

## *Part 1*



# DEVELOPING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Just what makes a woman self-sufficient? Is it money, education, a sense that she knows where she's going in life? Is it her ability to stand on her own in any situation and appear calm no matter what? Or is it her power to start with absolutely nothing and build a magnificent life? Perhaps she makes decisions based on what she believes is right rather than what is popular. Or maybe she has the ability to bounce back from every challenge that comes her way.

Regardless of your definition, I think you'll agree that a self-sufficient woman motivates others by the example she sets. She projects strength and energy. She brings calm to chaos, perspective to problems, reassurance to crises—and when things are going well, she *really* shines.

Those of us who live in relatively stable environments with the basic necessities of life may take self-sufficiency for granted. But what about women in developing nations who struggle to feed their children, women who walk several hours every day just to access water, women who cannot read or write because they never had the opportunity to attend school? How do such women step onto the path to self-sufficiency?

## Recognizing a Need

Global humanitarian organization CARE recognizes that women around the world suffer disproportionately from poverty and lack of opportunity. In economically depressed nations, women continue to be held back, and only when they have the chance to reach for independence are they able to live secure, thriving lives. For more than sixty years, CARE has enabled women in developing countries to improve their lives through programs that address the particular needs of their own regions of the world.

Because gains for women result in gains for entire families, CARE programs focus on at-risk women and girls. One program in India, for example, teaches women the technical skills to become leather artisans and the business skills to sell the items they produce. In Bolivia, CARE facilitates alliances between produce growers and international export companies to ensure that women are paid a fair price for their products. In Kenya, CARE provides family planning information and strengthens the local health system to improve women's health and quality of life.

As such programs (and hundreds of others) gain a foothold, women have the opportunity to become self-sufficient by learning about and then claiming their rights to education, income, and health, often for the first time in their lives. This newfound independence then leads women to seek greater participation and voice in their communities, creating a ripple effect across society. By helping women create new opportunities, CARE challenges generations of negative beliefs that have limited not only individual women but their families and communities as well.

To be clear, however, CARE cannot *make* a woman self-reliant. She must do that for herself. CARE's role is to provide the education and tools that women need, help change the social structures that limit their choices, and encourage women to unite to claim their rights. By deciding to capitalize on these opportunities, women take the first step toward gaining the personal independence that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

## Creating Opportunities for Self-Reliance

From one continent to the next, one economy to the next, one community to the next, CARE responds appropriately to women's needs and traditions. From Afghanistan to Guatemala to Zimbabwe, by providing the basic components for self-sufficiency, CARE helps women transform their lives. And often in the process, these very women become leaders in their communities and go on to transform the lives of others.

In Afghanistan, for example, after generations of conflict, girls are finally gaining the opportunity for basic education through sixth grade, but anything beyond that is still largely out of reach. This is particularly true in rural areas where fewer schools and teachers, combined with more conservative attitudes, tend to keep girls at home. To bridge this gap, CARE created fourteen specialized schools for girls in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Besides educating the hundreds of girls enrolled in this program, CARE has trained forty-two new teachers. The beauty of this program is that it moves multiple generations of women toward self-sufficiency by ensuring that the students of today have an opportunity to learn, while women are trained to teach the students of tomorrow.

Thousands of miles away, in Madagascar, CARE's food-for-work programs provide both short-term hunger relief and long-term infrastructure enhancement, while helping women learn skills to increase their independence. Through the program, women are paid in food wages for both training and for working on community projects such as water and sanitation systems. These projects provide income and food for about 10,000 households, as well as improvements to environmental and health infrastructure, ultimately benefiting not only those directly involved but about 200,000 others in the region. By providing training and jobs through this effort, CARE enables women to feed their children today and learn skills that they can take into tomorrow—all while making a long-lasting impact on the infrastructure of their country.

The women of Nepal have long lived on the fringes of society. In response to the generations-old pattern of discrimination, CARE initiated a five-year project in 2007 called Women and Youth as Pillars of Sustainable Peace. This forward-thinking program engages poor, socially excluded women and youth to work toward a democratic constitution and eventual peace in the region. One of the ultimate goals of this project is to influence government policy so that women's rights are protected. By involving the very women who will benefit from the program, CARE is helping them become self-sufficient while making a difference in the future of their country.

In rural Egypt, where only 2 percent of girls complete secondary school, the lack of classrooms and teachers prevents girls from getting an education. Gender bias creates even further problems, as the language and behavior of teachers send the message that boys are more intelligent and capable than girls. In response to this multifaceted challenge, CARE has partnered with other organizations to launch an initiative called the New School Program. As more and more girls become a part of this program and obtain an education, they are able to pass along their knowledge and serve as role models for the next generation of rural Egyptian girls.

In Uganda, women and girls have long been the targets of abduction, maiming, rape, physical assault, and forced early marriages. CARE's Women's Empowerment for Peace program supports those who have survived such violence and helps them develop the skills and ability to stand up for their rights. Among other goals, the program is helping twelve thousand women and girls seek redress for atrocities they have suffered. By enabling these women to acquire what is rightfully theirs, CARE is helping them increase their incomes and participate more fully in local decision-making policies.

In a rural area of Guatemala, where two-thirds of the population is illiterate, a unique CARE program combines microloans for

indigenous women with a three-year education program for their daughters. Working through a distance education program, these girls access educational videocassettes and watch televised classes to complete school and earn their diplomas. By helping mothers build small businesses through microloans, while educating their daughters—perhaps to own their *own* businesses someday—CARE is helping back-to-back generations of indigenous Guatemalan women find new strength and opportunity.

By looking at these examples, which represent just a handful of CARE's ongoing initiatives, you can begin to see some of the ways that CARE helps women move toward the future by customizing solutions to meet the particular needs of each region. By analyzing each situation and then providing an appropriate response, CARE is able to make the greatest impact on the greatest number of women—helping millions move toward self-sufficiency.

## CREATING SELF-SUFFICIENCY THROUGH TRAINING

As a teenager, Maria Landa gained her training and confidence in a CARE-sponsored welding program; she then used a loan from CARE to expand her small metal-fabrication business to provide jobs to fellow townspeople. From a business perspective, Maria's story would be fascinating enough: she created a new business model, identified a new market for metal construction and scaffolding, and, ultimately, created an entire new industry. But her story goes far beyond developing a financially stable business, as she used the skills and resources she originally obtained from CARE to later support the organization's relief efforts by building shelters for thousands of fellow Peruvians following a disastrous earthquake.

## Living an Unlikely Life

If you want to visit Maria, you must travel to Villa El Salvador, where the dusty, pot-holed roads all look the same, and the lines of low-lying roofs crowd the view in every direction. There on one particular block you'd notice a freshly painted, two-story building. Although a seemingly ordinary sign, "Santa Maria Enterprises," hangs above the storefront, this business is anything but ordinary. In fact, its very existence is an unlikely story.

Forty years ago, this entire area of Peru was a barren spot in the desert. Built from scratch on the outskirts of Lima, the settlement of Villa El Salvador was established as a refuge for poor migrants in 1971. Now this urban area is bursting at the seams, with a population that has swelled to over 400,000. And its inhabitants toil day after day in harsh poverty. Yet in spite of a tarnished landscape and rampant crime, this self-governed community is the envy of Peruvians struggling to better their lives. That's because Villa El Salvador provides the education, health care, and municipal services that most communities of the region do not.

It is here that Maria Landa has created a quality of life that many Peruvian women cannot even dream of. At age thirty-one, Maria defies the status quo, as she is an unmarried business owner and property owner. Like her hometown, Maria has become self-sufficient. As the head of Santa Maria Enterprises, she has come to represent just what is possible for working women across Peru.

With her entrepreneurial success and stellar reputation as one of the country's best welders, Maria makes it look easy, as if everything just fell into place. Not so. Her journey to being named Miss Micro-Entrepreneur of Lima defies the odds.

## Following the Dreams of Her Childhood

Unlike most girls growing up in her region, Maria was never limited by gender expectations. Her parents, entrepreneurs themselves, never steered her toward the traditional domestic role of

most Peruvian women. And during her days at an all-girl Catholic primary school, the nuns demonstrated to Maria and her schoolmates that there was no limit to what girls could learn and achieve by teaching them skills that were usually reserved for boys, such as car repair. Instead of being influenced to follow a restrictive female path, Maria was empowered to do anything and be anything. She was groomed to follow her dreams.

But following dreams was easier said than done, when living in a shantytown for the working poor. If it had not been for her parents, who prioritized schooling at all costs, Maria would have been just another struggling girl with limited opportunity and means. But within their modest home, Maria, her sisters, and her brother were encouraged to reach for something more.

In 1994, when Maria was just seventeen and a recent high school graduate, her father came home with a flyer that would change her life. CARE was offering a technical training program for teens in the area. He discussed the idea with Maria and her nineteen-year-old sister Elvira, and they both decided to give it a shot. But when they arrived to register for the metal carpentry class, it became clear that none of the male students expected women to be a part of that class. In fact, the idea of women taking up any trade, much less a dangerous one such as welding, was unheard of in their country. But having been raised by parents who believed that their girls could do anything, the sisters weren't discouraged and continued to attend class. It took only a few days for them to prove that they had a real feel for the work, and although the rest of the class still regarded them skeptically, the commotion about their presence began to subside. Six months later, they became the first female graduates ever, and each landed apprentice work with a local welding business.

The pair spent a lot of time practicing their new trade by day—making doors, chairs, window frames, model airplanes, and toy cars—while continuing their studies by night. After completing her studies and apprenticeship, Maria became a contractor for the

Peruvian Air Force, welding jet engines. There she fell into the daily routine of commuting to and from the airport for several years. Eventually growing tired of working for someone else, Maria began to focus on her real dream. She yearned to own and operate her own business, and she began to discuss this idea with her family, who, as always, offered their support.

### Starting Out Small

Based on her training and experience, Maria was able to get a bank loan of \$960 to start her business. With this money, she purchased some used welding equipment and began working in a room about the size of a storage shed next to her parents' home. She had done some research and determined that there was a guaranteed need for metal door frames, so that was her first product.

Although Maria loved working for herself, she found that building door frames was a limited business, and she was barely getting by. She knew she couldn't continue like this long term, and she wanted more. She needed a big idea and began researching ways to expand her metal business from a small product line in a small part of Villa El Salvador to the larger market in Lima.

Her research uncovered a two-step opportunity with the potential to transform her business. First, she would create scaffolding for construction sites; she knew the type of equipment needed for this and felt confident she could rework her shop to turn this product into an ongoing revenue stream. Then, once her scaffolding business began to turn a profit, she would pursue her *real* dream: to create tents, tables, and chairs, which she would rent out for events.

Needing money to purchase additional equipment, Maria went back to the bank for a larger loan. But although the bank had been willing to give her a token loan of less than \$1,000, she needed much more this time. Her new application was rejected on the grounds that she was too young and had no collateral. She tried to explain to the lender her plans for generating revenue and repaying the loan.



But the bank was very clear: they weren't about to lend real money to a "girl" who thought she could make it in a man's industry, much less one with a crazy idea about tents, tables, and chairs.

Luckily, Maria discovered that CARE could once again help her out. She learned that CARE had created a lending program called *Edyficar* (from the Spanish verb *edificar*, to build on or build up) to provide loans to small businesses like hers. Designed to help those with little or no capital, *Edyficar* provides not only money but also strategic planning and ongoing business advice. Because the program is intended to help growing businesses create jobs, Maria was exactly the sort of entrepreneur *Edyficar* was designed to support. She approached the organization for a loan and almost overnight found herself in the scaffolding business.

### Moving Ahead Step-by-Step

Eager to establish herself as a viable vendor, Maria began to visit construction sites, offering to supply sturdy steel structures to replace the rickety wood-framed scaffolding then in use. Not surprisingly, the men in charge brushed her off, presuming that a petite, personable "girl" couldn't possibly know a thing about construction. To convince them she knew what she was doing, Maria went to work transforming metal into samples of the scaffolding she could provide. And once again she approached the job sites. This time she was armed with product, and the men who had laughed at her on the first round began to take her seriously. As they checked out the steel frames, they realized that Maria's work was superior to anything being used. Orders soon began to trickle in. And as word traveled from one job site to the next, a constant flow of business began to keep her busy around the clock. Maria had proved that she could play with the big boys—that a woman could compete in her country's male domain of metal fabrication.

On the heels of her triumph, Maria began focusing again on her bigger business idea: tents to accommodate the explosion of

weddings and special events. Maria was confident that expanding her business into this area, which had gone unrecognized by the competition, could be a real gold mine. Having repaid her original CARE loan in only a few months, she approached them for a much larger loan of \$10,000 to put her plans into action. The loan came through, and Maria was again on her way.

With her sister Elvira now working alongside her, stacks of tent poles began forming inside the small shop. The goal was to create an inventory of materials from which they could quickly assemble tents in a variety of sizes. Then they'd offer those tents, along with chairs and decorations, as a viable solution for outdoor events. Looking well beyond Villa El Salvador, Maria pursued customers in the capital city of Lima, where families and businesses frequently hosted formal events. Knowing that residents had a limited choice of locations to hold their events, Maria proposed that any site could be transformed into an entertainment venue with one of her hand-crafted tents.

Slowly but surely, she gained a client base. Working tirelessly and figuring out a way to get past obstacle after obstacle, Maria's small-scale operation began to gain a reputation as the "go to" source for party planners across the region. Santa Maria Enterprises began to earn recognition as the first woman-owned business of its kind in all of Peru. Throwing all her effort toward her vision, Maria's business grew and grew. And after only one year, she was singled out for her first reward as an entrepreneur. But that was just the start. Seeing a clear path to expanding her business of tents and chairs, Maria took the risk and added full-service event planning to her repertoire. The risk paid off, as revenues soared and Maria's reputation expanded even further. Although the steadily increasing revenue reassured Maria that she was on the right path with her business, it was her ability to hire others, particularly other women, that opened her eyes to the fact that she was not only providing support for her own family but for her entire community as well. She had created an industry where none had previously existed.

## Seeing Beyond Herself

Meanwhile, Maria continued to look to the future. And she realized that to be a successful businesswoman—one who would not only become wealthy but also make a lasting difference in her community—she had to raise her sights. She understood that to become a citizen of the world, she must look beyond Villa El Salvador, beyond Lima, and even beyond Peru. She began to teach herself English and then signed up for evening classes at the local college to pursue her bachelor's degree.

In spite of all she had achieved, Maria was determined to keep moving forward. As she realized one dream, she moved instinctively to the next, no matter how difficult it seemed, no matter the reaction from the outside world, no matter what she encountered. Maria knew she had been planted in Villa El Salvador to make a difference, and she would let nothing stand in her way.

Then on an otherwise average day in August 2007, Maria came face-to-face with her opportunity to make that difference. Santa Maria Enterprises was booming, and she was wrapped up in the day-to-day issues of running the business when an 8.0-magnitude earthquake shook Pisco and the coastal communities south of Lima. Up and down the country's central coast, lives were ravaged. Hundreds of victims died in the rubble, and more than forty thousand families were left out in the open when their homes crumbled to the ground. Survivors were forced to find whatever shelter they could in open fields or among the debris of city streets.

Overnight, Maria's services were in fierce demand. Tens of thousands of homeless families needed an immediate place to live, and although there was a small supply of available tents, these didn't begin to fulfill the overwhelming need. Along with other humanitarian organizations, CARE responded to the emergency. Aware of Maria as a local resource, CARE contacted her and commissioned a thousand six-person tents and another one hundred classroom-sized tents to replace homes and schools that had been destroyed.

Working around the clock, Maria and her fifteen employees understood the importance of this project. They were not just building tents under which guests would drink Pisco Sours and nibble on ceviche. No, these tents would be the difference between life and death for their fellow Peruvians. The injured and elderly would be treated in these tents, and children and families would begin to recover from earthquake trauma. Maria and every one of her employees understood their mission, and sparks could be seen flying day and night, as workers constructed the steel frames and stitched together the durable tarps that would house tens of thousands of their countrymen.

Thankful for the role that CARE had played in her life, Maria was eager to give back. She had heard her parents tell stories of the 1970 earthquake in Peru that killed 50,000 and left another 600,000 without shelter and basic needs. She knew that CARE had been a force in helping her country recover from that staggering event, and she was eager to do all she could to work with them to overcome this catastrophe.

As she delivered the tents personally, Maria found that she was able to bring solace to survivors. Remaining positive in the face of overwhelming destruction, she encouraged those she met not to give up hope. In particular, she reached out to women who had lost children, husbands, loved ones—women who were overwhelmed with sorrow. Although she was younger than many of these women, Maria helped them find inner strength and overcome the crushing hardship they faced. In communities she visited, Maria stressed how everyone must work together to overcome the almost impossible situation now before them. But they *would* overcome it, and they *would* have a future.

## Looking to the Future

As a result of the business she built and the support she was able to provide to fellow Peruvians, Maria now stands as a symbol of success for women all across Peru. And *Edyficar*, now an

independent microfinance institution that grew out of CARE's credit projects, has 115,000 Peruvian clients and a loan portfolio of \$67 million, in U.S. dollars. These loans allow businesses like Maria's to develop new opportunities and create jobs to help Peruvians earn a decent living.

Today, Maria willingly accepts her responsibility as a role model for women seeking to better themselves through an education and a career. It's no coincidence that the walls of her small shop chronicle her journey with photos, success stories, and awards; she is a living example of what can be accomplished when a woman believes in herself.

Looking back on her childhood, Maria realizes how fortunate she was to have parents and teachers who helped her reach beyond the limiting restrictions society had set for her. She knows firsthand that many Peruvian girls don't have the same support systems that she and her sister did; often they are sent to work in the fields rather than to school and then are married off as teens to lighten the family's financial burden. As more than half of her country lives in extreme poverty, she knows that she can have an impact on all of this by creating jobs.

### **Lighting the Way for the Next Generation**

Today, Maria owns her own home in Villa El Salvador, a sign of independence once unheard of in the male-dominated society of Peru. Continuing to live within one block of her parents, Maria often gathers with her family to share meals. She also owns her own storefront in the commercial district of town, where her staff continues to grow. Still a very young woman, she provides an admirable livelihood for herself, as well as her entire family, who are integral to the success of her business. And she beams with pride when she discusses her younger sister, also college educated, who owns her own home and works as an architect.

Inquisitive by nature, Maria's knack for uncovering possibilities continues to fuel her business. Her keen sense of the local market

has enabled her to make great business decisions and then reap the rewards. Not afraid to take a risk, Maria has purchased land in a nearby industrial park where she plans to embark on her next venture—an expanded facility where she can reach for even bigger dreams.

But beyond her own business success, her personal happiness, and the security of her family, Maria feels a responsibility to the other women of Peru. Determined to help women understand the value of self-sufficiency, she travels to schools and business conferences, hoping her story will resonate with the young women and girls she meets. Over the years, she has cleared a path for many women in her country, and Maria now works to shine a light on that path so girls will see there is no limit to what they can achieve.

## BLAZING A PATH THROUGH SPORTS

Long-time CARE supporter and president of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), Donna Orender knows Maria and her story well. From their first introduction, Donna noticed not only Maria's initiative and self-reliance but also her ability to take calculated risks and achieve great results. Donna met Maria on her first trip to New York City and was impressed by the young woman's capability and confidence in a foreign country. Maria didn't need anyone to take her by the hand and escort her around the big city; she just asked a few questions and was on her way. Donna, who had blazed her own trail in a traditionally male field, instantly related to Maria.

Like many successful women, Donna was a straight-A student; she was expected to follow a traditional path—attend college, get married, have kids. From the beginning, she wanted to do something that would have an impact on people's lives, so she

turned her attention to social work and began pursuing a degree in psychology with a minor in communications.

But underlying it all, sports remained the most important thing in Donna's life. Even her college selection was driven by sports. Rather than enroll in one of the big-name schools into which she was accepted, Donna decided to attend Queens College in New York because it had one of the best basketball programs in the country. When she was not in class or studying, Donna could always be found in the gym. Whether for formal practices, playing pick-up ball with fellow students, or just practicing free throws hour after hour, there was no place that this future All-American would rather be than right there on the court.

Of course, back in the 1970s there was no career path for a woman obsessed with basketball, so after earning her bachelor's degree, Donna decided to head to Adelphi University to pursue her graduate degree in social work. Then one day in 1979, she received a call that was to change her life. A Women's Basketball League (WBL) was being formed. They were putting together a local team called the New York Stars. Did Donna want to join?

She didn't have to think twice about her answer to that question. This was her opportunity to pursue her passion and play at the highest level ever available to women. And she was willing to do whatever it took to be a part of that. Her life for the next few years was extremely hectic. She went to class, worked an internship, and spent every additional minute on the court; between class and practice, Donna could be found in her little orange Corolla doing homework while eating dinner. She squeezed every second out of every day. But even then, there just wasn't enough time, so she made the gutsy decision to postpone her graduate degree to focus on her first love—basketball.

Donna's decision certainly wasn't based on the hope of having the cushy life of a pro athlete. In addition to playing basketball, most of the New York Stars also had "day jobs." The team would travel across the country from New York to California, play a game,

and then take the red-eye back to avoid hotel costs and enable the women to get to work the next day. Although they occasionally played in Madison Square Garden, they often found themselves far from the spotlight, in run-down high school or college gyms. But despite the lack of glitz, they were happy because they were doing what they loved. They were playing ball.

### Blazing a Trail for Women Athletes

Back in those days, female athletes certainly didn't play for the money, and the women of the WBL were no exception. Because their salaries were so low, sports agents had no interest in representing them, so Donna was on her own to negotiate her contract. And she did a pretty good job, ending up as the second-highest-paid player on the team, trailing only the high-scoring center. In her first year, she made a whopping \$5,000, and she doubled that the second year. But Donna played for so much more than a paycheck. As the Stars' point guard, she was thrilled every time she took the court. Although the crowds weren't large, she got a rush out of playing every game and feeling that her presence on the court made a difference to the young women and girls in the stands.

In her role as point guard, Donna led her team with passion for three seasons and was singled out as one of the WBL's first All-Stars. Although she truly loved playing ball, she just couldn't continue working a full-time job while practicing, playing, and traveling. Self-sufficiency was important to Donna, and as much as she tried to make it work, her role as point guard just didn't pay a living wage. So she spent some time mulling it over and figured out a way to step off the court without leaving the sport behind. She moved in a logical direction for a smart, articulate athlete by developing a career in TV sports.

Starting with WBL interviews and commentary on general sports shows, she quickly earned a cable show of her own, then landed a dream opportunity with an entry-level job at ABC



Sports and continued at SportsChannel. Through her experience at the network, cable, and independent production levels, Donna learned the entire TV sports industry and, ultimately, owned her own production company, Primo Donna Productions. She had discovered a way to remain involved with the sport she loved while maintaining the self-sufficiency that was such an important part of her life.

### Taking the Next Step

As a result of her solid track record in sports television, an even bigger opportunity crossed her path. She was offered a role with PGA Tour Productions. Rising to the position of senior vice president of strategic development, Donna jetted across the country and around the world, overseeing many aspects of the business, including news media, Internet, advertising, and brand management.

Then in 1996, the women's teams in the Atlanta Olympics attracted so much attention with their great play that the NBA (National Basketball Association) board of governors approved the concept of a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). NBA Commissioner David Stern's vision, time, energy, and resources helped launch the league in June 1997. And in February 2005, Donna, with more than twenty years of sports business experience, was again presented with an offer she couldn't refuse. Commissioner Stern asked her to step in as the president of the WNBA. Today, Donna finds herself presiding over a league of thirteen teams that bring together a diverse fan base, role-model athletes, and corporate partners energized by the WNBA's can-do attitude.

The influence of the league can be seen in the explosive growth of organized women's basketball over the past twelve seasons. An estimated 100 million women play basketball worldwide, and the league reflects this trend. At the end of the 2008 season, their roster featured twenty-three international players from sixteen countries.

And beyond the professional level, the WNBA, now in its second decade, has made a solid impact on younger women. Female youth basketball participation has increased 277 percent, female high school basketball participation 18 percent, and female NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) basketball participation 43 percent in recent years, much of this driven by the role models of the WNBA.

Donna gives the true credit for the growth of the sport and the league's ongoing success to the many, many women involved. And she points out the fact that not only do they help to build women's basketball, but basketball helped to build them. Countless players, starting in grade school, used basketball to escape from a tough life, often in a tough neighborhood. These girls used the sport to get an education and then parlayed that education into a great career and a self-sufficient life.

### Developing the Right Foundation and Relationships

Over the years, Donna learned that success is based on being prepared and willing to act. That preparedness may come from an education or an abundance of courage. But she believes that even the best preparation can't prevent the unexpected. Even if you're well educated and have a lot of experience, you're likely to encounter unfamiliar and challenging situations from time to time. In these situations, Donna stresses that it's important to step outside your education and experience. Rather than think, "This is how it works. I can't do it any other way," always be open to new alternatives. Although a solid foundation of education and experience can be a real advantage, you have to marry it with flexibility and a view toward the future.

Maria Landa from Peru built a foundation on the education she received from CARE's technical-training program and steadily gained experience by applying her welding skills to larger and larger projects. But it was her versatility, flexibility, and willingness

to adapt to new opportunities that ultimately brought her such success.

Donna has also learned that a great way to expand your capabilities is by developing strong relationships with complementary individuals and organizations. The strongest relationships arise when you share mutual goals; you're definitely better off when you can bring more than one asset to the table. For example, the WNBA capitalizes on its relationships with organizations such as the Women's Basketball Coaches Association and the V Foundation for Cancer Research to bring awareness to breast health issues. There is no question that the WNBA has a powerful voice on its own, but partnering with organizations such as these enhances its voice exponentially.

For example, back in 2007, the WNBA already had a solid lineup of innovative programs such as *WNBA Cares* and *WNBA Be Smart—Be Fit—Be Yourself, Read to Achieve*, and *Jr. WNBA*. But Sheila Johnson, who is America's first black female billionaire and cofounder of Black Entertainment Television, had a big idea for something that fit the WNBA's charitable mold when she launched the Sheila Johnson *I Am Powerful* Challenge (The Challenge), a fundraising program in which she matched dollars raised in support of CARE's work, including those from the WNBA.

With millions of fans supporting teams across key cities, the WNBA was a perfect partner to help promote The Challenge. Many WNBA fans are attracted to more than just basketball; they see themselves as part of a league that itself could be considered a social movement and a showcase of empowered women. And CARE attracts similar supporters.

For its part, CARE gives the WNBA decades of experience and expertise to maximize the power of the league's good intentions. The organization brings national and local media exposure to link the WNBA with women's empowerment issues all over the world. And perhaps most important, CARE provides a shining opportunity for empowerment-minded WNBA fans to get involved

and make a difference, both in their communities and around the globe.

As both a CARE Ambassador and team president of the WNBA's Washington Mystics, Sheila Johnson understood the potential of a partnership between the two organizations. The Challenge perfectly illustrates the potential of combining strengths for the common good. And collectively, the effort epitomizes everything CARE, the WNBA, and self-sufficient women like Donna, Sheila, and Maria stand for.

The Challenge calls women in the United States to action and encourages them to support CARE's mission to help empower women in the fight against poverty. It builds awareness about the issues of poverty and educates women about the power we all have to change the world. It's a chance for women in the United States to connect with women in developing countries to help them become healthy, productive, and successful.

### Inspiring Future Lionesses

Achieving these lofty goals isn't easy, but the program's approach displays a keen sense of innovation. The first step is to have high-profile WNBA players, especially those whose personal struggles reflect the plight of the very women with whom CARE works, lend their passion and support. This means spokeswomen like Dawn Staley, the three-time Olympic gold-medal winner who launched the Dawn Staley Foundation to provide opportunities to at-risk youth, or Cappie Pondexter, the 2007 WNBA Finals MVP who helps kids reach their potential with basketball clinics and self-esteem workshops.

These "lionesses," as Sheila Johnson would call them, have helped raise awareness of CARE's work through public service announcements and appearances at the WNBA's *I Am Powerful* Nights, where CARE showcases its worldwide efforts. These spokeswomen educate fans about CARE's work during on-court

presentations and encourage them to support the organization. Fans receive *I Am Powerful* T-shirts to remind them that social progress happens when communities work together toward shared goals.

Just as the women of the WNBA are breaking down barriers for female athletes around the world, the Sheila Johnson *I Am Powerful* Challenge is breaking down barriers among women around the globe. By learning to see ourselves in women born into different circumstances, we recognize our power, our potential, our fragility, and our strength. This understanding helps women guide the next generation—lionesses helping to raise future lionesses.

### Challenging Conventional Wisdom

While overseeing the WNBA community, Donna has followed a simple but profound idea: *challenge conventional wisdom*.

Donna knows that women have long been defined by certain parameters. But she also recognizes that paths taken by women like Maria and herself have extended far beyond the conventional definition of “a woman’s place.” Although neither she nor Maria has rejected traditional female roles of strengthening the family, they’ve managed those roles in unconventional ways. They are creating their own definitions of “womanhood.”

Donna especially relates to the “no” that Maria received following her applications for a bank loan. That response is an everyday occurrence in the world of someone who challenges conventional wisdom. From her childhood, through TV work for men’s sports, to her current position at the helm of the WNBA, Donna has pushed past the word *no* all her life. And like Maria, she has continually turned what could have been negative situations into unique opportunities. With few road maps for building a career as a successful female sports executive, Donna was free to think creatively and redefine her role in the industry according to how *she* thought it should look. And she’s been a resounding success.

Under Donna, today's WNBA has grown into a league with fans in more than two hundred countries and territories. While broadcasting across the world in thirty-two languages, the organization has built major, long-standing partnerships with companies like Adidas, AOL, Discover Card, Gatorade, Nike, and T-Mobile. And perhaps most important, today's WNBA is a league of empowered women seeking to empower others. Although Donna believes that all of the WNBA players embody strength and empowerment, she often showcases two women in particular: Dawn Staley and Cappie Pondexter.

### Using Trials to Build Self-Sufficiency

Throughout her eight-year WNBA career, Dawn Staley made the game look easy. The savvy point guard tallied more than 2,200 points and 1,300 assists and made five trips to the WNBA All-Star Game. In 2006, Dawn was named to the league's All-Decade Team, an honor achieved by the ten most influential players in the league's first ten years of play.

But Dawn's road to WNBA success was not a smooth one. Growing up in a housing project in North Philly, Dawn turned what others might consider a difficulty into an opportunity. She developed her game on the neighborhood courts, going head-to-head against the boys, and playing against them developed a real toughness in her. So by the time she realized that basketball could be her ticket to college, she had crafted a strong, sharp game that could get her there. After completing her basketball career at Dobbins Tech High School with just a single loss, Dawn led her University of Virginia squads to an unprecedented three consecutive Final Four appearances en route to multiple All-America and Player-of-the-Year honors.

Her Philly-forged drive continued as a pro, where she redefined the point guard position in European leagues, the American Basketball League, and finally the WNBA. Then, after spending eight years as head coach at Temple University, she left her hometown

to oversee the program at the University of South Carolina, where she passes on lessons from her difficult, no-excuses road.

But even in her success, Dawn has never forgotten her past. Not long after the Atlanta Games in 1996, where she realized her lifelong dream of winning Olympic gold, the scrappy floor leader established the Dawn Staley Foundation (DSF). With the mission of building bright futures for at-risk youth, Dawn's foundation provides programs like the DSF Leadership Academy and the After School Program, which mentor middle school girls and lead them toward academic success. In recognition of her efforts to reach beyond basketball, the WNBA established the Dawn Staley Community Leadership Award, which is presented to players who follow her inspiring example.

In 2000, as a culmination to her stellar playing career, Dawn was given the honor of carrying the U.S. flag into the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Sydney. Quite a feat for the hardscrabble girl from Philly who honed her game by playing against the boys and is now one of the most honored "girls" in the history of the game.

### **Working for a Dream**

In high school, Cappie Pondexter was so passionate about playing professional basketball that she had the WNBA logo tattooed onto her right bicep. But like her friend Dawn Staley, her climb to get to the pros was not an easy one.

Raised in a single-parent home on the rough streets of Chicago, Cappie was encouraged by her mother to pursue her childhood dream of playing professional basketball, as long as she continued to remain an excellent student. Held in check by her mother's strong discipline and her faith in God, Cappie was able to avoid many of the common pitfalls of the streets. But even though they could be a nemesis, the streets molded *her* game as well, and the discipline and drive her mother instilled turned what could have been an impossible situation into an opportunity for success.

Achieving self-sufficiency demands the willingness to make the best of any situation, and Cappie displayed these traits as a ten-year-old following her eighteen-year-old brother to the gym.

A decade later, after scoring more than 2,000 points in her four years at Rutgers University, Cappie took the WNBA by storm, averaging more than 19 points per game in her first three seasons. In 2007, she earned WNBA Finals MVP honors and the following year paired that with an Olympic gold medal in the 2008 Beijing Games.

Like Dawn, Cappie is generous with her time, helping less fortunate kids achieve their goals through basketball clinics and self-esteem workshops across the country. She remembers what it was like to be a kid on the streets and knows that she could have taken a wrong turn at any point in the road, so she's there to steer the next generation of kids in the right direction, regardless of whether they go on to play sports or not.

### Setting the Self-Sufficiency Example for Others

Donna relishes the honors and awards won by Dawn and Cappie and the hundreds of other women who have worn WNBA jerseys; she is also grateful and humbled by the honors bestowed on her. Over the years she has earned a slew of accolades, including recognition in *BusinessWeek's* "2007 Power 100 Sports" issue, Fox Sports' 10 Most Powerful Women in Sports, and Sporting News' "Power 100" list.

But beyond the awards and what could be a heady role overseeing all WNBA business and league operations, Donna stands out as a woman who understands what women's sports can become, the impact they can have. As a result of her leadership, the WNBA has institutionalized its responsibility as role models through programs like those that have supported CARE. Under Donna's leadership, women like Dawn and Cappie have built the league's empowering environment—an environment based on the stories, struggles, and strong moral leadership of the women who play in it.



The WNBA puts strong women in visible positions where young girls will see them and aspire to be like them. With the credibility the league has gained, it serves as a strong delivery system for the message of working hard to achieve success. And CARE serves a similar role by sending a message of opportunity to women in developing countries.



## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Tana Greene, owner and CEO of StrataForce, was once a high school dropout; she went back to school and ultimately built a multimillion-dollar business. She explains why she supports CARE:

Any organization that strengthens communities for the betterment of all people has my vote, but, I'm particularly impressed with CARE's focus on girls. Teaching girls that they deserve equal dignity and rights—that's what will change the world! As a survivor of domestic violence, I know what it's like to be denigrated to the lowest level of self-esteem. And, without knowing that others cared about me, I could not have thrown off the mantle of abuse and moved on to a new life. By empowering girls and women—by showing them that they are both valuable as individuals and essential to society—CARE is creating solutions to eradicate poverty in even the poorest areas of the world.

Tana Greene achieved self-sufficiency through an unlikely turn of events. As a ninth-grade honor student, chaplain of her school, and president of the principal's committee, the teenager began dating Mr. Popular of the senior class. Then the summer before

her sophomore year, Tana discovered she was pregnant. The next logical step in those days was to get married, and so she did. She was fifteen years old.

Only a few weeks into the marriage, Tana realized that she'd made a terrible mistake. Rather than marry the man of her dreams, she'd wound up in a physically abusive relationship. Feeling trapped, she tried to cover up the problem and hang on for the sake of her newborn son but soon realized that she was only compounding her mistake. After struggling with the situation for almost two years, Tana made the decision to reset her life. At only seventeen, she took her one-year-old son and stepped out onto the path to self-sufficiency.

### Creating Success on Her Own Terms

From as far back as she could remember, Tana had a sense that she could accomplish anything. She watched others who had made mistakes wallow in them for the rest of their lives. But that was not her mode. Although she struggled to get by on \$10 a week in child support, she refused to see it as a problem; instead, she viewed it as a puzzle she had to figure out. And she started by creating a set of goals for her life.

To create the life she envisioned, Tana knew she needed a solid education, so she decided to move back home with her parents while returning to high school and then going on to college. Maintaining the mind-set that she could overcome any challenge, Tana worked hard with one eye on today and the other on her future success.

Tana knew that anything was possible, but without a road map, she knew she couldn't get anywhere. So she drew her own map, complete with mile markers. She planned to own her own home by the time she was twenty-five and her own business by the time she was thirty. She brought this vision to life by speaking it out loud, day after day. By continually putting her dreams out to the

universe, they became real to her—as though they were already occurring. She even hung a board in her bedroom on which she posted visuals that represented success; here she tacked up pictures of a briefcase, a car, a house, and a young son growing into a magnificent man.

### Leaving Doubters Behind

In spite of Tana's big dreams, her mother encouraged her to be practical. She told her to consider becoming a nurse or a secretary. These were two reasonable careers for a single mother in those days, but Tana refused to limit her dreams. After graduating, she landed her first real job, in admissions for a private business school, and worked tirelessly to achieve the milestones she had set. She bought her first home at twenty-three and opened her own business—a temp agency for manufacturing companies—at twenty-nine, a full year ahead of even *her* aggressive schedule. Through it all, a voice inside Tana told her that she *had* to succeed and that the way to do that was by relying on herself.

Over the years, one of the keys to Tana's success has been her ability to follow her gut instincts. With every decision she made, from leaving an abusive relationship, to returning to school, to starting her first company, Tana relied on these gut feelings. Like Maria Landa, Tana's dad taught her to believe that she could accomplish whatever she set out to do. And he taught her the value of intuition in making decisions and following through on them.

Even though Maria and her sister were the only females in their welding class (maybe *because* of that), the young Peruvian woman believed she could do anything she wanted to do, and she never hesitated. Tana followed a similar path. Although she wasn't always sure exactly what would happen with each of her intuitive decisions, she never questioned it; she never second-guessed what felt right.

And that was the question she asked herself when she remarried at twenty-six. She knew one thing for sure: after struggling

through a bad relationship, she truly appreciated the good one she shared with her new husband, Mike. Besides their great marriage, Mike also shared Tana's vision for success, and the two of them decided to launch a business together by buying a franchise in Norfolk, Virginia. They signed the contract on Tana's twenty-ninth birthday.

Four years after buying that franchise, they bought another in Charlotte and made the move to North Carolina. When the franchise agreement ended in 2002, Tana's self-reliant nature kicked in, and she decided to launch an independent company rather than continue as a franchise. As with most of her decisions, it was the right one, and the company expanded by leaps and bounds.

### Looking Ahead to the Next Thing

The company Tana envisioned and ultimately built, StrataForce, provides large numbers of contingent workers to manufacturing and distribution companies. Tana employs thousands of individuals who do the "heavy lifting" in the world of manufacturing. She supplies a base of people to draw from, as her customers' needs change quickly. Because it is difficult for these companies to make dramatic shifts in their employee base—say, to ramp up for holiday production—Tana's company steps in and provides workers to fill those jobs.

All along, Tana has believed that the ability to retain customers depends on doing the right thing and looking ahead to what they will need next. She constantly asks herself, How can I improve what I do? Then she challenges her team every week: "What is it *this week* that will make our service better?" Blame it on her self-sufficient nature, but Tana is always looking for a way to improve—a way to morph both herself and her business. She never stops evolving because that is what energizes her.

But self-sufficiency does not mean that Tana does everything herself. In fact, one of her strengths is knowing *when* to ask for

help and *whom* to ask. And throughout life, Tana has been wise enough to accept advice from those with more experience, such as her father and other mentors.

Today, with a business generating tens of millions of dollars a year, Tana still seeks to learn from others. By conferring with a consultant who challenged her to look inward to see both her strengths and weaknesses, Tana discovered that she was moving at such a fast pace that she often left others behind. Viewing this as a potential negative was a real eye-opener for her, and she's now learned how to interact so that her staff can run alongside her rather than always trying to catch up. The valuable lesson that Tana takes from this is that sometimes you have to slow down enough to communicate your strategy and engage others to move your dream forward.

### Relying on an Inner Compass

Rather than watch the latest fads or listen to the noise of the world, Tana relies heavily on her own inner compass, and it is this reliance that is responsible for her success. Back in 2002, when Tana's franchise agreement expired, she considered leaving the business to answer a calling to give back. But after weighing all sides, she recognized that she was actually giving back in her current position by coaching and developing her employees. With this realization she decided that she didn't have to leave her current position to find some *other* way to give back. She was right where she needed to be, doing exactly what she was called to do—helping her employees grow and understand their purpose in life. Seeing them reach their full potential is what drives her, and she came to understand that she could make more of an impact by continuing to build her business and develop self-sufficient employees than by stepping out of the world of business.

Although she is motivated by driving others toward success, Tana finds that she needs to step back from time to time and

recharge. At one point, she spent two weeks in solitude, writing in detail what was important to her in her business. From this inner brainstorming, she developed a brochure titled “Creating a World of Difference,” and that became what she calls the Mission-Vision-Values Statement for her company. This statement has become the ultimate manifesto by which she ensures that all her business decisions are in synch with her own personal vision.

Tana Greene, having grown from a fifteen-year-old who struggled with a real-world dilemma while keeping an eye on the future, continues to rely on her sense of independence to build the life she tacked up on that board in her teenage bedroom. And she did it one briefcase, one house, one step at a time. It would have been easy for her to fall back on the excuse that she was a single mother or a high school dropout; she could have drawn on a hundred other excuses for her lack of success, and who would have blamed her? But Tana has never been one to make excuses. She’s one to make things happen.

## GAINING SELF-SUFFICIENCY WHILE HELPING OTHERS

In the past few years, Zhenya Muzyka, founder of Zhenya’s Gypsy Tea, has made many trips to both Sri Lanka and India to meet with women who earn their livelihoods by plucking tea. As a result, she is inspired by CARE’s initiatives to help the women of this region become more self-sufficient. Although the work they do is a critical part of the local economy, these women have labored for years without an opportunity to participate in local decision making. But CARE is working to change that for the women Zhenya loves so dearly by providing education and helping them find their voices.

Although their businesses are thousands of miles apart and in drastically different industries, you will find striking similarities

between Maria Landa of Peru and Zhenya Muzyka of California. Each woman is passionate about a business she started early in life, and each is committed to helping other women; they both serve as beacons for the next generation of self-sufficient women.

The daughter of a Ukrainian Roma (Gypsy) family, Zhenya had always been curious about her heritage. As a child, she sat for hours with her beloved grandmother, asking questions and listening to the stories of her family's survival through the generations. Zhenya was dismayed when she discovered that her grandmother had been forced to hide her Roma heritage during World War II, as the Nazis persecuted the Gypsies along with the Jews. Saddened that her family had not been able to acknowledge their culture during those years, Zhenya embraced it, learning as much about her birthright as she could.

About this time, Zhenya learned that she was to carry on the Roma bloodline, as she was pregnant with her son. Although she was thrilled with the news, Zhenya became concerned about her lack of health insurance and overall financial situation as a single mother. And her concern was well founded, as she quickly discovered both the emotional and financial strain of having a child.

### Searching for Support

After her son, Sage, was born, Zhenya learned that he had a birth defect that affected his kidneys. Desperate, she took her son from one health facility to another, but none would help a young, single mother without insurance. As Sage's kidneys began to fail, Zhenya knew that she had to do something immediately or she would lose her beloved child. As sometimes happens when we need it the most, things fall into place, and Zhenya was able to find a state-run health program that provided exactly what she and Sage needed. The program, called California Children's Services, helped uninsured mothers who had babies with health problems. As Zhenya learned more about the program and was accepted into it, the cloud

of worry slowly began to lift from her life. She knew that she would be able to provide Sage with the medical care he needed and watch him grow into the fun-loving boy he was destined to become.

Although her baby was on the road to recovery, Zhená was still stuck with mountains of medical bills, so she looked to her heritage to point the way to self-sufficiency. Based on long conversations with her grandmother about natural elements, Zhená had studied herbal medicine and aromatherapy for years and had been blending tea since she was young, first as a hobby and then more seriously after she left college and went to Peru to study herbal medicine.

Looking for a way to support herself and her baby, Zhená began blending teas and herbs to see what she could do. What she could do was make amazing tea—tea that everyone raved about. Although she knew that she was on to something, the young mother was down to her last dollar; she begged her family to lend her enough to make her first business move, and they came through with the \$1,000 she needed to buy a cart. Setting up in a mall, with her infant son as her constant companion, the beautiful young woman with flowing hair and skirts to match began selling her teas.

### Starting a New Business

Although starting a new business while raising a young child with medical problems was not easy, Zhená tackled her daily challenges one by one. Just as Maria had a vision for what her tent business could become, so Zhená was confident of her success in the tea business. As she envisioned, her unique tea blends were a big hit, and she decided to again look back to her heritage—to *honor* her heritage—by calling her products Zhená's Gypsy Tea. She also paid a special tribute to her grandmother by including a Gypsy wisdom scroll in each package. These scrolls contained direct quotes from her grandmother, and these simple, yet powerful, words presented in such a unique way spurred her sales. Everyone loved reading the personal wisdom from the Ukrainian Gypsy grandmother.



Because Zhená's pride in her Roma culture was an important part of her identity, she highlighted it to build her unique brand. Both her product name and her distinctive, highly decorated tins set her product apart from the competition, and as her business became more and more successful, Zhená created ways to capitalize on the Gypsy brand. At outdoor tent events, she even brought in belly dancers and palm readers to attract attention to her tea. Once people met Zhená, they never forgot her or her tea.

Zhená's hard work and ingenuity soon began to pay off, as Whole Foods discovered her teas, providing the opportunity Zhená needed to launch her products into the mass market. So only six months after setting up her tea cart, Zhená hired her first employee to begin the brand's journey into the homes of consumers.

### Insisting on Fair Trade

In building her company, Zhená traveled to India and Sri Lanka, where she met the women who plucked her tea. She was concerned when she learned that some of them had babies with medical problems but no insurance to cover the cost of their care. Because of her experiences with Sage, she instantly related to what these mothers were going through. And she realized that she was in the perfect position to do something about it by buying only 100 percent fair trade and certified organic materials.

Because Zhená connected so closely with the women who plucked her tea, this wasn't just another business decision. She had learned that the women who worked at traditional gardens were only paid about U.S. \$1.40 per day—hardly enough to feed their children. These women spent their entire lives plucking tea by hand, yet received no health insurance, no opportunities for education, and no resources for family planning.

After that trip, Zhená focused her goals on the needs of the tea pluckers. Her mission for the company became to end poverty and provide health care for these women. Because her importer for tea

leaves was not especially interested in fair trade, Zhena met some resistance, but she didn't allow that to stop her. She decided to personally put in the time to complete the required paperwork, and within two months Zhena's Gypsy Tea became a certified fair trade business.

During her years blending teas, Zhena has discovered that most people, even those fairly well versed in business, do not understand how fair trade works. In order to become a fair trade employer, the owner of the tea garden has to adhere to strict standards established by a third-party certifying organization. For example, tea pluckers cannot work more than eight hours a day without receiving paid overtime. They cannot be exposed to cancer-causing pesticides or chemicals. And they are guaranteed access to health care, education, and clean water. All these services are covered by the higher price that Zhena pays for raw tea leaves. While non-fair-trade buyers pay about 50 cents a kilogram for tea leaves, Zhena pays almost \$4. Although such a difference in the cost of raw materials is significant, she is willing to pay the price to enable these women, whom she views as her partners in the business, to live good lives and provide for their children.

Zhena travels to the tea gardens three or four times every year to ensure that fair trade standards are being met. But even more than that, she wants to get to know the individual women who pluck the tea that she sells. As consumers across the world begin to understand and accept it, the concept of fair trade is starting to gain acceptance. Zhena believes that once people realize how much their purchases affect the lives of others, they will make the right decisions. Just minor changes to the workers' pay and hours can dramatically improve the living conditions of millions of underprivileged women across all industries and help them live self-sufficient lives. And a small tweak can provide education, health care, and other vital services that these women would otherwise lack.

Self-sufficiency has been a hallmark of Zhena's success. First, she developed the concept of selling tea just so that she and Sage

could survive. Then she created a unique business platform and grew from a single tea cart to a national business. And today she has come to fully understand self-sufficiency by giving back to other women who work so hard just to survive. By combining her magnificent heritage, her gift for blending teas, and her empathy for others, Zhenia has created a business that not only supports her own family and her employees but thousands of women in tea gardens from the far reaches of the world.



## IMPLEMENTING SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN YOUR OWN LIFE

As we've seen, regardless of nationality, wealth, or station, self-sufficiency leads to better lives for both individuals and communities. The women profiled in this chapter have led extraordinary lives and serve as illustrative examples to women around the world.

Think about your opportunities for independence. Although you've probably taken advantage of some and bypassed others, the critical thing to keep in mind is that self-sufficiency is not a gift but is something you must strive for and earn. Although each of the women in this section had the support of others to get her on her way, she pushed forward day after day to become self-sufficient. Although having a supportive family and employer may provide some shortcuts to success, only by moving daily in the direction of your dreams, as Maria, Donna, Tana, and Zhenia have done, can you become truly self-sufficient. Sherry Essig of Priority Ventures Group is fond of saying, "The way you live your day is the way you live your life." And I believe she is right. Are you living today and every day with a goal of becoming even more self-reliant? That's the only way to get from here to there.

Now think about which of these women you most relate to, and see how your life might overlay hers. Think about her turning points and the decisions she made that enabled her to move forward toward her goals. And consider how a similar step might propel you to greater success and independence.

Being a mother is often the hardest role that a woman is asked to play. One of the key challenges is having the patience to let your children do something that you could do in half the time. A four-year-old tying her shoes comes to mind! But unless we give our children the opportunity to learn these skills, they will continue to depend on us rather than reach up toward self-sufficiency.

When I was raising my children, I had two end goals: I wanted them to be happy adults and contributing members of society. I didn't care so much what career path they chose. If they were happy, contributing citizens, then I would judge myself successful.

One of the keys to my "happy-contributing" goal was to set them up in situations where they could "practice" being independent. For example, as frequent travelers, our family visited a lot of airports. Every time we planned a trip, we would designate one of our children as the "navigator." From the time we arrived at the airport, the navigator was in charge. She or he would remind us to get all of our luggage out of the car, would make a note of the garage section where we parked, would lead us to the appropriate terminal, and then, by checking for the flight on the monitor, would lead us to the gate. When we made connections, whether in a familiar or unfamiliar airport, the navigator was responsible for getting us to the connecting gate on time. And at the end of the line, she or he would stand at the belt to manage the retrieval of our luggage. I'll tell you now that we didn't schedule any flights with forty-five-minute connections in those days, so it took us a little longer to get to our destination—which we always did. And here is something that might surprise you: our kids became navigators

when they were only seven years old. Is it any wonder that by high school they could depart alone from the Raleigh-Durham airport, confidently connect in JFK, and make it to their destination in Stockholm?

Regardless of whether you're considering your children, your employees, or your colleagues, think about ways that you can support people to become more independent in their personal or professional lives.

---

### CONSIDERING THE VALUE OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

---

Throughout this section, you've seen the steps that four strong women have taken to become self-sufficient. Although they've gone through times of struggle, they have each, ultimately, built successful, independent lives. Now it's your turn to think about just what self-sufficiency means to you and how you can help others attain it. Spend some time reflecting on the following questions, and see if your honest answers can set you on the path to even greater independence.

#### *Reflecting on Your Self-Sufficiency*

- What is your definition of *self-sufficiency*, and how important is it to you? What steps can you take to become even more self-reliant?
- Would you say you're more or less self-reliant than most women you know? Why do you think that's so?
- Describe the time in your life when you felt the most independent? What made you feel that way? How did you capitalize on the situation? What was the end result? How can you re-create this situation on an ongoing basis?
- Who is the most self-sufficient person you have ever worked with? What is the most important thing you learned from that person? How did you implement that lesson in your life?

*Enabling Others to Become Self-Sufficient*

- What actions do you see women taking that limit their independence? How and why do you think they do this?
  - Think of someone you know who seems competent yet is overly dependent on others. What can you do to help her become more self-sufficient?
  - What can you do to help the next generation of women become more self-sufficient?
-