A GIRL'S GUIDE TO BEING AWESOME

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Based on *A Teenage Girl's Guide to Being Fabulous!* published in 2015

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A GIRL'S GUIDE TO BEING AWESOME

EMPOWERING ADVICE FOR TEENAGE LIFE

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SUZANNE VIRDEE

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This book is dedicated to every girl, everywhere. For those who already have dreams and want to make them come true, and for those who don't yet dare to dream. I hope this book empowers you.

It is also dedicated to my beautiful mother, Cynthia, whose love, wisdom and never-ending support has enabled me to believe in myself, and has given me the power to follow and achieve my dreams.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my dad, Mohan, whose advice to "never give up" has served me well in every part of my life.

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CONTENTS

A Little Bit about Me
8

Introduction
10

Find Your Sparkle
13

Fab-U-Cation
33

Think Big
45

Being Awesome
61

Self-Esteem
78

www.summersdale.com

Identity
92

Porn Is Not the Norm
118

Anti-Social Media
125

The “F Word”: Feminism
138

Goodbye and Good Luck
149

Resources
156

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YOU ARE CAPABLE OF AMAZING THINGS

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CHAPTER ONE

FIND YOUR SPARKLE

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WHAT IS "SPARKLE"?

Sparkle is an energy; it's a vibrancy around a person. Sparkle is that thing that gets us noticed for all the right reasons. It's inside all of us, but you may not even realize you have it.

Sparkle also means believing in yourself and breaking down barriers so you can get to where you want to be.

"SUCCESSFUL WOMEN HAVE AN AURA THAT SAYS 'I BELONG IN THIS SEAT'."

CATHIE BLACK, MEDIA EXECUTIVE AND AUTHOR

One famous example of a woman who stepped out of the boundaries of expectation and went on to achieve great things is the American senior politician Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. In 2019, Alexandria was named one of the world's most influential women.

Although she wasn't born into a wealthy or powerful family (her mother came from Puerto Rico and her father from an area of New York called the South Bronx), Alexandria worked her way from being a waitress all the way to being voted into the US Congress.

She achieved something that people with her age and social status don't often do, because she was able to recognize and utilize the sparkle she had inside herself.

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"I FELT LIKE THE ONLY WAY TO EFFECTIVELY RUN FOR OFFICE IS IF YOU HAD ACCESS TO A LOT OF WEALTH, HIGH SOCIAL INFLUENCE, A LOT OF DYNASTIC POWER, AND I KNEW THAT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OF THOSE THINGS."

ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ, US POLITICIAN

Alexandria could see her limitations: she didn't have wealth, or a family with the connections to help her reach her goal. But the things she did have were far more important than all that: Alexandria had self-belief, passion and determination. All these qualities are things that make a person sparkle and stand out from the crowd.

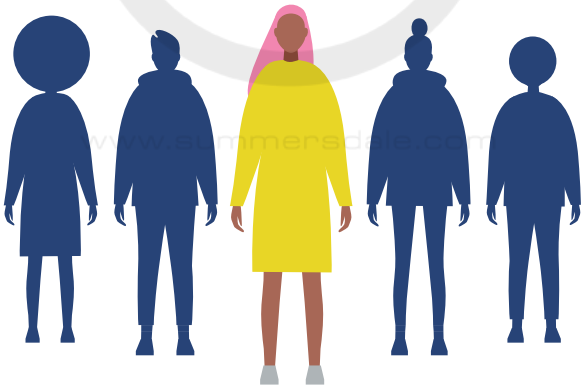
Alexandria believed she had the right to become a congresswoman just as much as those with money and power behind them did. She made history in America by becoming the youngest-ever woman to be elected to the House of Representatives, aged just 29.

Sparkle is about unleashing the natural talent inside you just like Alexandria did. It doesn't mean being "cool" or being the most popular girl at school. It means quietly but firmly believing in yourself, and not allowing anyone to make you feel inferior. It means feeling you belong and feeling you can do anything.

Everyone who's achieved great things in life has sparkle, but they don't have it as a result of what they've achieved – they had it before they hit the big time. They used sparkle to achieve that success. You can too!

Don't get sparkle mixed up with showing off though – it's more than that. Sparkle is genuine and it's what we all need to carry us through the good and not-so-good times.

Those of you reading this book will probably come from all sorts of different backgrounds. Some of you will have more money than others, more opportunities and more support at home than others. Some of you may feel alone or feel you have no one who seems to care about what you do.



You might have parents who expect you to follow a certain path and profession and who might pile a lot of pressure on you. You may have recently come to this country with your family and be getting used to a whole new culture. Money may be tight and opportunities where you live may be limited. You may not have a mum, or you may not have a dad; in

fact, you may not have either. You may be in care or living with another family. Whatever your situation, try not to be too worried or anxious about how things are right now, because **it doesn't matter where you come from – it's where you are going that counts.**

Whatever is happening in your world right now won't stay that way forever. You're growing up, and life will change. It can change for the better or for the worse: that bit is up to you – and that's where the need for sparkle comes in.

Sit and dream for a minute. What career or job do you wish you could have when you leave school or university?

Now, think about what job you really think you'll end up doing when you leave school or university.

If you've answered the same for both questions, that's brilliant! You're on track. However, if the two answers are wildly different, then you haven't unlocked your inner sparkle yet.

What I want you to automatically believe is that your dreams can become reality if you put your mind to it – just like Alexandria did.

No matter what your personal dreams are for your life – whether you want to be a florist or a film director – sparkle will help you get there.

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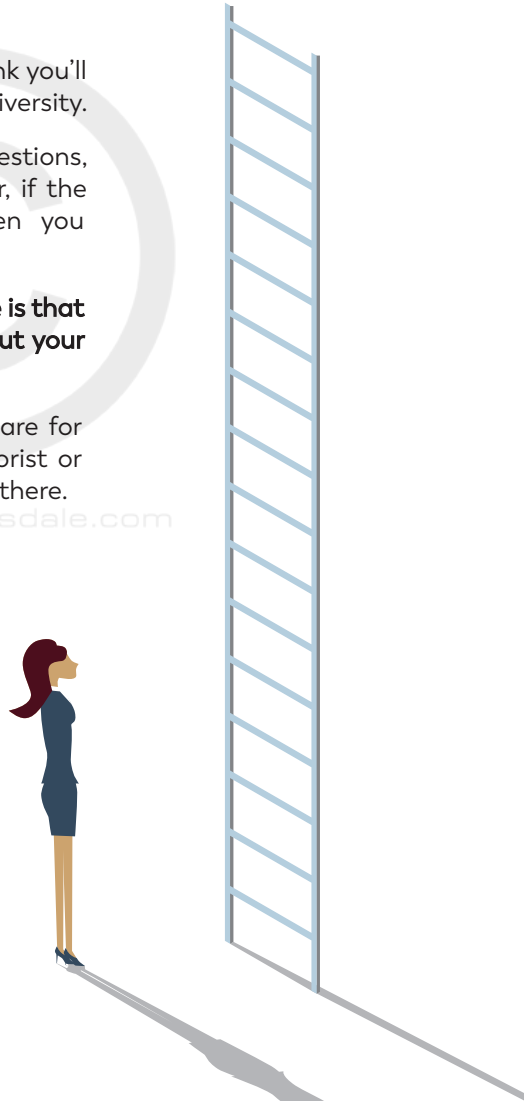

MY GOALS AND AMBITIONS

Use this page to note down some of your goals, dreams and ambitions. Your sparkle will help you to achieve them!

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SPARKLE AT SCHOOL

Going to school is very different to being in the adult world of work. You can get by at school without drawing attention to yourself. But if you're going to succeed in the big wide world, you need to make yourself stand out. You need sparkle.

Employers often tell me that they hate it when candidates in interviews mumble, don't hold eye contact, and just generally have no personality. Sparkle gives you the confidence to communicate well, and that's a big key to success. Good communication allows you to get your message across clearly and gives people confidence in you.

So, how do you – as a young woman – go about getting sparkle, if even the thought of speaking in public, or to a teacher, fills you with dread?

> "I ALWAYS DID SOMETHING I WAS A LITTLE NOT READY TO DO. I THINK THAT'S HOW YOU GROW. WHEN THERE'S THAT MOMENT OF 'WOW, I'M NOT REALLY SURE I CAN DO THIS', AND YOU PUSH THROUGH THOSE MOMENTS, THAT'S WHEN YOU HAVE A BREAKTHROUGH."
>
> MARISSA MAYER, GOOGLE'S FIRST FEMALE ENGINEER AND FORMER BOSS AT YAHOO

That's pretty much how you do it – you push through the fear.

For generations, girls have been "the quiet ones". Often, when girls want to say something, they don't say it out of fear they'll be laughed at. How many times have you not put your hand up at school when you knew the answer to a teacher's question, for fear your classmates will all turn to look at you if you're wrong – even when you know you're right?

When we feel like that, we are letting fear hold us back.