

**GURU  
GUIDE**  
with  
Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with  
**Madeleine Black**

23

**STANDING UP  
FOR YOURSELF**



# A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'Guru Guide' is an attempt to refine decades of hard-earned expertise into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic: rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice: it is advice from battle-hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

## **The Guru Guide has a pre determined format:**

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/ area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples: so that you can customize it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

## INTRODUCING

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**VIDUSHA  
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise are with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON  
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands-on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.



## INTRODUCING MADELEINE BLACK

When we 'met' Madeleine during our non-stop, 18-hour marathon of a webinar, although we were horrified, we were also inspired by her harrowing life experience. A victim of rape and violence in her normative years, Madeleine refused to allow her encounter with the most inhumane side of humanity to scar her, warp her or beat her down.

Using her trauma as a rallying cry for herself, Madeleine 'picked herself up' and ensured that she developed sufficient resilience and the courage to stand up tall and proud and become a beacon of hope for many around the world who face adversities of the most horrific kind every day.

A motivational speaker, author and also, avid podcaster, Madeleine's inspirational messages are heard around seven continents across the globe.

# WHAT DO YOU MEAN 'STANDING UP FOR YOURSELF' ?



How many times would you have been in a situation you didn't want to be in, simply because of peer pressure?

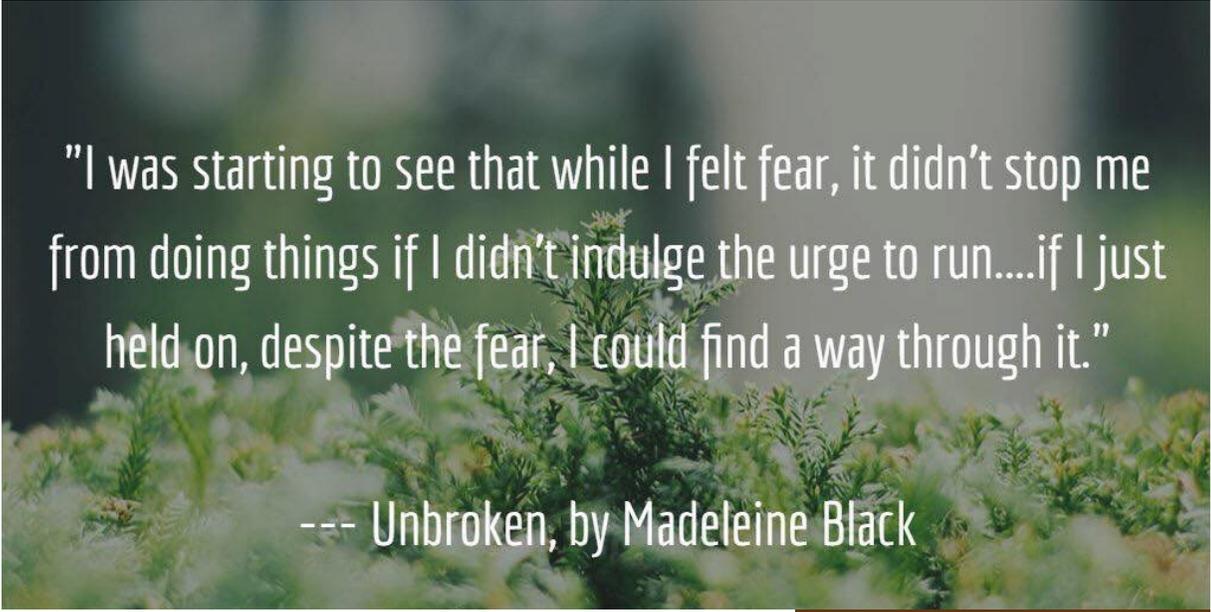
How many times would you have said 'yes' just to please somebody when you really wanted to say 'no'?

How many times would you have berated yourself for being in a predicament you really should not have been in ?

See, ALL of us would have been unable to stand up for ourselves at some point or the other, some more so than others; but we have all been through it. Pressure to conform, please others and not be the odd one out – these are very real sources of social pressure that we all succumb to. Far too many times we don't develop the skill sets to really do what we want to do, early in life, and this leads us to do so many things later on that we regret.

Standing up for yourself IS a skill, and it is a skill we ALL need to have.

## WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO SAY WHAT YOU WANT ?

A quote by Madeleine Black from the book 'Unbroken'. The text is overlaid on a background image of a green plant with small white flowers. The quote reads: "I was starting to see that while I felt fear, it didn't stop me from doing things if I didn't indulge the urge to run....if I just held on, despite the fear, I could find a way through it."

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--- Unbroken, by Madeleine Black

Well, mostly because we are too scared – isn't it?

Finding that courage takes practice, and also, learning a few skills.

We often 'hide' our true feelings, never saying what we really want to say. We bottle up what we feel until it erupts. Each of us has different coping mechanisms, some of which are rather detrimental to ourselves and lead us to addiction and other forms of self-harming behaviour.

The reason for all this is in our inability to really put ourselves and our wellbeing first. This suggestion may sound selfish; but it isn't.

After all, if YOU don't stand up for YOURSELF FIRST, then who will ?

## **CONCEPT 1: DIFFERENTIATING CONFRONTATION AND STANDING UP FOR YOURSELF**



Most of us think of 'standing up for ourselves' as having a 'confrontation'; it doesn't have to be.

There are many different ways of really standing up for what we think, what we believe in and our own interests without ever raising our voices or having any form of confrontation. Most of us don't like confrontation, and shy away from it, but this should not be at the cost of us 'giving in' to something we really don't want to do.

Compromising is something we all have to do in any relationship, and that's different. But, being able to stand up for yourself and say 'no' when required is critically important. If you don't, well then, you are doomed to be 'abused' in very many ways.



## TOOL 1: HOW TO SAY NO 'POLITELY'



Learning to say no politely, yet emphatically, is critical.

Most of the time we shy away from saying 'no' because we think we will be misunderstood or because we feel we ought to always help someone else or 'please' someone else.

You CAN help without saying 'YES!' Even in work environments, being able to say 'NO' is a critical skill, otherwise you will often be overburdened.

Here is how you are able to say 'no' without offending:

- » Be truthful: I can't because...
- » Be Tactful: However, I would love to be able to help you out...
- » Be helpful: Why not ask X, Y or Z or why not try...

You can always say absolutely anything using these three simple prompts and be able to say 'no', without sounding offhand, negative or impolite.

LEARN TO SAY 'NO' WHEN REQUIRED.

## CONCEPT 2: DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN BEING FIRM AND BEING RUDE



Many a time, we're not FIRM enough.

Being FIRM and being RUDE are two very different things. Remember, you don't have to be rude. In fact, you shouldn't be rude even if the other person clearly deserves it (After all, why should you stoop to their level of derogatory behaviour?). But, being able to be FIRM is truly required because sometimes some people don't 'get the message' when you say 'NO'.

So, remember, being FIRM is a skill being rude is a choice.

Learn to be FIRM. Learn to stand your ground. Learn to be able to get that message across.

## TOOL 2: THREE WAYS TO HELP YOU 'HOLD FORT'

Reason things out

You can ask me even a hundred times, my answer will be the same

Let me think about it and get write back to you

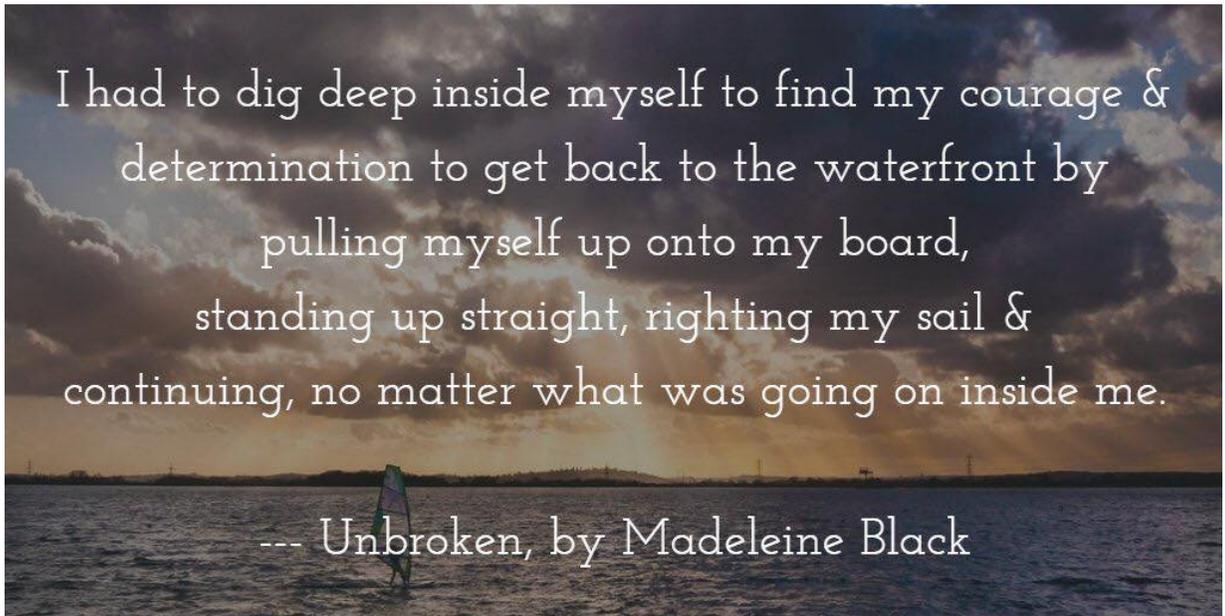
At times, logic helps. Being able to logically show why you won't do something is a good way to start, provided the person is a 'reasonable' individual.

This phrase helps establish your conviction: and if you are able to say this in a certain tone of voice, it will have the desired effect. Don't be apologetic when you say it. Say it with absolutely conviction.

sometimes, you can talk and talk and people still insist. So, don't waste your breadth arguing. BUY TIME. Get out of the situation by promising to think and write back, and then write an emphatic note saying you won't do it.

Being firm is about the 'tone' you take. You should not waver.  
You should not sound as if though you are in two minds.  
You should not allow your emotions to take over. Be clear. Be Precise.  
And allow your voice to be absolutely resolute.

## CONCEPT 3: KNOWING WHEN TO CALL FOR HELP



Being able to call for help, when required, is essential in being able to stand up for yourself.

We ALL need help, many times over. So, we should know WHEN to seek help, and also, WHOM to seek help from. Making sure you have a solid network of friends, family, colleagues, and also, at times, organisations that offers exclusive services on particular aspects (like the police, counsellors, etc.) is important in having the help you need when you need it.

So, actively start networking, and also, remember you don't have to face challenges alone. There ARE many people who CAN and WILL help provided you know how to reach out when it is required.

Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Only YOU will know when YOU need that help, so don't shy away from asking for help when required.

## TOOL 3: 4 TYPES OF HELP YOU MAY NEED

### Emotional

In order to be able to stand up for yourself, you need to be able to have the strength of conviction and courage. You will need emotional support to see this through. Being able to talk to someone about how you feel, and what you need to do will help find the courage to stand up for yourself.

### Practical

There will be those times when you know WHAT to do but can't quite put a finger on HOW to do it. Some situations require delicate handling and in these types of situations, someone who has 'been there' can offer very good practical advice.

### Legal

There are times when standing up for yourself involves legal aspects, and it is critical that you seek help in these circumstances as the legal domain is a very specific area and you should not walk into it blindly.

### Social

Sometimes, in social circumstances, both professionally and personally, having 'wider social support' is important for you to not only stand up for yourself, but also, to ensure you don't 'cave in' eventually. So, have networks to help you here too.

## SOME FINAL TIPS

- » **Challenge your fears** : I started to realise that my fears were an illusion! Everything was based on what HAD happened to me or based on what COULD happen, and so it was obvious that my fears came from imagination. Once I saw this, I started challenging my mind by putting myself into situations that I would normally have avoided, because I allowed them to speak to my fears. It was a bit like exposure therapy. It wasn't easy, but I learnt to stay steady with whatever feelings were coming up in that moment in order to ground myself and not run away which is what I wanted to do. The more I practised this, the more it helped me to stay in the present by being grounded in the moment, and my fears evaporated.
- » **Find your voice** : I really believe that when we don't speak out about any issue which is cloaked by shame, guilt or fear, we hold ourselves back. For many years, it felt as if I had put myself in the deep freezer, but speaking out switched on the defrost button. Speaking out, finding my voice and sharing my story has helped me shatter any shame, fear or guilt I had left, by doing the very thing my mind was telling me not to do. We think that by avoiding these dark spaces within, we are protecting ourselves and we want to avoid being vulnerable as we perceive it to be a form of weakness. Yet, the very opposite is true. It's only by going inwards, facing our shadows and allowing ourselves to accept and acknowledge all of our experiences, that we can really start to heal, grow and expand.
- » **Get support** : It's never too late to ask for support. Be careful whom you choose and make sure it's someone you trust. If you can't find someone to share your story with, then tell yourself your story. Whisper it to yourself or write it all down. A massive shift of energy took place inside of me when I finally stopped denying all that had happened to me, something I had been doing for years. I had to feel in order to heal, which wasn't easy most of the time. But I have now laid down my internal weapons and my mind is finally peaceful through acceptance, gratitude and forgiveness. Maya Angelou said: "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." Don't you owe that to yourself to accept and let go in order to live your bravest and most authentic life?

# MADELEINE BLACK



Click here to buy  
Madeleine's book

Listen to my new podcast show here

Watch my TEDx Glasgow talk called  
"Unbroken - Speaking The Unspeakable"

Read my article for The Metro about Duffy  
and victim blaming here



<https://madeleineblack.co.uk>



## "Unbroken" - The Podcast with Madeleine Black

Madeleine Black

Unbroken - The Podcast with Madeleine Black, features amazing individuals who have all triumphed after adversity and have not just bounced back in life, but forward and are now making a difference for others. Hosted by Madeleine Black, the

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