

CHAPTER 1

The Author and His Inner Critic Experience

When one door of happiness closes, another opens;
but often we look so long at the closed door that we do
not see the one which has been opened for us.

—Helen Keller

I Dream of Africa

AS AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD boy, the spring seasons in Salt Lake City, Utah, were particularly memorable. Pink and white blossoms from our cherry tree were in full bloom. Bursting with the smell of jasmine flowers, our backyard was soaked with its aroma. From an artist's palette, the array of springtime flowers painted the open fields on the other side of the fence next to our house. Yellow chrysanthemums, lavender lupins, orange bursts of daisies, and the creeping buttercups were some of my favorites. There was harmony in the air from distant mowers cutting lawns for the first time after a long, cold winter season.

Some of my most memorable times were playing with my baby sister in the front yard on our Big Wheels. In the morning, before we headed out for our Big Wheel adventures, we would have our dose of Saturday morning cartoons. There I was, in my favorite red and blue Spider-Man Underoos, sitting downstairs on our brown shag carpet.

After breakfast, my little sister would bring her favorite doll downstairs, sit next to me on the beanbag, and ask, “What are you watching, Bee-bomb-bow?” That was how my little sister would say my African name because she couldn’t pronounce Odhiambo.

“I’m watching that funny rabbit,” I explained. In one episode, the main character would take a trip to Africa. We laughed wildly at what seemed to be a harmless and hilarious cartoon. My imagination would then run wild in our backyard. I often took my GI Joe and Transformer toys on imaginary trips to the distant lands of Africa. They would face the mighty lion and other fierce animals of the African landscape. I made a superhero cape out of my sister’s baby blanket and flew to our treehouse in our backyard. Up there, I imagined overlooking the landscape of the Serengeti. I imagined the silhouettes of the acacia trees and plumes of dust from the migration of the wildebeest. I saw an enchanted land of wonder and mystery.

My Inner Critic: Where Am I Going? Where Did I Come From?

As a youth, I felt a burning desire deep within to understand another part of myself in relation to the African Continent. Into adolescence, I wanted to be proud, but I didn’t know how. I learned a little from movies that I saw as special features on television, such as *Roots* and *Shaka Zulu*. This was my first exposure to a small part of African culture.

I was taught a bit about Africa in middle school and high school, but I never quite understood the reason why the learning surrounding this dynamic continent was minimized in mainstream education. I have a clear recollection of reading about Africa in our

assigned textbooks. As I was sitting at my desk, I remember little discussion, learning, or time devoted to the “Dark Continent.” It was troubling to me that we spent such a miniscule amount of time on the antiquity of this country. We studied Africa briefly and then quickly moved on to the European Empire, its colonies, and its influence on modern-day culture. Africa was a blur. *Why is this?* I wondered. This left me feeling frustrated because it gave me the impression that Africa was insignificant along with the native peoples of that land. They were dispensable. A commodity. A resource. Were there any influences on literature, art, poetry, technology, architecture, science, and math? This felt deeply dismissive, frustrating, and insulting. When I left the classroom, I remember feeling angry and embarrassed. I did not want to look at my other classmates because I simply felt ashamed.

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W. E. B. Dubois described a phenomenon called “double consciousness.” It is the fallacy of seeing and judging yourself through the eyes of another. He would describe how the American Negro would see himself or herself through the eyes of their white counterparts and judge themselves off of that psychological measuring tape. They could never live up to the standard because they would be limited by the thoughts, opinions, prejudice, and bigotry of another. Dubois went on to talk about the splitting of the psyche:

Two souls, two thoughts two unreconciled strivings;
two warring ideals in *one dark body*, whose “dogged”
(def. tenacity or not giving up easy) strength alone,
keeps it from being torn asunder.

I have discovered the phenomena of the double consciousness is universal to all. Think for a minute about the people who you might be seeing and judging yourself through their eyes. This might give rise to various feelings inside you such as anger, anxiety, depression,

irritability, and confusion. In essence, you are feeling like you are being controlled.

This double consciousness took hold of my thoughts and gave rise to the inner critic in several ways. At that time, many disparaging negative beliefs began to emerge and move to the forefront of my thoughts and behaviors:

- Black Americans are different.
- Black Americans were fighting a losing battle.
- I questioned whether Black Americans unique physical, cultural, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual qualities had significance.
- Black Americans seemed powerless to change their fates and futures.

The frustration I felt began to affect me in more ways than one. The frustration turned into anger, and the anger gave more power to fear. I developed an inferiority complex. This inner storm of fear, anger and inferiority began to take shape. Over time, I became aware of its destructive nature. I did not want to contribute to or be a casualty of the psychological damage it was causing within.

I came to a crossroads and needed to make a decision. In the eye of the storm, I had some clarity on what direction my life would go. That was when the veil began to lift. I came to a few realizations about the forefront of effective change. I needed to see Africa for myself. I felt a deep soul connection to Africa. I knew there was unfinished inner critic business that needed to be reconciled. It was my decision to understand my African culture, lineage, oral history, folklore, and meaning as I began my journey to silence my inner critic.

The Country Girl and the Foreign Exchange Student

My father came to America in the 1970s as an eighteen-year-old foreign exchange student on a scholarship. He was from Mfangano

(Ma-fan-ga-no), an island on Lake Victoria in Kenya, and my mother was from Carthage, a rural town on the east side of Texas. They met on the Chico State College campus and began dating after much persistence from my father. They would have three other children besides me. Unfortunately, their relationship did not last, and they parted ways when I was very young. I had some memories of my dad before the breakup, but there are only bits and pieces.

During my adolescent years, I developed a deeper curiosity of who my father was and where he came from. I knew something was missing, and it was pulling me toward an understanding. It was almost as if a circle needed to be completed or a void within needed to be satisfied. I needed to understand my idea of maleness and know how to act as a young man. I was envious of my peers who had their dads there to support them on father-son day.

I also felt that there was something more powerful and more salient than understanding who my father was at that time. There was a deeper soul connection to something that was greater than my relationship with my father. I still believe his forefathers were calling me back home to Africa to discover who they were, to hear their voices, and to walk on the black sandy beaches that they walked on before they set sail on their fishing excursions. I felt that it was important for me to walk the same mountainside that my father did when he went to school and that his father used to travel to meet with other elders to discuss the affairs of the people. They were calling me to walk down the beaten path through the beautiful island of Mfangano. Until then, my soul would be left wanting.

My mother and my aunt Sarah (my father's cousin) were two of the greatest influences on me going back home to see the people. My aunt would tell me stories in vivid detail of how brave my grandfather was. How he went to face the mighty boa that attacked a young child as he was coming home from school with a makeshift spear and shield made from a rusty abandon car bumper. He was recruited into the English army and survived the war. He donated land to the community for subsistence farming. These stories were part of the

legacy he left behind. My aunt would say that the stories could only go so far and that I needed to experience and author my own story. I needed to go and claim the land my grandfather gave to me as part of my birthright. I needed to leave behind a legacy for my children, the people of Kenya, and the people I work with in my private practice as a therapist. This would be part of my story. It was not just about the land; it was about my connection to it. I needed to claim who I am as a person—not what was told to me through the media or in textbooks. I needed to see with my own eyes, and my soul needed to experience it on a firsthand basis.

I received my passport and my Kenyan visa in the mail. When I saw the iconic shield and spears of the Kenyan flag, I felt a great sense of pride and excitement. I knew it was going to happen. I had saved up some money a little bit at a time. It was not easy because I was paying my way through college. When I finally saved enough money, I bought my ticket to Africa.

My Kenyan family was elated. They felt a great sense of pride that I would take it upon myself to go home and see the people. Upon hearing the news, my grandfather could not wait for me to come and see the birthplace of my father. It was a unique experience because I am the firstborn and my father is also the first born, and there is a special relationship that happens within African culture with the firstborn male child. I am also the firstborn of all the Kenyan cousins; therefore, I have inherited a responsibility.

My Journey to Africa

Africa has been loved, feared, and misunderstood throughout the centuries. It has been ravished by famine, war, pestilence, and intertribal conflict, and it has been conquered by imperialistic foreign countries. Many of these countries came to Africa to take the resources and the bountiful wealth that the land has to offer. The indigenous people, particularly on the east coast of Africa, were part of

this bounty. To this day, Africa is controlled by governments that are not necessarily for the people. They are more interested in personal financial gain and comfort. This reality is evident by the disparity between the rich and the poor and the haves and the have-nots.

In the absence of my familial connection with Africa—and with all these disparaging realities—why is my heart drawn to this continent? African history is filled with a fascinating array of mythology, folklore, rituals, and customs in written form and the more common oral traditions that are told by elders to their sons. Essentially, these traditions are taught through the generations to those who are willing to listen and learn and be passionate about preserving these teachings.

These powerful aspects of African culture are the fabric that has uniquely weaved together an understanding of my inner self. During my travels to Africa, I was looking up into the starry heavens one night, and I was taken by the expanse of the universe and our place in it. I came to the realization that the observance of one's ancestors is very much ingrained in the rituals, traditions, and language that are a necessary part of any cultural practice. Culture shapes identity. The language of the self and a sense of purpose give rise to understanding the self in relation to others through the lenses we use to see the world.

I don't believe that my realization is a necessary component for everyone to have. Everyone's journey is unique to themselves. However, I do believe that the journey is what is important. It gives insight and clarity to some of our inner beliefs and outward behaviors. We might give in to struggles we are experiencing on the inside of us. Thus, causing a disruption in how we are viewed, perceived, and experienced by others. Our filters do not always allow us to see that some of our behaviors and beliefs come from our parents.

My journey to the distant lands of Africa guided me down a path that helped me discover a part of myself that strengthened my style of psychotherapy. It was a deeper curiosity of who my dad was, and my desire to connect with his side of the family drew me to the idea of life's meaning, the greater good, the value of helping others, altruistic value,

and a connection to God. I knew that this connection, understanding of the inner self, and connection to people from all backgrounds needed to happen if I was going to be fulfilled as a psychotherapist.

Off the Plane

It was a surreal experience. As soon as I got off the plane, I felt at home. The language of the people fell on my ears in a natural poetic cadence. It was the language of my soul. I felt my inner critic begin to quiet itself. Why was it becoming silent? Was it because I chose to challenge the critic with courage, confidence, and faith? Was it because I challenged myself to face my doubts and fears?

One of the things that was very helpful during my pilgrimage to Africa was the fact that I had done something for myself. It was a challenge. I remember the fear of the unknown. I wondered if I would be truly accepted. Being so far from home, what would happen if I was stranded? What about civil war or civil unrest? I did not have the answers for these valid questions. I just did my due diligence by studying the social climate of Kenya. I leaped out in faith and trusted the draw that I felt within. I didn't let the fear consume me or the disbelief change the direction or alter the course of my path. I felt that it was a higher calling, and I answered it.

Where is your life path calling you? Where do you find something that needs to be fulfilled within you? Are you allowing the inner critic to deter you away from your destiny? From your wholeness? Nobody can walk the path for you; it is something that you have to walk yourself. Many people become afraid, and through disbelief, they become paralyzed with fear. They do not want to venture out on the path that is before them. This causes many difficult dilemmas that fuel unrealized dreams: complacency, mediocrity, stagnation of the soul, excuses, and feeling like a victim. This lends itself to reoccurring themes that I have seen in many of my clients: regret, anger, bitterness, uncontrolled fear, guilt, blind arrogance, living in the shoulds, and

esteem issues that make it increasingly difficult to look into the mirror. Allowing these themes to work within your subconscious mind gives the negative inner critic a position of psychological power.

I looked out the airplane window as we began our descent and saw the setting of the African sun over the horizon. I remember how big the sun appeared. It looked like liquid gold was being poured out over the vast savanna. A refreshing newness and connection to Africa seemed to transcend all my fears. The antiquity of this continent left me with a resounding soul connection to the birthplace of my ancestors.

We touched down at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Carrying my luggage with me, I met with my aunt Serina, who happened to work in airport as a supervisor, and she made the process of stamping my passport and walking through customs less anxious. She was so excited to see me that she allotted time away from work and waited until my plane landed many hours before the scheduled time of arrival. She greeted me with a genuine anticipation, "Ethe Nade" (How are you doing? in Luo). She joyfully escorted me through the various security barriers.

Uncle Ellie, my father's second youngest brother, took the fourteen-hour trip from Mfangano Island to the Nairobi airport. His English was good, but he wished he could speak better so he could clearly tell me how happy and proud he was to see me. My uncle Kwasi lived in Nairobi, Kenya, and was a finance director for the local government. He is a family man and living in an upper-class neighborhood. Ellie and I stayed at Kwasi's house for a couple of days, and we ate traditional African food that his wife prepared for me. The next day, Kwasi set up transportation for us to the island.

The trip from Nairobi to Mfangano passed through the highlands and the African savanna. Going through various small towns along the way, I had the chance to see what life was like for the native people across the land. I was bewildered by government-issued luxury cars traveling through slums and paying no mind to the suffering children. It was clear to me that greed, mismanagement of funds, and the

dictatorship were influencing the affairs of the government. Society was swallowed by corruption and was in shambles. Most people were dependent on agriculture. Along the road, vendors were selling fresh fruit and vegetables. Most of them were trying to make living on the few shillings they received from tourists and locals.

My uncle Ellie and I enjoyed a buffet at a small restaurant in Kericho, a big town in the highlands west of the Kenyan Rift Valley. The town was known for its lush forest, agriculture, and tea plantations. Ellie ordered the same thing each time we stopped to eat: a chicken-based soup, the local staple of ugali (a cornmeal cake), and a Coke. It was a special treat for him to eat with his nephew from America. He took great pride in letting everyone know about me with his head held high and a smile. I loved spending time with him. He was my companion during my trek through Africa. I was amazed by how many people he knew along the way. He had a meek spirit and was a well-loved pastor who was very kind to the people in his congregation. He brought a sense of comfort to people he had a relationship with, and I could tell that they trusted him. He seemed to be especially popular with the college-aged kids. They would hang out around his house and ask difficult questions about life and the Bible. He had a good understanding of the welfare of the people and was well connected to the heartbeat of village life on the island. His connections fascinated me. I saw many similarities between us in our approaches to building rapport and working with people. A dear friend once said something to me that hit me on an emotional level. She reminded me that since he would be gone someday, it was a time to cherish. She went on to say, "It was good that you gave him the opportunity to venture out and experience life together with you and that you took the time to enjoy these moments with him because in this life nothing lasts forever." I learned as much as I could from him.

We finally approached Mbita (M-Beat-Tah), which was a small, bustling town on a small peninsula on Lake Victoria. Merchants lined the dusty streets. The murmur of commerce was mixed with

the baying sound of goats and cattle. As my uncle haggled with the boat captain on a reasonable price, we hopped aboard a pink and blue pastel-colored boat. Sitting between a goat and a big bag of rice, I couldn't help but to feel slight nervousness in my stomach. I knew the boat was overloaded with people and commodities. I prayed, "Please, God, don't let this boat break in half in the middle of the lake!"

My uncle must have seen the apprehension on my face. He looked at me, smiled, and said, "Don't worry." When someone tells me not to worry like that, I usually check my back for a "kick me" sign! I managed to let go, relax, and trust his words.

As we headed off, I was excited and curious. I was mesmerized by the sunlight that danced off of the waves. The boat was slow, but it was strong and sturdy. As we passed President's Barack Obama's father's island, we came to a majestic scene that I could not imagine. I had a picture of what I thought the island would look like but none like what I seen with my own eyes. The giant fig trees that lined the island looked like they were from prehistoric times. Lush, green foliage and exotic animals inhabited the land. Large groups of native vervet monkeys could be heard in the trees or walking down paths. Black-chested snake eagles were feeding their chicks in their huge nests. Otters, weaver birds, giant monitor lizards, and other creatures inhabited the diverse island, making it one of the most unique ecosystems in the area.

As the boat sailed past several massive boulders with exotic birds nesting on them, I saw the home of my ancestors for the first time. It was like a religious experience. "There it is!" The locals call it *Pinedala* (the motherland).

About fifty yards from the shoreline, I could see people waving from the beach. The short woman in the front was my grandmother Dani. As we docked, she took my hand and greeted me in her native tongue. She didn't speak much English, but I could tell she was very pleased to see me. She took my hands and said, "Welcome home." I was greeted by my grandfather Janedus, my father's youngest brother, Ogango, and several of his kids.

The Village Life

The friendly village was a small agricultural and fishing community. Tropical foliage surrounded the open plots of farmland. As we meandered down to the trails, everyone knew everyone else. I understood some of the conversations in our native tongue. My uncle would say, “He is the son of Atunda.”

The villagers replied, “He has honored his father and grandfather by coming to see the people.”

As we traveled toward the mountainside, my uncle pointed out acres of land that belonged to the family, which my grandfather inherited from his forefathers. We traveled to the east side of the island to visit the rock art (Kwitone). These fantastic geometric paintings were made by Twa hunter-gatherers between two thousand and four thousand years ago. Up until the 1980s, it was a site for folklore, rain worship, and connecting to the ancestral spirits. I learned that people wanted to understand their connection to the universe and the land that they inhabited. Their form of spirituality was connected to their livelihood and survival. They depended on the seasons and the earth to provide for them and their families.

As I walked into the cave, I saw spiral shapes and images that looked like the sun and the moon. I wondered if it was a way of coping with unseen events and trying to understand profound subjects such as life, death, and God. I don’t think anyone has the answers to those questions except the Artist. The closest we can possibly get to understanding the intent of the Artist would be from the descendants of those people and those who seek to preserve this important part of human understanding.

The next day, my grandmother greeted me with porridge. The simple dish was made from a sweet millet. After breakfast, my grandmother wanted to take me for a walk. We journeyed through the mountainside and down some trails I was surprised by how strong she was. She couldn’t have been more than five foot one and was just under a hundred pounds, but she was full of life. She held

my hand as we went through what seemed like an obstacle course. I remember being overtaken by her small strong wrinkled hands. I remember thinking that these were the same hands that held and raised my father as a child. As we trekked through the countryside, she showed me where my father traveled when he went to school. It just so happened that we met his teacher along the way. They talked about the old days and what kind of student he was. He said, "You did a good thing, Odihambo! You came back to see the people! You have made your grandfather proud!"

On the path, we also met up with my grandmother's sister. We were invited to have lunch and tea in her small dwelling. Dani was so proud to show everyone her firstborn grandson from America. Dani's sister said, "You did a good thing coming back home to see the people!"

The next morning my grandfather would take me to a plot of land next to their house. He pointed where it would begin and end. He told me that this would be my land. I promised my grandfather that I would return to Kenya to build my traditional home on the piece of land he gave me but for now I would build a fence around it. He rose before daybreak to burn a great portion of the shrubbery to open up the space. My grandfather was so excited that he started at around three o'clock in the morning.

My uncle Ellie and I took the boat ride back to the Mbita to buy some cedar posts and barbed wire. I hired a college kid who was looking to earn some extra money to pay for his textbooks to help. As we began the work, my grandfather sat on a rock with his staff and watched the fence being built. He felt a great sense of pride as he saw the tradition being passed down to the next generation.

The Story of My Lineage

One night my grandfather and grandmother were sitting together on one side of the wall. My cousins were sitting at the opposite end of the

room on a grey colored couch with the cushion missing. I will never forget how the room was illuminated by a kerosene lamp and how our silhouettes danced on the clay walls behind us. We had just finished eating a fish stew that was pretty outstanding after my stomach got past eating the little fish eyes staring back at me.

As we finished the meal, I asked my uncle Ellie to ask my grandfather about our ancestors. My grandfather thought for a moment, looked intently at me, and smiled. Ellie took a couple of pages from my journal and began to write. My grandfather gave me our family history going back three or four hundred years of all the names of my forefathers in detail.

He began by explaining in a calm voice that our ancestors originally came from Egypt and traveled down the Nile River. They traversed through Uganda, Sudan, into Kenya, and they eventually they settled on Mfangano Island. My grandfather said, “This is where you come from, and this is the history of our people.”

It was transformative. A quickening within my soul connected me to something that was greater than all the obstacles I had to endure and the difficulties and challenges I had yet to face. It transcended all the racism I had experienced in adolescence. It gave me a sense of why I was there and that nothing I had been through was not without reason. There was purpose. It connected me to something eternal. It felt like something that had been written by the hand of God. It became clear why ancestry was so important and meaningful to me.

The inferiority of the inner critic had become a distant memory, a forgotten whisper. It tries to resurrect itself from time to time, but I have this newfound truth. It was not completely gone—and there was still work to be done from the years of being told who I was—but I had a greater understanding of my inner self.

With education, a greater understanding of the self, spiritual beliefs, and trusting in my own capabilities, my self-esteem, self-concept, and self-confidence grew. I believed I could accomplish anything I set my mind to do. It made sense. I realized that those

who had died in conflicts to make a better life for future generations were a part of me...right now!

I realized I am a product of the people who made it through slavery, who fought for freedom and the civil rights from my mother's side and my father's rich heritage set me on the path of learning who I am. This was a crushing blow to my inner critic!

The Final Goodbye

The first trip came and went. The second trip came after my grandfather sent word that he wanted to see me. My grandmother had passed away. It was time to go back to Mfangano. My grandfather was resting in the bedroom. He was not the same physically strong man I'd met on my first trip. After sixty years of marriage, it seemed like a part of him was gone. Dani had been laid to rest to be with her ancestors.

I said, "Grandpa, it's time for me to go back." He looked at me and began praying as Ellie, myself and the young college student, held hands. He started to cry, and he asked me to "stay forever." I told him that I would be back just like I had promised. He cried and prayed two more times.

Ellie told me it was the first time he had ever seen my grandfather show that type of emotion. A week later, my grandfather passed away. Everyone was proud that I had a chance to fulfill my grandfather's request before he crossed over to meet his ancestors. I felt a calling to pull back the layers, discover my ancestors, and understand how they influenced my inner critic. The circle I had been looking for was now closed. I could carry on the legacy I learned from my grandfather and my experiences on the island.

As you will come to understand in this book, part of your narrative is unique to you. Perhaps you don't know who your parents are. Perhaps you grew up in foster care or an abusive home. Nevertheless, the way you choose to seek the truth and find an

understanding for yourself belongs to you. You are the author. The pen is in your hand. You have to be brave enough to write a story that is different from what people have told you. Your journey is waiting for you to discover it.

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CHAPTER 2

The Inner Critic

Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless—
like water. Now you put water into a cup, it
becomes the cup, you put water into a bottle,
it becomes the bottle, you put it in a teapot,
it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow
or it can crash. Be water, my friend.

—Bruce Lee

What Is the Inner Critic?

THE NATURE OF the inner critic can be difficult to understand. Where does it come from? Why is it so pervasive? Why is it so elusive? Why does it seem to be like a whisper in the wind—a fleeting thought pattern that we will miss if we do not pay close attention to it? Why does it have such an immense impact on our lives? How can a thing that can neither be seen nor touched be so powerful? Why can it change the courses of our lives? The inner critic exists outside diagnosable mental disorders such as schizophrenia and depression.

It is not some type of psychological phenomenon that requires medication or long-term therapy.

The inner critic is the voice we hear from time to time. It can be helpful in some ways, but it can also be destructive and hurtful. It is the voice that quietly warns us when we are about to do something foolish. It is the voice that pushes us toward excellence when our will fades. The inner critic is the quiet guide that gently leads us. It also feeds on our failures and mistakes. Persistent negativity can create an inferiority complex or fear. It can also turn us into monsters.

The negative form of the inner critic is not gentle. It feeds on embarrassment, failure, unhappiness, and fear. It turns them into a dark force that drags us beneath the floor—unless we take actions to stop it.

Negativity becomes a cycle when we allow the dark form of the inner critic to take precedence over the good form. One failure can become the source of several other failures. “You failed your nursing program’s final exam; therefore, you will never become a nurse. Therefore, you can never become a good mother. Therefore, you will never be able to achieve the level of financial and career growth you dream of. Therefore, you will be an average person, earn an average income, and live an average life” The failure of your final exam can be regurgitated within your subconscious, fed into your mind, and make you think and act like a failure.

Many people let a failure in one area of their lives lead to failures in other areas. A man who has failed in his first two business attempts and has lost investors’ money will unwisely allow this failure to enter his marital life. The business failure will turn him into a bad husband and father. The negative inner critic is at work in men and women with this type of life pattern.

The inner critic can influence the quality of our lives and how we view ourselves. It can push us toward achieving our goals and influence our life decisions. Sometimes, the voice can be helpful, motivating us toward success and the achievement of our dreams,

goals, and life ambitions. At other times, it can be a negative force that says, “You cannot achieve this or do that.”

The voice of reason and good is sometimes termed the *conscience*. The conscience speaks subtly when we are about to steal or lie. It speaks when we are unkind to others. It speaks when we spend time partying instead of reading. It speaks when we take a bribe. It speaks when we are about to do something we should not be doing and when we ignore something we should be doing.

A conflict is often created in our minds between the voice that pushes us toward happiness and the voice that pushes us away from happiness and fulfillment. This conflict is like the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other shoulder. They are both telling you what you *should* do. Even though they are heavy influencers, the decision is ultimately yours.

The goal of this book is to help you understand where this voice comes from, its level of influence on your life, and how to quiet the negative voice and heighten the voice that pushes you toward happiness, success, and fulfillment.