



# **ON PURPOSE**

**The Busy Woman's Guide  
to an Extraordinary Life  
of Meaning and Success**

**TANYA DALTON**



An Imprint of Thomas Nelson

Living

# ON PURPOSE

isn't about changing who you are;  
it's *rising up* and becoming the  
*best version* of you.

## A NOTE TO THE READER

Dear Reader,

Before we begin, I want you to understand that this book isn't written to help you fit in with the status quo. It's not designed to line up nice and neatly with how society already works. The shelves at your local bookstore are already buckling under the weight of all those other books that tell you what to think, how to behave, and give you rules for getting things done.

This book is none of that.

I want to challenge you to think for yourself. I don't want to tell you *what* to think; I want to empower you to choose *how you want to think*. I want to shake the foundations of how you view your world. Because it is *your* world, and it's filled with opportunities and choices that perhaps you didn't realize were there. Or, more often than not, you've forgotten the choices were there at all.

In the chaotic rush of our days, we can easily get caught up in the "doing" of life, and we sometimes don't take time to pause, step back, and choose. That's what this book is designed to do. It's an intentional pause in your hectic schedule, a chance to take a good look at how you've been going through your days and question how you feel.

We don't talk about our feelings much, do we? Especially when it comes to emotions at work or our mood as a collective society. Sure, we can

grumble and complain about irritations or frustrations. But the unadulterated pursuit of happiness is treated as something frivolous or silly.

What, then, is the point of our days? If not to find joy, then what?

Sit and think for a moment about any goal, any dream, you've had in the past. At its heart, wasn't it steeped in happiness?

**You wanted a promotion at work. Why?**

*To feel the satisfaction of climbing the ladder.*

**You wanted to run a 5K. Why?**

*To feel the joy of stepping over that finish line.*

**You wanted to get out of debt. Why?**

*To feel the happiness of not worrying about paying the bills.*

We are operating within dated, obsolete models that are desperately in need of evolving, because joy and happiness deserve to have a seat at the table—it's time to pull up a chair for them. It's not enough to just show up and do our work anymore. We have more time on our hands than ever before in history, so why do we feel rushed and stressed and have an overall dull ache of dissatisfaction?

I want to challenge the bedrock beliefs that so many in our world have wholeheartedly trusted because we were told they were truths. I want to help you have a healthy disregard for the impossible; I want you to see yourself for what you are—a changemaker.

I wrote this book for women who are ready to defy the status quo and stand up and see themselves outside of the tidy definitions society has made for us.

It's time to stop operating at ordinary levels and choose to be extraordinary.

A handwritten signature in a cursive script that reads "Tanya".

# HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

There are four sections to this book, with each one designed to build off the last. So while it may be tempting to jump around to the chapters that pull to you, I want to encourage you to read the sections in order. You are, of course, free to go rogue, but allow me to give you a quick overview of the four sections so you can understand how each one connects with the one before it:

**REFLECTION:** We all have a past. Whether we like that past or not doesn't matter. We can allow it to continue its reign of control or we can use the process of reflection to redefine ourselves as we move toward our future.

- Reflection helps answer the question of *why*: Why do we make the choices we do?

**PROJECTION:** Using what we learned from Reflection, we will start looking forward—choosing our future. This is the part of the process when many people can feel stuck or uncertain, so together we will unpack ways to clarify what *you* want for your future.

- Projection helps answer the question of *what*: What are the choices we want to make?

**ACTION:** Once we've projected into our future and explored the possibilities, we want to make sure our actions are aligned with who

we have discovered we are and where we want to go. This is an opportunity to release the fears and doubts that keep you from the life you want.

- Action answers the question of *how*: How do we move forward on the choices we're making?

**ALTERATION:** When we make our plans flexible and we allow for life to happen, we don't get thrown off track when life throws us a curve in the road. In this section we'll find that alteration is sometimes an opportunity for something even better than we dreamed.

- Alteration answers the question of *what if*: What if I get off track?

---

Here's a truth you'll find inked into these pages: when you choose to expand your possibilities, there's no going back to the old hustle. You will see how you can reignite your passion and excitement for life and let go of burnout because you know how to implement strategies to make life feel easier.

In each of the nine chapters, we cover one choice you are able to make that has the ability to dramatically transform your life for the better. Those nine choices are your foundation to take you from a place of simply dreaming up a better future to a place where you truly feel confident and fully prepared to infuse more and more action into those dreams and goals you set for yourself.

All of the things you envision, all of the success you want, can take flight. There's no need to feel like you are staying stagnant and falling short every time you try to push off the ground. You absolutely have the potential to live *On Purpose*—it's about stepping up and choosing to run your life instead of feeling like life is running you.

You'll find that I write in a raw, unique style. I want you to feel as though I am sitting across from you coaching you through every choice. I include very candid stories about my own journey to help you see how I've

navigated through this process in my own life. You'll find I've included stories from women I have worked directly with through my programs and community along with women leaders I admire and respect.

All of these women are very open and honest about their struggles and their triumphs. Most of them have opted to be identified fully in the book, while others found sharing their stories more difficult. For those who preferred anonymity, I've referred to them by a fictitious first name only. But please know that all these women I've included in the book insisted that they wanted their stories told; they believe, as I do, that when we share our journey we light the way for others—especially when that path has been challenging. It is an honor to be able to share these stories with you.

At the end of each chapter I've included many of the common lies we tell ourselves, along with the truths that we've discovered together in the pages before. I also include springboard ideas to help you gain some momentum on your journey because I want to see you succeed.

## INTERACTIVE READER'S GUIDE

Like my first book, *The Joy of Missing Out*, we will cover a lot of unique exercises and tactics. To help you dive deeper into these concepts we discuss, I've created a free Interactive Reader's Guide that you can grab at [TanyaDalton.com](http://TanyaDalton.com), under the Resources section. You'll find additional stories, thought-provoking activities, and more included with this free resource, designed to make it even easier to bring these concepts into your own life. Go grab that now. I promise you're going to want it.

# INTRODUCTION

*Your lab results are clear.*

I felt a little bit like the wind had been knocked out of me; I even waved my hand behind me, blindly looking for a chair to sink into.\* I needed to sit down and take in the weight of that disappointing phrase. Five words that for most people would cue a feeling that might sound like air horns and confetti fluttering from the ceiling inside them.

“Are you sure? Did you run my thyroid? What about my hormones?”

I could hear the cloying desperation in my own voice as if I were demanding that they find something—anything—wrong with me. I couldn’t see the nurse on the other end of the phone, but I could tell she was shaking her head as she sighed and reminded me, “We ran a full panel. There’s absolutely nothing wrong.” She paused and then casually added, “You might want to look at your lifestyle.”

*My lifestyle?!*

No.

Just no.

I didn’t want to look at my lifestyle—I didn’t have time for that. What I needed was a quick solution, a pill or a product I could take to

---

\* Admittedly, I’ve always been prone to being slightly melodramatic.

fix everything. I was tired of being tired. I was frustrated with the extra pounds I was lugging around that made me feel sluggish. And I wasn't the only one who had *had it up to here* with my moods.

I hung up the phone and headed into the kitchen to pour myself a nice, big glass of wine. Apparently there was nothing I could do anyway.

## ARE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE ENOUGH?

My friend Tracy once told me, “We don't leave our suffering because it makes us uncomfortable.”

It was a funny statement; after all, when we are suffering, don't we want it to end? It's like avoiding the dentist when you have a painful toothache simply because you don't want to hear that you need a root canal.

No one wants a root canal.

What's ironic is the root canal isn't what's painful; it's all the moments leading up to it. Getting the procedure done is actually an opportunity for immediate relief from the pain—not a Band-Aid-type fix but a chance to remove it permanently. There's some discomfort in getting it done, but aren't you already uncomfortable?

It's funny, but, I know for me, the discomfort of suffering didn't seem to outweigh the discomfort of change. Honestly, if I could've picked between taking a good, hard look at my lifestyle or walking barefoot on a bed of hot coals, I probably would have started taking off my shoes.

For the next two months after my phone call, irritation and moodiness became my own runway of hot coals. I slipped into becoming comfortable in my own discomfort. I justified it in every way possible, but late at night, when the house was still and there were no distractions, I couldn't escape my own thoughts. I lay bleary-eyed and wide awake, watching the red numbers of the clock tick by the midnight hours.

I stared at the ceiling and chatted with my regular nighttime visitors: Worry would sit and visit perched on the edge of my bed, while Regret whispered quietly in my ear and Stress hogged all the covers while

chattering on at full volume. I couldn't quiet them down. Counting sheep didn't help; neither did counting down the hours: *If I go to sleep now, I'll still get 4 hours of sleep . . . Okay . . . if I fall asleep now, I can still get 3 hours . . . Maybe I can get 2 hours of sleep . . .*

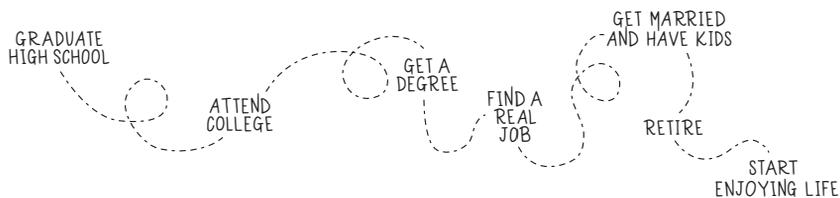
Why did I think it was easier to sit in my suffering? I honestly don't know. I think it's because I felt like this was just the way life was supposed to be.

## WHAT ARE YOU FILLING?

I thought I was checking the boxes of everything I was supposed to do. Maybe you feel the same—punching the clock, wrestling your days like an angry bear, dragging yourself through the daily motions, struggling to find satisfaction.

### We are filling our calendar, but are we filling our souls?

Have we stopped to ask that question? Or have we resigned ourselves to the belief that this is just how life works? We've been sold a life promise that isn't really true—that if we hustle and suffer through, life will magically work out in the end. Maybe we thought our life map was supposed to look something like this:



And when it doesn't, or if we veer off from the “expected” track, we are somehow failing. After all, we live in a world where expectations and perseverance are both put on pedestals, so we get stuck cycling through the soul-crushing motions, living life on repeat, until the day comes that we can retire at the age of 65 . . . *then* we can finally enjoy life a bit.

Stop *borrowing* from

**TODAY**

to make *tomorrow*

**GREAT.**

The days of the cushy retirement package are over, and, truth be told, the cheesy gold watch isn't all it's cracked up to be.

And let's be honest, that's not how life really works. We don't have to settle or slog through our days to earn happiness. We have to stop borrowing from today to make tomorrow great. It's time to start living our lives for today *and* for tomorrow. It's time to get a bigger vision—it's time to rise above the mediocrity.

You dream of more? *Go get it.*

You believe you were designed to change the world? *Yes, you were.*

You wonder if you can reach the brass ring? *It's yours to grab.*

It's time to take up more space, to stand tall in the belief of yourself. This is your chance to say: life can be different—life can be *On Purpose*.

## LIVING ON PURPOSE

Don't let the word *purpose* fool you—it's such a heavily weighted word. *Purpose* simply means working on something bigger than today—living a life aligned with a larger idea created and set by you. We all have a purpose in our lives, even if we don't know right now what that purpose is. I want you to hear this: you were designed for more. You were made for a life that brings joy and satisfaction to yourself and to others.

We can live each day *On Purpose* by deciding how we want to spend the precious time we have—not waiting for an imaginary clock to wind down so we can one day enjoy life. We have lied to ourselves for far too long. We say it's not possible or we find imaginary obstacles conveniently placed in our path. We make excuses to ourselves because we aren't sure what is truly possible.

I know, because that's exactly what I was doing when I was on the phone begging for a diagnosis from the nurse. I was looking for a magic pill when it really just came down to owning the choices I was making—chasing

after success and not taking care of myself because I was too busy trying to look like I had it all together.

Don't feel bad if you've found yourself in a similar situation. Feeling guilt or shame will only hold you back. This is the perfect chance to rise up because of the truth I learned from that hard season:

**Once you accept responsibility for your  
own life, you can do anything.**

It doesn't matter what you've done in the past; what matters is what you do moving forward. By picking up this book, you've made the first step in taking back responsibility and deciding how you want to live.

I do think, though, that if we are going to go through this journey together, it's important to clear the air about one thing: this is not just a goal-setting book. Yes, we will talk about goals and how they fit into the big vision you have for your life, but goals are simply the vehicle to get you where you want to go—they are not the end destination.

It's funny because when I sat down to write, I had planned to write an entire book focused solely on goals. I promised my editor, Jenny, that I would write a goal-setting book. I've taught thousands of women how to achieve their goals, so it was easy to give her an outline of each chapter. I could coast into writing two-hundred-some-odd pages only about goal setting.

No problem.

When you decide to write a book, you have to believe you know the topic inside and out. But then you have to step back, give the book room to breathe, and allow it to show you how it needs to unfold. I started with a strict outline, but from the very beginning my writing began to lead me far off the well-beaten path I had planned.

Without question, writing this book has transformed me—as a woman, a business owner, and a mother. It's changed my thinking in ways I never anticipated and shifted the way I run my life at home and in my business. It's infused more joy and harmony into every single day—even on the days where nothing goes as planned.

While I pecked away at my keyboard, the world outside my windows had transformed too. Huge shifts have been happening since the global pandemic. With so many lives upended, the pandemic has acted as a catalyst for many people, causing them to stop and really question whether they've been living their lives *On Purpose*. Asking themselves:

*I'm exhausted but feel like I've accomplished nothing—what have I been doing with my days?*

*Why do I feel so unsatisfied with how I'm spending my time?*

*How do I figure out what to do so my life feels more meaningful?*

Late at night, staring up at the blank white ceiling, those were the same questions I had been asking myself.

## BUT WHAT'S THE GOAL?

It had been easy to think that I would write about goal setting; after all, people love goal-setting books. We've convinced ourselves that goals are the magic solution. If we can just accomplish *this one big thing*, suddenly life will be easier. We fixate on the finish line, hoping that maybe happiness will lie in wait on the other side—and are disappointed when it's not.

Sometimes what we think we want is not what we actually need—*goals are not the goal*. When we are so busy focusing on crossing that imaginary finish line, we miss enjoying all the meaningful moments as we make progress. There is an abundance of joy that can be found in the cracks and crevices of our daily life, in the small moments, when we live *On Purpose*.

But because we think goals are the magic solution, we place an incredible amount of importance on the giant achievements, and we discount the small moments. When, in truth, our daily actions will bring us more ongoing joy than a finish line ever will.

In fact, most people undervalue the small, continuous steps because

they think that the fastest route between where they are today and the life they dream of is to hustle and constantly chase every opportunity—especially the big, defining ones. The idea of living a life of unhurried purpose feels like it would take too long. The term *unhurried purpose* is a misnomer. It's deceptive because living with unhurried purpose is actually the faster way to get where you want to go. There are no real shortcuts to getting to the ideal life; it simply takes consistent, small movements done with purpose.

That is the heart of this book—the daily choices we make, the small decisions and opportunities that get us to that bigger life we dream about.

We look across the chasm between where we are today versus where we dream of being, and that void is as wide as the Grand Canyon. We fool ourselves into believing that the quickest and easiest way across is to build a jet pack to quickly propel us to the other side. We'll spend 30 years slogging and toiling to create that “faster” way to zoom across the divide in an anticipated 20 seconds flat. We like the idea of that speed.

In reality, simply placing one foot in front of the other on a purposeful path—climbing down into the canyon and then up the rocky trail—would get us where we want to be in just a matter of days—all the while enjoying the views.

Together we will uncover how you can find a more meaningful life in those small, easy steps. We don't realize it, but unhurried purpose is hidden in our daily lives in the choices we make to live our life to the fullest, staying true to the path we believe our soul is designed for.

Living *On Purpose* isn't about changing who you are; it's about rising up and becoming the best version of you. You don't need changing, but there's a good chance your mindset needs a little adjusting. Any time we are ready to uplevel, whether it's in business or our personal life, we need to step out of our comfort zone and question our thinking.

I know I've thought several times that it would be nice to have a crystal ball to show me what the future holds. In truth, there actually is one—if you want to see the clear path of where your life is heading, take a good look at the daily choices you are making.

## CHOOSING TO CHOOSE

We have more choices than we think. We just need to open our minds a bit. We aren't talking Jedi mind tricks here—our brain is hardwired to make choices and decisions without skipping a beat.

In fact, we can easily plant a tiny seed of an idea and it immediately begins to grow. This seems like a lot of work, but really it's not. Take yawns, for example. Yawns are one of those things that seem to be contagious. When you see someone else open and stretch their mouth into a satisfying yawn, making a loud *yaaahhhm*, you often feel pulled to yawn yourself. Even reading the word *yawn* in this book right now has you thinking about yawning, doesn't it? I know because as I type the word *yawn* in this passage, I can feel a yawn begging to be released in my own throat.

And with this newfound need to yawn I notice a second, very quiet thought begin to form:

*Maybe I'm tired.*

Just like that a new thought has been planted. It doesn't matter that all the evidence points the other way. After all, I had a full night's sleep last night and it's 10 a.m. I'm sitting on my screened porch with sunlight pouring onto my lap. I've been up and moving for hours, but I suddenly have the slightest dip in my energy simply because I have decided I am tired.

I'm not really tired, but my brain is tricking me into believing *maybe* I am. That is how powerful our brain is. When it makes a choice—even without our knowledge—we buy in completely.

What if we decided to actually choose our choices?

I know that's an odd statement, but mull that over for a minute. We assume that a choice is always something we actively choose, but it's not. Those yawns are a perfect example of this. Our brain makes thousands of choices every day, and many of those are made without us thinking about them at all. Our brain chooses to pull our hand away when our finger brushes against the hot stove, to shut our eyes when we sneeze, and even to utter a curse word when we bang our

shin against something.\* We don't intentionally make those choices; our brain chooses them automatically.

Isn't your brain amazing?

Our brain's automatic decisions are a fabulous benefit because I don't want to think too much about my balance when I jerk my leg upward to stop the pain after stepping barefoot on a Lego (again). But it's also a drawback because it means I can easily slip into autopilot, with my brain making decisions about how I live without my conscious knowledge. Not choosing is a choice we often make. When we don't pause and question our thinking from time to time, we can find that we've been sleepwalking through our days.

*It's time to choose to be awake in your own life.*

When I made that choice for myself, everything changed. I'll admit, at first I felt like a bear being roused out of a long, deep hibernation, but once I wiped the crust of sleep from my eyes, I began to see clearly. *For the first time.*

I started moving forward with vision—clearly seeing the direction I wanted to take. I learned how to create freedom in my life where I actually decided what life looks like (which meant saying goodbye to guilt, overwhelm, and stress). I could see I could be the architect of my own time and how I spend it. I began to discover how life could be so much easier—I just had to wake up and see that if I wanted more joy, more gratitude, and an abundance of love, then I could choose it.

We only have one thing to do before we start. We have to stand in the belief that choosing the life we desire is possible.

Whisper it to yourself. Say it in the mirror in the morning when you get dressed. Post it next to your computer at your desk. You don't need to know how to make those choices right now; we will get there together through the next nine chapters. Right now you just need to be open to seeing that the choices are there.

The first choice is to turn the page and begin. See you in chapter 1.

---

\* Crazy interesting fact: your brain chooses to call out vocally when you hurt yourself because it disrupts the pain messages. But why does it always seem to make you say the curse word louder if your kids are within earshot?