



Chris Kennedy's
**PHENOMENAL
WOMEN**



YOUR JOURNEY TO A PHENOMENAL LIFE

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CHRIS KENNEDY

To my children Kath and Thomas

To Evelyn Letsholo, who has taken wonderful care of me and
my children for over twenty-six years





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INTRODUCTION

'Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.'

— HELEN KELLER

Welcome to a daring adventure. You are now starting the journey to accessing your full phenomenal self, so that you can live the life you were designed to live.

Phenomenal Women will change your life; I know this because I have used all the tools and techniques in this book to develop my own phenomenal life, and they have been effective in assisting my clients to become phenomenal.

Any woman who believes there is more waiting for her to experience than she has right now needs this book, because it will change her life.

The initial chapters create a personal vision for you to aspire to, and subsequent chapters take you through your life to uncover anything in your personal history that might be holding you back and preventing you from moving forward.

Each chapter has true-life stories and case studies, as well as thought-provoking questions and exercises, which will enable you to make the journey to yourself and to the future you desire.

Some of the exercises are challenging and many are interchangeable with each other, so if you find an exercise that really works for you, you can use it in multiple contexts. Conversely, if an exercise in a particular chapter does not resonate with you, you can replace it with an exercise that has worked for you. The book has been designed to give you a toolkit of techniques that you can use to heal all aspects of your life.

Some of the things you will need to think about are going to be tough, but,

if it were easy, you wouldn't need help, because you would have the answers already.

Enjoy the journey – it truly is worthwhile to be able to construct the future that you know you deserve.

THE JOURNEY TO PHENOMENAL

‘There is only one admirable form of the imagination: the imagination that is so intense that it creates a new reality; that it makes things happen.’

— SEAN O’FAOLIN

One late summer morning, in my quest to stay fit, I was waiting for a friend to arrive to join me in a walk around the suburb when one of my husband’s acquaintances, who had been doing some work around the house, arrived at my front door and told me he had some bad news.

My first thought at that moment was, ‘Damn, he can’t fix the cupboard door.’ So when he told me that Matthew, my husband, was dead, I just couldn’t comprehend what he had said. When his words finally sank in, they felt like the last nail in my coffin.

In the previous year I had spent most of the money I had inherited from my parents’ estate working on a project that I believed would be successful, but which failed miserably. My son had just graduated from the most expensive boarding school in the country and had gone on to live even more expensively in Cape Town. My daughter had been diagnosed with a physiological brain complaint that made schooling torture for her (and me), and then the news arrived that my estranged husband had been brutally murdered.

At this point, my life reached an all-time low, and I went into a serious reaction.



Yet, before that moment, from the outside things had looked good – great, even: I had a fantastic house, two children studying at the best schools in the country,

five dogs, and I was working for myself in a business environment in which many regarded me as a guru.

I was the only one who didn't feel good about my life, and I was the only one who could see the cracks, mainly because I was doing a great job of masking from others what was really going on inside – the desperation, the sadness, the panic.

This was not supposed to be happening to me – I was, and still am, in people development. I was, and still am, regarded by many as a phenomenal woman. But it wasn't showing up in my life at that time, and it hadn't for a while. Most of the projects I had been working on were going nowhere, my personal vision was shaky and it felt as if my life had reached an all-time low.

Or so it seemed at the time. In reality, the brutal murder of my husband would be the springboard for a phenomenal story and an amazing personal journey. Of course, I just couldn't see or feel it clearly right then.

And my phenomenal story had its foundation on one essential element: I learnt to go within myself and find a source of 'phenomenal' from which I could draw whatever I needed, whenever I needed it. And it's there in all of us. Every one of us can access a place inside ourselves from which the phenomenal is possible.

WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW

You might not be experiencing anything like the moment I experienced that morning; your life might not have become a major train wreck. You could just be dissatisfied, you could be wanting more to happen, needing to progress more quickly, be better at what you do, have more money, find balance in your life, have a successful relationship, add a spiritual dimension to every day.

There are many reasons why you might be wanting more phenomenal in your day-to-day life, your career, your parenting, your finances. You could be dealing with the loss of a relationship, a job, the death of someone important to you. You could be reeling from a personal experience that has left you debilitated. You could be facing a personal challenge that feels so big, you just want to run. You could be so stressed out and under so much pressure that the smallest irritation feels overwhelming and you find yourself exploding at the tiniest thing that happens.

You could be experiencing physical debilitation and illness as a result of the life stress and pressure you are undergoing.

Whatever is happening, whether things are great, good or awful, you obviously want more, or you would not be reading this book. And this book is about helping you to *achieve*, *have* and *be* more in your everyday life.

If you don't feel phenomenal right now, if you don't feel phenomenal every day,

if you feel you could be more phenomenal, then there is something going on inside of you that is not allowing you to access and own that phenomenal space within yourself. You are allowing something out there to be bigger, stronger and more demanding than the enormity of what is inside you.

And no one is doing it to you; you are doing it to yourself.

You are making the choice to go down, to go under, and to be less than you were designed to be. But there is a place inside of you that, if you allowed yourself to get in touch with it, would let you know everything that you are, can do, could be and what your true potential is; and that there is a reason for all this stuff you are experiencing. There is a lesson that you need to learn, and that is why you, the master of manifestation, have created this in your life at this moment.

If you don't learn from this moment, it will repeat itself over and over again – until you do learn.

We constantly create the world around us. We draw people and events into our lives so that we can see who we are in the moment and how our minds and emotions are working. Many of us curse the universe, god, fate or destiny for dealing us a poor hand. We angrily and completely own the role of victim to external forces instead of owning that which is in the world around us – which is there to teach us how to adjust our beliefs, our thinking, our behaviour – in order to own our true identity. In this way we can get more of what we want, rather than having to use life just as a classroom, or to be its victim. We can learn to live in a world of peace, satisfaction, fulfilment and understanding rather than in one that consists only of hard work, misery and feeling 'almost good enough'.

Some of us believe that some external, higher being is setting tasks and lessons for our personal development.

Some even feel that they need to learn how to master skills such as manifestation in order to have what they feel they need or want in their life. In fact, the bookstores are crammed with countless books that contain formulas on how to get what you want through goal-setting, manifestation techniques and the like.

Few people, if any, realise that they are already masters of manifestation; that they have created the minute detail of the world around them. What they say they dislike and want to overcome is, in fact, what they have chosen to manifest.

Few of us realise that we are complaining about a world we have created ourselves – a world that could prove the greatest gift and provide the clearest insight, if we knew how to work with it.

Working with the raw material of our lives will allow us to understand the process of personal creation and to take ownership of our role and responsibility in the creation of our own lives, and will provide a vehicle for change and mastery.

So, how are you going to learn? What can you do to take the lessons from the world you have created around yourself – in your relationships, in your home, with your friends, at your work?

CREATING THE PHENOMENAL

How did I take myself from this dark point to being the visionary who inspired SABC3 to launch the Phenomenal Women Initiative? To launch a career that generates extensive media coverage and exposure? To be the woman who stands up in front of other women and encourages them to be authentic and honest about themselves and their lives, and then leads them to a new departure point for life? To become the generative change agent who persuades change-resistant chartered accountants that there is a life outside of audit? To be the consultant to the team that is putting together the content for the new professional qualification process for chartered accountants?

The fact is, most women are phenomenal, and, because we are, we just keep on going, no matter how bad things get. Only a few of us go off the rails for a period of time. The majority of women keep on going every day, looking glossy and gorgeous, even when they aren't feeling glossy or gorgeous. This phenomenal strength in women is both their greatest asset and their biggest drawback.

Because no matter how tough it gets, women just keep going. And they wear the mask that says everything is okay: my marriage is fine, my job is great, my life is perfect. It makes the ones who do show the cracks feel worse, as everyone else seems to be doing so well.

So, how can you start or continue your journey to being authentic, successful, confident and empowered, with a spiritual dimension that provides energy whenever you need it? How do you journey towards your phenomenal self?

The first step is to find out where you *really* are, and that means being completely honest with and about yourself.

The next step is to know where you want to be, how you want to feel, and what life will look, sound and be like when you are living your vision. And the detail of your vision is incredibly important, because by knowing what you will be when you are phenomenal, you can compare it with how things are now. This will enable you to chart your journey and to know what is blocking you.

This is one of the core ingredients of your journey to the phenomenal you; it is one of the tools in your toolbox that will enable you to move forward. It is one of the many techniques, processes, thinking strategies and practical steps that will assist you on your journey.

Then, when you are upset, despairing, unhappy or frustrated, you can use one of a variety of tools to deal with these emotions and rebuild yourself and your resource base from the inside out. And when you are happy, achieving and successful, you can store the unique personal strategy that brought this into your life and utilise it again and again.

Let me share a personal example. Just recently I was on a real roll in my business. One client indicated that they wanted to continue to be involved in a project of mine, and I was also requested to carry out a high-level intervention within an organisation.

Feeling proud and excited, I phoned a business colleague to pass on the good news. The hostility with which the news was received stunned me. With indomitable spirit I decided to phone my son, normally a strong member of my fan club. His response was slightly more encouraging – thirty seconds of praise before he proceeded to criticise my business plan.

I felt gutted. I also became curious as to why their support was so necessary to me. For what reason did I need to phone them and share my excitement rather than revelling in it on my own? Discussing this with a close friend, she and I played around with various notions as to what was going on inside me.

The next day the friend came up with a suggestion. She postulated that I needed my enthusiasm about my success to be matched externally, or I would not feel that I had permission to succeed.

Bullseye. Coming from a dysfunctional family and, as a sexually abused child whose paternity my mother was unsure of, I was the bearer of the family shame; I always had to check my achievement against the family backdrop. I was not allowed to be more successful than my older brother, I could not draw attention to myself in case I created waves with my father, and my mother encouraged invisibility except when she wanted me to support members of the family.

In other words, I was not allowed to get above myself and attract attention, which meant that I allowed myself success only in direct proportion to the response of the people around me. So, if I did something well, I could continue doing it only if it met with approval; I'd stop very quickly if my success met with rejection.

I was responding to a very deep personal programme that was created when I was very young, one that had come into being and was installed outside of my conscious awareness.

Normally we cannot identify, let alone talk about, these hidden programmes and patterns that run and rule our lives, that threaten to ensure that we never reach our full potential.

How phenomenal can you be when you have to have permission from everyone around you to be successful? How lucky will you have to be to keep on creating success when it is dependent on friends and business colleagues celebrating, and not denigrating, your success? How long before you hit a glass ceiling of your own creation because you are unwittingly stopping yourself from getting where you say you believe you can, and want, to go?

WORDS

Balloons

I found a balloon yesterday
She was beautiful
She let me hold her for a while
Then the wind took her away
She had no string to anchor her to earth
But I could learn to fly.

— CHRIS HITCHINGS (1998)

EXERCISE:

Building the journey to phenomenal

GUIDELINES

This exercise will help you to understand some of the reasons why you are not accessing your phenomenal personal potential.

When doing the exercise, you can work in whatever way is most effective for you. You can envision the answers to the questions below, relaxing in a place that is comfortable. You can create a series of collages by tearing out images and words from a magazine that represent the answers to the questions and pasting them on a piece of card, or you can journal your answers.

QUESTION: In order to be the person I want to be, where does my thinking, doing and being need to be?

How would I behave if I were the person who had achieved my phenomenal potential?

What would I be doing for a living?

Who would my friends be?

Where would I live?

Who would be my life partner?

How would I spend my time, both business and pleasure?

What would my hobbies be?
What would I read?
What movies would I see and where?
What would I watch on television?
What would I look like?
What clothes would I wear?
What car would I drive?
How would my bank statement read?
When would I pay my bills?
How would I pay my bills?
What accounts would I have?
What food would I eat?
Where would I eat?
What would I think about if I were this person?

Now you should have a strong sense of who you will be when you achieve your phenomenal potential. So let's find out who you *currently* are and where your thinking currently rests:

QUESTION: Where is my thinking, doing and being currently?

How do I currently behave?
What do I do for a living?
Who are my friends?
Where do I live?
Who is my partner/significant other?
How do I spend my time, both business and pleasure?
What are my hobbies?
What do I read?
What movies do I see and where?
What do I watch on television?
What do I look like?
What clothes do I wear?
What car do I drive?
How does my bank statement read?
When do I pay my bills?
How do I pay my bills?
What accounts do I have?
What food do I eat?

Where do I eat?

What do I think about?

Now let's refocus on that person you want to be:

REVIEW:

What sort of person is the person I want to be?

Do the following:

- Describe her values
- Describe her attitudes
- Describe her behaviours
- Describe her lifestyle
- Describe her physical appearance
- Describe what you feel about this person

And now let's create the contrast again and see who you currently are:

REVIEW:

What sort of person is the person I am?

Do the following:

- Describe your values
- Describe your attitudes
- Describe your behaviours
- Describe your lifestyle
- Describe your physical appearance
- Describe what you feel about yourself as this person

Now look at your answers for the above two *Review* exercises, and answer the following questions:

- Which one, if either, do I like more, and for what reason?
- If I have a child, which person would I prefer my child to be like, and for what reason?
- Which one would I choose to marry if they were of an appropriate gender for me, and for what reason?
- Which one would I employ and for what reason?
- Which one would I choose as a friend and for what reason?
- Which one would I trust and for what reason?

SUMMING UP

The answers to these questions will vary from person to person; this is not a formula or a process to sort you into a category. There are therefore no right or wrong answers; just *your* answers. Think whether you like yourself as you are now. Think whether you like the person you feel you would be if you got what you wanted.

This is the raw material of your belief system that we will need to work with if you are going to achieve what you want.

When I first did this exercise after I had created it and was testing how it worked, I kidded myself that when I manifested my visionary life for myself, nothing would be different.

Well, I have to confess that, doing the exercise now, I have a whole new insight into the phenomenal life I desire and what impact it will have on me. This new honesty has been created partly by the experiences of achieving some of my vision and acknowledging that already things have changed.

It is so easy to say that I would still have the same friends, eat in the same places, drive the same car and pay my bills in a certain way, but the truth is that my friendship base has shifted significantly as I have progressed on my personal journey, as have many other aspects of my life. I drive a different car, pay my bills over the internet to save time, and I eat in different places because I travel more.

I also like myself more now, although I can see that other people might not like me as much as they would have liked the old me. I would like my children to be more like this me than the old me, and I would be happier with a partner that is like I am now, but, truthfully, I might prefer to employ the old me rather than the new me. A product of a dysfunctional family is the ideal employee – they will go to extreme lengths to please the people around them.

So, as you can see, this exercise requires an enormous amount of honesty.

The exercise can give you a powerful vision of life that will become your guiding light when the going gets tough. You can make sure that nothing outside yourself defines you, and, finally, you can begin to work on yourself on a day-by-day basis to make sure that you are constantly moving towards your vision.

INSIGHTS

This is an opportunity to review your progress and discoveries. You can journal this information, or you can make notes in the book if you want to keep track of your progress. It is sometimes useful to keep a record of your journey, because more often than not we spend time looking at how far we have to go rather than

how far we have come. Recognising how much we have learnt and achieved can give us the inspiration to move forward when things get tough.

- How do you feel about what you have discovered about yourself?
- How are you different?
- How do you feel about yourself?
- How do you feel about your future?
- Were there any surprises?
- What would you like to remember about the discoveries you have made about yourself through this exercise?

A PHENOMENAL PASSION

*'How much longer will you go on letting your energy sleep?
How much longer are you going to stay oblivious to the immensity
of yourself?'*

— BHAGWAN SHREE RAJNEESH

On my son's twenty-first birthday, he sent me a text message telling me I was a pathetic mother and hadn't made his day special in any way.

Even though I was deeply hurt, and then ragingly angry, I put on a brave face and carried on with the training programme I was running that night, but I wanted to scream out at Thomas for his ingratitude.

The next day, as I drove around town, I felt as if someone had died and I had lost a chunk of myself. Then I realised how much of my identity and emotion I had invested in my son's opinion of me. If he didn't think I was a great mother, then I was a failure – to myself and, in my eyes, to the world. When he lashed out at me, it made me less to myself.

I had been working a lot with my sense of self and, as usually happens when I start working on something, I got a full-on challenge from my world and in my most vulnerable area – my children.

I realised that I needed to approve of and respect myself even if everyone else in the world did not. I realised that the only person who had betrayed me was me. Thomas was just an external representation of what I had done to myself for decades.

If you are defining yourself by the people, events and opinions in your world, sooner or later you are going to be miserable. Sooner or later you are going to be unhappy and dislike yourself.