

WHAT'S SHADOWING YOU?

In 2004 after international motivational speaker Les Brown heard me speak and said “*You have the gift,*” he encouraged me to write a book. At that point, I already had four chapters written, but his encouragement motivated me and exposed me to a deeper level of my own courage to complete my first book, *There Is More Inside*. I had been dabbling in writing for nearly six years, but didn’t have the faith to believe that what I had to say was significant. In fact, by 1994 I knew that a part of my life’s purpose was to inspire people through writing. But something was shadowing me and I didn’t realize it until Sheri Bell-Rehwoldt, my editor, began to read and cross out, in red ink, sections of my manuscript.

With her usual comical, yet cutting tone she would say to me, “Renee stopping putting your pain onto your reader. Nobody wants your pain.” At the time, it didn’t make sense to me. In fact, although she doesn’t know it, she was really getting on my nerves. There were times when I wanted to erase her from the equation and do it “my way.” But she was my friend and the expert, so I sucked it up. I would rewrite and rewrite the section of *There Is More Inside* that disclosed my getting fired and my fiancé walking out of my life. I deleted names and events. The goal was to insure that *There Is More Inside* did not become my personal counselor’s couch.

As I have grown, I understand the impact of Sheri’s persistence. She helped to erase all traces of doubt that I was capable of writing a book that would tell a story and produce personal liberation for the reader. She helped to squash hesitations and false beliefs that emanated from former negative assessments of my writing ability. I realized that I had an experience that was shadowing me, but it wasn’t me! Like a shadow that reflects off a wall, those negative comments were harmless. Now that’s self-empowerment! If there is something shadowing you and hindering you from living your personal power try the following three steps.

1. **Identify a genuine friend to help you see truth.** Sheri’s greatest gift to me is her open and direct honesty. She would say things to me that I didn’t like, but needed to hear. Because I respect her and she has proven to me that she loves and respects me, I trust her. Having a relationship with someone who can hold the mirror for you is extremely important. They can see things that may hit you on your blind side or hold you back. Be sure, though, that the person you choose isn’t in competition with you.
2. **Perform daily self-assessments.** A verbal nick or cut here and there throughout your day can really tamper with your self-esteem and quickly agitate you. Take time to evaluate your day and what bothered you. Acknowledge it. Learn the lesson. Forgive the person. Move on.
3. **Do what you think you can’t do.** Before I met Les Brown I had four chapters of my book completed. Before Sheri pulled out her red ink pen, I had a manuscript. People believe in people who believe in themselves. Begin by

facing and getting rid of some of the obvious shadows. No one wants to clean, disinfect and take out someone else's garbage. When you begin the process, you send the message to others that, "I'm ready."

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