

Introduction

FROM PASSION TO PURPOSE

At the age of twenty-five, holding hands nervously, we stepped onto the ledge, and in a leap of faith, moved forward into the void. This is how we felt as we signed our names to the paperwork. For the first time in our lives, we took on the roles of business owners and employers. We became young entrepreneurs of a unique dance school in an industry that wasn't known for change.

Since our first opening day, we believe that we embody the *entrepreneurial spirit*. These two words are defined as “an attitude and approach to thinking that actively seeks out *change*.” It’s “a mindset that embraces *innovation* as well as *service* and *continuous improvement*.” Individuals with entrepreneurial spirit are deemed to possess “*passion and purpose*”.¹ We believe that we created our dance school in this way and with an optimistic “yes-we-can” outlook. We continuously look for ways to improve ourselves and our business. We thrive on finding new avenues to apply our creativity and work ethic. With a clear vision and philosophy about our brand, we integrated our love for dance and fitness, and for learning.

As our mom mentioned in the FOREWORD, the spark for this book happened after she collated our Zoom meeting notes into one file (see *Appendix A*). It looked like a book! Once we began to write, our goal was to share our learning and insights about creating our business together, our dance studio, located in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. We chronicle its growth over the past twenty plus years. We demonstrate our passion for dance and fitness, and we share our philosophy and how it came to be. Over the years, we were faced with criticism and negativity. Up against all odds, we stayed positive and optimistic. We had to dig deep and believe in ourselves (see PART I and II).

We began writing during the height of the pandemic in the spring of 2020. We wanted to highlight how we coped and kept our *ViBE* alive during this challenging time in the world (see *Chapter 12*). We had also been invited as guest speakers, and we had notes and videos from those presentations that we realized could be incorporated into our writing (see *Chapter 9* and *Appendix B*).

Additionally, we were knee deep into creating our new cartwheel mat (see *Chapter 13*). We were super passionate about it and excited to bring it to the world. As we ventured into writing this book and the first few books of our children's series, we also decided to share our writing and publishing experiences and what we were learning (see *Chapter 14*). Documenting carefully, we felt like we had an umbrella of helpful strategies to share with our potential readers.

This book is also our *personal* story. We detailed our early years and our growing up as identical twins as well as our family challenges (see PART I). We realized that so much of our personal and family history influenced our professional lives and we could not separate the two. As a result, we wove everything together into one complete package along with a plethora of useful strategies. We also included reflective questions to encourage learning and growth.

We emphasize that ongoing *self-improvement* should be looked at in a constructive way. It's not about *fixing* faults or defects but about learning and growing. It's about living in the present and

moving into the future, one step at a time, with optimism and confidence, making changes that will impact your direction in a beneficial way. As lifelong learners, we see self-improvement and professional development as crucial to a fulfilling life and a successful business.

WHAT TYPE OF BOOK IS THIS?

The *genre* of our book is *transformational nonfiction*, which means that it is a mission-driven *self-help* book with messages that impact readers to help them change, heal, learn, and grow. Our book could also be classified as a *teaching memoir* because we use our own stories to illustrate lessons that can help our readers. We openly and courageously share our personal experiences as well as our journey as business owners, entrepreneurs, and authors, while at the same time, we share “how-to” and useful strategies gleaned from our insights and lessons learned. At *ViBE*, we want dancers to walk in one way and walk out better. We want the same for our readers with their experience with this book. We want our words to help them become the best versions of themselves. Specifically, we see this book as a *self-help memoir* designed to improve and add value to our readers’ lives.²

THE NAME OF OUR DANCE SCHOOL AND THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK

In 2002, we named our dance school *ViBE Dance and Fitness Studio*. It was important for us to include both *dance* and *fitness* in the name because we are wellness advocates as well as dance enthusiasts. We later added our incorporated name, *ViBE Studio Productions Inc.* We liked the one-syllable word, *vibe*. We remember searching for its meaning and discovered that when it is used as a verb, such as “let’s *vibe*” or “we are *vibing*”, it means moving to the beat, grooving, listening to music, and/or dancing.³ Talk about symbolism. It was perfect. Back then, we had no idea that the name of our business would become such a popular and mainstream word as it is today. (We talk more about the importance of names in *Chapter 3*.)

The word, *vibe*, is heard in song lyrics and is seen on social media. It is even printed on all sorts of products. The phrase, *good vibes*, has become common and is used often in today’s vernacular. We recognized the potential of this word before it became part of everyday language. It now feels like a foreshadowing regarding the longevity of our business.



We like to define what this word means to us. It's not simply the name of our business. It's the word that perfectly encapsulates and describes the feelings of who we are and what we do. It's our *vibe*. It's our *passion*. It's our dreams and interests. It's our desires and wishes. It's what fuels us. It's what energizes and motivates us. It's what encourages us to make a difference! It's our *purpose*. It's our *brand*.

We also see our *vibe* as our *power*. This power is not about having power *over* others but refers to our *personal* power and unique qualities. It's our mental or intellectual power. It's our social and emotional power. When we refer to personal power, we mean having strength and confidence in our own abilities. It's our power to be mindful of the present moment, to be more aware. It's our power to find meaning and to create. It's our power to positively *influence* ourselves and others. It's like a candle that shines bright and can light up other candles within its vicinity. It's our power to make decisions and ask questions. We associate personal power with seeking out feedback and acting on it. We see it as growth and learning.

The word *vibe* also relates to our *purpose*. It encapsulates our values and beliefs. It speaks to our vision and mission. It's all about our goals. It is who we are and what we are meant to be and do. It's our *brand* and it's our *vibe*.

We often ask others, “*What's your vibe?*” We believe that this question is effective because it engages people to reflect on their own lives—on their *vibe*. As we brainstormed for questions that might stem from this one, we realized that *all* of them are addressed in some way in this book. We included these below (in alphabetical order just for fun):

- What are you all about?
- What's your attitude?
- What's your belief?
- What's your confidence levels?
- What's your desire and dream?
- What's your fun?
- What's your goal? What's your growth?
- What's your happiness and happy place?
- What's your joy?
- What's your identity? What's your interest? What's your intention? What's your integrity?
- What's your leadership strength and style?
- What's your magic? What's your mental health and wellness level? What's your mindset? What's your mission? What's your motivation?
- What's your objective? What's your overall health and wellness level?
- What's your *passion*? What's your path and possibilities? What's your philosophy? What's your physical health and wellness level? What's your plan? What's your potential? What's your power? What's your pride? What's your *purpose*?
- What's your reason for being?
- What's your self-worth? What's your strength? What's your support?
- What's your talent? What's your truth?
- What's your uniqueness?
- What's your virtue? What's your vision?
- What's your *why*? What's your work ethic? What's your work-life balance?

Since our goal is to motivate you to reflect on your own *vibe*—on your *brand*—and to set actionable goals, these three words for our title seemed fitting. We also used the same three words as the slogan for our 2023 t-shirt slogan (see *Chapter 9*).

OUR CORE MESSAGE

The writing of this book transformed us in so many rewarding and transformational ways. It was a continuous revelation of who we are and what influenced us to be who we are. Towards the end of our writing process, we realized that the whole notion of *branding* seemed to be an overarching theme in the book. As a result, we learned everything we could about branding, and then revised our book with the lens of branding. We even modified the subtitle to highlight branding as a focus.

To clarify, branding is about *differentiation*. It started when farmers labeled their cattle with their brand to differentiate them from others. Branding is also all about demonstrating value to others. It evokes a feeling about who you are and what you do.

In business, a brand is what sets you apart from your competitors. It's what your clients know and understand about your business. It's the elements that you incorporate, such as your name and values, your vision and mission, and your persona and personalities that play into your identity and purpose. Over the past few years, with the increase in technological advancements and more online events, the whole notion of branding has become more and more important than ever.

Personal branding is similar to corporate branding because it refers to how you are seen by others and how you make others feel. It's the qualities or words or emotions that become synonymous with you when people see you or hear your name. It's your *identity* that people see as a cohesive whole.³ It's your *vibe*!

As teens, we were not aware of the notion of *branding*. It just happened as we went from experience to experience and did things that gave us joy and seemed to be what we should be doing. Creating our brand and building our resumes were not conscious endeavors.

We didn't realize it then, but we were our brand before we opened our dance studio. By working in the dance industry throughout all the varied opportunities that we undertook, and by being enthusiastic and having an optimistic attitude, and by being role models, we built a reputation that gave us credibility and reach. Without knowing it, making connections, and ultimately spreading our positive energy and our *vibe* helped to create our brand and worked to our advantage to help make our dance school a reality beyond our dreams.

In today's world, we believe that everyone needs to be reminded that each experience and *how* we respond can play an important role in creating who we are and what we believe. It's being more mindful about building our brand or our identity. It can ultimately shape our current and future reality. This is the *core message* in this book.

Our goal is to help you find your *vibe*—to help you build your *brand* and become the best versions of yourself in life and business. We also are strong advocates for accessing *support*, such as in the form of books and online resources, and other people, including professionals. This has helped us in so many different situations. Having the appropriate support is integral to building your *brand* and moving *forward* in life and business with *optimism* and *confidence*.

MOVING ON VERSUS MOVING FORWARD

We often say that we are moving *forward*. We view moving *on* and moving *forward* as different. For us, moving *on* implies carrying with you the burdens and baggage of your past without resolution or forgiveness of yourself and others. It means knowing what happened and taking it everywhere you go. Picture a person trudging along with a huge bag on his or her back. It could also imply leaving behind your past with no more mention of it, but we believe it is still with you and can hamper your growth and daily life if not dealt with in a conscious way.

In contrast, we see moving *forward* as a positive action of travelling into the future. It is acknowledging the past with a solid resolution and forgiveness of your past experiences. It's taking what's in your hearts and minds and continuing to go forward at your own pace. It's accepting what went before and letting it go and learning from it. It's living in the moment. It's setting realistic goals for the future. It's persevering and never giving up on yourself. It's being fearless and strong. It's being optimistic and gaining confidence in your own abilities. Yes, there might be setbacks, but it is moving ahead with hope.

WHY OPTIMISM?

Throughout the writing of this book, we discovered that, although there are similarities, there is a difference between “optimism” and “positivity.” Research has linked both to *benefits* such as “lower levels of stress and stronger immunity” and “better heart health and feelings of well-being”. Thinking positively and optimistically can “decrease stress”.⁴

Positivity also stems from *Positive psychology* which focuses on the good things in people's lives, such as happiness and joy or inspiration and love. It also refers to states and traits, such as having gratitude and compassion for oneself and others, or being resilient. It helps institutions and organizations apply positive principles such as life satisfaction and wellbeing, hope and optimism, and self-esteem and confidence. As a psychology field, topics such as these are studied to help people live their best lives.⁵

Positivity and optimism come from the “law of attraction,”⁶ which means that if you think positive or hopeful thoughts or if you have a positive *attitude*⁷, you will attract positivity to yourself. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. Negativity is contagious and can spread.

We completely agree with this premise. We work hard to mindfully control our thoughts and keep a positive and hopeful attitude in all that we do. We believe that we shape our lives by our mindset towards ourselves and others. This means that individuals with a positive attitude in their own abilities will be better able to learn and succeed and people who walk and talk like the effective leader they want to be will become that leader. We see that success can be attributed to *attitude*.⁷

We know, however, that when bad or sad and unexpected things occur, like accidents or divorce, or when tragic things like illness or death or Covid happen, it takes more than positive thinking to cope. We can't just say “get over it and think positively.” This can create “toxic positivity,” which can make you feel “less than” or create a feeling of “guilt for not being strong enough”⁴ to handle it. Therefore, although we see having a positive attitude as essential, we believe that being hopeful and having optimism is seeing the realities—the good and the bad—and believing that there is a positive

coming. It's not about pushing the negative feelings away but acknowledging them and dealing with them. It's realizing that change is inevitable and understanding “what you can and cannot change.” It's making a list of things that you *can* do. It's challenging your thoughts and actions. It's about “problem-solving”⁴ and having hope for the future. It's visualizing something better and moving towards it. It's seeking support or professional help if you need it. It's about all the possibilities available to you if you look for them. It's the *how* you respond to opportunities and choices that create your reality. This again relates to the *core message* of this book.

WHY CONFIDENCE?

The whole notion of confidence-building is a mantra for us as we continuously witness confidence playing a huge role in each child and adult's self-esteem. Confidence, in this sense, means “a feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities.”⁸ It shows in behaviors and actions. It shows in attitude and mindsets. We can see it in the growth of skills and capabilities.

We see confidence in life and business as key. When approaching any new learning, kids and adults need to have a positive and optimistic attitude and an open mind. They need support and lots of practice. They need to put in the effort. When they persevere and try again and again without giving up, they become determined to succeed. They gain that all-important confidence in their own abilities which can spill over into other areas of their lives. They realize that they can do anything.

We believe that the higher your confidence, the better you feel about yourself, and the happier you become. The more success you achieve, the more determined you become. It's a powerful pattern. It enables greater feelings of being limitless and unstoppable! We see it as becoming empowered to find and activate your *vibe*. (We talk about confidence again and again in this book. It is an important aspect of our philosophy and practices.)

Here's what we see about how confidence plays a role in achieving success:

CONFIDENCE AND SUCCESS				
	+	+	+	=
A Wish, Dream, Desire, Motivation, or A GOAL	A Positive mindset, An open mind, Input, Strategies, and SUPPORT	Practice, Practice, Practice, Effort, Go, Go, Go	Determination , Perseverance, Never giving up, Try, Try, Try	LEARNING and GROWTH IN SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE = SUCCESS

OUR IDEAL READERS

We started by brainstorming a list of who we viewed as the *potential* readers for this book. We then refined our list to highlight the most *ideal readers*. Creating this list helped us target our book in a more focused way because we want to provide useful information and strategies.

We believe that this book is for **adults and teens** who may feel frustrated in dealing with their personal and professional challenges and could benefit from some concrete coping strategies to move *forward* with optimism and confidence. They may have low self-esteem and are somewhat insecure in their own abilities. They may fear failure and change or dark times. They may be afraid to take that first or second step towards a new endeavor. They may want to become their best selves in life and/or in their workplace or business. It could also be for **parents** who want to find some positive strategies for their children and/or for themselves.

Other *ideal readers*, of course, are **our committed face-to-face and online ViBE community**—our dancers, staff, parents, and families, past, present, and future—who want to show their support. (We are proud to say that a *lot* of people have experienced our *ViBE* over the past twenty plus years!). And, of course, we know that **our families** and good **friends** will want to read our book to see our entire story in print and show their love and support.

Because we are sharing our business journey, this book may be useful to **entrepreneurs** and **business owners** as well as **managers** and **employers** who want some practical strategies to become more effective leaders, especially during any obstacles they may face in today's challenging world. They may also want to see how another business and business owners evolved and continue to thrive. This book may also be of value to **dancers** or **dance teachers**, **fitness enthusiasts** or **studio owners** who want to learn more about the power of dance and fitness. They may want to see a similar business and business owners in action.

Because this reads like an instructional guide with reflective questions throughout, it might be of value to **educators** who want information and practical strategies to share with their staff or students to encourage them to become their best selves and increase their leadership potential. **Physical and health education teachers** may want to gain ideas for their classes in physical and mental health and wellness, and **intermediate or secondary school teachers** may want to address the life skills and/or business education curriculum with their students and are looking for ideas and resources.

Because we included *Chapter 13* about inventing and marketing a product, we see **creators and inventors** (new or experienced) as possible readers. They may be interested in seeing how we brought a unique product to market.

Because we added *Chapter 14* about our writing and publishing journey, we see **authors** (beginning or seasoned) as potential readers who may want to hear about our writing and publishing endeavors to gain some potential good ideas for their own journeys.

OUR PROMISE

Our *promise* to you, our readers, is that this book will provide important strategies and support for your lives and business. We hope that it will also offer inspiration. As you read, we trust that you will learn about yourself as you see yourself reflected in our struggles and joys. The up and down situations we face may be different but the questions we ask ourselves and the lessons we learn can be universal.

We often say, “How you do one thing is how you do everything.” Author, Annie Dillard, echoes this thought in her book, *The Writing Life*, when she wrote, “How we spend our days is, of course,

how we spend our lives.”⁹ This resonates with us as we encourage you to mindfully reflect upon *what* you do each and every day and *how* you do it.

- Do you do it with energy and enthusiasm?
- Do you do it with openness of mind?
- Do you do it with kindness and caring to yourself and others?
- Do you do it with a positive attitude?
- Do you do it with a willingness to learn and grow?

We continue to look for helpful tools to support us as we explore our thoughts and actions. We strive to be the *best* that we can be. With this in mind, we promise that this book will encourage important *self-reflection* to help you examine and discover your leadership potential and your best self. We hope that you will see your *vibe* and brand come alive for you as you make small and important changes and move *forward* in life and business with optimism and confidence.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

We organized this book into this Introduction, five main PARTS with chapters within each part, and a conclusion. Here is a brief clarification of each section:

- In this *Introduction*: **FROM PASSION TO PURPOSE**, we introduce ourselves, the book’s *genre*, title, and our *core message*. We discuss our *ideal readers* as well as our *promise* to our readers.

- In PART I: **BUILDING YOUR BRAND** (*Chapters 1 to 6*), we share our passion and background in dance as well as the opening of *ViBE* in 2002. The writing in this section demonstrates the personal side of our lives and our family’s life. It illustrates how we built our personal brand.
- In PART II: **CLARIFYING YOUR BRAND** (*Chapters 7 to 10*), we share everything we do that has created and continues to contribute to our *ViBE*. We give you an inside view of our operations with our dance school and community. We unveil strategies for clarifying your *brand* in your business.
- In PART III: **THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING YOUR BRAND** (*Chapters 11 and 12*), we share how we believe leadership impacts our life and brand, and how we develop a strong and dedicated team. We talk about what we are witnessing at *ViBE* and what we can all learn from it.
- In PART IV: **SURVIVING AND THRIVING** (*Chapter 12*), we discuss our journey throughout this stressful time along with the strategies we used and the insights we gained.
- In PART V: **EXTENDING YOUR BRAND THROUGH CREATIVE INITIATIVES** (*Chapters 13 and 14*), we highlight how we branched out and implemented our exciting creative initiatives. We chronicle how we invented a new product, and we share our writing and publishing journeys and the creation of our author brand.
- In our concluding chapter, *Final Thoughts*: **MOVING FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE**, we discuss what’s next for us. We illustrate again how we are moving forward into the future with optimism and confidence. We emphasize our *yes-you-can* attitude—as we encourage you to do too.