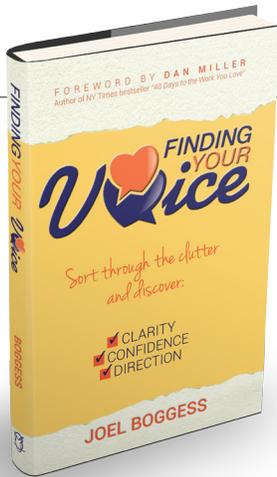


# Finding Your Voice

*Sort Through the Clutter and Discover Clarity, Confidence, and Direction*  
by Joel Boggess



## Sound Wisdom

© 2013, Joel Boggess  
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## SUCCESS Points

*In this book you'll learn:*

- What it means to live authentically
- That your past doesn't have to define your future
- The value of your emotions
- How to discover your passion
- That it's OK to experiment and fail

## The Authentic Life

Stop trying to live up to others' expectations.

### QUICK OVERVIEW

It's easy to fall into the trap of working and living to please other people. For example, perhaps your parents lovingly pushed you toward a career because they believed it would offer financial security or prestige. If you heeded their advice without regard for your personality, style, values or strengths, you may regret every moment you spend at the office—not to mention the time and money you invested in preparation for said career. Or maybe you started out in a role you loved but have been promoted into one that no longer fits. Now, rather than looking forward to each day, you dread it.

In *Finding Your Voice*, Joel Boggess shares stories and personal experiences to demonstrate the emotional and physical consequences of living less than authentically. He also offers advice on how to untangle yourself from a life that isn't really your own. You'll learn how to find your passion and let go of limiting beliefs so you can create a fulfilling life.

### APPLY AND ACHIEVE

Boggess points out that people often regard every decision as critical—life and death. “One wrong choice, and BAM! it's over. The pressure to make the right decision becomes so intense, the tendency can be to do nothing rather than make a wrong decision.” In reality, most decisions are far less serious. The real risk is inaction.

Boggess suggests approaching decisions with the mindset that every choice and new experience is an opportunity to grow and learn. Remove the drama from your decisions by assuming that there could be several right choices. Then, make one and move on!

What is it that you've wanted to try? Have you thought about taking a class or a trip? Have you been considering a career change? Give yourself permission to try. If you fail, choose to learn from the experience and realize that, as Zig Ziglar said, “Success is not permanent and failure is not fatal.”

# SUMMARY

## FINDING YOUR VOICE

**A** fake voice, whether from a “frienemy” or in a political debate, is easy to identify and difficult to listen to for any length of time. Falseness grates on the nerves and wears on the soul. We *crave* authenticity.

So many people today—maybe even you—struggle through life weighed down by all the people standing on their shoulders: the perfect parent, the fearless leader, the high-achieving employee, the responsible child, the amazing spouse, the caring volunteer, the conscientious money manager. All those voices whisper in your ears like the angel and devil from old cartoons—the angel perched on one shoulder, the devil anchored on the other. They tell you what to say, what to think, what to dream, and how to act. They drown out your authentic voice. Worse, the cacophony of demands and expectations crushes your spirit and keeps you from seeing, thinking, dreaming, and being the person you were designed to be. It’s no surprise you’ve lost your voice—it’s a wonder you can even breathe!

Now let me ask you this: Would it be OK for life to go on like this forever—with these characters and their persuasive yet counterfeit voices permanently weighing you down? Do you want to continue shouting against the crowd of voices until you can hardly speak?

I’m willing to bet you want something different—something *better*—for your life. Amid all the noise and confusion and demands, you want to find your voice and experience a life authentic to you.

In *For Love of the Game*, Kevin Costner’s character, baseball pitcher Billy Chapel, uses the phrase “clear the mechanism” to get in “the zone.” With those words, the outside noises—his teammates’ banter, jeers from the opposing team’s dugout, the crowd in the stands—all fade into silence. Suddenly, he’s able to focus on who he is and what he does best. That’s *his* voice.

Here’s the good news: like Chapel, your voice is within you. With focus and intention, you can block out the noise and distractions and reconnect with it. When you hear it, there will be no mistaking its authenticity. You won’t have to wonder what you’re supposed to be doing with your life; you’ll *know* without doubt or reservation. And just as important, you’ll know what you shouldn’t be doing and whom you should ignore. One by one, you can flick those characters off your shoulders until you hear only the voice that really matters—*yours*. Imagine the peace that kind of clarity could bring to your personal and professional life.

Do You Know Your Own Voice?

What does it mean to “find your voice”?

- It means getting in touch with your emotions and what excites you.
- It means understanding your value and worth.

- It means knowing the *real* you.
- It is *your* full expression.

Your voice affects everything you do. When it’s clear and strong, you feel strong; you are also at peace with your choices because you live with intention. When you know your voice, you don’t need someone else to give you approval because you’ve already approved of yourself.

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**When you hear your voice,  
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authenticity.**

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When you know your voice, you:

- *Value* your enduring qualities and unique traits,
- *Own* who you are and understand what is important to you,
- *Are intentional* with your thoughts and actions,
- *Create* a plan by visualizing your best life,
- And *embrace* your excitement and emotions.

It feels amazing to know who you are and to stop trying to be someone you’re not. But the personal benefits aren’t even the best part. Think about it: Who else benefits when you are at your best? Everyone, right? When you use your unique gifts and do what you love, you exude energy; happiness pours out of you and covers the people around you.

## WHAT’S YOUR STORY?

While the events, trauma, and drama of your past may have shaped your present circumstances and beliefs, they don’t have to dictate your future. You don’t have to remain chained to your past mistakes or others’ perceptions of you.

Many people look at their lives and think, *I’ve screwed things up so completely... I deserve the mess I’m in*. Still others believe lies they heard from authority figures and/or the media: You’re not good/smart/pretty/sexy/\_\_\_\_\_ enough to deserve a better life. If thoughts like those threaten to hold you captive in an unhappy or unfulfilling life, know this: Your

## What Passion Isn't

### **Passion Isn't Your Role**

Some roles are carried throughout life. Others are short-lived. In either case, even if the role is significant (like that of a parent) it doesn't define your voice or your passion.

### **Passion Isn't Your Skills or Talents**

While knowledge of your competencies and skills is good, those traits don't equate to passion. Passion is about living a life that captures your essence and takes your breath away. To experience that, you must look beyond the mechanics and processes of what you've been trained and told to do.

### **Passion Isn't Your Voice**

You need to understand your passion in order to fully express your voice; just don't mistake the two for being the same thing.

### **Passion Isn't an Occupation**

Passion is bigger and deeper than any occupation. Certainly, it is wonderful if you can tap into what excites you and use that enthusiasm in your career. But a career isn't the only place passion can serve you.

biography doesn't have to be your destiny. Your past mistakes and even your present circumstances don't define you.

No one enjoys suffering or trials. But we can take comfort in the knowledge that every struggle we endure can make us stronger and better if we choose to learn from the experience. You may discover that the difficulties you're facing now or that have touched your life in the past hold clues to finding your voice. Your struggles can become the catalyst for moving into a better place—emotionally, spiritually, financially, and relationally.

Interestingly, the events that take us to the lowest points in our life (business and career failures, the loss of a loved one, a financial collapse, etc.) often turn out to be both a springboard for greater success and a sounding-board for the voice within us. Zig Ziglar, Dave Ramsey, Dan Miller, and many other people whose wisdom is part of our everyday conversations, experienced devastating circumstances before they became household names. Ziglar failed as a salesperson before becoming a top seller in his company. He went on to share his insights with millions and build an internationally respected leadership and sales training company. Ramsey and Miller both experienced financial devastation before reaching successes beyond their wildest dreams. Each of these men chose to use their stories of personal disaster to empower others. You can do the same. No matter where you are in life, you can use your circumstances to catapult you forward rather than allow them to hold you back.

- You have a story others need to hear.
- Maybe it's a story of trial.
- Maybe it's a story of hope.
- Maybe it's a story of overcoming.

Whatever your story, I hope you'll choose to grow from the experience and then share what you learn with the world.

## WHY PASSION MATTERS

Knowing what really excites and ignites you is an essential step toward finding your voice. Conversely, not knowing your passion prevents you from living your authentic life and from effectively sharing your gifts with the world. The results of denying your true voice in the long term can be devastating. Some people suffer from depression, and even heart disease and high blood pressure. Unfortunately, as my friend and mentor, Dan Miller, points out, "People pray, 'Please God, give me a sign. What should I do with my life? Should I stay in this job I hate or not?' They don't realize that the indigestion, heartburn, rashes, migraines, high blood pressure, and various other stress-related ailments are all signs. What more does God have to do?"

A passionless life leads to a miserable existence of mediocrity and "just getting by." You've surely heard the term "soul-sucking job." Well, when you aren't passionate about your day-to-day work, it can drain the life right out of you. When you're not happy, your work suffers. When your work suffers, your boss and clients notice, and, eventually, that shows up as lack of funds in your bank account. In contrast, Thomas Stanley explains in his book *The Millionaire Mind* that eighty percent of millionaires

**When you use your unique gifts and do what you love, you exude energy; happiness pours out of you and covers the people around you.**

believe they would have never been successful had they not been extremely excited about their vocation.

Excitement is one of the key indicators of passion. When you wake up early because you look forward to the day, or when you lose track of time because you are “in the zone” and completely engaged in the task at hand—that’s passion. For entrepreneurs and salespeople, this enthusiasm is especially critical. It’s far easier to earn a living doing something you love. And the truth is, you’re going to need excitement when the phone doesn’t ring. Slumps happen to everyone. But when you believe in what you’re doing and are excited about your work, it’s much easier to push through those down times and into success.

### **Go Ahead: Experiment with Life!**

Have you ever watched a creative cook in the kitchen? A dash of this, a dollop of that, a pinch of something else... and the next thing you know, you’re biting into a delicious concoction for which no recipe exists. Occasionally this kind of cook misses the mark: a cake flops or the sweet and sour sauce turns out a little too sour. In general though, experimental cooking works out just fine—and sometimes the combination of flavors blows your mind.

Working with the assumption that the food will be, at a minimum, edible and quite possibly amazing, the cook experiments with the ingredients, cooking temperature, and time in the oven. A periodic taste test and an occasional peek under the lid ensure the creation is on track. The same approach that can work wonders in the kitchen can also work wonders in your life. Unfortunately, rather than experimenting and “taste testing” along the way many people approach every decision as if life and death hang in the balance. One wrong choice, and BAM! it’s over. The pressure to make the *right* decision becomes so intense, the tendency can be to do nothing rather than make a wrong decision. But what if you approached life differently (with a new belief perhaps) and assumed that by and large, most things work out OK and the things that don’t generally aren’t major catastrophes? What if you chose to see each situation for what it really is? A chance to grow.

If you tend to get stuck in indecision for fear of making a wrong move, try removing the drama from your decisions. Release the pressure to make the “right” decision by realizing that there may be several good choices. If you don’t love the results of the first experiment, scratch it and go on to the next choice.

What have you always wanted to do? Why haven’t you done it? What has been holding you back? How could you experiment with that idea?

Even small experiments can open your mind to new ideas and possibilities. By giving yourself permission to try something on a temporary basis, you free yourself from the fear of failure. It’s OK if your experiment fails. Testing an idea’s merit is what experiments are for. Maybe it will work. Maybe you’ll love it. Or maybe you’ll decide it isn’t for you after all. You could study a subject that interests you, volunteer with a cause that tugs at your heart, take an internship or short-term apprenticeship, plan a trip to a place you’ve never been before, take on one client on a freelance assignment. You don’t have to commit for a lifetime, and you might discover something that stirs your soul like never before.

### **Get Emotional**

If you looked out the window the last time you took a flight you probably noticed the ramp agent—you know, the guy wearing earmuffs and carrying an orange flashlight in each hand. The agent uses those flashlights to direct the pilots safely between the gate and runway. Now, the pilot doesn’t *have* to follow the ramp agent’s directions. He has full control of his plane and can choose to go the way the flashlights are pointing, or go in the opposite direction. He has the *ability* to do either. But for his safety and the well-being of his passengers, he’s probably going to choose to follow the agent’s guidance.

Your emotions, like the ramp agent’s directions, can be action signals pointing you in a particular direction. Society tells you to ignore some types of emotions, but I don’t believe that’s what God intended by allowing you to experience them. I believe He wants you to do something with what you’re feeling. For example, if you’re experiencing sadness, it could be His signal to grieve; if you’re experiencing frustration, it could be His sign that you need to change your approach. Like the pilot, you have the freedom to follow the emotional directions God puts in your path—or you can choose to pretend you don’t feel them and continue on your course.

# SUMMARY

## FINDING YOUR VOICE

What would happen if you followed some of the directions or guidance you're picking up through your emotions? You know the feelings:

- A sense that you should say no to a new project.
- A desire to try something new.
- Excitement about participating in an accountability group.
- The instinctive feeling that you should talk to a stranger (or avoid them).

By looking inward and trusting yourself and your emotions, you will often discover the answers you've been looking for. And you may find the key that will unlock your voice and new opportunities to use it. If you feel happy, excited, intrigued, or joyful at the prospect of taking a particular action, try it! Remember, it's OK to experiment. Trust your instincts. And, if it turns out to be something that doesn't work, take what you learn from the experience and move on to the next.

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**If you tend to get stuck in indecision for fear of making a wrong move, try removing the drama from your decisions.**

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### ENJOY THE JOURNEY

Finding your voice is a process—a journey without a designated end. There may be moments when you may get frustrated with a lack of perceptible progress. Other times, you'll revel in the joy and peace of feeling fully confident in yourself. But at no point will you sit back on your sofa and say, "That's it! I've arrived. I'm as good and as happy as I'll ever be."

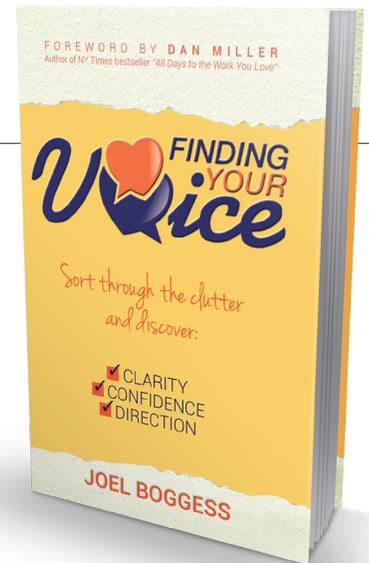
No, you will continue to evolve every day! Life will present new challenges and opportunities. Even as you grow and change, you can become more in tune with who you really are and with what matters most to you.

### ***What Do You Believe?***

Everyone accepts certain beliefs as truth. These beliefs can be good or bad, true or false, effective or ineffective. Either way, your beliefs shape the way you live your life. Always.

- What you believe *about yourself* can push you to either explore new opportunities or to close yourself off from the risks of getting hurt and making mistakes.
- What you believe *about the world and your place in it* determines how you interact with others and what you allow yourself to experience.

The underlying issue behind most beliefs or excuses is the question of *deservedness* or *worth*. If you don't address beliefs that may be limiting you, it doesn't matter how many books you read, how many motivational seminars you attend, or how many coaches, therapists, or ministers you pour your heart out to. You'll remain stuck—held captive by chains you've put on yourself. Regardless of how unbreakable those chains seem, with a little faith and practice, you'll discover that it's possible to *control* what you believe about yourself and the world around you. When you learn how to believe differently about yourself, questions like "Do I deserve this?" begin to dissolve.



## About the Author

**Joel Boggress** is a career coach, motivational speaker and radio host. His passion and expertise is teaching people how to connect with who they really are, what excites them and what they stand for. He holds an MBA and a master's in counseling from Amberton University.

## Action Steps

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned. Here are a few questions, thoughts and activities to get you started.

1. Do you feel like you're living an authentic life? Or do you feel like you're trying to live up to other people's expectations?
2. Do you know what your enduring traits or unique qualities are? Make a list of the aspects of your character that define who you really are.
3. What event or circumstances from your past could be impeding your success now?
4. How could you rewrite that story so that you can learn from the past without being controlled by it?
5. What are you excited about? How can you incorporate that enthusiasm into your daily life and work?
6. What are you willing to experiment with this week?
7. How could you harness your emotions and use them for guidance this week?

## Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of **Finding Your Voice**, check out:

**The Compound Effect** by Darren Hardy

**Stop Saying You're Fine** by Mel Robbins

**The Barefoot Executive** by Carrie Wilkerson

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