

PART TWO



**ESTABLISH A STRONG
FOUNDATION**



CHAPTER THREE

The THRIVE Principles™

“Smooth seas do not an experienced sailor make.”

Anonymous

When you head out on a trip to a place you’ve never been before, do you take the time to get a map, some directions, or a compass to help you get there? Most people do. If you’re traveling with children, you’ll notice they always want to know “are we there yet?” or “how much longer?” Although your children won’t ask these questions about the divorce process, they will experience the same sort of impatience for getting back into a routine or some semblance of “normalcy.” Getting through the maze of divorce and learning to become a great single parent is going to be one of the most important journeys you can take in your life, so it’s vital that you prepare properly.

I created my map the day I decided it wasn’t good enough to simply “survive” or “get through” my divorce. For the sake of my children and myself, I chose to flourish and thrive instead. If life was going to hand me lemons, I was going to make some delicious lemonade!

I had a Masters degree in public policy from Harvard University and worked as a senior policy adviser and a fund-raising expert for many years. I was trained to give politicians, top-level bureaucrats, and administrators strategic advice, analysis, and policy recommendations. But when it came to steering my course through my divorce, I felt ill-prepared. My academic qualifications and professional experience

didn't help me when it came to my own personal policy and direction. So I realized I needed to retrain myself. Equipped with the academic degrees to prove my intellectual ability, what I was lacking was training in emotional resiliency.

I started the process of reinventing and retraining myself, working with some of the best transformational and business trainers in the world. The drive to thrive propelled me through my healing and sparked the birth of my new company, Thrive After Divorce Inc. The company's mission is to empower people experiencing divorce to fearlessly create and express their highest potential. This chapter will give you the roadmap of the core principles you need to bring with you on your journey—the THRIVE Principles™.

The THRIVE Principles™

The THRIVE Principles™ have been fundamental to weathering any personal or professional storm I've encountered. The creation of the THRIVE Principles™ came to me during the course of writing this book. As I did my research, spoke to single parents, and reflected on my own experiences of divorce, I kept asking myself what was my motivating force that kept me going forward? What core values did I use as a compass to direct me on the road ahead? As I asked myself these questions, I kept hearing the word “thrive” and feeling the energy of that word resonate in my heart. The word itself conveys a sense of inspiration, hope and success. From this self-inquiry, I came to articulate what I call the THRIVE Principles™. As you'll see, each THRIVE Principle™ is a fundamental value or principle, configured together in an acronym that provides an easy frame of reference. These are not new principles. In fact, these universal principles and values have been taught by many great spiritual teachers and leaders over centuries of human existence. What is new, however, is the positioning of these core principles together.¹⁰

They are:

The THRIVE Principles™

Trust
Honesty
Responsibility
Integrity
Vision
Expression

T—Trust

The first principle is to TRUST. After divorce, your ability to trust others and yourself may be shattered. Divorce signifies the breakdown of trust in the partners at some level. For some, trust is broken in an obvious manner, such as infidelity or physical or emotional abuse. For others, trust is eroded more incrementally as partners grow apart and start taking each other for granted.

In order to trust others, we must first start with trusting ourselves. Author Stephen M. R. Covey argues that self-trust creates credibility and confidence. “Every time we make and keep a commitment to ourselves or set and achieve a meaningful goal, we become more credible,” says Covey. “The more we do it, the more confidence we have that we can do it, that we will do it.”¹¹

Trust that you are made of the right stuff. Within yourself, you have every resource or skill you need to help you find your way through a problem. It’s just a matter of learning how to access your own incredible talents.

Most importantly, we need to trust ourselves. You are the world’s best expert on you, so please listen to yourself! Taking endless polls of other people’s opin-

ions only leads to analysis paralysis. Trust that you will make mistakes and that you can learn from them. When in doubt, simply take a deep breath, check in with your intuition, and trust where your heart wants to lead you.

You need to trust that your children will be healthy, happy, and capable of creating their own loving relationships. This may be hard, particularly at those moments when you see them unhappy, stressed, or confused. Trust that this relationship breakdown is part of a bigger picture that you cannot yet see.

Trust is a process of believing in yourself today, tomorrow, and the next day. It is a daily commitment you make to yourself. Trust that you can create healthy, intimate relationships in the future by choosing to learn from the mistakes of the past. Without trust in yourself, you are rudderless, and everything will feel difficult, confusing, or even scary. With trust, anything is possible.

H—Honesty

It's so important to learn to be HONEST with yourself and with others. Without honesty, there can be no authenticity. When you can be real with yourself and with others, they can be real with you. Clearly, a lack of honesty at some level plays a role in divorce.

This is an incredibly important lesson to teach our children. When we cover up our pain, our children sense that immediately. They then internalize the message, "I must learn to cover up my pain." Let's teach our children that they don't have to be perfect little human beings. Let's teach them that they are loved unconditionally for the human beings they are, complete with all their talents and flaws. We see their beauty and appreciate them for the treasures that they are in our lives.

To be honest and bare your heart to people leaves you vulnerable, which is why many people hedge their truth or hold back. Through our willingness and courage to be truly vulnerable, however, we can create relationships with greater intimacy and authentic connection.

In my own life, my connection with my children is far stronger than it was before my divorce and is a direct result, I believe, of my willingness to be honest and transparent with them. I express what's true for me, and they, in turn, feel safe and supported. They are willing to be honest with me and share what's true for them.

If you need help, be honest and ask for what you need. If you want to say no, be honest and decline. I'm always astonished how often people will say yes to a request just to be polite or "do the right thing" and then carry out the task with resentment and procrastination. Honesty is critical for business and personal

partnerships of all kinds. Relationships built on honesty lead to more satisfaction and long-term success than those built on false pretenses.

R—Responsibility

The third principle is RESPONSIBILITY. As many great spiritual teachers tell us, we need to be 100 percent responsible for our current reality. We put ourselves in the driver's seat of our life only when we take 100 percent responsibility. Otherwise, we end up as the perpetual backseat driver—always knowing better after the fact.

When I first heard the concept of taking 100 percent responsibility at a personal-growth seminar I attended more than fifteen years ago, I was resistant and disbelieving. The seminar leader proposed that we are always 100 percent responsible for our reality, even in relationships. "I'm 100 percent responsible? That's not fair!" I groaned. I had thought that my ultimate goal in my relationship would be a fifty-fifty partnership, and therefore, I was only half responsible for the quality of my relationship.

As I struggled to try on this principle of 100 percent responsibility, I could see how much psychic energy I had spent evaluating that fifty-fifty equation on a regular basis. "Hey, today I put in about 75 percent, and you only put in 25 percent" would be the unconscious and unstated conclusion of how I would interact with my husband. Not being willing to take 100 percent responsibility left me blaming him and others. It left me feeling powerless because I let some portion of my happiness and well-being rest in the hands of other people, including my husband, to show up with their "50 percent" responsibility for the relationship. The truth of being 100 percent for myself and my happiness started to sink in.

Without responsibility, you are the powerless victim, spending your time and energy blaming others and making excuses for why you didn't get what you wanted in life. When you take responsibility, you are then able to make changes and take action to accomplish your goals. As I accepted that I was 100 percent responsible for the quality of my relationship, I began to feel a sense of relief and empowerment. I wasn't responsible for the actions or behaviors of others, but I was responsible for how I acted and behaved in response.

An often-overlooked component of responsibility is to distinguish the things you're responsible for from the things you are not responsible for. Women seem particularly skilled at taking responsibility for the emotional well-being and actions of others, while at the same time ignoring their responsibility to their own happiness and health. Before I truly understood and started living by this principle of responsibility, I had been a great believer in being compassionate

with other people and caring for them. Unfortunately, I ignored my own needs to the point that I allowed myself to become a doormat in some of my important personal and business relationships. Using the principle of responsibility will help you to set clear and healthy boundaries in business and affairs of the heart.

It's never too early to introduce our children to the concept of responsibility. How many times has your child broken something or done something wrong, only to react with the stock "It's not my fault!" response? I know mine have. What I try to instill in my children is that it's important to be responsible for their own words and actions and that I expect them to be responsible for fixing their mistakes. Instead of crying over spilled milk, teach your children how to mop up the mess. This will take you out of the rescuer mode and support your children in becoming responsible and capable adults.

I—Integrity

One of the most fundamental principles is INTEGRITY. Your word is incredibly powerful and sets the universe in motion to align with your word. It's vital that you do what you say and say what you do. If you don't follow through on your word, whether it's your diet and exercise plan or making that call to your accountant, you are not honoring your word. Integrity has always been a fundamental value for me personally all my life, but my training as an integrative coach gave me a more complete appreciation for how powerful and fundamentally important this concept is.

Can you count on people who make promises to you and then don't follow through? Of course not! Yet that's the signal you give yourself every time you don't honor your own word: you can't count on you. You let yourself down. In fact, breaking promises to yourself is one way that you disrespect and devalue yourself. To thrive after divorce, you're going to need to count on you. Remember, actions speak louder than words.

When you're in integrity, you know it. A part of your vital life force gets snagged on whatever issue or relationship is out of integrity. Your mind engages in endless loops of inner dialogue that rationalize or justify why it's "okay" to not honor your word. It's like having a computer program running in the background, which slows your processing speed and sabotages your productivity. Being out of integrity chews up your psychic bandwidth.

If you don't honor your word, you must restore your integrity in order to get back into your flow. Fess up to yourself about the areas in your life in which you are not meeting your commitment. Either follow through or de-commit. As you extend your horizons, you have to keep raising the bar of your integrity.

Living in full integrity helps you to live “in the zone” where you’ll find it effortless and magical to accomplish your goals.

In relationships, I’ve found integrity to be an invaluable yardstick in choosing my friends, clients, and business partners. Does someone call you when they say they will or follow through on their actions? If they don’t, chances are that lack of integrity pervades their life more broadly. To thrive after divorce, you need a support system that is strong and unwavering. Dealing with people who are always out of integrity with you drains your precious energy. Use the integrity principle to create a safety net for yourself of people who have strong integrity as well.

V—Vision

Whether you’re raising children, finding a relationship, building a trim body, or exploring a new hobby, you must take the time to create an inspiring VISION for yourself. This is particularly important for single parents who need to replace the old “happily ever after” vision with a new one that fits their current reality. It’s an important principle, but it’s also the first pitfall many single parents fall into.

Without a vision, we don’t have the big picture. Multitasking, information overload, juggling overcrowded schedules, and high stress levels seem to characterize life in the twenty-first century. It’s easy to get caught up in battling the daily brush fires, feeling like you can never get ahead. No wonder so many people feel like they’re working harder than ever and can’t enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Winston Churchill once said, “Never mistake the edge of your rut for the horizon.” Articulating a vision defines your true horizon. Your vision should empower you and light you up from the inside. Holding a vision will pull you through the day-to-day challenges and keep you in action toward your goals. Being a great parent and creating a successful relationship with your ex-partner (if you so choose) will take every ounce of energy, creativity, and commitment that you have. That’s why having a vision to fuel you and guide you is absolutely critical. We’ll go into greater detail on the importance of vision and how you can create one in Chapter 4, “Pitfall #1: Not Having a Big Picture.”

Articulating a new vision will also be a great support for your children. Most children do not fare well with uncertainties and unknowns. Letting them know you have a game plan will give them security and a sense of direction. You can even invite them to create it with you.

E—Expression

The final principle is EXPRESSION. Human beings have a huge range of emotional expression ranging from rage, sadness, and fear at one end of the spectrum to ecstasy and love at the other. Our *joie de vivre* comes when we can be our authentic selves and fully express ourselves. Young children can be our best teachers of this.

Divorce can cause you to clamp down on your self-expression. Sometimes people find themselves playing a role of “dutiful wife and mother” or “the guy who brings home the bacon.” The ending of a marriage is an opportunity to break out of any old stereotypes and create a new expression of yourself.

You pay a price when you limit your emotional range. Growing up, I was very uncomfortable with anger, so I did everything I could to never feel that way. I would avoid conflict at all costs or try to please other people. But as I capped my risk of feeling those strong negative emotions, I also limited my ability to fully feel the joyous positive emotions that live at the other end of the spectrum.

As one of my teachers told me, emotion is simply energy in motion. Bottling up our emotions is like stuffing psychic sludge into your system. Eventually you either shut down, or you get backed up and explode. What I’ve learned is that expressing all of how I’m feeling is the best strategy I know for living fully and in the moment. You’ll want to bring that energy and joy of life with you as you develop your life after divorce.

THRIVE Is a Mind-set

When you get divorced, imagining your life as a single parent can be daunting. Learning the ropes of being a successful single parent is like finding your way through a complex maze. Adopting the THRIVE Principles™ can help you find your way through the maze quickly, powerfully, and with ease.

The decision to simply “survive” or to “thrive” reflects the mind-set, attitudes, and beliefs you adopt. The ability for you and your children to flourish after divorce is something that starts from the inside and is then expressed outwardly. It starts in your attitude and in your heart first.

Now that we’ve clarified what each of the THRIVE Principles™ is, let’s take a look at how they can make a difference in your mind-set. The table below illustrates how the THRIVE mind-set can take hold in your inner dialogue.

THRIVE Principles™	Choose to “Survive”	Choose to “Thrive”
TRUST	<p>“I can’t trust men/women anymore.”</p> <p>“I’m so stupid—I can’t trust myself.”</p> <p>“I’ll never, ever let myself be in this position again!”</p> <p>“I don’t understand why these things happen to me.”</p>	<p>“I trust I can handle anything.”</p> <p>“I trust that everything happens for a reason.”</p> <p>“I am open to learning from my past mistakes and trust I won’t repeat them in the future.”</p> <p>“I give myself the gift of self-trust.”</p>
HONESTY	<p>“People won’t like me or approve of me if I tell the truth.”</p> <p>“It’s not such a big deal—I’m over it already, honestly!”</p> <p>“A little white lie never hurt anyone.”</p> <p>“Asking for help makes me feel weak and needy.”</p>	<p>“It’s OK to tell others that I’m scared or hurting.”</p> <p>“I know that the truth sets me free.”</p> <p>“I ask for help and support when I need it.”</p>
RESPONSIBILITY	<p>“He/she did this to me.”</p> <p>“It’s not my fault my partner was a jerk.”</p> <p>“My needs have to take a backseat to others, like my children, my family, and my friends.”</p> <p>“I hate to be called selfish.”</p>	<p>“I helped to create this situation.”</p> <p>“I’m responsible for my own happiness.”</p> <p>“My priority is to honor and love myself, first and foremost.”</p> <p>“I honor the emotions and thoughts of others without the need to feel responsible for them or to try to fix them.”</p>
INTEGRITY	<p>“I’ve got too much on my plate so it’s OK that I don’t follow through.”</p> <p>“Everybody else seems to drop the ball on me and expects me to clean it up.”</p> <p>“I try really hard to do what I say.”</p>	<p>“I follow through on my commitments to others and to myself.”</p> <p>“People can count on my word.”</p> <p>“I am surrounded by people I can count on and trust.”</p> <p>“Integrity is the compass I use in my life.”</p>

THRIVE Principles™	Choose to “Survive”	Choose to “Thrive”
VISION	“It seems like I go from one crisis to another.” “I’m so busy, yet I never seem to get anywhere.” “I don’t feel like I make a difference.” “I feel overwhelmed and scared when I think of my future.”	“I feel fueled by a sense of purpose.” “I believe each life event is preparation for my next step.” “I like to step back and get the big picture.” “I feel excited to create my future.”
EXPRESSION	“I edit what I say before I speak.” “I worry about what other people think of me.” “I’ve got to keep myself together and be strong.” “When I get into a funk, I don’t know how to get out of it.”	“I feel free to be me, even if I’m sad or angry.” “I feel vibrant, alive, and happy with who I am.” “Sometimes I feel like a kid at heart and act like one too!” “I’m comfortable expressing my emotions, and not only just the good ones.”

You Deserve to Thrive

Each of us is here because we have a unique talent or gift we bring to the world. You are blessed with your children. Use the THRIVE Principles™ as the foundation for living your life and delivering what you have to offer to your children and the world with passion, joy, and ease!



You can easily teach and model each of the principles to your children. Review the THRIVE Principles™ again, this time considering whether you feel these principles are important for your children to learn. I think you’ll agree with me that the THRIVE Principles™ represent a great cornerstone for creating a happy and inspired future.

Take Action!

- Write the THRIVE Principles™ out on a separate piece of paper or index card so you can post them where you'll see them often.

✓ Accountability Check

- I will complete this exercise by: _____
- I completed this exercise on: _____

 *Remember to Celebrate!* 

- For each principle, create a personal affirmation to reinforce the THRIVE Principles™. Be sure you state the affirmation in the present tense, as if it is already happening.

Examples:

Trust I trust I can handle any situation with ease and grace.

Honesty I am honest with myself and others.

Responsibility I am responsible for my own happiness.

Integrity I have integrity, and people know they can count on me to do what I say.

Vision I have a vision of my children and me having a loving, connected relationship.

Expression I express myself fully each day.

Visit www.7pitfalls.com to download a free copy of affirmations based on the THRIVE Principles™. You can also download a blank affirmation template to fill with your own affirmations and post as a reminder.

Take Action!

MY PERSONAL THRIVE AFFIRMATIONS

TRUST _____

HONESTY _____

RESPONSIBILITY _____

INTEGRITY _____



VISION _____

EXPRESSION _____

Take Action!

✓ Accountability Check

- I will complete this exercise by: _____
- I completed this exercise on: _____

 *Remember to Celebrate!* 

Remember to record your actions in the “Take Action!” Tracker at the end of the book.