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Wisdom From The (Not So Secret) Order of The Titanides: Vol. 1

The Only Life You Can Save Is Your Own *The key to succeeding as a female entrepreneur*



Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Titanides newsletter. We are thrilled to welcome so many new members. And we're excited for all the wonderful new plans for 2019. We thought we would kick things off by sharing the theme of this year's gala event, "How to save your own life..."

At this year's Titanides Gala, we examined the critical differences between male and female entrepreneurs. We looked at the pay gap, the mental load gap, the risk gap and more. And we talked about how, as women, we must take responsibility for our own success if we hope to close this gap.

Below is a copy of the keynote, along with the latest research articles. I hope you'll take just a few minutes to read it and then do the scoring exercise with us. Everyone at the Titanides event wrote down their scores, and we all agreed to hold each other accountable for "closing the success gap" in the next 12 months.

Marcella

The Only Life You Can Save Is Your Own

In 2015, on a gorgeous spring day, I ran away to Knobs Haven, a spiritual retreat center in Loretto, Kentucky.

It was the first time I had been able to rest and just breathe in nearly four years. I dropped my bags in my room and headed out to the Cedars of Peace to walk the labyrinth and meditate in the little chapel.

But before I could get to the end of the farm road, my cell phone rang. I didn't recognize the number. It was out of state. I answered my phone, and I heard this girl who sounded like she was 15 say, "Ms. Allison?"

"Yes?"

"This is Amber, from the rehabilitation center in St. Louis. You need to come get your son Jake. We're closing."

I was dumbstruck and furious. "What in the hell are you talking about? I just spent three weeks getting the insurance approved and paid \$500 to fly him there, and he's supposed to stay for three months."

I hung up and threw my phone so hard at the wall, it broke. Then I stormed over to the office of JoAnn Gates, the very lovely spiritual director of the retreat center.

"The facility in St. Louis called, the one I killed myself to get Jake into... the special dual-diagnosis facility that's supposed to treat mental illness and addiction... they are closing! Because, get this... there's more money in detox! I can't freaking deal with this anymore."

JoAnn said in her incredibly calm voice, "Then don't."

"You don't understand. Jake's only been there two weeks and they want to send him home now. I swear if you weren't already insane, the mental health care system would drive you insane! I can't take it anymore!"

And JoAnn said again, "Then don't."

"You're not listening. I cannot run a psychiatric ward and rehab center in my house. I've spent four years trying to save this kid. I've fought insurance companies and doctors and hospitals and rehab centers. I can't do this anymore."

"Then don't."

The next day, as I drove back to Cincinnati, I was screaming and yelling at God at the top of my lungs on the Blue Grass Parkway. Small animals were afraid to cross the road. "I'm done, do you hear me? I'm done. I can't do this anymore."

And over and over again, all the way home, I heard JoAnn saying, "Then don't." I heard her when I stopped for gas. When I grabbed a cup of coffee in Lexington. And when I crossed the bridge over the Ohio. "Then don't." "Then don't." "Then don't."

That Friday, my husband Tom and I picked Jake up at the airport, and we drove him straight to a small efficiency apartment we had rented near my office.

The day before, we had trekked over to Goodwill. Do you know you can outfit an entire apartment for like \$350? I'm talking a couch and a chair and silverware and some really bad artwork. We outfitted that entire apartment, filled the refrigerator with

groceries, unloaded all his books and clothes and TV from our house and just put it all in the apartment.

We dropped Jake off, and we said, "Buddy, you've got food. You've got your medications. There's an AA meeting down the street. This is up to you now."

And I was so convinced that Jake was not going to be alive by the next morning that I called my girlfriend in Al-Anon that night, and I asked her to meet the ambulance with me in the morning.

And Tom and I drove back home, and I just went to bed. I wasn't worried. I wasn't freaking out. I wasn't upset. I was just completely done. I had absolutely nothing left to give.

The next morning, my phone rang about 8 a.m. It was Jake. "Hey, Mom, how's it going?" He was up, reading a book, making coffee, and getting ready to head out to a meeting.

And I was looking at my cell phone like aliens had descended. And Jake just kept talking all chipper and happy like Mr. Rogers or something.

Every day for weeks, I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. But instead, things started to slowly get better. Jake started going to meetings. He started taking his medication. He agreed to see the psychiatrist. It wasn't all unicorns and roses, but there were signs of progress.

Three years later, he is sober, he's in school, and he's taking his medications.

And one day, not that long ago, I was driving him home from the psychiatrist's office. I was telling him how proud I am of him and how amazed I am at how far he has come.

And I asked him, "Dude, what was it? What changed? What made the difference?"

And he looked at me and he said, "You know, mom, when you put me in that apartment and you walked away, I didn't have to be responsible for you anymore. I didn't have to feel guilty about ruining your life. I could just take care of me, you know?"

All those years I was trying to save HIM, and it turns out that the only one who could save Jake's life was Jake. And the only life I can save is my own. The only life any of us can ever save is our own.

We Are Gas Lighting Ourselves

That's something that we ALL have to learn as female entrepreneurs and marketers and copywriters. We have to save our own lives, and we have to do it over and over and over again.

In 2018, women of every race are still paid less than men, at every education level. And the *more* experience you have, the *wider* the pay gap.

You've heard that infamous statistic that women earn just \$0.80 on the dollar. But let's stop and do the math. In 2015, men working full-time earned a median annual salary of a little over \$50,000, while women earned just over \$40,000 a year.

That's a loss of over \$10,000 in median income every single year. Just because you're a woman.

Over a 40-year career, that's more than \$400,000. So you have to work an extra decade just to catch up! And black and Hispanic women face an even bigger gap. They have to work more than two decades past retirement just to close the gap. Which means unless you're a vampire, you'll never catch up.

Now, you'd think that as entrepreneurs and freelancers, the first thing we would do is close the pay gap. After all, we set our own price tag. Surely, we wouldn't sabotage ourselves? Right?

Wrong! FreshBooks, a Canadian accounting software company, did the math. They analyzed invoices from male and female freelancers recently. And they calculated that we charge 28% LESS than men. 28%! That's WORSE than eighty cents on the dollar! We are literally gas lighting ourselves.

And that's on us, ladies. If we want things to change, we can't sit around waiting for a knight on a white horse to ride to the rescue. We have to rescue ourselves.

So where do we begin? How do we take responsibility and save our own lives as female freelancers and entrepreneurs?

Well it turns out, you are already doing one of the best things you can do right now, by reading this article and taking advantage of the power of the Titanides community.

Why Women Need a Room of Our Own to Succeed

I was reading an article in the Harvard Business Review by Shawn Achor. He recently wrote a new book I love called *Big Potential*. It's about how the power of community can increase your chances of success. The research shows we quite literally all rise

together.

In the book, he tells the story of how he had just spoken at a large women's conference, and he was flying home. He had the program out on his lap, and the guy next to him asked about it. And when Shawn told him about the event, the guy said something dismissive like, "Does that crap really make any difference?"

Shawn was so frustrated at his inability to coherently defend the need for women's conferences and networking events that he called up another author, Michelle Gielan, and they decided to do a study of 2,600 women across all kinds of jobs and industries who attend a conference for women just like the Titanides event.

They decided to measure two things. They wanted to know, if a woman attends a networking event, does it improve her income? Does she in fact make more money?

And they wanted to know if a woman attends a woman's networking event, does she experience any *intangible* benefits? Is she less stressed, more confident, more connected?

They were hoping to show a modest improvement so that they could defend themselves against jerks on airplanes. But what they discovered blew their minds.

In the year after a woman attends a conference of women and connects with her peers, that woman has double the chance of getting a promotion. Double! Not only that, but she has triple the chance of earning 10% or more in the following year. Triple!

But it's not just about the money. Eight out of 10 women who attend a women's networking event report feeling more optimistic about their future. And 7 out of 10 women report feeling more connected.

Now, research shows when you feel more optimistic, you have better business outcomes. And when you feel more connected, you are happier and more successful. So no wonder their income went up!

Now, here's the thing. If you want these benefits (and those are some pretty awesome benefits in my opinion), you have to take action. This is not passive. It's active. You have to take action to save your own life.

And you know what? It turns out we already know how to do this. The more than 60 letters in our wonderful book of female wisdom, ***Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me This Sh*t Before?***, prove it.

We're working on finalizing our publishing plans as we speak. But for now, I want to share just a few pieces of life-saving wisdom from our community with you.

Now one of the first things you can do to save your own life is to...

Charge What You Are Worth

It was Jen Stevens who told her younger self...

You can get the job done right and charge what you're worth. And you should. Because people will pay for it — when you ask them to.

Part of the reason that women earn 80 cents to every male dollar is because we're reluctant to ask for that extra 20 cents.

So how do we ask? How do we even know what we are worth?

Well, first of all, we need to find the appropriate rate for the job, and we need to check that with someone before we agree to the price or send off the invoice.

Now when I first got into the business, my good friend Monica Day was one of my mentors, and she was working for one of the Agora companies at the time. And so when Agora's Mike Ward hired me for my first gig at The Oxford Club more than 10 years ago, I called Monica.

I had no idea what to charge. It could have been \$10 or \$10,000. I had no idea. And Monica took one look at my bid and said, "If you seriously don't increase your fees, I'm going to get on a plane and fly to Cincinnati and personally beat your ass..." And if you've met Monica, you know she would totally do it.

You see, she knew the going rate for that work, and she knew I was way underbidding it. So do a buddy check before you send out that bid or that invoice. And it's best if you check it with someone who is at or near your level and knows the going rate for your level of experience, because that changes. AWAI and Copy Chief also both have good pricing guides that can help. Do your homework, ladies.

I STILL make this mistake. I still worry that I'm charging too much. Or that the client can't afford it. And I lower my fees before I even negotiate. It's ridiculous!

I was recently bidding on a project with a new client, and I asked fellow copywriter David Deutsch to take a look at the bid for me because he had worked with this client before. And David called me back and said, "Double it." I said, "What?" He said, "Double it. Oh, and I'd increase the royalties too."

So I doubled the bid. And I sent it out to the client. And guess what? No pushback, none, just done. He accepted the full flat fee. We negotiated the royalty a bit and that was it.

Overnight, I doubled my fee because I charged what I am worth. Because I charged like a man, and I billed like a man, and I priced myself like a man.

Ladies, take Jen Stevens's advice, charge what you are worth.

Now, we're going to make a little scorecard as we go along. And I want you to score yourself on each category on a scale of one to ten so that when we get together next year, we can measure ourselves like in Shawn's study and see how we are doing.

So grab your pen and right now I want you to write down how you think you are doing with charging what you are worth. Give yourself a 1 if you're like mother Theresa and you give everything away. Give yourself a 10 if you always charge what you are worth. Then just write the number and maybe a sentence next to it about why you chose that number.

The second thing you can do to save your own life is to...

Start Saying No

Lisa Christoffel warned her younger self...

Lisa, you're always the first to raise your hand to help, but you're not helping yourself at all. Every once in a while, you realize what you're doing and you start saying no.

Then, as soon as you have balance in your life, you start taking on more and more until you tip yourself into over-commitment all over again. You'll pay for this, with your health and your happiness.

Until one day you will be forced to wake up and start looking around at how you're living your life, how you're spending your precious time.

Many of us work from home and we're working all day and we're doing laundry in between phone calls and we're loading and unloading the dishwasher and scheduling doctors' appointments and calling the plumber. And some of us are trying to take care of our kids at the same time and we're sending emails at 3 a.m. because it's the only time the house is quiet and we can think.

And yes, things have changed since my mother's generation. My husband actually knows how to use the vacuum cleaner and he's the one who does the dishes in our

house. He'd even be happy to do the laundry except I forbid him to touch my clothes after he shrank my favorite sweater until it wouldn't even fit the dog.

Bright Horizons, a chain of national childcare centers around the United States, did a study. And they discovered that yes, women are starting to earn more money and more of us are becoming the breadwinners... but our male partners, they're *still* not sharing equally in the household management... because WE are the ones still carrying the "mental load."

What do I mean by the mental load? Let's say your husband offers to cook dinner. This is great. But if you send him 10 text messages saying, "So there's spaghetti in the cupboard, there's a jar of sauce, there's some hamburger in the refrigerator, but remember don't put mushrooms in, because Johnny's allergic to them, but if you could make the spaghetti, and have that ready by 5 pm before we leave for soccer practice..." If you are planning everything that he's executing, you are carrying 100% of the mental load. Even if he did boil the water!

And when you complain if he says, "But you didn't ask me to do that..." then you are still carrying the mental load!

As women, we are TWICE as likely to manage the business of the household, and THREE times as likely to manage our children's schedules.

I had no idea how much of the mental load I was carrying until my son became very seriously ill with mental illness and addiction. My husband Tom and I were thrust into all these family counseling programs.

It was pretty rapidly apparent that I was carrying all the mental load for our crazy dysfunctional family. I will never forget when the counselor gave us an assignment one week to switch roles. I was supposed to do whatever my husband did, and he had to do everything I did. Sounds like a reality TV show, right?

What happened is, Tom suddenly had to carry the mental load for the entire family. He had to keep track of Jake's doctor's appointments. He had to make sure he understood the insurance forms. He had to deal with prescriptions and the mental healthcare system, which will drive you crazy if you aren't crazy to begin with.

Meanwhile, I found myself wandering around the house trying to figure out what to do with all my extra time, and I ended up reading about four novels in a week.

This year I've been travelling so much for business that Tom probably carries more of the mental load than I do. I remember I was in California for work earlier this year, and my son Nathan calls me up and says, "Mom, can you stop at the store and pick up some food for dinner? There's like nothing to eat here." and I say "Dude, I've been gone for three days, I'm in California." And he's like, "Oh."

He's so used to Tom running the household that he didn't even notice I was gone. If this had been ten years ago, he would have starved to death before I got back.

But we don't just carry the mental load at home with our husbands and kids. We also do this when we're on projects with other people when we end up acting like "the mom" in business situations.

I notice many times with my male clients, I am the one carrying the mental load for the entire project. I'm the one emailing the guru at 4:00 a.m. to remind him that he promised that he would get us the data today. I'm the one emailing the entire team to point out that the trade in the special report has expired.

I just finished a project a year ago for an options trading service, and I actually sat down and divided up the hours I was actually writing or researching copy vs. the amount of time I was carrying the mental load for the project and basically acting as the mom for the entire team. Almost half of my project time was spent carrying the mental load. And just like at home, I wasn't getting paid for that extra time.

So I brought it up and they actually hired someone to do the job I was doing for free.

Ladies, take Lisa's advice and just say, NO. Stop carrying all the mental load.

Score yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. How are you at saying no? How much of the mental load are you carrying?

1 means nothing in your house happens unless you plan it and direct it and your boss texts you to ask when the weekly meeting starts every damn time...

And 10 means your partner can plan a five-course meal without you and your kid actually knows when he has soccer practice and your boss reminds you of the meeting. Just write your number down and a sentence or two about why it's appropriate.

The third thing you can do to save your own life is to...

Put Yourself First

Joyce Hollman wrote to her younger self...

As you learn to take time to get still and listen to your inner voice, you will start to understand what you need from your life. When you stop running around, doing, doing, doing all the time, you will start to hear that small, still voice.

You won't be able to immediately fulfill everything you realize you need, but there will come a day where you can put a stake in the ground and say that the situation is no longer working for you. You'll release yourself from the role of caretaker...

Bank of America does a survey of small business owners in the United States every couple of years. And one of the questions they asked in 2014 was about personal sacrifice. And it's probably no surprise to you that more than seven out of ten small business owners admitted they've made significant personal sacrifices for their business.

But when they asked business owners, "What have you sacrificed?", there was a huge difference between men and women. Men said, "Time with my wife and my kids," but women said, "Time for myself and my social life."

So we skip our book club even though we love it. We skip out on girls' night even though we love hanging out with our girlfriends. And we don't get a massage, and we don't do the things that make us feel fed and cared for.

We're women. We love caring for people. We love caring for the people in our lives. And we love showing up for our partners, for our children, for our families. To do that, we choose to sacrifice our own self-care. Oftentimes our own social lives.

So let me ask you this question: How much time do you spend taking care of yourself vs. taking care of others?

Healthy Women and Working Mother Magazine recently asked women to rank the time they spent managing their own health care vs. caring for others.

Turns out we do not put our own health first... that's our children. And we don't put ourselves second... that's our cat. And we don't put ourselves third... that's our parents. And we don't put ourselves fourth... that's our partners. We come in dead last. Fifth place.

And that's ONLY if we get around to taking care of our own health at ALL. Nearly eight out of ten of us never get around to our own health appointments at all because we're too busy taking care of everyone else. My colleague Jen Adams cracked me up recently when she told me her family doctor refused to book another appointment for her children until Jen booked her own physical.

I had my own come-to-Jesus moment recently. I was drinking Red Bull and eating goldfish crackers while pulling an all-nighter to get a client's copy done. And I said,

"This shit has got to stop." And I cancelled all my travel from July until the beginning of October. And I started cutting back on sugar and caffeine and eating healthier and taking walks.

But it's not easy. I've still got at least 20 pounds to lose and I need to exercise more. And I'm still sneaking Starbucks and chocolate. But I'm trying. And yes, it would have been great to be at the Titans meeting or to accept my invitation to Baby Bathwater or to NOT miss my Bo Eason mastermind group this month. But I made a decision to put myself first to take care of ME rather than running around taking care of everyone else.

And this is my commitment for the next year. Because you can't succeed as a female entrepreneur if you are not taking care of this instrument, this body. We are not just disembodied heads walking around supporting others and working like dogs. We have to take care of ourselves. And that means finding time for ourselves and taking care of our own health.

Take Joyce's advice. Stop taking care of everyone else and start put yourself first.

That is how we quite literally save our own lives.

Score yourself, scale of 1 to 10. How good are you at putting your own needs first? 1 means you're coming in dead last (if you're not already dead). And 10 means you're taking care of your health, your social life and your own well-being. Your oxygen mask is on. Again, write down the number and a few sentences about why you chose that number.

Ok, we're making progress on closing the gap, but we're not done yet.

Biggest obstacle quiz:

So a bunch of crazy Canadian researchers looked at all the obstacles women face in building a business. And they found five major obstacles:

1. Limited business experience and training
2. Access to capital
3. Hostile climate for women
4. Negative effects on the family
5. Negative self-image women have about their own abilities

Now which one do you think was the biggest obstacle?

Believe it or not, the number one obstacle women faced was **their own negative self-image**. And once again, that's on us, ladies.

That's why if you want to save your own life, you need to...

Be Your Own Biggest Fan Girl

We all have an inner critic or "mean girl." We all have that nasty judgmental voice in our heads that bullies us and tells us we're not good enough. She just shouts louder in some of us.

Sometimes confidence truly is a case of faking it until you make it. Early in my career, I mentored a group of young male copywriters like Henry Bingaman and Roy Furr and Guillermo Rubio. They were like the "cocky posse," all full of testosterone and swagger.

It was Henry who really helped me change my own image. He taught me to own my successes and stop discounting my abilities. He used to say our egos balanced each other out.

And Kevin Rogers, founder of Copy Chief, helped me to change my self-image too. If you've ever had Kevin introduce you on one of his podcast episodes, you know what I'm talking about. He makes you sound like Wonder Woman, Joan of Arc and Lady Gaga all wrapped up in one. When I doubt myself, I just pull up that podcast and listen to that intro over and over again.

It was Kevin and Henry who really helped me to shut up that "mean girl" critic and replace her with John Wayne with boobs. They taught me to own my successes.

Here's how Pauline Longdon, a great mentor to so many women, put it when talking to her younger self...

In time you will learn never to live down to the expectations others have of you. People you trusted set the bar way too low for you, and many wrote you off. They said you'd never amount to much, but they were so wrong.

They told you that you'd never be a good copywriter because you're female... and through sheer grit, pig-headed determination and countless hours of hard work, you will make them eat their ugly words.

The truth is that you won't ever be a good copywriter because you're female. You're an exceptional copywriter, because you're you. You will become quite the wordsmith, and you will need no qualifiers.

Take Pauline's advice, and make them eat their ugly words.

Ok, how's that bitch in your head? Scale of 1 to 10. How strong and healthy is your self-image? #1 means that nasty judgmental critic is tearing you apart. 10 means you're a member of the cocky posse and you've got more swagger than Old Spice.

This is one of the reasons why I insist that we build each other up and support each other in this community. We already are our harshest critics. We sure as heck don't need to fuel that by tearing each other down.

Not only do you need to be your own best fan girl, you also need to...

Be Somebody Else's Biggest Fan

Look, I know how hard it can be to maintain your confidence, especially when you are struggling, or you have a losing promotion, or you have a setback in your business. It's really easy to start beating ourselves up, and that's why one of the best things we can do in this group is BE SOMEBODY ELSE'S BIGGEST FAN. Instead of tearing each other down, celebrate each other's successes, and be there to support and remind each other of our greatness during our most challenging times.

I recently posted about the Sports Congress package I wrote with Bo Eason and Richard Rossi in our Facebook group. I had been working on that launch for MONTHS and MONTHS and I'd been posting and sharing about the process. And the client loved the copy and everyone thought it was going to be this massive success. Instead, it was a complete wipeout.

And this entire community had my back. Carline Cole told me to get some pralines and cream ice cream and remember the important things in life. Lori Haller gave me her classic shouty caps LOVE YOU encouragement, Michele Wolk reminded me of my past controls and pointed out that I've beat some big names in my time. There were dozens and dozens of comments. That is what I mean by "be someone else's fan club."

And the final way you can save your own life is to...

Risk More And More Often

Serena Savage wrote a beautiful letter to her younger self about her fear of failing...

"Know that persistence in the face of failure is the key to progress. Know that you can forgive yourself, and that giving yourself space will help you become the person you want to be. Finally, know that every good thing is on the other side of fear, and that you deserve all the good that's coming to you."

The Journal of Entrepreneurship did this "meta analysis" where they looked at all of the research done on male vs. female entrepreneurs.

According to the analysis, many female entrepreneurs are freaking terrified to fail. Not only that, but our unwillingness to fail stunts our growth.

Because we're afraid to take risks, our businesses do not grow as quickly. We don't want to risk failing, so we play small and we stay small as a result.

Now this does not mean these things are true for every woman. It just means in general, this is one of the differences they find.

I was talking with David Deutsch about my fear of failure a while ago. And he sent me a YouTube link. I looked all over the place, but I couldn't find it.

But here's the idea, this young guy, probably in his 30s, wanted to start taking more risks and get over his fear of failure. So he did something called the "40 days of failing" or something like that. Every day, he pushed himself to risk more.

One day he went to a restaurant and he asked the waitress to dance with him. He literally played a song on his iPhone and asked her to dance in the aisle. Another day he sang out loud badly on a street corner at the top of his lungs. Then he tried to convince random people to give him \$100 for no reason. And he posted about all these different risks that he was taking all the time.

For me, it was my son who helped me overcome my fear of failure. It was only after I had failed to save him over and over again from drug addiction and mental illness that I stopped being afraid of failure. Because I literally had nothing left to lose. Here's what I told that younger self,

"You'll fail at everything you do to save your boys. You will finally admit defeat and give up all control. You will stop trying to be the perfect mother. You will make every mistake over and over again until you wear your failure like a scarlet letter on your breast for all to see.

You will be pounded by life like a meat tenderizer until all that is left is a fragile tender thing. Only then will you understand that love is the only thing that matters. Kindness is all you have left to give."

It was only then that I found the courage to start the Titanides. It was only then that I could take the risk to start this community, to host a conference even though I'd never done it before, to build a website, to lead a Facebook community, to create a safe space for women in this industry to come together. Because I was no longer terrified of failing.

So take Serena's advice and *risk more because every good thing is on the other side of fear, and you deserve all the good that's coming to you.*

Ok, final score. How risky are you? Again, just write down a number from 1 to 10. 10 is bungee jumping off a cliff on a regular basis and 1 is afraid of your own shadow. Tell me how you're doing on risk and write down a line or two about why you scored yourself this way.

Now, I want you to add up all your numbers. All five categories and write down your total in your journal and circle it and put down today's date.

We're going to work on these five areas for the next year, and we're going to get those scores up. We're going to close that gap.

We All Shine Brighter Together

(Or how our asses light up the darkness ;-)

At our very first Titanides dinner three years ago, we developed three founding principles. We said Titanides leap before we are ready, we get back up when we fall down, and we pay it forward to other women.

And our little community has grown from 18 women around a dinner table in Stamford, Connecticut, to 60 women at this year's event and over 400 women in our Facebook community. For those of you who are new, welcome. And those of you returning, welcome back.

Again, just by participating in this women-only community, you increase your chances of success. Not only can you increase your income by 10% this year, but you can lower your stress, feel more connected, and boost your confidence too.

But you have to fight for yourself. You have to be willing to put your own oxygen mask on first – to use an overused but accurate cliché.

If you are a Titanide, then you are going to commit to saving your own life. And you are going to be a lifeline for every woman in this community. You're going to watch out for each other and mentor and support each other.

Shawn Achor tells another story in *Big Potential* that I love. One dark night in 1935, a biologist from Washington State named Hugh Smith was doing research deep in a mangrove forest in Southeast Asia. As he sat in the darkness, all of a sudden, the

entire tree canopy was illuminated as if struck by lightning. Then a second later it went dark again. Then two seconds later the entire forest for thousands of feet glowed again.

The trees were filled with thousands of lightning bugs, all illuminating at the same time. When Dr. Smith reported his discovery, no one believed him. It wasn't until years later that science proved him right.

It turns out that when a single lightning bug lights up deep in the recesses of a mangrove forest, the odds of finding a mate are 3%. But if all the lightning bugs light up together, they can be seen for up to five miles and their success rate of attracting a mate rises to 82%. The clever little bugs increased their success rate by 79 percentage points just by flashing as an interconnected community instead of as individuals.

When we help others become better, we increase ALL the available opportunities. When we collaborate as a community, we all begin to shine brighter.

And that is what it means to be a Titanide.

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