

My Journey through the Jungle

A Woman of Leadership

By Kelly Smith

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In this article I am dedicating the Jane in the Jungle movement to my mother, Kay Smith, my most significant female role model, who had a beautiful spirit that was encouraging and supportive. My mom died 20 years ago at the age of 53 in a car accident. She was smack dab in the middle of chasing her dream of being an independent business woman after raising her three children as a full time house wife and mother. I was 26 at the time of her death and still too young to understand what a huge following Mom had and how many lives she touched, until her funeral service filled wall to wall with people from all eras of her life.



When I was growing up my mom was very excited that the world would be different for me as a woman because of the women's movement. She secretly read Gloria Steinem's work, and was metaphorically turning summersaults in the kitchen, the main room of the house she occupied. She would tell me over and over again what a great future I had in front of me as a woman and how very important it would be for me to not get pregnant at a young age. She put a huge emphasis on my being financially set in a career that I loved before embarking on motherhood. She was doing her best to lead me in a direction that as a woman would make my life much better than hers. She was excited for me and my generation of women!

My mother was a classic oppressed female who felt she was stuck with very limited options after having children in the early 60's. I as her only daughter witnessed her suffering through the female filter and it was very clear to me, "I did not want to be in her shoes". Her *voice was not heard, much less honored*, it was traumatic and disturbing to say the least. I was greatly impacted by the years of witnessing the life of a female via my mother's role and position. I made a promise over and over again with myself; "I will do anything to not have to be stuck like mom!" That promise I made with myself has taken me on a very interesting journey which has always been my passion and purpose in life, Women's Work and Self Actualization!

In my twenties I found Re-evaluation Counseling and fell in love with the theory regarding solutions to human oppression and particularly the theory regarding women's oppression. The theory suggests that the next step for women is to address the "internalized women's oppression", that is to say the deeply ingrained messaging that has become "a way of being". One very general example is the

experience of “being a victim and not having a voice in things that matter”, i.e. Women as a whole still hold back a lot and are apologetic for having opinions, not honoring their thinking and how much the world needs women’s input. The recommended path for overcoming limitations is to take on leadership in the particular area where you experience such limitations, and so I did. Not only did I get certified as a teacher, I also took on leading women’s groups and attending women’s workshops. I ate it up!

Leadership has been a very important part of discovering, planning, and navigating my journey in life. I also attribute leadership skills to getting me through a very difficult era in my life when I very suddenly found myself a single mom with no parents alive to help me with my small young children. I was mortified and very afraid—I had no idea how I was going to support a family. I recalled my mother’s mantra: *I can’t leave your father because I don’t want to be a single mother on welfare*. I was not prepared for the circumstances that I found myself in and I had a scarcity button that was huge and chronically triggered by everyday living. Thank God for the resources God put in my life in the way of excellent training, coaches, 12 step recovery programs and very supportive and loving friends. And, thank God I did not end up having to seek government assistance.

One of my close friends who has mastered prosperity and abundance in his life and is a great ally to the women’s movement, told me of *The Hunger Project*. The Hunger Project is powerful organization started by Joan Holmes that raises money to fund leadership programs that empower women in third world countries to learn to be self-sufficient. Leadership affirms that we are self sufficient in finances, happiness and fulfillment, offering something valuable to the world, confident in our abilities and aware that our contribution makes a difference.

The Hunger Project targets third world villages that have only experienced scarcity and poverty, not able see solutions or possibility regarding how to draw on their natural talents and the abundant resources of the earth. They show village leaders how empowered, educated women can create a village that is self sufficient, thereby ending infant mortality. The leadership program set up by The Hunger Project works with the villages to determine what it would take to have their village sustainable. The women are seen as beautiful, intelligent and powerful human beings with solutions to their problems, and they are supported as they realize their solutions through the empowering context of leadership training. The women are brought to the front row of the meetings/classes and asked to speak up about what they believe would solve the problem of infant mortality in their particular village. As their thinking is valued and their voice is encouraged, they will inevitably come up with the solution and then with the support of The Hunger Project a plan is put into place and initiated. [For an enormous hit of inspiration watch this Hunger Project video, you are promised to get goose bumps galore!](#)

When I learned of this initiative I began investing in The Hunger Project as a portion of my tithing. Contributing financially has helped me to create a more prosperous mindset and has stood as a reminder that as a woman, I can create sustainability in my own life. I have pictures of these villages that show women

sparkling with hope, and their children looking healthy, happy and content. I hang them up in my office to provide hope, keep perspective and remind me that I do make a difference! I also love to read the success stories that are posted in the newsletters [and web site](#). They touch my heart and remind me that money is only a symbol of our mind's ability to manifest abundance and prosperity. These pictures also remind me of the power and spirit of Women!

I created Jane in the Jungle to be an international women's movement. I want women to benefit from inspiration, training and encouragement at the individual level. I also want your daughters', daughters', daughter to be impacted - as well as all women across the world. Leadership theory holds out that **we are all one** and that working to get ahead at the level of individual limits us to living in a state of "survival mode". There has never been a more exciting time for women in terms of opportunity in the world and there has also never been a more important time for women to lead in the world. What a marvelous thought to think of every woman and girl alive as seeing themselves as a leader with an important and valuable contribution to make in the world. What I see possible for every woman/girl is to be trained for leadership at both, the personal level and the group level. It is the inevitable future for women's thinking and voice to continue making the world a better place for women, men and children!

Ways to create possibilities for women:

- **Give yourself permission to Play Big!** – Women can think and play a lot bigger than we currently are, dust off your dreams! Notice when you are pulled towards selling out on yourself and your inner-critic starts to down play you, then choose to continue thinking big and play big.
- **Get clear about what you want in your life** – Develop a vision and mission based on your natural talents, strengths and abilities – backed by your passion and skills. Ask yourself the question – "What would I do with my life if I had no limitations?"
- **Encourage other women and girls to Think Big, Play Big and go for their Big Dreams** – Talk to women and girls about their dreams and support them in their pursuit of their dreams. Join a like-minded women's or girls group/organization to find this type of opportunity.
- **Get involved with a woman's cause and increase women's influence worldwide** – Pick a cause that calls to your heart and is a reflection of your value system.

To learn more about the hunger project:

Read article:

["Empowering Women as Key Change Agents"](#).

To make:

[On line contribution](#); [Reference Jane in the Jungle for tracking purposes](#).

Participate in:

Stay for up coming Jane in the Jungle fun events!

- **Take action towards your dreams, even if they are small, because action keeps you in the game** – Sign up for a leadership course, get some coaching, make a phone call, set an appointment, get sober, and/or pursue work that will support your dream.
- **And remember “it’s never too late”!!!**