

FAMILY WISDOM

FROM THE MONK WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI

NURTURING
THE LEADER
WITHIN YOUR CHILD

ROBIN SHARMA



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I dedicate this book to my extraordinary children, Colby and Bianca, two of the greatest and wisest teachers in my life. I love you both very very much.

I also dedicate this book to my dear friend and colleague the late George Williams, a man who touched many lives but left us far too early.

Finally, I dedicate this book to you, the reader. May the lessons you discover on these pages inspire you to be a wiser person, a better parent, and to become the kind of family leader that will inspire the children of the world to live bigger and better lives.

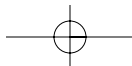
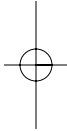
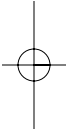


*A hundred years from now it will not matter what my
bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the
kind of car I drove. But the world may be different
because I was important in the life of a child.*

Author unknown

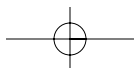
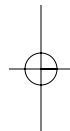
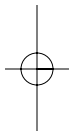
To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.

Thomas Campbell



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Special thanks to my friends at HarperCollins, who have supported, encouraged and inspired me to keep writing these books. I express gratitude to Iris Tupholme, Claude Primeau, Judy Brunsek, David Millar, Lloyd Kelly, my publicist Doré Potter, Marie Campbell, Neil Erickson, Pauline Thompson and especially to Nicole Langlois, my caring, insightful and wonderful editor.

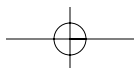
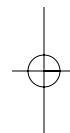
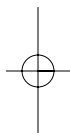
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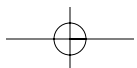
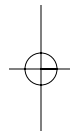
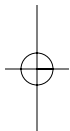


complete *Family Wisdom* in awe-inspiring surroundings. Thanks also go to all my mentors, including Gerry Weiner, Ed Carson and Lorne Clarke, for inspiring me to “stay the course.” I also express gratitude to each and every one of my corporate clients for the privilege of being able to share my leadership message at your conferences, and for your having the wisdom to recognize that people lie at the soul of your enterprise. Heartfelt thanks to Jill Hewlett for being such a light. Deep appreciation goes out to my parents, Shiv and Shashi Sharma, for being such splendid examples of excellent parents, and for all the love, kindness and support you have showered on me. Big thanks also to my brother Sanjay and my sister-in-law Susan, for being there when I needed you most.

And finally, I thank Colby and Bianca, my two children, for bringing me so much joy.

Family Wisdom
from The Monk
Who Sold His Ferrari







My Great Awakening

*We are generally afraid to become that which we can
glimpse in our most perfect moments.*

Abraham Maslow

The saddest part of life lies not in the act of dying, but in failing to truly live while we are alive. Too many of us play small with our lives, never letting the fullness of our humanity see the light of day. I've learned that what really counts in life, in the end, is not how many toys we have collected or how much money we've accumulated, but how many of our talents we have liberated and used for a purpose that adds value to this world. What truly matter most are the lives we have touched and the legacy that we have left. Tolstoy put it so well when he wrote: "We live for ourselves only when we live for others."

It took me forty years to discover this simple point of wisdom. Forty long years to discover that success cannot really be pursued. Success *ensues* and flows into your life as the unintended yet inevitable byproduct of a life spent enriching the lives



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of other people. When you shift your daily focus from a compulsion to survive towards a lifelong commitment to serve, your existence cannot help but explode into success.

I still can't believe that I had to wait until the "half-time" of my life to figure out that true fulfillment as a human being comes not from achieving those grand gestures that put us on the front pages of the newspapers and business magazines, but instead from those basic and incremental acts of decency that each one of us has the privilege to practice each and every day if we simply make the choice to do so. Mother Teresa, a great leader of human hearts if ever there was one, said it best: "There are no great acts, only small acts done with great love." I learned this the hard way in my life.

Until recently, I had been so busy striving, I had missed out on living. I was so busy chasing life's big pleasures that I had missed out on the little ones, those microjoys that weave themselves in and out of our lives on a daily basis but often go unnoticed. My days were overscheduled, my mind was overworked and my spirit was underfed. To be honest with you, my life reflected outward success but was completely bankrupt in terms of inner significance.

I was of the old school that believed that happiness would arrive when I bought the right car, built the right house and was promoted to the right job. I judged the value of a human being not by the size of their heart and the strength of their character, but by the size of their wallet and the contents of their bank account. You might say that I was not a good person. I would argue that I simply had no idea about the true meaning of life or how to conduct myself as I lived it. Maybe it was the kind of people I associated with, but everyone I knew in the business

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world lived by this same philosophy. We all dedicated the best hours of our days to climbing the stairway of success that we dreamed would lead us into the coveted corner office, the opulent summer home in the Hamptons and perhaps that spectacular ski chalet in France. We all wanted to be famous, admired and honored. We all wanted to be filthy rich. And, most of all, we all wanted to be wanted.

And though I did entertain the idea of being a mother one day and raising a family in the future, the dreams of my quietest moments were more along the lines of appearing on the cover of *Forbes* or FORTUNE magazine with the headline under my sleek figure stating “Catherine Cruz: the CEO Who Broke All the Rules and Still Won” than cheering on children at little league games. On the way to work, I used to repeat affirmations like “Today will be the best day of my life” and “I have the millionaire’s mind and the warrior’s heart.” I can just see you shaking your head right now, but I wanted success so badly back then I would have done anything for it. I would have said whatever people asked me to say, done whatever anyone told me to do and climbed over anyone who had the misfortune to get in my way. I’m not saying I’m proud of the person I was back then. I’m just telling you that that’s who I was. I was tough, ruthless, ambitious and driven—to a fault, closing down my emotional side in an effort to survive in the world I had made for myself.

My life was defined by my work and I felt I was destined to reach the pinnacle of success in business. On my office wall were these words of the great English poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that I believed said it all:

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*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.*

Sure, my pals from MBA school and I learned to pay lip service to all those honey-covered platitudes like “people come first” and “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” that were served up all too frequently by well-heeled consultants and well-meaning business professors. But deep within each one of us, there lived only one desire: to serve ourselves and meet our own goals, hopes and dreams—no matter how many people we had to trample to do it. And so we sacrificed our very souls for the sake of professional success and the pursuit of big money. We gave everything we had to our work. And though I’m now embarrassed to admit it, in the early years it was fun. Really fun.

As the brightest student in my class, I had my pick of the best companies on the planet to work for. Having always been a bit of a rebel, I delighted in rejecting every one of their six-figure offers, much to the chagrin of my mother who thought I was out of my mind. Remembering the advice of one of my favorite professors in business school, himself a person who chose to walk the road less travelled (he preached: “When searching for your ideal job, stop asking ‘Is this a company I’d like to work for?’ and start asking ‘Is this a company that I’d like to own?’”), I settled on a fast-track management position with a little-known financial services firm with massive growth potential. Never discount the power of stock options to attract even the most uninterested job candidate.

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Every morning at precisely 5:15, my shiny black Mercedes—a signing bonus from my new employer—sped through the underground parkade of the seventy-story glass-and-metal office tower that I was to spend the next few years of my life within. With a fresh copy of *The Wall Street Journal* in one hand and my alligator skin attaché case in the other, I strode to the bank of elevators and then up to the sixty-second floor office. This was my real home.

Once there, I would check my messages, return all phone calls and then proceed to live out the next sixteen to eighteen hours in a state of high anxiety and near chaos. In short order I was promoted to divisional, and then senior, vice-president, all before I was thirty-five. I had the pleasure of flying around the world first-class, rubbing shoulders with the business elite, eating in the finest restaurants and doing deals that would make my contemporaries shudder with jealousy. I was eventually given a luxurious office, and I finally did buy that ski chalet, thanks to my stock options that, as I had hoped, soared through the stratosphere.

A few years ago, a few friends from business school and I started a web-based company we called BraveLife.com that provided corporations with a revolutionary new way to train and develop employees wishing to excel in these wildly competitive times. Though it was initially something we did just for fun, BraveLife.com became an instant hit, and within months, our unique enterprise was featured in just about every major business publication in the nation. With the pundits saying this venture was an ideal candidate for a public offering and venture capitalists hovering around us like vultures closing in for the kill, my partners and I knew we would soon be rich. It was all coming together, just as I had envisioned in so many of my quieter

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moments. I would be wealthy, celebrated and and beloved. I could afford all the material possessions I craved so deeply, and finally have the resources to live my life on my own terms. I was well on my way to the mountaintop and living the life I had always wanted. And yet, as I drew closer to my dreams, I stumbled upon a strange realization that took the wind out of my sails. No matter what I tried to do to deny it, I was a completely miserable human being.

I was seven years into a marriage that lacked any trace of passion or emotional connection. I met my husband, Jon Cruz, at a wilderness retreat the company I initially worked for had sent its high-performing executives to in order to refine our leadership skills. Jon was a struggling entrepreneur hoping to find some inspiration in the mountains, and we found ourselves on the same team, faced with the mission of scaling a challenging rock face in the middle of the night. He admired my fearlessness and tenacity, and I was immediately attracted to his gentleness and passion for life. We fell in love and, though it ran contrary to my cautious ways, we were married six weeks later.

Jon was a good man in a world where raw goodness and strength of character are no longer given the value they deserve. Our early years together saw lots of good times but, as the years progressed, our relationship started to fall apart through the process of neglect. He loved nature and the great outdoors, and I loved glitzy restaurants and high-brow fashion shows. He collected great books and enjoyed carving wood on the backyard patio, while I collected great wines and appreciated fine art. But I must tell you that it was not our differences that led to our less-

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than-ideal marriage. The real problem was that I was never home to be with my husband.

By the time I'd roll into the driveway at night, Jon would be asleep. And by the time he'd get up, my Mercedes would be winding its way to my office. Though we lived under one roof, it would be safe to say we lived separate lives. But it was far more than my relationship with Jon that was causing me to feel so empty and disheartened as a person. We had two young—and wonderful—children I knew were suffering as a result of my eternal absences. They did not say a word to me about all the time I spent at the office, but their eyes revealed the fulness of their disappointment and their deep need to have a richer connection with the woman they called Mom.

Porter, our son, was just turning six and Sarita, our daughter, was three. I knew that these early years were by far the most important in terms of the shaping and development of their characters. I knew this was the stage during which they needed to be surrounded by great, loving role models who lavished affection and wisdom upon their tender souls. I knew that I would regret the many hours I spent away from them but, for some inexplicable reason, I just could not tear myself away from my office and all the obligations my hyper-complex professional life carried with it.

“Life is nothing more than a series of windows of opportunity strung together to form a whole,” my wise father used to tell me. I had the common sense and intelligence to appreciate that Porter and Sarita would only be young once, and that now was the time that they needed my presence. Once this window of opportunity closed, my chance to equip them with the values, virtues and vision to lead rich lives as they matured would be

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gone forever. And I knew I could never forgive myself for not being there for them when they needed me most. I guess I just didn't have the courage to step back from my chaotic life and really reflect on my highest priorities, nor the wisdom to ensure that these priorities were reflected in the way I spent my days. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't bring myself to stop working at a blistering pace and restore balance in my life. I truly felt I could not live without the adrenaline rush and sense of significance my overflowing agenda gave to me. As much as I'd publicly profess that my family was what truly counted, the facts clearly revealed otherwise. All the evidence showed that Jon and the kids finished a distant second to my career and my desire to become rich.