

Destined to Succeed

by Toni Hatton

I'd like to personally thank every woman who has decided to live her life with a passion and to express why it is so necessary to continue to live your life "On Purpose." When I was 19 years old, I gave birth to my heart's desire, a baby boy. I greatly anticipated his arrival! I envisioned us enjoying each other's company, living life fully, and seeing the world together. Ten months after his birth, he was diagnosed with Bilateral Retinoblastoma, cancerous tumors in both of his eyes. I thought my world had ended! I had never in my life experienced so much pain and confusion. I literally felt like the world should have come to a complete stop, just to help me get through this. As a result of my son having Bilateral Retinoblastoma, by the time he was 5 years old my husband Kevin and I had to make the decision to have both of his eyes removed in order to save his life. Little did I know; my life hadn't ended, but had just begun.

Right in the middle of one of the happiest times in my life, I entered into a process. This process taught me that having faith is a fight, that my perception could accelerate this process, and that I was destined for greatness. I believe that challenges and situations are designed to reveal to us what's inside of us. When I tell my story, some say that I am an extraordinary woman. I don't feel as though I did anything extra. I did what I was supposed to do, and that is, raise my son. I had to release control over the things I had no control over so the process would not rob me of my joy while raising my son through radiation, chemotherapy, and surgeries. Everybody has a mountain and we have what it takes to climb that mountain.

As a child, I always believed in the impossible. I always knew that something bigger than myself was guiding my life. When I began to walk along this journey with my son, there were times when I thought I would just stop believing for a brighter day. Thoughts would come to my mind like, "Who are you to think that anything good can come from all of this pain? You're no different than anybody else. This is how your story is going to end." I had to fight that negativity. I wrestled with faith and facts, sometimes all night long. My faith would say, "No matter what the outcome, we are going to thrive, not just survive, thrive!" On the other hand, the facts were saying, "Cancer kills and you might as well not have high expectations." Decisions are powerful. I had to choose between living my life based on faith and living it based on facts. Then I had to be committed to the process of the decision that I had made. Living my life based on the facts and statistics of cancer would have caused me not to expect much as far as recovery was concerned. My thoughts, which become my words and then my actions, would have created a negative environment, producing exactly what I was saying. Instead, I chose to have faith and believe that no matter what the diagnosis, my son was going to survive cancer and have a message of victory to share with the world. So, I had to surround myself with people who thought like I thought and used positive words around my son, because he also had to believe that he was going to survive. Since I believed for the best, I focused on good thoughts, which produced good words, which created a positive environment for my son to grow up in. He didn't know that what he had been diagnosed with could kill him. All he knew was that he was sick and was going to get better. I learned that words are creative and what you say is very important.

I also learned a lot about perception. It's not what you're going through, but how you perceive what you're going through, that determines whether you sink or swim in this sea called life. For example, you have two women walking down the same street on their lunch break. They both experience someone snatching their purse and running away. Both women are devastated. One woman is so overwhelmed that she has to be taken to the hospital and is not able to return to work until 3 weeks later.



Author Toni Hatton has a passion for children and family. As a result of being Vice President of the PTA in the public school system, a member of the Governor's Task Force for Education and Finance, and a board member of the Parents of Blind Children, a division of the National Federation of the Blind, she knows that God has called her to make a difference in the lives of others. Toni has been married to her husband Kevin for 20 years and is a dedicated mother of one daughter, Kristen, and three sons, Kevin, Kristopher, and Karrington. She has been home schooling for the past 5 years. Toni is also a speaker and her message is one of faith, perception, and destiny. To schedule a book signing or speaking engagement, please send an email to thproductions@tonihatton.com, visit her website at www.tonihatton.com, or you may call 410-298-2121.

The other woman is so grateful that the only thing she lost was her purse, that she hurries back to work and shares the incident with her co-workers, makes the necessary phone calls to secure her accounts, and continues to function until the end of the work day. What happened? One woman thought that it was the worst thing that could have happened to her that day and the other woman thought about what could have happened to her that day. Here's another example: your child may be acting out. If you think to yourself, "I made a mistake in raising this child, he/she is going to end up on the wrong road, there is no hope," then you will respond out of frustration, not remembering that raising children is a process with delayed rewards and as a parent you have to continue to sow good seeds into your child's life until they get through certain transitions and you are able to see the fruit of your labor. With that said, I challenge all of the ladies reading this article to take another look at the situations that you encounter. Could you see it another way? Is there another spot where you can stand and look at it from another angle? You'd be surprised at what you've been missing when you look a little harder.

I also learned through this process that I was destined for greatness. Every time I felt like I couldn't take another step, I ended up taking two. I'd walk through one challenge, experience a season of rest, and go through another challenge. It wasn't long before I realized that I was walking through my challenges and was surviving them all, and with my right mind, nothing missing and nothing broken. If you take a look back over your life, you too may feel that it was almost impossible for you to survive some of the things that you've encountered. If your challenges have made you better and not bitter, could it be that as long as you continue to face them and view them as opportunities to learn about yourself and the world around you, that you will reach total fulfillment, living a full, satisfied life?

Ladies, I encourage you to believe in the impossible, look at the bright side of your situation, and know that you have what it takes to take a lickin' and keep on tickin'. No matter what you do, do not lose yourself in the process. If you lose yourself, you've lost everything. As long as we live, we are going to experience some form of pain, sadness, or disappointment. Challenges come and challenges go. We as women cannot afford to allow our minds to come and go every time we're faced with seemingly impossible situations.

Two weeks ago my son, Kevin II, celebrated his 20th birthday! After he lost his eyesight, he continued in public school up to the ninth grade. For 10th through 12th grades, he was homeschooled, went to his Senior Prom and graduation. He then attended college for one year and during his second year, lived in an off campus apartment while attending school in Colorado. He became very familiar with the Denver airport, having to travel independently several times over the holidays last year. Oh, I forgot to mention that the decision I made to think positive produced three more children after Kevin. Statistics revealed that I had a 50/50 chance of having other children with Retinoblastoma. My daughter, Kristen, whom my doctor suggested I abort, just graduated from high school this year and has completed her first semester in Culinary School! Kevin and I also have two incredible younger sons, Kristopher and Karrington. The facts in my life would have prevented three other people from gracing this earth. Instead, faith gave them access! I wish I had the time to tell you how I've enjoyed raising my son and all that he has been gifted to accomplish. I've captured most of his life in my latest book, *Don't Be Afraid: He's Preparing You!* You can actually read an excerpt from the book on my website, www.tonihatton.com. Yes, happy endings are not just for fairy tales. Miracles happen everyday!