

## Introduction

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*“Although there may be tragedy in your life, there’s always a possibility to triumph. It doesn’t matter who you are, [or] where you come from. The ability to triumph begins with you. Always.”*

—Oprah Winfrey, Emmy-award-winning talk show host

Hey, Empowered Gals!

You are probably wondering a whole bunch of things right now, like “Thanks, Mom—another book. How am I supposed to read this *and* get my algebra homework done?” or “So, what makes this book different from all the other books I’ve read?” Or, you might be wondering about all the other things that teen girls wonder and worry about, like how you are supposed to fit in, make friends, keep friends, deal with gossip, feel good about your body, do well at school, get asked out on a date, be a good girlfriend, get a job, find out what you want to do for the rest of your life, stay healthy, how to make good decisions about sex, and how you are going to make your place in this world. I was just in Teenville myself a couple of years ago, so I’m no stranger to any of those questions. And I’m not going to promise you that this book will tell you the answers, because everybody’s answers will be different. All this book will do is help you figure out those answers—and more—for yourself.

You might be wondering why this book is different. First of all, I’m 22, and I remember what it’s like being right where you are now, and since I’ve been through it all, survived it, and made it out the other side, I can now pass on all the info to you. So, this isn’t going to be one of those books written by some well-meaning but out-of-touch adult who wants you to “stay in school, and don’t do drugs!” Sure, I want those things for you, too, but I’m coming at it from a different angle.

*Being a teen girl is like riding a roller coaster, except you step on it as a kid, and you don’t get off it until you are an adult.*

When I was in high school, I felt alone and misunderstood, like most teens. I was the older sister, and my mom wasn't really able to "be there" for me, so I didn't have anybody to talk to who could give me advice or tell me what to expect. I wished for somebody to come along and give me tips and advice, let me know what was happening, and reassure me that everything was going to be okay, even though I felt that was the last thing that would ever happen. And now that I've "been there, done that"—survived high school, started my business, achieved things I'm really proud of, overcome some really difficult obstacles, and built a life that I'm really excited about—I feel like I can be that older, wiser best friend that *I* was looking for—for you!

This book is filled with over 1001 tips (yup, I counted!) that you can start using *today*, everything from getting real, honest-to-goodness, body-loving confidence to being a star at school, becoming a global citizen, and doing your part to change the world. This book is about action and results that you can start to see right away, because why wait any longer? When I was in high school, I wanted steps—a formula for success, stuff I could do to get closer to what I wanted *right now*. I wanted the inside scoop; I wanted to know stuff that I wasn't being told; I wanted a friend to guide me through it. I hope this book is all that—and then some—for you.

This book is for every teen who has ever complained about something in her life. Why? Because when you complain, you do so because you know there is another option, a better one, something else that you want. This book helps you get that, whatever it may be. You complain about your grades because you want better ones; you complain about things that are hard because you want them to be easier, right? What do you complain about the most? Instead of focusing on the problem, let's work on the solution. This book takes the inaction of complaining and turns it into action, moving towards more of what you want and leaving behind what you don't.

Of course, there are some things you can't change. I mean, your parents are your parents, your genes are your genes, and your location is your location. But you *can* change the relationship with your parents, you *can* do stuff to nurture the

relationship with your body, and you *can* make the best of living where you live right now and work towards a future somewhere else. See? Complaining isn't that bad after all, because it shows you want you want. Now it's up to you to do something about it!

But, before we get going, we need to clear up some important things; like, what is an Empowered Gal (EG) anyway? And what on earth are those 9 Life Lessons?

First of all, an EG is a young woman who knows who she is, takes action to get what she wants, and takes responsibility for her life and her future. She knows she is fabulous and strong and can do anything she puts her mind to. Every girl can be an EG. It doesn't happen overnight, but trust that she is in there, just waiting to be let out. And with the help of this book, she will be!

The 9 Life Lessons will provide you with an intro to the nine most important areas of your life. It's like Math 101 or English 101 at school—it provides you with the basic groundwork that you build on, more and more every year, for the rest of your life. It puts you in the driver's seat. You might not be able to control the ups and downs, and you probably will encounter hills, valleys, and obstacles along the way, but you do control which roads you take and how quickly you get to different destinations. And just like life, there are different forks that lead you off in different directions, and it's up to you to decide which ones you want to take. You can take the ones that lead you closer to your dream life or farther away from it, and it's ultimately up to you where you go. The lessons in this book will help you make the right decisions for you, whatever they may be, and help you steer yourself towards a life you love—but I'm getting ahead of myself.

These 9 Life Lessons came from what I remember about being a teen and what girls all over the world are going through, right this very second. I realized that no matter where you live, whether it is the middle of farm country or the mansions of Beverly Hills, if you are a teen girl, you are going through pretty much the same stuff. How do I know? I asked you! Well, not *you* you, but girls in general. What follows are the most common responses to the age-old question: What do you really, really, really want?

*"I want to actually like who I am and what I look like. I want to stop comparing myself to other girls and learn how to be okay with me and my body."*

—Melissa, 14

*"I want to have a good friend who I can count on, no matter what."*

—Tanya, 15

*"I want to have a great relationship with my mom and dad. I want to be able to communicate with them better than I do now."*

—Denise, 15

*"I want to have relationships with guys that aren't so dramatic. Plus, I want to understand them; they are so confusing!"*

—Dominique, 18

*"I want make the right choices when it comes to sex. There's so much pressure that I'm not sure what to do."*

—Patty, 17

*"I want to do well in school, be better at studying, and get into a really good college."*

—Michelle, 16

*"I want a good job, so that I can support myself and my family. That's really important to me."*

—Lucinda, 18

*"I want to be healthy, have energy, and do good things for my body."*

—Charlotte, 16

*"I want to give back and make a difference. I want to feel like I matter."*

Here's what I think: I think you want to like yourself more, get to know who you are, feel good about yourself, love your body, feel confident in your skin, have better friendships, be a better friend, deal with mean girls and peer pressure, stand up for yourself, get on better with your parents, make healthier choices about dating and sex, have the courage to decide what's right for you, get better grades, do well in school, get accepted into your dream school, make some money, find your passion, get healthy and have more energy, give back, and make a difference in the world. You, like most teens, probably just don't know how. It can be hard, I know! But now, you hold in your hands the first step in getting there. The catch is that just reading this book isn't enough; you need to turn these words into action, and apply these lessons to your own life.

By the end of this book, you will be able to:

- ☆ Identify the difference between real self-esteem and “fake” self-esteem.
- ☆ Stop playing characters in your life and start being *you*.
- ☆ Be a self-esteem queen and figure out who you are
- ☆ Banish the “body blues,” and start working towards a loving, nurturing relationship with your body.
- ☆ Be media smart, and banish your self-esteem robbers.
- ☆ Identify the right friends for you, and strengthen the friendships you have.
- ☆ Survive the ups and downs of the friend-o-coaster.
- ☆ Become *you* centered, not friend or guy centered.
- ☆ Spot and deal with toxic friends and mean girls.
- ☆ Understand your parents, and work towards a win/win relationship.
- ☆ Stop pushing your parents' buttons, and get more of what you want.
- ☆ Communicate effectively to get your point across the right way.
- ☆ Figure out if you are ready to date, and who you want to date.
- ☆ Date smart, respect yourself, and get what you need from the relationship.

- ☆ Make healthy decisions about dating, and date for the right reasons.
- ☆ Deal with breakups the EG way.
- ☆ Make the right sex decisions for *you*.
- ☆ Decode guy lingo and know what he really means when he says what he says.
- ☆ Understand the importance of protecting yourself.
- ☆ Know why abstinence is awesome, and why you should wait until you are ready.
- ☆ Succeed at school, and improve your performance.
- ☆ Study smart, and deal with test stress and anxiety.
- ☆ Identify what kind of postsecondary education you want, and take steps to get there.
- ☆ Find the right job for you and get it.
- ☆ Ace every interview and become irreplaceable at work.
- ☆ Start planning now for your dream career and make it happen.
- ☆ Identify what is and isn't healthy and how to eat right and exercise the right way.
- ☆ Mind your mental health.
- ☆ Avoid addictions and resist peer pressure.
- ☆ Give back, and become socially responsible.
- ☆ Take easy steps to “green up” your life and save the planet.

And that's just the beginning! This book will transform you and the way that you think about your life. It is designed to be your BBFF (best book friend forever). It is 100 percent real, authentic, and from the heart. Whether you are deliriously happy, screaming at the top of your lungs, collapsed in a heap on your bedroom floor, feeling misunderstood, laughing uncontrollably, confused, heartbroken, upset, or a combination of the above, I can guarantee you that it gets easier—and way more fun. But that doesn't mean that you can't make the most of *right now*. Life is happening all around you, and wishing it away is such a mega-waste! You have so

much awesome potential to do cool stuff, change your life, change the world, and start working towards your dreams and goals.

Even though you are probably still living at home, going to school, and dependent on your parents doesn't mean that you don't have control over your life. Take it from me—you have *way* more than you give yourself credit for. You control things like:

- ☆ The clothes you wear
- ☆ The people you hang out with
- ☆ The makeup and hairstyle you choose
- ☆ The music you listen to
- ☆ Your friends
- ☆ Your boyfriend/girlfriend
- ☆ Decisions about drugs, drinking, or breaking the law
- ☆ How you treat people
- ☆ How hard you work
- ☆ Your grades
- ☆ How you talk to people
- ☆ Your honesty and integrity

Cool, right? It's 100 percent your decision what to do about those things. It's also up to you how you use this book. You can flip through it, skim a couple chapters that interest you here and there, put it on your shelf for a lazy Sunday down the road, or give it away ... *or* you could invest in yourself, sit down, and read through it. Like everything in your life, it's up to you!

And remember it's *your* book! Use it, make notes in the margin, highlight stuff, mark the pages you want to go back to, and write answers to questions asked in the blank spaces provided. There are also note pages in the back that you can use to take notes or jot down ideas.

And case you were wondering who I am, I can start by telling who I'm not: I'm *not* the kid of a famous doctor or author; I'm *not* a therapist; I'm *not* a middle-aged man or woman who wants to get in on the teen market by writing a "Thou shall

not do xyz” kind of book; I’m not a socialite, a model, or a recovering addict of any kind. I’m pretty much just like you, except in an older been-there-survived-that kind of way. I have researched, talked to thousands of teen girls, and conducted surveys, while also drawing on my own teen experiences, and in doing so, I found out what kind of book *you* wanted to read. Who else am I? I am the founder of EG Inc., a company all about *you*. I speak at high schools, events, seminars, and pretty much anywhere with a mic and young people. I am also a crazy yorkie lover. I hate to fly but do it all the time. I’m sometimes super-confused and overwhelmed. I love food, especially anything cooked by my dad. I’m a farm girl at heart. I love my life, and would one day love my own TV and/or cooking show. I have a minor addiction to reality TV. And one of my favorite things to do is collect sea glass in Santa Barbara. That’s me, ladies! But most important, I’m on your team. This book is sort of like a conversation between me and you, just like I would talk to you if you were sitting in my living room. I want you to use these lessons, like I did, to start creating your life your way.

Sound good? All right, let’s go! Welcome to *The Empowered Gal’s 9 Life Lessons!*

xoxo

Kate

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