



Build the Strength Within: Create the Blueprint for Your Best Life Yet

Deborah Carlin

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Carlin does a rare thing for a self-help book: gives useful guidance by supplying readers with the tools necessary for change.

Developed by a psychologist and expert in the human condition and self-development, *Build the Strength Within* is a “full-immersion” program that includes a book plus online audio and video files. Deborah Carlin offers a comprehensive process for creating a life blueprint.

Self-help books that focus on living a fulfilling life sometimes fall short because they lack the substantive guidance and tools necessary for the reader to implement real change. Carlin’s book is different. *Build the Strength Within* not only takes a positive, uplifting approach but also is chock-full of helpful counsel, instruction, and self-guided exercises centered around facilitating work-life balance.

The book is divided into five sections: “The Basics,” “Clarity & Application,” “The Core,” “Taking It to the Next Level,” and “The Big Picture with Details.” Carlin leads a logical process of discovery and development to build a “blueprint for a successfully intentional and integrated life.” In each section, the author includes personal stories, compassionate advice, and relevant teachings from others, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, and Wayne Dyer.

Carlin discusses psychologist Erik Erikson’s “various stages in the life cycle” (from infancy to late adulthood) to demonstrate “why it is helpful to consider the value each life stage can offer.” This one chapter alone is likely to provoke serious introspection.

Perhaps the most useful parts of the book are the numerous journaling exercises, “self talk scripts,” “self-assessments,” and “plan of action” tools. These elements are carefully integrated with the text so they appropriately supplement each section. For example, the “Beginning Work-Life Integration” self-assessment addresses the question, “How well-integrated are you between your personal and work life?” Here, the reader uses a scale to evaluate five statements to assess the answer to the question. The “What’s Important?” plan-of-action tool encourages the reader to write down things under the categories “What I love,” “What I hate,” “What excites and drives me,” and “What I am committed to.” The reader’s responses help guide him or her on the path to self-discovery.

Carlin writes skillfully, weaving together observations and experiences (which sometimes include personal, intimate details of her own struggles) with the thinking of other experts. The exercises and tools are particularly effective; they should encourage self-evaluation and provide valuable insight into one’s own wants, needs, and challenges.

Build the Strength Within provides a well-thought-out framework for developing one’s own life plan and is a masterful example of a programmatic approach to self-improvement.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (November 17, 2014)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to

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