A person's legs, wearing light-colored jeans and brown hiking boots, stand on a gravel surface. The background is a warm, golden sunset or sunrise, creating a soft, hazy glow. The text is overlaid on this image.

"Rachel has an extraordinary gift for putting into words what it means to accept and embrace the messy, hard, beautiful, sacred moments of motherhood."

—RACHEL MACY STAFFORD, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Hands Free Mama* and *Hands Free Life*

THE BRAVE ART OF MOTHERHOOD

FIGHT FEAR, GAIN CONFIDENCE,
AND FIND YOURSELF AGAIN

RACHEL MARIE MARTIN
FINDINGJOY.NET

Real Words from Real Moms

“Thank you for being such an honest and true voice for so many moms out there.”

—Jen K.

“You help me get through the days when I am not sure what I have gotten myself into and when I question if I am cut out for motherhood. Thank you.”

—Heather B.

“Thank you for allowing me to see the truth that has been staring me in the face and for giving me the strength to move forward with what is best for my children and me.”

—T.E.

“Your writing helps me feel less alone and often gives me the little boost I need to dig deep and keep going.”

—Jenifer J.

“Thank you so much for showing me that I’m normal, that mothering my children is an imperfect science of trial and error, and that it’s okay not to be perfect. Thank you.”

—Heather W.

“Today you bring tears to my eyes. You make me feel like somebody gets it. Somebody understands.”

—Becky R.

“The wisdom you share is life changing and gives me hope in the days when I need it the most.”

—Kristi B.

“When I read your honest reflections, I hear an assuring voice whisper back, ‘You are not alone.’ Suddenly, my hope is renewed, and I’m able to go back to what I do best: loving my people. You have an extraordinary gift for putting into words what it means to accept and embrace the messy, hard, beautiful, sacred moments of motherhood.”

—Rachel M. S.

“I am constantly riding the roller coaster that is motherhood. Thank you for your compassionate and enlightening words of strength, wisdom, and inspiration.”

—Tash M.

“Your words have spoken straight to my heart. There have been times when they’ve been my primary encouragement.”

—Jessi H.

“Sometimes your words are what keep me going when I’ve hit the wall of patience, energy, and self-confidence.”

—Kathy S.

THE
BRAVE
ART OF MOTHERHOOD

**THE
BRAVE
ART OF MOTHERHOOD**

**FIGHT FEAR, GAIN CONFIDENCE,
AND FIND YOURSELF AGAIN**

RACHEL MARIE MARTIN
FINDINGJOY.NET



WATERBROOK

THE BRAVE ART OF MOTHERHOOD

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

Trade Paperback ISBN 978-0-7352-9139-3

eBook ISBN 978-0-7352-9140-9

Copyright © 2018 by Rachel Marie Martin

Cover design by Kelly L. Howard

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York.

WATERBROOK® and its deer colophon are registered trademarks of Penguin Random House LLC.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Martin, Rachel Marie, author.

Title: The brave art of motherhood : fight fear, gain confidence, and find yourself again / Rachel Marie Martin.

Description: First Edition. | Colorado Springs : WaterBrook, 2018.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018012716 | ISBN 9780735291393 (pbk.) | ISBN 9780735291409 (electronic)

Subjects: LCSH: Mothers—Religious life. | Motherhood—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV4529.18 .M363 2018 | DDC 248.8/431—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018012716>

Printed in the United States of America

2018—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SPECIAL SALES

Most WaterBrook books are available at special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, and special-interest groups. Custom imprinting or excerpting can also be done to fit special needs. For information, please email specialmarketscms@penguinrandomhouse.com or call 1-800-603-7051.

For my parents



Contents

The Guide	1
---------------------	---

PART 1: STUCK IN THE GREAT TENSION. 3

1 Time Keeps On Ticking	5
2 Pay No Attention to the Mom Behind the Curtain	11
3 Sticks and Stones	23
4 Will the Real You Please Stand Up?	33
5 Survivor	41
6 The Future of Your Present Reality	51
7 One, Two, Three . . . Jump!	63

PART 2: EXPOSING EXCUSES. 75

8 The Denials	79
9 The Baggage	95
10 The Agendas	109

PART 3: BUILDING A NEW REALITY 119

11 Break the Cycle	123
12 Look Back and Rediscover You	131
13 Take It One Step, One Inch, at a Time	139
14 Choose the Right Mental Targets	151

15 It's Okay to Freak Out.	167
16 Don't Do Life and Dreams Alone—Armor Up!	177
17 It's Your Story—Own It.	193
18 Cross to the Other Side	199
My Visual Journey.	203
Acknowledgments	205
Notes	209

The Guide

Over the past five years, I've lived what I've jokingly called a public private life. As you'll read in this book, living the private spaces of my life in a public forum was antithetical to the "me" of most of my life. But going through great changes and having others see and read about the progress has resulted in some very common questions:

- How in the world did you change your life?
- What steps did you take?
- How did you manage change and being a mom?
- How did you discover happiness?
- Where did you get the bravery?

As a result, in the book process, I've spent a good year examining my past seven years. I didn't let any nuance sit by the wayside but rather dug deep into the details—the emotions, results, choices, and mindsets that led to me reclaiming my life. I mapped my world—the inner and outer struggles as well as the times of failing and success. Those details?

That's what this book is about.

But I need you to know from the start that this book is not a linear, chronological story of my progression from poverty to my life today. Instead, it is about the mental determination, the process, the challenges, and the how behind great change.

It's your guide and the answers to those common questions.

You will discover the agreements you've made about yourself, the excuses you give, and why your reality is what it is. But it doesn't have

to be what it is. If you dare, if you decide to walk this path, to disrupt patterns that keep you stuck, all while in the midst of motherhood, I can guarantee you that your future will be different.

That is the brave art of motherhood.

STUCK IN THE GREAT TENSION

“Be brave,” says my spirit.

“Wait,” says fear.

“Have courage,” says my soul.

“Not yet,” says worry.

“Dare,” says my heart.

—Rachel Marie Martin

Dear Brave Warriors Journeying Life with Me,

Last year I was in Washington, DC, standing in the front of a room, holding a mic, speaking to a roomful of moms. As I gazed around the room at all the women looking for a word of hope, at all the moms pushing little ones in strollers in the back, at the women daring to dream, I decided to veer from my set script and tell them what was on my heart.

I shared a story of a mom who had seven kids and had the IRS knocking on her door. This mom had less than fifteen dollars in her checking account, but she also had a dream, a target of change, and an old netbook computer her parents had given her for Christmas.

I told those moms how she started to write, to dare to be real, and to spread a bit of hope. I spoke about how she suffered through a divorce and

lost everything, yet in the losing, she found herself again. I explained how she got knocked down and how she stood back up, over and over.

I shared how she found happiness again.

I shared how she made a new agreement about worth.

And then I introduced that room of moms to the mom of my story.

Me.

Tears fell freely that afternoon. But they weren't tears of sadness; they were tears of hope. I took a risk to voice my story and found a bond with a roomful of women who also wanted the realness of hope. It started as a ripple and began to rush from woman to woman. We all got it; we all knew our fight; we knew we weren't alone. The more I shared, the stronger the rush of hope spread.

I knew that was why I told my story and why I'm sharing it here.

My story has worth.

Yours does too.

Embrace your story. Share it with others.

And cling to the hope that comes out of it.

—Rachel

Time Keeps On Ticking

I grew up in the eighties. My kids think it's epic how I lived during the generation they now deem retro. In fact, several years ago I flew cross-country to Seattle to visit my oldest daughter, Hannah, who was a sophomore in college. We hung out in her trendy local bakery, and as we ate crumbly gluten-free pastries topped with dollops of fresh whipped cream and sipped our overpriced espressos, she asked, "Hey, Mom, do you want to go to this cool vintage shop with me? I know you'll love it."

I didn't hesitate to say yes. I pushed my chair back and grabbed my coffee, and together we walked across the leaf-covered street to Hannah's favorite store, while she rapidly talked about how much I would adore this place and all the amazing objects inside.

As we wandered around the dusty shop, I observed something unexpected. In fact, I started to laugh as the reality became clearer. You see, her "vintage" store with collectible items that withstood time was not filled with the antiques I was expecting but was, in fact, filled with relics from my own childhood.

I was now vintage.

I spotted orange and lime-green Tupperware, the same as my mother once sold. Fisher-Price toys, the same ones I used to play with, now fetched a premium price. Cabbage Patch Kids, Atari game consoles, and

other games I thought had disappeared lined the shelves. A wall of posters of artists I loved hung by bins of vinyl records, cassette tapes, and CDs. I flipped through them, past Huey Lewis and the News and Tears for Fears, and then saw one of my favorite tapes by the Steve Miller Band tucked in a stack. As I looked at the cover, the now poignant lyrics filled my mind: “Time keeps on slippin’, slippin’, slippin’ into the future.”¹

While I hummed the melody, I looked up at Hannah meandering through rows of my childhood now for sale. She was looking at neon shirts, and as she thumbed through the rack, her face scrunched up just a bit. I’d seen that face before. It was long, long ago on the hot summer night when she was born. Her tiny six-pound-thirteen-ounce self came into this world with that same scrunchy face. She was a feisty newborn, completely dependent on me, her rookie mom.

I sighed heavily—the type of sigh reserved just for moms—and as she decided which eighties shirt was the best I wondered, *Where in the world did the time go?*

She didn’t know I stared at her, but there she was, just a couple of years younger than I was when I’d first held her.

I remember that me. I was feisty, full of dreams, full of hopes.

Now there I stood, twenty years later, a divorced mom of seven kids, watching her and, in a way, watching myself. That sigh wasn’t just about how quickly she grew up, but it was also because of the clear image of my own passage of time.

There is an unspoken tension in life. When we are young, we’re oblivious to it, unaware of the movement of time. But the older we get, the more we become aware of its constant ticking.

Then one day in the middle of our life’s moving timeline, we become mothers, and that timeline that was once ours alone we now share.

As moms, our time is fragmented, and we focus on our children. We stop documenting our own accomplishments and instead document

theirs: a week old, a month old, a birthday, the start of school, the move to middle school, prom, graduation.

With each new milestone, we have more to do, more to keep up with, more expectations to manage. And time keeps moving, keeps ticking by. It doesn't slow down for hard times or for blissful moments or for times when we just need a break. Yet I cried when my Hannah turned one, because I felt as though I'd already lost a year of her childhood due to time's tick.

"Slow down, time, slow down," I'd pleaded.

But life gets busy, so busy that the appreciation of time's movement gradually shifts to those days when we quietly chant under our breath, "I just want to make it through." There are times when we can't wait for the day to end, when the burdens and expectations keep piling up and there doesn't seem to be enough of us to go around. There are days of slammed doors, cranky kids, and "I hate you! You're the worst mom ever!" when we're just trying to be the "good" mom. Next thing we know, we're another mom in a march of moms who are going through the motions of motherhood, joking about the moments of peace we *might* get at the end of the day, cursing the homework our kids whine about, and telling one another we'll join that kickboxing class when our schedules get less busy.

We become so focused on getting through motherhood and doing for our kids that somehow we lose sight of all the mothering our mothers did during our own childhoods. Think of all the piano lessons, recitals, and orchestra concerts our moms went to for us. The soccer practices and cheerleading competitions. The constant shuttling to and from our high school jobs. They spent their precious time helping us grow and achieve our goals and skills and loves.

The world was at our feet, and our moms helped and encouraged us to discover our passions. Yet when we become mothers, the focus of priorities shifts. Instead of continuing to pursue our dreams, we abandon

them and copy what our moms did before us. We put ourselves on the back burner to help our children achieve *their* dreams, knowing the whole time that we're only helping them achieve the dreams they have before they, too, become parents.

What if you broke that cycle in your family? What if you decided to teach your children that those skills and dreams you fostered as a child are just as important for improving your entire life, and in so doing, you take moments out of your schedule to focus on you? I'm not suggesting that you no longer help your kids achieve their dreams; I'm suggesting that you do it *alongside* continuing to pursue yours. What if seeing you do that means that they, too, will pursue their dreams their entire lives?

Just as Steve Miller sang, "Time keeps on slippin'," we don't have unending amounts of time to someday get back to doing what we dreamed of. Every tick of the clock is a minute further in our lives. When I first held Hannah in my arms, I felt as if I had an infinite number of ticks. Twenty-one years of the clock flipping over and over have since happened. And when I stood in that Seattle vintage store, I realized that the art of life, of motherhood, happens when we exhale and cherish today *while* we also seize the moment, the inch of time today, and move ourselves forward to reclaim who we are meant to be.

For so many years I went through the motions. I got busy with motherhood, learned to accept reality as unchangeable, and existed. I didn't have a fire to appreciate that inch of today. Instead, I took it for granted. You probably do that too.

At a certain point, the inches will run out. Time will pass and the urgency to change will either shrink or disappear into lives where we settle. I don't know about you, but I don't want my college-aged kids to be sitting in their hip coffee shop, chatting with their friends about their mom, and saying, "Yeah, my mom, she was a good mom, but she settled."

Nor do I want to sit with my friends when my home is an empty nest and say, "I just don't know who I am anymore."

You are worth not settling.

But you have to decide not to assume that you always have tomorrow to do what you need to do today. I know you didn't intend to forget yourself. I know you want to be happy. I know you want to fight for your heart. I know you want to rightly order your life. I know you want to have that deep bravery and sense of purpose. I know you want to rediscover your passions from your childhood.

It's not that we're trying to forget ourselves. We just get busy.

And it's so easy to lose track of time in motherhood. It's even easier to overlook the importance of our own hearts.

I know I did.

Stop saying, "I'll get to that tomorrow." That's our first task for ourselves.

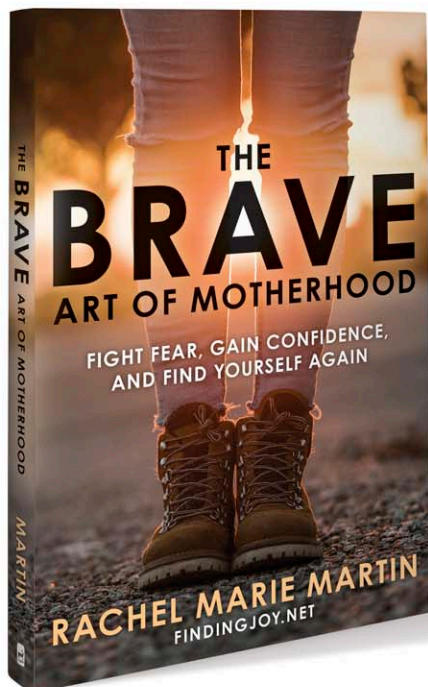
You owe it to yourself, your family, your friends to live without fear and with wild abandon. You owe it to yourself to get to everything on your tomorrow list today.

I am passionate about helping you ignite the fire of urgency in your life. I believe in you, I really do, and know that whether you have one child or fifteen, are married or divorced, are wealthy or poor, have direction or none, you can recapture time's inches in life.

You are worth fighting for each inch today.

Continue
Reading...

Order
*THE BRAVE
ART OF
MOTHERHOOD*
now!



BUY NOW



WATERBROOK