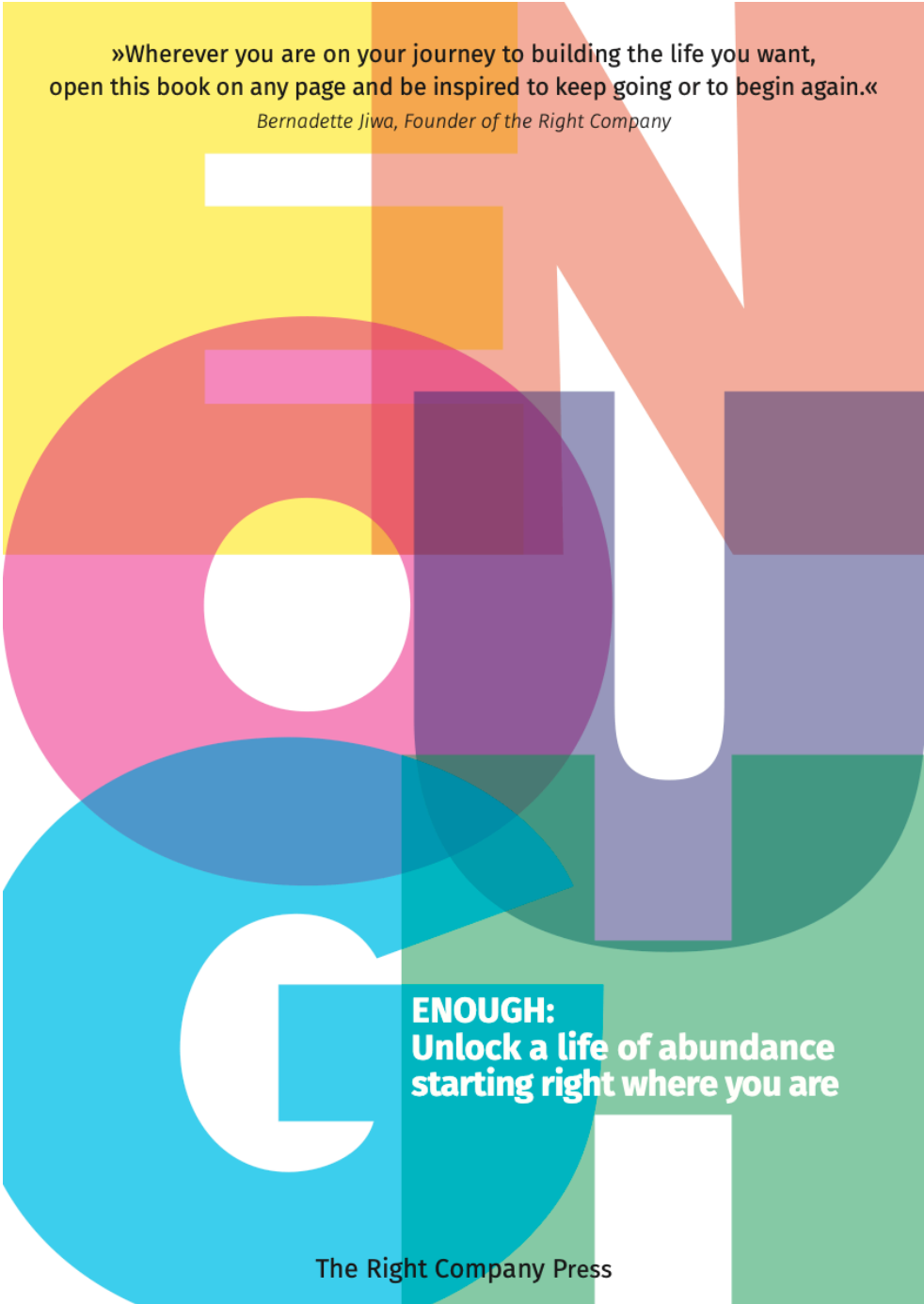


ENOUGH: Unlock a life of abundance starting right where you are

# Making Meaning is Key to Happiness

Jackie Davis

---



Thank you for downloading your complimentary copy of “Making Meaning is Key to Happiness,” the chapter I contributed to the book **ENOUGH: Unlock a life of abundance starting right where you are**. The chapter chronicles my journey from life as a dissatisfied corporate employee to a thriving entrepreneur when I redefined what enough means to me. You’ll also receive periodic emails that will educate, inspire, and motivate you to take action for personal and professional empowerment.

I am one of sixteen geographically dispersed entrepreneurs and professionals who gathered to write the book. We addressed the questions we and others were asking about what is enough in terms of time, money, friendships, happiness, and success.

You’ll find stories of encouragement, inspiration, and challenges we overcame in life and business to achieve success. It’s rarely enjoyable to spend all your time working and not taking time to play. So, we interspersed shorter pieces, photos, poems, and meaningful quotes throughout the book. In addition to the chapter, I contributed a poem titled “Enough of Me.” You’ll have to buy the book to read it!

Visit my website to buy the book and get valuable information about how I can help you grow your business.

<https://jackiedavis.me> © 2022 Jackie Davis

**ENOUGH: Unlock a life of abundance starting right where you are**

# Making Meaning is Key to Happiness

Jackie Davis

*How I freed myself from the slavery of the almighty dollar, broke the chains of the corporate workplace and stopped tolerating the microaggressions of others.*

I ran across Anderson Bridge to join the other 30,000 some odd people in Harvard Yard. I was out of breath when I took my seat among the sea of black robes and mortarboards for the official commencement ceremony. Before the dean called our school, I pulled out the dollar bill I'd so carefully folded and put in my pocket earlier that morning. I was ready.

Our school was next. Before the dean could confer our degrees, we jumped to our feet and roared. It was loud, raucous, boastful. I'm sure we were heard way across the river back to the Boston campus.

Unlike some schools where graduates threw their hats into the sky to celebrate the occasion, we waved dollar bills in the wind. Some classmates clutched bills in both hands. Was that Benjamin Franklin on their money? We were graduates of the Harvard Business School. Masters and mistresses of the universe. We were all going to be rich.

I envied my classmates who joined investment banks or consulting firms because they were making the BIG bucks. In retrospect, this was odd for me because I hadn't entered b-school to earn lots of money. I wanted to study marketing. By the time I graduated, I'd succumbed to peer pressure and outside expectations. My relationship with money changed. The more money I had, the better.

My career decisions were motivated by money. If the work was tolerable and the money was good, that was enough for me. I happily settled into my jobs and waited for the headhunter to call with the next opportunity to join a company at a bigger salary and more benefits.

I became a slave to the almighty dollar, chained to corporate workplaces where I tolerated microaggressions. Subtle insults and racial biases were directed against me as if intended to keep me in my place. It wasn't always apparent to other people when I was marginalized or ignored, but I could see it.

For example, I'd make a point in a meeting on more than one occasion, and it seemed to fall on deaf ears. A few minutes later, a white male would make the same comment. Not only was he heard, but coworkers remarked that his point was brilliant and insightful.

What had just happened? I could hardly believe my ears. I realized I had a choice. I could be silent, let it go, or I could speak up. So, I opened my mouth and said, "*Excuse me. I just made the same point.*" My colleagues reacted with guilty stares as if they knew he stole my words, but they chose to ignore the theft. Sometimes they asked me if I was sure of what I said.

I felt as though they questioned my credibility. The fake ignorance infuriated me. I had to bite my tongue to keep from spewing hot, nasty words or risk getting labeled as the stereotypical angry Black woman. That would surely damage my reputation. But why was his voice heard and not mine?

Another memorable experience occurred after I joined a company through an acquisition. I'd participated in the launch of the first Computer Clubhouse. My new manager was pleased with my performance and supported my request to become a permanent member of a team. It was my opportunity to do challenging, creative work.

Unfortunately, his boss blocked my request. He explained that I had to move to the corporate headquarters located in California if I wanted more meaningful work. His reason didn't make any sense to me because I'd be traveling around the United States to open new Computer Clubhouse locations. What difference did it make where I lived? I never got a straight answer and didn't understand his motivations. Can I prove there was bias? No.

However, according to the McKinsey & Company study, *Women in the Workplace 2020*:

*"Compared with their colleagues of other races and ethnicities, Black women have always had distinct, and by and large worse, experiences at work. They are promoted more slowly than other groups of employees and are significantly underrepresented in senior leadership. They are less likely than women of other races and ethnicities to say their manager advocates for new opportunities for them. And they have fewer interactions with senior leaders, which means they often don't get the sponsorship and advocacy they need to advance. Given these challenges, it's not surprising that Black women are less likely than employees of other races to report they have equal opportunity to advance at work."* <sup>(1)</sup>

Occasionally, I even experienced slights from vendors. One vendor I'd communicated with via telephone and email was eager to meet with me. He had no idea what to expect when he came to the office because companies did not display employee photos on the internet yet. Two of my direct reports joined me in the meeting. They were both white, one male and the other female. The sales rep snapped his head around when we introduced ourselves. He looked shocked to learn that I, a Black woman, was the manager. It would have been funny if it wasn't so insulting.

The rep avoided eye contact with me and directed his attention and questions to the other people in the room. I had to take control of the situation and calmly but firmly informed the sales rep that I required answers to my questions before approving the purchase. The prospect of losing a sale got his attention. The whole tenor of the meeting changed, and he began to address me directly. It was clear that he understood I was the decision-maker he had to please if he wanted the business.

Finally, one day I looked at myself in the mirror and said, enough is enough. I was tired of the racist and sexist treatment I'd experienced at work. Some people are more adept at ignoring snubs and choose to stay in their corporate jobs for the money, the title, or the benefits. But, for me, there was no price tag on respect or being valued or heard. My employers couldn't pay me enough to remain invalidated or underemployed. My achievements proved I was capable and worthy of better career opportunities.

From early childhood, a network of supportive family members and friends valued me, reinforced my value in myself, and bolstered my confidence. Later in life, I sometimes found allies in coworkers, managers, and even vendors. And as for the naysayers, it was their issue, not mine, if they did not recognize my worth. I didn't need to prove that I am enough. But I realized no one was going to rescue me from an unfulfilling career. I had to save myself.

A few years before my 50th birthday, I created an escape plan to remove the golden handcuffs. I decided to pursue a dream and attended design school at night while I worked during the day. It took two years, but I finally squirreled away enough money to feel financially secure without the promise of a paycheck. I took a deep breath, quit my job, and opened a residential interior design business.

Running my business was one of the highlights of my career. I was the boss with the power to control my fate. I selected the vendors I wanted to do business with and the clients I wanted to serve. My energy soared because I was in the flow. When I was motivated solely by the money, I knew something was missing, but I chose to ignore the void. Now I enjoyed the creative freedom I rarely experienced in my corporate jobs. Powered by my passion, I designed rooms my clients loved and helped fulfill their dreams of a beautiful home.

Although I pivoted the business several times to meet new market demands and stay ahead of the competition, it was unsustainable due to a downturn in the economy. After 14 years, I closed the business and returned to corporate marketing jobs to rebuild my nest egg. I hummed along in a corporate job until the spring of 2020. I became one of the 9.5 million employees in the U.S. who lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The daily grind of the job search and the pressure to pay bills started to take a toll on my mental health. After countless days watching mind-numbing television programs and eating huge portions of junk food, I had to make a change. Lucky for me, I found a fun distraction in a Story Skills Workshop.

In just six weeks, I wrote my first story. I described an experience I had when I attended a predominantly white school. I was the only Black student in my 5th-grade classroom. The story is about luck, race, belonging, and becoming. Sadly, the story is as relevant today in 2021 as it was in 1965.

Three months after I completed the workshop, I recited the story on a live Zoom call hosted by GBH, a local public broadcast company. Then I delivered it on stage. The story was recorded and later aired on television by WORLD Channel. I had no idea I had such a powerful story inside me or that it would resonate with so many people. Finally, I was seen and heard.

Releasing my story to the world has freed me to tell more stories and live a more authentic life. I've learned that the best stories capture the audience's attention and take them on a journey that evokes an emotional response. I hope the story of my journey to entrepreneurship inspires you to have the courage to transform your career and your life.

Over the years, I've asked myself, what is enough? Back when I stood waving my dollar bill at graduation, I would have easily said that money was the answer. But time has given me new experiences that changed my perspective. Today, as I reflect on my life, the question I ask is, Enough of what?

Money is only one answer. My bank account balance does not define me. I am rich in ways that money can't buy. I have enough when I have the freedom to create. I have enough when I am respected. I have enough when I am treated justly. Yes, money is still important to me, but it's no longer a big part of my identity. There's more to life than making money. Making meaning is key to my happiness. My goal is to do meaningful and share stories that improve society.

Enough for me is about having the income to feel secure, to have experiences that make me happy, and to be able to share my good fortune with people I love and the causes I support. By these criteria, I'm rich, and that is my definition of a mistress of the universe.

So, while many of my friends head into retirement, I am reinventing myself once again. I'm off to start my next big adventure, and for now, that is enough. I'm reminded of a quote from Oprah Winfrey, *"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."* <sup>(2)</sup>

You may have doubts as you consider entrepreneurship. That's normal. You're human and, it's scary to take risks. But ask yourself if your corporate job is giving you enough, according to how you define enough. I'm convinced that running your own business is worth the risk, even with all the ups and downs during the journey. Go for it!

## References

(1) Women in the Workplace 2020, a 63-page report from LeanIn.org in partnership with McKinsey & Company. [https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace\\_2020.pdf](https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2020.pdf)

(2) Oprah's Lifeclass, 2012.