**TALKING POINTS**

**FOR**

**EVA FRANCIS**

**CHILDHOOD**

We go through life meeting all sorts of people and listening to stories about how wonderful their childhoods were. Guess what? I hope you took notes when you met **those** other people and heard **those** inspiring stories because you're not going to hear a happy childhood story from me!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I grew up as a "country girl" in rural Jamaica. ... and we were poor... no electricity ... no running water.... that is... unless **I RAN** out to the well to fetch it!! ( **Wait for the laugh**). I was shy. I was lonely. I was ashamed of who I was and embarrassed for what I did... and didn't have.... but looking back on my early years, I wouldn't trade them for the world... you see, they gave me the strength, compassion and determination to be the adult that I became.

Years ago I heard a quote... "Give me the child when he or she is seven years old and I will show you the adult." I may have come a long way from the circumstances of my youth, but the determination of that little girl continues to fire my ambition and reminds me every day to respect others because we never know what circumstances they have had to overcome.

Growing up in Jamaica, I was teased, I was bullied, and I feared that what I had was never good enough. I felt like I just didn't have what was needed to get along, and based on the treatment I received, I had good reason to feel that way. While my classmates were driven to school by car and looked fresh and presentable by the time they entered the classroom.... I looked more like a tornado hit me! We didn't have a car to take us to school... I rode that crowded, noisy local bus. I certainly didn't have a brand new freshly pressed uniform... I wore hand-me-downs, and on top of everything, my shoes were worn, my skin was darker than everyone else's, and I promise you... I stood out like a sore thumb!! You know how people say, "It gets better???" No... that didn't happen in MY case!!! In fact as I got older and went to high school, things seemed to get worse... It's funny...not **really**, that as the kids got older, they seemed to get more cruel. I remember so many times they teased me. They hid my lunch. They mistreated me. I withdrew more and more. I stayed in the back of the class. I kept quiet. I didn't want to bring attention to myself. I thought no one would want to listen to what I had to say... **CAN YOU IMAGINE??** People **NOT** wanting to listen to **ME**??? (**Wait for the laugh**). When I had to help my mother sell produce in the local market, my biggest fear was that someone from school might see me. Instead of being proud that I was the only one from my village to even **GO** to high school, I was ashamed ...But somehow, something inside me found the key to life... I knew I had to work harder and be smarter than my classmates. I knew I had to get out and rise above the circumstances. I knew, more than anything, that I had to make something of myself.... not only for me, but for my family. I tell you all of this because within each one of us lies an insecure young child... we all have the ability as adults to use what we have been blessed to receive.... no matter what it is, and rise above circumstances and find our strength... I was determined not to give in to all that negativity... I was intent on succeeding... I left my high school at the top of my class... thankful for every painful lesson that only served to make me **stronger**...

**Executive**

I took my determination and purpose with me through college and I began my professional career always with the goal of knowing, "Never quit. Don't back down. Save my family." I brought my dedication with me... as well as my memories of high school and how I was treated. As I found my way in the business world, all of those "incidents" gave me strength to constantly recommit to my goals and responsibilities. I don't know if you've ever heard the expression, "I am part of all that I have met..." think about it... wherever we go we take pieces of our experiences with us. It's up to us as adults and professionals to use all of those moments to advance our understanding of life and relationships and to shape our future ... and every so often, the universe provides a reason for us to look back and laugh.... would you believe that after I had been an executive in the hospital system for several years... and mind you, I was responsible for supervising A LOT of people... guess who I had the "pleasure" of having under my watch??? Remember all of the kids that tormented me back in high school?? You got it!!! The daughter of one of those sweet young "bullies" applied for a job under my guidance. Apparently the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.... I didn't even have to let her go... she was not very talented, couldn't handle the pressure, and left after only a couple of months!! As with everything, there is a lesson to be learned in every experience we have in life. That was a clear reminder for me... treat everyone with respect... we never know who we might run into...the world is really a very small place.

(**I think we need one or two examples of what you did as an exec to show involvement, commitment, progression, to round out this section**)

**BUSINESS**

After working for many years in the hospital system and after serving in many different capacities... not all at once, mind you... I am good but I'm not **THAT** good... (**Wait for the laugh**) I decided to leave and set out on my own. Ever since I was a young girl, the voice inside me... yes... She really is **VERY CHATTY!! (Wait for the laugh**) ... reminded me that from the very beginning my goal was to have my own business. I was a professional for many years... I learned the ropes from the bottom up... I was a successful manager and executive... creating and running my own business would be a piece of cake... **RIGHT**?? Not...so...fast.... **BOY**... did I make mistakes!!! And **BOY**... did I learn!! Someone once told me her personal slogan and I'm going to use it here. "I don't know what I don't know." Just because a professional business person makes running a successful business look easy.... that does **NOT** mean it **IS** easy. People have visions and dreams every day of what they want to do with their lives.... and I'm referring to young people as well as experienced professionals. If there is one precious lesson I learned on the road to being an entrepreneur it's this: if you haven't lived it, and if you haven't walked that path, don't be so sure you know what to do. By all means keep going, but allow yourself a cushion for mistakes. Allow yourself to be open minded. Allow yourself to be coached. No matter how brilliant I thought I was and am **(if you want to make a joke you can say**).... and I'm sure by now you can tell with all my self doubt and shyness that I was a real BEACON... especially when I was younger (**and wait for the laugh**), when I went into my own business I saw how **magnificently** I could fail.... so I got help. I sought wisdom from professionals like John Maxwell. I once read that someone said, "If at first you don't succeed, failure may be your style." (**Wait for the laugh**). That person obviously hasn't met **ME**!! I believe more in the words of Winston Churchill who said, "Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm." ... well, that's closer, but I also believe that eventually, after all the lessons that one learns through failure, with determination, an open mind, and a positive attitude, things will click. We **MUST** believe in ourselves. We must find the ability to envision success. We must be willing to do what it takes to achieve that success, but most of all, **we must respect the process** involved in whatever we choose to do.

(**I think we need one or two examples of failure within the business to round out this section**)