

# WHEN THE CULTURE LIES

HOW THE UNACCOUNTABLE RUN OUR  
LIVES AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

BY LINDA GALINDO

## When the culture lies, there is no accountability.

For many years, I have worked with leaders that want to create more accountable organizations.

I have found that there are often entrenched beliefs that stand in the way of people living accountably and achieving their definition of success.

In fact, over time, I started calling these “beliefs” what they really are: lies. In organization after organization, I saw the same lies perpetuated. Same lies, different place.

By calling these lies out for what they are—pointing the finger of truth at them—we can live in the truth and not get caught up in the corporate-speak that prevents real accountability.

My next book, **“When the Culture Lies: How the unaccountable run our lives and what to do about it,”** is a distillation of the lies I see, and presents clear, practical ideas about what to do about them.

I’m pleased to share an excerpt with you.

Lie:

## People in positions of power can “empower you.”

If you’re waiting for someone to empower you to do what you need to do in order to be successful, you’re in for a long, long wait, and an unsuccessful life.

The fact is, there is no such thing as one person “empowering” another.

### **You can only empower yourself.**

Sure, your boss can give you the authority to take specific actions. The law can give you the right to do the same. Even your parents or spouse might give you some sort of empowering permission. But at the root, you’re the only one who can empower yourself to use what you have—or get what you need—to achieve your dreams and goals.

To say that you’re not empowered to blaze your own trail is to say that it is someone else’s fault you haven’t already done it. To say you’re not empowered to live the life you want is to give someone else the power to let you live it. To say you need someone else to empower you is a lie you tell yourself.

Successful people go after what they want and need. They don’t wait for someone to hand it to them.

If they don’t have the tools and resources to get a job done, they figure out a way to either get the tools they need or do the job without, regardless of the tools. These people are self-empowered.

### **What is empowerment?**

Empowerment is the fuel of life. It is what you have to do to get what you want. It’s acting and facing all possibilities. It’s the only way to ensure you achieve your goals.

### **An empowered person takes risks.**

Here are four mantras I live by:

- I realize that the results I get are the consequences of my choices. If I choose not to jump, I won’t be rewarded with the fun I so desperately want.
- I know that if it is to be, it’s up to me.
- I need to step out of my comfort zone.
- I must stay focused.

Empowerment requires risk. And every time you take a risk, you grow as a person. You empower yourself a little more with every new journey outside your comfort zone, and the residual confidence that comes with that accumulates. When you decide whether the risk you’re about to take is worth the outcome, you become very focused. So your decision to jump, or not jump, is a thoughtful one, as it should be.

Say you decide to jump and you have an amazing experience. You realize that you just achieved something important. You overcame fear. You stepped outside of your comfort zone. You did it yourself—even if you asked for help along the way.

Then the amazing happens: That experience becomes part of your DNA, your physiological self. That fear doesn't come back—at least not that "first-time" fear. The outcome becomes part of your history. You never revert back to your "pre-fear" self. You permanently change.

This happened to me early in my career when I had the opportunity to make a presentation for the first time at a meeting. I was terrified. I knew it was possible that someone would disagree with, or criticize, me. I decided that the outcome—letting my voice and my valid opinions be heard—was worth the risk.

And sure enough, someone in the meeting made a demeaning, inappropriate comment during the question-and-answer portion of my presentation. I didn't like it. But guess what? It didn't kill me. In fact, after the meeting, I circled back with that person and addressed his issue. I didn't talk behind his back. I didn't swallow my feelings. I didn't harbor ill will about him. I didn't hold onto it and let it hurt me. Instead, I addressed it. And more importantly, I learned from it.

**When we stretch our boundaries, we always learn something.**

From our new knowledge, we might decide never to do it again—to disempower ourselves—because we feel that the risk of facing a similar consequence, if we try again, outweighs the benefit.

On the other hand, you might be thrilled and energized by the new experience, like I was.

There's no guaranteed outcome. There will always be risk.

Either way, it's up to you to own your choice.

Executives tell me again and again that they spoke up once and got shamed, or were spoken to in a condescending way. They say they will never trust anyone again as long as they live. They get very dramatic about it. You know what? That's life. If they want to stop, that's a valid choice.

**The choice is always yours.**

Surround yourself with people who have similar stories but have overcome their fears. Their stories could help you empower yourself to overcome yours. Every time you succeed, you further your human growth and potential. Every win equals another dollop of positive energy in your reserves. That's what helps you move forward. That's what self-empowerment does for us.

Some people forfeit their hard-earned power, however. They surround themselves with people who complain about how badly everyone treats them. They get stuck.

Either way—moving forward or staying stuck—is valid. You make your own choice. It's yours to live with.

**I can tell you this: stuck is not where I choose to be.**

## What will you choose?

When you are part of a culture, remember this: your power is always yours.

Think about the explicit and implicit messages that are being communicated by your culture.

Who is being served by the ideas and messages being put forth?

Are you able to recognize any lies?

Are there risks that you need to take? A truth you need to tell?

What path will you choose to take?



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