

SNEAK PEEK

UNCOMMON COURAGE

An Invitation

ANDREA T EDWARDS

The book combines a rare combination of captivating storytelling and truly insightful lessons about how you and I become an ever better version of our self! **David JP Philips**

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REVIEWS

These reviews are by people who've actually read this book. Some are authors and other celebrated people; a few are from the toughest audience, my family.

"The book combines a rare combination of captivating storytelling and truly insightful lessons about how you and I become an ever-better version of ourselves! My favorite takeaways were the simplifications of the complex and the honesty which so often is replaced with a facade these days."

—David JP Philips, founder JP University, the Reinventor of Communication

"Passionate. Inspirational. Powerful. This incredible compilation of stories and insights is down-to-earth and engaging and helps us play our part in the world. Written from the depths of her soul, Andrea's vulnerability encourages us to reflect on how we are living our lives. This is a great read that will inspire everyone to become a better human and make the world a better place."

—Shirley Taylor, CSP, author, *Connecting the Dots – To Inspire the Leader in You*

"In this book, Andrea Edwards honestly and openly shares with us her inner journey as she has traveled the world and faced the complexities of relationships, parenting, business and social media. This is not a quick-fix self-help book, but rather travel guide from which you can pick up useful-tips, plan some must-sees, and avoid being ripped off at the market. Finding meaning and purpose can be elusive, but as you read this book you will be inspired by one woman's life that is full of purpose. Uncommon, uncompromising, and sometimes, uncomfortable purpose."

—Andrew Bryant, CSP, author, *Self-Leadership: How to be a More Successful, Efficient and Effective Leader from the Inside Out*

"I challenge you to come away from this book without being changed in how you see yourself and the world around you. Accept Andrea's invitation to find your own truth to guide you forward."

—Dr. Tanvi Gautam, author, *The Spark Lies Within: And other secrets of women leading inspired and authentic lives*

“Reading *Uncommon Courage* is like going to a dinner party and being seated with an experienced CEO, a spiritual guru and a wise old grandma. While they say you have to learn your own lessons, with this book you might just graduate ‘the school of a beautiful life’ with more magical moments and fewer scars.”

—Tara Moody, marketing and culture speaker, strategist, content creator

“I started reading thinking, ‘Oh I’ve probably heard all this before,’ and yet once I began, I couldn’t put the book down. Time and time again, *Uncommon Courage* nails it. You can’t avoid thinking, laughing, even shouting out loud as you read this book.”

—Lindsay Adams OAM CSP, author, *The DNA of Business Relationships*

“Andrea brings herself straight from the heart fully into the world—wisdom, courage, and love. This book is food for the unsettled heart to find peace, for the discouraged heart to stir with hope again, and for the love in our hearts to flow from ourselves to the world.”

—Wendy Tan, author, *Wholeness in a Disruptive World*

“This goes deep into the human heart. Written with genuine rawness, it had me engaged, start to finish. I found myself constantly reflecting on my own self-discovery, while feeling enlightened to continue to embrace my journey to self-love and internal abundance.”

—Wendi Stewart, financial markets analyst and trader

“Using very personal insights this book brings you practical everyday tips for a better life, more courage and even approaches to solutions for global issues. It’s a plea for more civil courage and personal development.”

—Dr. Frank Hagenow, CSP, psychologist, author,
Leadership Without Mind Games

“Need a little more courage? Read *Uncommon Courage*. Andrea takes you step-by-step through her extraordinary AND ordinary moments that create turning points. The experience, research and insights raise our awareness of the difference we can all make as we continue to

learn, listen and take action. Whether we take small or radical steps, we can all create significant and positive change in our world.”

—Kerrie Phipps, author, *Do Talk to Strangers:
How to Connect with Anyone Anywhere*

“When I read *Uncommon Courage*, I felt like I was peeling an onion—so many layers, so SO inspirational. I love this book and Andrea because she makes me want to be a better person, for myself and for Mother Earth! This booked helped me with a few of my demons, helped me with compassion, as well as showing compassion for people that I feel do not deserve forgiveness—but it’s not for them, it’s for me. Always the key message. Definitely a must-read in today’s crazy world. It will shift how you think, live and love.”

—Vicky Coburn, wellness consultant

“As an amateur and professional performing musician spanning 20 years to serial social media conversationalist who’s achieved guru status among her loyal “tribe,” Andrea’s life journey takes us through the streets of Calcutta where she meets Mother Teresa to being chased, robbed and *nurtured* in some of the most dangerous countries on the planet—to learning unconditionally how to say YES. *Uncommon Courage* is nothing short of epic. A feverish read to say the least.”

—John Vincent Gordon, CEO Expat Choice Media

“*Uncommon Courage* is unconventional, unapologetic and undoubtedly a gem that everyone must read. Combining real-life stories with powerful questions, this book makes you stop, reflect, and want to take action towards being the person you want to be. So, if you’re feeling stuck, grab this book, dig deep and go be magnificent!”

—Sha En Yeo, the Happiness Scientist

“*Uncommon Courage*—wisdom from a woman wise beyond her years—will compel you to find what is meaningful to you and spur you on the journey to living an impactful life. A must read for anyone who wants to create a better world around them.”

—Anupama Singal, author, *SYZYGYmoments*

“This package of valuable nuggets of wisdom gives you recipes on how you can lead a happy life true to yourself while making a positive impact on others. Her keen insights build upon her personal and professional experiences in her lifelong and curiosity-driven quest to find her purpose. While Ms. Edwards does not shy away from the challenges presented by social media, her message is ultimately one of hope in that a more constructive online discourse can be found if more of us find the courage to speak our minds and help others.”

—Niklas Myhr, the Social Media Professor

“Filled with inspirational stories and provocative questions, this book takes you on a journey of self-discovery. Through entering Andrea’s world, you enter yours; not only to re-evaluate what you believe and why, but to have self-compassion and the courage to embrace change, act with kindness and step into committed action.”

—Natalie Turner, author, *Yes, You Can Innovate*

“Good books are meant to be read and then re-read; *Uncommon Courage* falls slap bang into this select list, it’s a keeper. Full of wise and humane anecdotes, woven into a rich tapestry of plain and simple life lessons, this is one of those addictive can’t-put-down-read-through-in-no-time gems.”

—Ferenc Nyiro, artist and yogi

“This book is a humorous and evocative treasure trove of insights on how to live your best life—minus the ‘woo-woo.’ It is akin to having a wise, non-judgmental friend help you dig a little deeper into the *how* and the *why* of who you are and where you are heading. This is the book to buy for everyone in your life who is oozing promise and potential and just needs a nudge to tap into their own #UncommonCourage.”

—Samantha Gayfer, strategic marketing and crisis communications leader

“Written as a journey of self-discovery, the life lessons come from the love of travel, a deep curiosity about life and the world, and passion for humanity and the environment. This is no ordinary book, it’s an adventure with an invitation to growth and self-acceptance.”

—Sally Foley-Lewis, author, *The Productive Leader*

“I feel like I’m sitting around a bonfire when I read Andrea T Edwards’ reflective, raw, grounded and highly enlightening new book *Uncommon Courage*. Andrea’s stories beg me and, I believe, you, to go inside and focus on what is truly important, while getting rid of the ‘noise’ that surrounds us all, often stopping our true voice in this world. So, grab her book, light a fire if you can, and settle in for a great journey full of surprises, wisdom and courage. *Uncommon Courage* rocks!”

—Kevin Cottam, author, *The Nomadic Mindset: Never Settle . . . for Too Long*

“I love this book. Andrea has experienced a lot—good and bad—and I love how she draws on these experiences to explain how she reflects, always with the aim to become the best version she can be for the sake of herself, her community and the planet. She does this while inviting the reader to think and reflect on their versions of their life and how they might consider doing the same. It is a great read and a great exercise on reflection.”

—Rebecca Kynaston, athlete, mother, eternal student

“When you learn from osmosis, it lasts longer! The trials, experiments and playing with fire: a journey travelled vicariously and a partner who shows how to care. Care, for yourself, others around you, and the earth that we live in. *Uncommon Courage* spurs us to keep our naivety in the right place and work towards creating a better world, within and without. A book that I can go to every time I feel a little nudge, to show a bit of courage.”

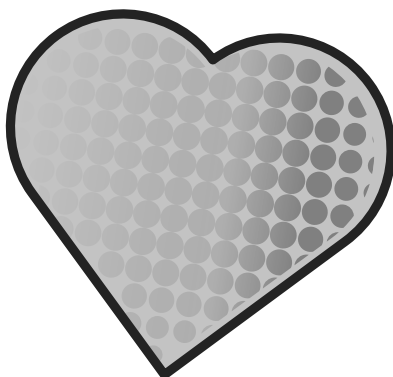
—Pravin Shekar, author, *Throne Wars: Marketing Lessons from the Art of War*

“Andrea always had the single-minded desire to live her very best life. To be more than was expected of her and to experience more of life than most of us could ever believe possible. She had the courage to break free from the comfort and routine of her upbringing, the courage to live her best authentic life, and now, the courage to share her stories, warts and all. A great set of wisdoms for readers of all ages and stages.”

—Phillipa Edwards, producer, conductor, composer
and the toughest audience—her sister

UNCOMMON COURAGE

AN INVITATION



ANDREA T EDWARDS

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A tree is planted for every book you buy.

FOREWORD

- What will your life be remembered for?
- Will you be missed when you are gone?
- Did you leave those around you better for knowing you?
- Have you found your purpose?

Rarely in a human lifetime do we experience the entire world being forced to stop. When it happens, though, we have an opportunity to reflect upon important questions. The global pandemic, with all its challenges and tragedy, is also the kind of *big reset* that can force us into a pause for intense learning and personal growth.

This is one of the reasons I was delighted when Andrea asked me to write a foreword for *Uncommon Courage*. As I read her book, I knew that Andrea's experience and wisdom could help so many people who are facing struggles through a period that is challenging for all of us.

Ultimately, life is about having the courage to say **this is the kind of person I want to be**. And to be who we aspire to be, we need to go deep into sometimes difficult conversation with ourselves. *Uncommon Courage* takes us on a personal journey, one that digs into the important questions of working out who we are and who we want to be—for ourselves, our loved ones, our communities, and the world.

Courage requires continual maintenance and effort—there is no final destination. I used to talk about this during one of my keynotes, “Building

your Confidence Muscle,” when I was a guest speaker for companies around the globe—this is when I first had the pleasure of meeting Andrea, over a decade ago. You have to work on your courage, just like you build muscles at the gym. Some days you get sore, other days you can tell how much progress you have made, and yet there is never a question—if you want to stay in shape, you have to keep using those muscles no matter what. With courage as with staying healthy, there are no shortcuts!

I got a reminder of the importance of working my courage muscles at the beginning of the pandemic. There I was, comfortable and strong in my work presenting on stages around the world, and overnight, I had to recreate the entire atmosphere in my “home office.” How do you show up with a lot of excitement to no audience interaction? The silence when I Zoomed onstage was deafening, and facing it took a new kind of courage. So, like everyone else who was suddenly forced to work from home, I was definitely challenged professionally. I struggled to find my rhythm, but I can definitely say I trusted my own counsel, as Andrea so wisely advises us to do in these pages. Building my courage muscles in new ways brought new opportunities. In 2020 I did 187 keynotes and customer engagements, almost twice as many as I did in 2019, and I haven’t been on a plane for work since March 2020!

Uncommon Courage peels away at questions of how to live with purpose and courage in today’s world like layers of an onion. Through Andrea’s loving, curious attention to the world around her, we are taken deep within ourselves. When you set off on this journey with Andrea, you’ll have to trust the process, explore your mindset and your ideas, and be willing to reflect on how they have shaped who you are today. This is a path of recognizing and embracing opportunities, of seizing your moments with courage for the results you deserve.

As I always tell people I’m mentoring, opportunities sometimes show themselves as “whispers” and we need to have the courage not only to hear them but to act on them as well. Sometimes these whispers come from within, and sometimes they come from those who inspire you, the great people around you. Sometimes they will come to you while reading a book like this one.

It doesn’t matter how successful we are right now—there will always be times we need courage, there will always be times it feels uncomfortable, and there will always be times a whisper comes from within or without at the right time to guide us forward. We must simply be open to hearing it.

FOREWORD

Some of the chapters in this book will be gentle whispers, some may stop you in your tracks. It depends on how open you are to working on yourself, how willing you are to lean on your intuitions and the subtle—or not so subtle—whispers around you.

**Enjoy this journey—let it inspire you to live your life with courage,
reflection, purpose, and truth. #BeBold**

Allow *Uncommon Courage* to be your invitation to have the courage to step into all you aspire to be.

TIFFANI BOVA

Global Growth and Innovation Evangelist

Author of the *Wall Street Journal* bestselling book *Growth IQ:
Get Smarter About the Choices that Will Make or Break Your Business*

WELCOME

ON THE FIRST OF JANUARY 2020, I turned 50. It was the start of a new decade and a milestone birthday for me. The feeling in the air that night as the clock turned to midnight and the fireworks lit up the sky was one of hope for the future. It was a beautiful celebration with friends near and far.

Boy, am I glad I celebrated—because not long afterward, news started to break of the emergence of a new coronavirus.

Living in nearby Thailand, we had the first case confirmed outside of the Chinese mainland. Things got tense quickly and kept getting tenser by the day. We were all paying close attention to the news (especially those of us in Asia), hoping it would be under control quickly, like what we saw with SARS in 2003.¹ Then *bam*—by Chinese New Year, the real 2020 had started, and you don't need me to tell you *that* story.

In the lead-up to my 50th birthday, I decided to record and release a series of original videos, *50 Wisdoms in 50 Days*. It's quite an effort doing a project like this (I had to put on make-up every day!). Many people listened to them and have since told me that I should get those wisdoms out into the wider world, as the messages of encouragement and hope would help people going through today's challenging times.

1 <https://www.history.com/news/sars-outbreak-china-lessons>

So that's how this book came to be. Written from my heart to yours, it's here to help you embrace your best life, regardless of what is going on around you. No matter how good or how bad things are, this is about the mindset that helps you live your best life all the time. It's not easy, and it takes constant vigilance, but it works. It really does.

However, one thing I've learned since the pandemic began: times like these teach more wisdom, so the original set of 50 has expanded significantly. To be honest, it was hard to stop writing new ones.

A principal lesson I've learned during this journey of life is that once you fully embrace the deeper wisdoms of peace, love, and joy, well . . . you need to embrace them all the time, regardless of external influence, and especially not just when the going is good.

Because real wisdom means connecting deeply to who you are from a place of profound love—for self, for community, for the world. Love really is all there is.

My awakening to this idea began more than three decades ago. I love reading and travelling. I've devoured ideas and philosophies from many cultures, religions and movements. On top of that, I spent my 30s committed to reading all the books on business, self-help, and spirituality that I could get my hands on. I wanted to understand: what made a book successful? What made a book a best seller? What did I enjoy and what did I hate to read? After this, my quest morphed into studying speakers, influencers and social media more broadly.

As I was reading/watching/analyzing, I gathered together the common threads running through all these books, and the people who made an impact on me. From what started as an exercise to understand the different genres, I began to weave new ideas and life goals for myself: the idea of the power of mindset, the importance of deep self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of self-love, positive thinking, generosity, abundance, and so much more.

I learned many ideas and practices that I could apply to myself, and I decided to make myself a case study of many of these ideas.

I didn't talk about it. I just did it. I wanted to test the effect of these ideas in my own life to see if they helped me create a good life and a better world. I wanted to see if they actually delivered on their promise. However, to really succeed, I had to fully sink into it, I couldn't just do it on the surface. You might say I surrendered to these ideas because it was the only way to really know if they were true. No pessimism, doubt or judgment allowed. Just sink into it, Andrea! So, I did.

This collection of writing is drawn from my 30-year case study on what worked in the real, day-to-day life of a young woman growing into a corporate creature who became an entrepreneur and then a speaker, trainer, and author, as well as a traveler, wife, mother, and friend. It's a story of personal growth, but it's also a story of resilience and a deepening of empathy and compassion towards all—even those I don't like. Spoiler alert: if you want to transform your life, it starts deep inside, and it requires long-term commitment, no matter what.

I'm sharing these insights from an understanding that for many of us, committing to self-growth is very challenging indeed. Some of us start, grow, and then pause for a breather because it's intense. Or we find it too hard to keep going because we're clashing with people in our life who are at odds with the bigger, fresher version of ourselves we're becoming. It's not an easy process to commit to and it's definitely OK to say *enough for now*, because change is not easy and shouldn't be rushed. I absolutely respect that.

Personally, I go through periods of amazing growth and then I stall, sometimes going into a downward spiral or funk for a while. What I've learned is that these moments, too, are part of the journey to growth.

For 30 years, no matter how good or bad life got, I committed to holding these wisdoms true. It wasn't easy to keep believing, especially when things weren't going well. While there were days, weeks, and even months where I felt my anchor come loose, I always returned to these ideas. This was because I felt better, more at peace, and more in love with life—all of it, even when times were bad!

This is why I'm sharing these principles with you. They got me through tough financial times—really tough, like knocked-down-on-our-knees tough. They got me through the adjustment to parenthood. The stress of jobs lost. The challenges of a child needing special care and the pressure that creates on a marriage. A career that no longer lifted me. The pressure of creating a new life and career in new countries, time and time again. In other words, they got me through the tough stretches that life can dish out, and I'm confident they'll do the same for you.

I talk a lot about my husband, Steve Johnson, in this book. He's been on this journey with me for more than half of the case study I'm discussing. Since I was well on my way when we met, it meant he had to accept the ride, too. That was part of loving me, right?

Steve has been an absolute legend in so many ways. When we met, and even today, I share ideas and ways of life or thinking that are not

natural to how he sees the world. I've always appreciated how Steve challenges me when he doesn't agree (which helps me challenge my own thinking) and we've had to talk through many ideas, adapting and refining as we went to ensure we were always together. And yes, by sticking together, it might mean it takes longer to grow, but it's worth it if we are committed to going forward, together.

If you read this and are inspired to follow these ideas or indeed find your own path to contentment, I definitely recommend bringing your loved ones or circle of friends with you. It will make it much easier to succeed, because when you are not in alignment with those closest to you, you can risk losing friendships or stalling your personal growth, because evolving as a person can result in clashing with those closest to you. Avoid that if you can. Go together.

Back to Steve. A really important contribution he has always made is giving me the full space to be me. He never tried to change who I was or how I wanted to grow. He never tried to stop me doing the work I felt was important, either—even when there was no financial gain attached. More importantly, because he's so good at what he does (which is very different to my work), he gave me the space to live my life and grow my business how I wanted to—which gave me real confidence and space to know if these ideas are actually workable. I knew I could never surrender to these ideas completely and test them fully if I was overwhelmed with day-to-day pressure as well. So, thank you so much, my love, for this gift of time and headspace. You gave me the opportunity to really test, so I could know if these ideas were really true. This is a gift of unimaginable value. Thank you for everything you do—for me and our boys.

Dear reader, while you may not get the same space as Steve gave me, hopefully my ability to fully experiment proves the results enough, because if you can embed many of these ideas deep in your psyche, it will make your life better, more enjoyable and, yes, even more successful. This is about a deep and foundational change, which will leave you lighter, more in love with the world, and more in love with life.



***GET OUT OF
YOUR LIFE!***

SELF-EMPOWERMENT

MY OWN PERSONAL-GROWTH case study started in 1992 in Egypt. I was 22, blonde, and an army musician. It was the first country I landed in outside my home country of Australia, and an incredible experience of personal growth and awakening. This is where everything I've written in this book began, which is why I've chosen to start telling my story here.

It was my first real opportunity to face my thoughts, as well as deal with the loneliness, the dangers, the unknowns of travel, and the discomfort too—yes, all of it.

The glory of traveling this beautiful world has been my greatest privilege, not to mention top-of-the-pops in regard to what I've learned about living the best possible life.

When we explore the world, it's not only about confronting external differences—sometimes on such an epic scale it scares the life out of us—it's the personal and internal deep changes that matter even more. Even if we start off pretty happy with ourselves, travel changes us profoundly and deeply, for the better.

Now, it's important to recognize that we don't all need the same experiences to grow. Not everyone was born with an insatiable desire to explore the world. Many people find the space for silence, thought, and growth in their home landscape. This is really about getting out of your day-to-day way of seeing things, in whatever way that makes sense to you. We are

all different and must honor ourselves rather than feeling an obligation to do something everyone says we must do to be whole.

For me it was definitely travel, and my time in the Middle East was the beginning of a love affair with otherness that changed everything about who I was.

This was my first journey, and I haven't stopped since. I've spent half my life away, exploring our glorious world. I'm completely addicted to it and I never feel more alive than when I'm in a new, unknown place.

Many developing countries can be uncomfortable to travel in, especially for basic things—like access to suitable toilets. But it's important to see beyond this to the raw beauty and humanity operating at a different level to what we've always known in our comfortable lives. There is something primal in these experiences, and I couldn't help but get drawn in when I began traveling.

It also makes it really hard to go home, because being comfortable loses its appeal. That's the downside of this experience: disconnection from your roots. It's worth it, though.

Most of my adventures in the early days were solo, and this gave me weeks and months of silence to confront my own thoughts. When you meditate or work with a spiritual teacher, the number one thing they recommend is shutting the external noise down, so you can face yourself. This process can be frightening, intense, and lonely. It's also very liberating, which is why I did it and did it again and again.

There was a lot of stuff in my mind that I came to understand wasn't mine at all, programming I'd undergone that left me misaligned to who I wanted to be. I knew I needed to face these things in order to become who I wanted to be, and that I could only do this work through the kind of transformative silence I found in travel.

Those solo months on the road saw me pulling down tendrils of my own thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and gave me the chance to look at them and ask myself, is this my idea? Do I want to continue owning it or does it need to get tossed out?

So many ideas went to the scrap heap. The religious education I had all through school got broken down, jumbled around, and mostly rejected. It wasn't all bad, but there were many ideas I did not buy into, now that I had the opportunity to question them.

There was family stuff, too; this time of reflection helped me understand that everyone was just trying their best in their own unique way.

My parents' divorce and the anger I held onto for years afterwards: also sent to the scrap heap.

I also really started to understand the gift of the experiences of my childhood. Every part of my childhood experience shaped who I am, and I finally appreciated that I should be grateful for it all—the good, the bad, the ugly—because without all that, I wouldn't be me.

I reflected on politics, business, the world—asking myself which were my opinions and which were the opinions of others. Which ones should I keep, which ones should I reject? It was the ultimate detox for my brain and heart.

And all the way through this painful and lonely process—which does not seem to stop once you start, by the way—I discovered me and, in that discovery, I opened myself up to new possibilities, new ideas, and other ways to look at things. I even started to like different sorts of music! Yes, even my music tastes were more adventurous after I began my journey of self-discovery.

I went from black and white in my thinking to seeing everything in many layers of gray. I learned to listen to new ideas and questioned them from every angle. I took nothing as truth, and today I tell my boys that there is no single truth. There are only ideas, and you've got to discover your truth and then be ready to change your mind again and again.

Nobody on this planet knows it all. I've discovered that if you try to see the world from other people's viewpoints as well as your own, it changes the game.

It wasn't just the silence that helped me, it was the experiences I was having every day too. I witnessed other people's lives, lived differently, but still, so much beauty everywhere. I saw alternative lifestyles I would have shunned before and realized how narrow my thinking was. As long as you're smiling and doing no harm, enjoy!

Those long months of silence and incredible experiences, often digging deep into ancient history (a true passion), gave me the opportunity to gain so much more clarity. And it's a path I continue to travel, because I never stop learning if I stay open.

That ability to step away from everything I'd ever known, and not only confront differences externally, but to face up to the silence and the thoughts in my head—such a gift. I am forever grateful I took myself out there and in return, discovered a better version of myself, a less judgmental, more open, more forgiving version.

When you travel, you constantly see the kindness of strangers. And I saw the kindness in humanity everywhere, from fellow travelers helping me out when I got in a bind to the incredible kindness of locals every place I visited. This vision of humanity is addictive.

I'll always remember the Egyptian lady in Cairo who gently showed me how to cross one of their crazy roads when I first arrived. I'm now a master road crosser anywhere. Or a chemist in Cairo, who took me into his shop, gave me water, and took care of me because I'd lost my way in this maze of a city, and he didn't think it was a safe place for a young woman to be walking alone.

Or another stranger in Shanghai in 1995, who took me to some of the best off-the-beaten-track places to visit just to show me her amazing, beloved city.

Or the gorgeous hearing- and speaking-impaired man in Calcutta who sold me toilet paper and kept an eye out for me, along with a hunchbacked man with a huge smile, who got me taxis any time I needed them. These two men were everything to me as I fell in love with that city.

And the small, curious children everywhere, fascinated by this person who looked different to anything they'd known before. Did that interaction with me have an impact on them, too? It certainly changed me.

Or the people learning to speak English in China, back in the mid-'90s, chewing loudly in my ear and spitting tea on the floor, as we all cramped in together on a horrible train ride for hours and hours and hours. I'll never forget the lady who lost her shoe down the toilet on that trip. The spit from the tea was swishing back and forth on the floor by the end of this journey. You certainly didn't want to be without shoes.

Or the boy in Mexico, who wanted to have his way with me, in his little hut nearby, and somehow, his eyeballs pulsed when he looked at me. I didn't know eyeballs could pulse until that point.

So many people, from all walks of life, all faiths, all cultures—just human beings at their best, helping, guiding, showing and expecting nothing in return (except maybe the boy in Mexico—bless him). I always met so many more amazing people than I did people wanting to do me harm. I saw laughter everywhere.

When you travel, you have to learn to trust others when you are out there, facing the world alone. You learn to become vulnerable and to accept your own vulnerability, because you must.

Equally, you learn to pay attention to your intuition and trust yourself when you believe someone is a threat. My intuition is very, very good, and I could spot and feel danger a mile away.

I learned to handle myself on many levels. On that first trip to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel as a 22-year-old blonde woman, I was almost raped several times. I was mauled, groped, and stared at relentlessly. Because I'm a fighter, I punched a number of men during that time. I was still in the army after all, so they didn't scare me. Let's just say, no one was grabbing me and getting away with it! Guatemala City, Tegucigalpa in Honduras and Managua in Nicaragua—three of the most dangerous cities in Central America apparently—and yet I never had a moment of fear as I wandered the streets alone at night. I had to. I was by myself and I needed to eat. As a woman, solo travel teaches you that you don't need a man looking after you.⁴

Travel's ultimate gift is strength in yourself. When you travel alone, you learn to fight and stand up for yourself. You learn how to get around with barely any language at all. You learn how to cope, and you learn how to thrive as you get fully connected with yourself.

I personally believe the only thing that matters in life is doing the work to get to the best version of ourselves. Everything else is just a distraction from that. The journey is different for all of us, and the destination too, but if we can find our path without to that joy within—wow, that's a life worth living. Travel was the beginning of my quest for deep self-awareness, and everything you'll read within these pages is an extension of that journey.

If travel isn't your thing, there are other ways to make sure you face yourself from outside your life. Comfort is a beautiful thing, but it is never where personal growth lies. You've got to get a whole lot of uncomfortable to achieve that.

Globally, we're all in a lesson in discomfort because of this pandemic. It's a wonderful opportunity to prioritize working out how to take the time and space to get out of your life, to hear the silence inside and to work out what is really you. I hope we all take advantage of this powerful and

4 Which isn't to say that it isn't awesome to be taken care of by someone you love. Travel taught me all of the above, but my husband, Steve, taught me another layer of true vulnerability. Thank you, my love. It's so nice to share the journey with you and to be loved by you xxx.

GET OUT OF YOUR LIFE!

yet uncomfortable time for growth. There are life lessons everywhere, if we choose to see them.



"Travel isn't always pretty. It isn't always comfortable. Sometimes it hurts, it even breaks your heart. But that's okay. The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart, and on your body. You take something with you. Hopefully, you leave something good behind."

—Anthony Bourdain, *No Reservations: Around the World on an Empty Stomach*



**LET PEOPLE
BE DICKS
SOMETIMES**

EXTERNAL INFLUENCE

EVERY ONE OF US has been a dick at some point or another. Dickishness is when we act out of character, when we're a bit crabbier or a touch more self-centered, or even when we do or say hurtful things to get a rise. In children, that's negative attention seeking. You could say it's the same thing in adults. It often happens because of stress, anxiety, fear, or other negative emotions. Sometimes we're a dick for a week or a month or even longer, if we're going through a tough patch!

Right now, more people are being more dickish than usual. Being a dick can be a sign of deep fears and insecurities. Suicide rates are rising in every country, in every culture. People today are feeling lost, fearful, misunderstood, under-valued, and vulnerable. They may have eco-anxiety, which leaves them worried about the future or their children's future. Adding to the confusion and uncertainty are the cesspool of politics, misinformation, and Fake News. Plus we've got that pandemic on our hands, too! Jobs lost, no money coming in, no food on the table.

There's a lot going on. All of these issues can bring out the worst in people, so our role is to bring out the best in them.

Now, if someone is a dick all the time, of course it's hard to have them in your life. But if someone is being a dick and it's out of character, ask them what's going on.

Approach them with empathy and non-confrontational intentions, and you'll likely find they are in pain or confused or scared. Sometimes all

three. Most often people aren't even aware what's wrong until you actually draw it out of them. Ask if they are all right. Ask if they need help. Give them the space to answer—in their own way, in their own time. Probe gently to see if you can help them identify the cause of their angst.

When they realize that they have, in fact, been feeling out of sorts, they might also realize they've been behaving like a dick—and stop. However, best not to make it your job to point that out to them.

Let's give each other the benefit of the doubt. This is how we make room for grace to enter the equation. When we don't give the benefit of the doubt, we lock people into being their worst selves, even if it was just momentary. In that moment, we don't allow each other to grow and evolve from whatever pain is causing us to act out. It's a lose-lose for everyone involved.

Let's not turn our backs and leave momentarily dickish people in that space! Changing the world for the better starts with the simple step of helping people emerge from a tough moment to become their best selves.

GIVE THEM SOME LOVE



List out uncharacteristic dickish behavior you've seen in people in your community lately and make an appointment to speak (gently) with those people.

What dickish behavior—temporary or perhaps even sustained—do you recognize in yourself?



**TRUST
YOUR OWN
COUNSEL**

CAREER THOUGHTS

NOT EVERYBODY IS IN A POSITION to give you meaningful advice. Why would they? Everyone comes at life from very different perspectives, experiences and expectations.

Which is why trusting your own counsel is a strength, not a weakness or an arrogance. You take input and advice from those around you and then you draw your own conclusions, based on your knowledge, your experience, and your insights.

You have your own perspective that the data of life has given you, while taking into account the viewpoints of people around you. Be focused and particular in choosing trusted people to ask. Make sure they are aligned to your values, to your level of courage, and to you as a human being.

When I was young, advice was freely provided by the adults in my life. Being very stubborn, I often followed my own plan anyway. What I found was that, flying in the face of the advice I was given, I would excel or I would fail—but both taught me valuable lessons that helped me to grow.

I started to understand that the advice was coming from their perspective, which wasn't always relevant to my own. I also remarked that people who were not capable of being courageous in their own lives regularly projected their fears onto me.

Taking other people's fears onboard is the number one thing that will hold you back and make you less courageous. Being sure in yourself and

what you want in life is key if you want to get to the point of trusting your own counsel.

In my 30s I was offered coaching by a senior executive who wanted to help me reach the executive ranks of a global corporation.

I politely declined the offer. When I was younger, this would have been a dream for me, but by this point in my life, I realized that corporate politics and game-playing would never be my thing. I knew myself well enough to know that this was not my path. I had learned to trust my own counsel early.

Advice is only relevant when it comes from people in alignment with you. While we may and should go *outside* for advice, real strength comes from building the confidence to trust above all in your own counsel, your own wisdom within.

Here's an aside that will resonate with any woman who has ever been pregnant. When you are pregnant, *everyone* wants to give you advice whether you ask for it or not. Some of the unsolicited advice can be frightening and impact your ability to enjoy your pregnancy. Pro tip, if strangers ask you if it's your first pregnancy, tell them it's your tenth. No one will give you random advice then.

INTO ACTION

Am I strong in trusting my own counsel?

When have I taken advice that was not aligned with my own counsel?



Why did I listen to this advice? (Think deeply on that.)

Did I do something differently in life or work because I did listen?

**Is it too late to change direction, back into alignment with my own counsel?
(Hint, it's never too late.)**

What kind of advice am I seeking right now?

Who is aligned to me and can help me on my way?

If I were a friend coming to me for advice, how would I advise myself?



***EPIPHANIES
ON ANGER***

SELF-AWARENESS

ONE OF THE GREATEST LESSONS I've learned in life is about letting go of anger. When I was a young person, certain people around me were very free with their anger. I could have copied their style, but I took a different path. This does not mean I don't get angry—it means anger doesn't control me.

Neale Donald Walsch once said, *"Anger expressed is never about the person it's directed towards. It's always about the person who is angry."* I heard this wise man's words at the right time; they went in deep and forced me to reflect.

Since then, any time I find myself moving into a place of anger towards someone, instead I ask myself whether I was really angry at that person or simply projecting my own frustrations or angst onto them.

I'd ask myself, for example, "Am I angry with my children, or deflecting my frustration of mothering onto them? Am I angry with my husband, or directing all of my pent-up angst about everything onto him?"

Catching and questioning yourself when you feel angry needs to be a continual and conscious practice. It will help you dig deep into your self-awareness and understand where the anger is really coming from. And it will improve and make more joyous your relationships with the people you tend to project that anger onto.

If you've got a bigger problem with your anger than the occasional frustration-driven flare-up, maybe you've got some deeper issues that you

could try to get to the bottom of. There are some amazing professionals out there who can help with that kind of work. Whatever its source, your anger is toxic to you, your life, and your relationships. Face it. Sort it out.

For the average person, when you feel your anger rising, ask yourself if it is really about someone else and their actions, or if it may be a frustration deep inside of you being projected onto them? If you're completely honest, you'll find that the vast majority of the time, your anger comes from your own feelings of frustration misdirected towards someone else.

Now I'm still human, so yes—anger impacts me too. I get angry when I see unkindness or injustice directed toward people who are helpless, downtrodden, or not in a position to stand up for themselves, socially or economically. That definitely gets me going. But this is not the kind of anger that leaves me feeling poisoned, and it has no consequences for my relationships.

I will also defend myself and the people closest to me, but I've always found this can be done without losing dignity or resorting to anger for anger's sake. Standing up for yourself or someone else is absolutely important, but again, I don't hold onto it. It is released quickly and easily.

My husband often gets frustrated that I don't get angry or stay angry. But he also knows I just don't want it in my body—it doesn't serve me. However, when someone does make me really mad, and I actually feel that way for a week or two, Steve feels relieved. He tells me it makes me more human. Personally, I detest feeling that way and can't wait to get rid of it.

The important thing is, any time you feel anger, go inside and ask: is it them? Or is it me? The latter will be your answer most of the time, if you can be fully honest with yourself. Acknowledging this changed my life and I hope it changes yours.



REFLECTION

What are your frustrations with someone or something in your life? Think deep and list it down, all of it. Be completely honest with yourself—what's getting your goat?

Take a minute or two to go within and work out what it is that you are projecting onto others in your life.

Every time you can, when you feel anger rise in you, stop, think, reflect and ask yourself: am I angry towards them, or is it something deeper? This is a wonderful muscle to develop.



***THE ONE-
MINUTE
MEDITATION***

SOCIAL LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPED THIS ONE-MINUTE meditation for my executive clients at IBM, BNP Paribas Securities Services, DHL, Microsoft, and beyond. I use it to help clients define their core focus as social leaders.

One thing I've observed when working with executive teams is that they're often so busy in their minds they can't connect easily with the wisdom in their hearts. I put this meditation together as a fast way to tap into the subconscious mind. For anyone who feels this all sounds a bit *woo-woo*, you should let the fact that it has worked spectacularly well with business executives alleviate any reluctance you might have towards giving it a go. It won't harm you, I promise! And it might just do you a world of good.

Over the years, I've seen it be a very powerful tool for thousands of executives, sales leaders, and other businesspeople, and it works to help them find their focus as social leaders. I've also seen it lead directly to \$40 million of business for one client, as well as \$140 million in the business pipeline. Why? People buy from people they trust. Owning your voice, with integrity and a mindset of service is what matters in business and in life.

While the one-minute meditation was designed to uncover focus for social media, it is relevant more broadly. I find this an excellent exercise to do anytime I am asking myself what I should do with my life.

Be open. Give it a go and see what comes up.

CONTEXT

To gain clarity on your focus or life goals, it is important to reflect and consider what you want to be known for, or what you want to do with your life.

Reflection helps you arrive at a strong, defined, and powerful voice for your professional social media channels. It can offer a clear direction for the journey ahead of you. You may discover you already know the answer to whatever question you have, but it is buried in your subconscious mind and you can't quite grasp it.

Coming up with answers to these questions can be a challenging process. Some of us keep the answers buried deep, quite simply because we are nervous about facing them. The reality is, when we accept our truth and our voice, it means it's time to find the courage to step more fully into our future. That can be frightening for a lot of us. I speak from experience: I've been working on this for years and I've yet to reach my full voice and role in the world. I'm getting there step by step, though. This book is part of that journey.

There is no denying it—owning your voice is an act of courage. I encourage you to support those you see doing so, for while it is a powerful path, it is not an easy path to take.

Ask yourself what you want to be known for. Look at this as a challenge to identify your own special talent(s) or message. We often take for granted what comes easily to us. In fact, coming easily is a sign of what makes us special (*and* that thing we have this natural talent for), but often we don't value it because it's easy. This is one of life's crazy contradictions, and it can make this process really hard.

The following meditation will hopefully help you overcome that challenge, if you approach it with an open mind and look at it as a starting point for the journey to becoming your whole, best, beautiful self.

THE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sit down with paper and pen, your phone, or a computer—or simply use the space below in this book. The important thing is to have everything you need to write ready in front of you before you start. Clear away unnecessary clutter.
2. Read the questions below. Select one that speaks to you *right now*. All of these questions are relevant. You can go back and do the others separately later.
3. Get comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Uncross your arms and legs and set your timer for one minute plus 10 seconds. (Those extra 10 seconds will give you time to relax.)
4. Start your timer, close your eyes, take some deep breaths, and relax.
5. When you're ready, silently ask yourself the question you chose—over and over again—until the alarm goes off. Push away any other thoughts that attempt to break in while you're doing this exercise. Just keep asking your question over and over again, meditating on it for one minute.
6. When the timer goes off, open your eyes and start writing. Write whatever comes up, and if nothing comes up, doodle or scribble. Do not judge what is coming out, just write for as long as you need to write and capture the messages that emerge from your subconscious.

In front of you will be words, sentences, paragraphs, or maybe even patterns. Consider your words. Do you have your answers there? Are you surprised by what you see? Or are these the words you knew would come?

If you are struggling or apprehensive about doing this, invite a good friend or colleague to do this exercise with you. When you get your results, you can discuss it together. Regardless, the answer to your question is here. Be open to seeing it.



MEDITATION QUESTIONS

Reminder: all questions are equal, so select the one that speaks to you today.

- What do I want to do with my life?
- What do I want to be known for?
- What makes me stand out in a crowd?
- When I light people up, what is it I am talking about?
- What is my expertise?
- What am I unique at?
- What are my core values?
- What comes easily to me?
- What do I read about until the early hours of the morning?
- What gets me out of bed eagerly?
- What gives me energy?
- What feeds my spirit?
- What do people compliment me on?
- What makes me amazing?

NOTES AND INSIGHTS

Now spend some time defining your message and make a plan to contribute your voice to the world. And for insights on how you can be a social leader, follow my blogs on **andreatedwards.com**.



MANBASSADORS

EMPOWER OTHERS

WHAT'S A MANBASSADOR? They are men with a particularly powerful attitude and a whole lot of integrity. But first, some context on what they stand for.

The #MeToo movement gave women an opportunity to express and share a negative part of the female experience. While not a pleasant issue, it has opened up a positive conversation, an enlightening and empowering one. It has made us look around and say: *wait, it is time for us to say no, we no longer accept this behavior.* It has been a time for all of us to grow—together.

#MeToo is not about hating men.

And it has inadvertently created a situation where some men, concerned that their behavior could be misinterpreted, have become overly cautious around women, especially in the workplace. This is not a good thing, if taken too far—when even something as straightforward as having lunch with a female colleague becomes fraught with uncertainty and unintended meaning.

The truth is, both sexes have power players and manipulators in their ranks. Our challenge, as men and women, is to make sure they don't continue to drive the global conversation! They define our global societies and I don't know about you, but I've had enough of that. We can't allow the minority to continue to define our lives.

The majority of men and women are great. Most men and women are reasonable. And most men and women know the difference between appropriate and completely inappropriate behavior.

The creep who targets vulnerable women is known by the observant people around him. It is not a secret. And this is not about trying to put up rules about the natural and comfortable chemistry between two people. It's about uncomfortable behavior that disempowers one party.

Instead of pretending it's not happening—as we have for too long—let's bring this behavior to the surface, identify those power players and manipulators, call them out, and make sure they can't keep perpetrating their abuse.

All the great men I've known and met throughout my life never feel so inadequate that they needed to dominate women in any way—especially sexually.



In his discussion of the 25 Characteristics of an Alpha Male, Chad Howse really nailed it:

“The alpha male doesn’t try to be an alpha male. That’s where so many fail. He is interested in life, in living. He’s fascinated by the world around him, in becoming the best man he can possibly become. He genuinely cares about people.”¹⁷

That, to me, is what makes a man an alpha male. He’s a #manbassador.

The men who think domination is what it means to be a man are not alpha males. They’d struggle to be considered a beta male! A man who seeks to dominate, sexually harass women, encourage hatred of others, or create division in society . . . That’s not a man. The vast majority of humanity has evolved beyond those animalistic traits, but unfortunately, some men around the world haven’t moved forward with us. Those men should never be given a place of authority, especially not as leaders of our countries!

There are many great men who are supportive of women—who applaud them and see them as equals, capable colleagues and leaders.

A manbassador isn’t frightened of women or other men, because he doesn’t need to manipulate or put people down to feel powerful. These men are role models in business and in life. They are examples to other men of what it means to be a great man.

A manbassador is comfortable in his own skin and comfortable in the role he takes on in his life—even if it is not a traditional male role. He steps in for boys and younger men lacking a role model of what it means to be a man today. He shows them how to respect themselves, others, and the world. Manbassadors are a beautiful gift in any community, an incredibly important and valuable member of society.

If you are a manbassador, speak up, show up, raise your voice, set the example, step in when needed to help raise the next generation of men, and let’s overcome the growing divide in today’s world.

¹⁷ <http://chadhowsefitness.com/2012/11/25-characteristics-of-an-alpha-male>. Readers interested in alpha male theory might also enjoy Tricia Christensen’s essay for WiseGeek, in which she puts this leadership idea in its zoological perspective: <https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-an-alpha-male.htm#didyouknowout>

Honor the manbassadors in your life. Help them understand the role they could play in having a bigger impact in the world. Let's put the voice of manbassadors on a bigger platform. An example to look at is The Try Guys—I love them. Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, is also a personal favorite.

Those “pussy grabbing” macho males have been getting all the lime-light, and we see how much damage that has done. Time to drown them out with the glorious voices of the manbassadors. Are you up for the task?

And fellas, what do you reckon, shall we stop allowing a minority to hijack us all? Join the conversation and help take it in a positive #WeToo direction. The world needs to move forward, united, with grace, love, and integrity at the center.



***A TIME FOR
REFLECTION***

CLIMATE COURAGE

IT FEELS LIKE WE'VE ALL BEEN given a big time out since this pandemic began. We've been sent to our rooms and told to reflect and consider the world we create out the other side of this crisis.

While this is a very challenging time for everyone, it is much harder for those all around the world who were already struggling to stay afloat before it started.

Which means those of us who are lucky enough to maintain a comfortable quality of life through the pandemic have been given an opportunity to embrace a gift—the gift of time to deeply reflect. A time to reconsider how we live our lives and how we shape our collective future, so that all can live in dignity. We all have a chance, a beautiful opportunity, to create the world anew.

Will we, as a species, take this chance to reflect and change our ways? Or will we miss it and look back only when the next crisis hits, and the next, and the next?

With the climate crisis, the health crisis, the economic crisis and deepening global inequality all rising around us, it's clear that if we do not change, we are ensuring a permanent state of crisis.

We are ensuring a global atmosphere of injustice, violence, economic slavery, famine, poverty, and extended suffering. Some of this is directly affecting us in the “comfortable” world too. It's not somewhere out there for others to deal with.

It all begs the question—do we *want* permanent crisis? I certainly don't. We can no longer ignore the peril we are in. Scientists are predicting that major ecosystems are starting to collapse.⁴⁹ We were warned of this back in 2008.⁵⁰ It's not happening in 2050 or even 2030—the signs are here already, and the bigger it is, the faster it will fall!⁵¹

Yet we continue to chop down life-giving trees. We glory in excessive consumption and the acquisition of stuff, all while the land gets warmer and the oceans get warmer too. Emissions are trending in one direction—up!⁵² We continue to pass nature's tipping points and don't seem capable of grasping the impact it will have on all of our lives.

Why should we care about tipping points? Tipping points are lines that, once crossed, make it even harder to fix things or reduce impact. It's pretty much irreversible. We have been over-indulging and gorging on our beautiful planet without thought for too long.⁵³

But it's not simply about us. It is about today's children, and young people are frightened. When my son was 11, he said to me, "Mum, if it gets too hot to be outside because of global warming, I am going to commit suicide."

That was a devastating moment for me! Our children know, regardless of how we try to protect them from the worst truth. They see a future of unbearable hardship.

As adults, is that all we are prepared to offer them? We cannot wait for our children to grow up and act. We don't have time to kick it down the road yet again. The time to act was more than 30 years ago, but we still have now. Right now.

This time out we are all living through is a gift for us to claim a unique opportunity to rewrite our collective future, one where the sustainability and health of all life on planet earth are at the center of our values and plans.

49 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-15029-x>

50 <https://www.pnas.org/content/105/6/1786>

51 <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/climate-tipping-point-ecosystem-collapses-may-come-faster-than-thought-studies/>

52 <https://www.co2.earth/global-CO2-emissions>

53 The following articles demonstrate how deep into this trend we are. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-75481-z>; <https://www.sciencealert.com/controversial-model-finds-global-warming-will-continue-even-if-we-stop-emissions-tomorrow>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

With this gift of time, let's ask ourselves some searching questions and find the answers, together.

1. Are you happy with your life—family, home, community, and sense of achievement, contribution, and meaning? Even if you are, is it time for new directions?
2. Are you questioning the frantic pace of life we left behind? Do we want it to be like that when it's all over?
3. Are you proud of the company you work for? Is it contributing positively towards all life on earth, or is shareholder value overriding these needs? If so, what can you do to change it?
4. Do you believe it is time we demand business to change dramatically, to take into consideration the earth's finite resources and take responsibility for the waste left behind? What businesses—including your own, but also including those you patronize—can you begin to hold accountable?
5. Are we individually ready to face up to our part in the devastation and suffering going on in so many places in the world? Do we continue to accept children suffering in mines to make our latest phones or computers? And women suffering in the garment industry for fast-fashion? Companies like Ikea benefiting from (and ignoring until recently) illegal logging practices⁵⁴ to produce fast-furniture to feed our insatiable appetites for the new?
6. Are you wasting less, buying less, saying no to single use plastics, consuming less meat, shopping locally, and making plans to reduce your emissions?
7. Is your country polluted and full of rubbish? Are you ready to demand action from the businesses that have profited from it for decades?

⁵⁴ <https://www.eco-business.com/news/as-ikea-is-hit-by-illegal-logging-link-in-europe-furniture-firms-sustainability-function-in-southeast-asia-dissolves/>

8. Is it time to close the wildlife markets, while creating new livelihoods for those reliant on them for income?
9. What about overfishing and destruction of the seas? What's the real impact? What's the risk to us?
10. Are you working to be part of the solution to end inequality, in all its forms?
11. What parts of life from before should we get rid of? I want the false, egocentric, hero-worshipping, sales-pushing nonsense gone. I want us to be real, to be meaningful. What about you?
12. And to the parents, are we acting and doing enough to ensure our children have a beautiful future?

We face big challenges.

Will you join me, so we can face them together? Will you raise your voice to demand change—on social media, in your communities, in your company, and on any platform or stage that you have access to? Will you join a rising chorus demanding better for all life on planet earth? Will we do the best we can to ensure our children do not face the worst possible outcome of the climate crisis?



ABOUT ANDREA T EDWARDS

ANDREA T EDWARDS, The Digital Conversationalist, is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), and a globally award-winning B2B communications professional. Andrea works with the world's largest companies on the transformation needed within to maximize business growth in our digital future. She is a change agent, provocateur, author, passionate communicator and social leader. Andrea's book *18 Steps to an All-Star LinkedIn Profile* was added to two Book Authority's listings as the "100 Best LinkedIn Books of All Time" and "22 Best New LinkedIn eBooks To Read In 2021."

With *Uncommon Courage*, Andrea hopes to inspire conversations which change the direction of how we live.

You can join her for more insights with special guests on the podcast/LiveStream *Uncommon Courage* and at her Websites **www.andreatedwards.com** or dig into the section **www.Uncommon-Courage.com**

CONNECT WITH ME

If you would like to connect and join my community, here is how you can do it. I'd love to have you join the Facebook group *Uncommon Courage*, where we can dig into these and any other ideas relevant in the world.

Facebook Group Uncommon Courage



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