

Rubber Duckies Don't Sink

**Start Every Day With Purpose, Passion,
And A Whole Lot of Ducky Determination**

Ilene Meckley



Copyright © 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Dedication

To my parents and grandparents, who taught me that making a difference doesn't require a grand stage, just a kind heart, a steady hand, and the courage to keep showing up.

Your love, wisdom, and quiet strength have shaped every step of this journey. This book floats because of the foundation you built beneath it.

As my dad always said: "Do the right thing-even when no one's watching." And from my mom: "Kindness is never wasted. It always finds its way back."

To every rubber ducky that's ever been made, someone smiles - you're proof that joy can be simple, silly, and deeply healing.

Preface

The Ducky Way

Let's be honest, life isn't always smooth sailing. Sometimes it's a splashy adventure, sometimes it's a stormy sea, and sometimes it's just a slow, awkward waddle toward something meaningful.

That's where the rubber ducky comes in.

This cheerful little companion isn't just a bathtub buddy-it's a symbol of resilience, joy, and the ability to float through life's waves with purpose. It doesn't race. It doesn't sink. It simply stays afloat, no matter what.

In this book, you'll meet the people who shaped me, the experiences that challenged me, and the moments that made me laugh, cry, and grow. You'll hear how my path shifted from social work dreams to ducky-themed outreach-and how I found purpose in the most unexpected places.

So grab your towel, take a deep breath, and step into the water. Whether you're riding high or paddling through the ripples, I hope this book helps you find your own ducky way-lighthearted, purposeful, and full of heart.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	2
Preface The Ducky Way.....	3
Introduction Waddling Through Waves with Purpose.....	8
Chapter 1: Make a Difference.....	10
Chapter 2: The Layers of Purpose.....	14
Chapter 3: The Ripple Effect.....	18
Chapter 4: Choose Your Thoughts.....	22
Chapter 5: Float Forward	26
Chapter 6: Legacy in Motion	29
Chapter 7: Celebrate and Paddle	32
Chapter 8: Paddle with Purpose.....	36
Chapter 9: Pause, Reflect, Waddle.....	39
Chapter 10: Ducklings in Tow.....	43
Chapter 11: The Emotional Pond.....	47
Chapter 12: Waddling Through the Waves.....	50
Chapter 13: Quacking Through Life.....	54
Chapter 14: Flocking Together.....	58
Chapter 15: Paddle Like You Mean It.....	61
Chapter 16: Lessons from a Rubber Duck.....	64
Chapter 17: Waddle in Line.....	67
Chapter 18: When the Duck Falls Out of Line.....	70

Chapter 19: The Waddle Planner.....	73
Chapter 20: The Unsinkable Duck.....	77
Chapter 21: Quack Back.....	79
Chapter 22: Float Beside Me.....	82
Chapter 23: Paddle Forward.....	85
Chapter 24: Bobbing Through the Bumps.....	90
<u>Chapter 25: The Towel Animal Principle.....</u>	<u>94</u>
Chapter 26: What If,.....	96
Chapter 27: Back on Track.....	100
Chapter 28: The Duck Who Danced in the Storm.....	102
Chapter 29: Saying Yes to New Possibilities.....	105
Chapter 30: When the Music Pauses.....	107
Chapter 31: The Drift Isn't the End.....	111
Chapter 32: If I Had All the Money in the World.....	113
Chapter 33: We do not always need to be chasing.....	115
Chapter 34: Borrowing Belief	117
Chapter 35: Waddle with Intention.....	120
Chapter 36: The Pond Where You Belong.....	123
Chapter 37: So You've Been Ducked.....	126
Chapter 38: Operation Quackback.....	129
Chapter 39: When the Sparkle Fades.....	131
Chapter 40: Waddle Into Wonder.....	133
Chapter 41: Duck Your Doubts.....	135
Chapter 42: The Ripple Effect.....	137

Chapter 43: Time for a Check-Up from the Neck Up.....	139
Chapter 44: Ditch the Once-a-Year Resolution.....	142
Chapter 45 Continued: Duck, Decide, and Dive In.....	145
Chapter 46: The Superpower of Shero DuckY.....	146
Chapter 47: What the Duck Knows.....	148
Chapter 48: The Molt Moment.....	151
Chapter 49: The Power of Preening.....	154
Chapter 50: The Ripple Effect.....	156
Chapter 51: The Sweetness of the Last Page.....	158
Chapter 52: The Loop of Becoming.....	160
Epilogue: The Ripple Effect.....	162
About the Author.....	164

Introduction

Waddling Through Waves with Purpose

Growing up, one message was always clear in our home: “Make a difference.” It wasn’t just advice—it was a way of life passed down from my parents, and from their parents before them. That message shaped how I saw the world, how I treated others, and how I searched for meaning in my own journey.

My father’s story is one of vision and impact. As a child, he dreamed of law enforcement—there’s a photo I treasure of him at age six, proudly wearing a tiny police uniform. That dream stayed with him. He went on to law school, joined the Department of Justice, and became known as the father of WITSEC, the Witness Security Program. You may have read books or seen documentaries about it. But to me, he was also the dad who helped start our temple, led the PTA, and showed up for his community with heart and purpose.

My mother’s journey was equally inspiring. Her parents were entrepreneurs with enormous hearts, running a business that helped people afford what they couldn’t otherwise. One family even thanked my grandfather, Mr. Abe, for the food they were able to eat. My grandmother always told me I should go into business. I thought I’d be a social worker instead—but life had other plans. You’ll read how that path evolved, eventually leading me to a world filled with rubber duckies, joy, and unexpected purpose.

My mom herself was a force of nature. She supported my dad’s career while going back to college, earning her degree in education, and later her master’s—all while raising my brother and me. She skipped second grade as a child, and I love teasing her for “making up for it” by teaching second grade for many, many years. She graduated as a valedictorian, went on to the University of Texas, met my dad, and married him at 18. Their love story lasted 68 beautiful years until my dad passed away in August 2020.

And yes, I have a brother, too. He followed in my dad’s footsteps to law school at UT, built a successful career, and then boldly pivoted to something new. He and his wife designed and built a stunning home and then began

helping others do the same. His journey reminds me that purpose isn't fixed—it evolves. That's exactly what this book is about.

The title *Rubber Duckies Don't Sink* isn't about stopping—it's about pausing. It's about taking a moment to reflect, evaluate, and ask yourself: What is my purpose now? Because purpose isn't a one-time decision. It shifts with experience, deepens with challenge, and expands with joy. Sometimes you ride the waves. Sometimes you get knocked down. And sometimes, you simply waddle forward—awkwardly, bravely, and with a smile.

This book is filled with stories—some mine, some from the remarkable people in my life—that show how purpose can be rediscovered again and again. And yes, there will be rubber ducks. Even in the hardest moments, there's room for lightness, resilience, and a little splash of joy.

So read on. Meet the people who influenced me and the experiences that shaped me. Discover how I've waddled through life's waves with purpose. And maybe, just maybe, you'll find a little ducky wisdom for your own journey too.

Purpose isn't a finish line—it's a current. Let it carry you, shape you, and surprise you as you waddle forward with heart.

Chapter 1:

Make a Difference — The Legacy Begins

I didn't set out to change the world. I just wanted to help someone feel seen. Growing up, "making a difference" wasn't a slogan but a way of life. My parents didn't talk about legacy in grand terms. They lived it. Through quiet acts of kindness, unwavering support, and a deep sense of integrity, they showed me that legacy isn't what you leave behind, it's what you live every day.

Legacy, to me, isn't about fame or fortune. It's about how people feel when they think of you. It's the echo of your choices, the ripple of your presence, the warmth of your impact. It's the stories people tell when your name comes up in conversation—not the resume, but the real moments, the ones that mattered.

As a child, I watched my parents become anchors for their friends and community. People came to them—not just for advice but for comfort, clarity, and steady reassurance that everything would be okay. They didn't have all the answers, but they always had time. They listened. They cared. And they responded with grace.

One of the most powerful lessons they taught me was this: The ups and downs don't define you. How you choose to respond—not react—shapes your path.

That distinction became a compass for me. Reacting is instinctual, often fueled by emotion. Responding is intentional, rooted in reflection and purpose. My parents modeled that every day, whether handling a setback with quiet strength or celebrating a win with humility.

And yet, for all their wisdom, there was one lesson I had to learn the hard way: Sometimes, making a difference means stepping into the spotlight—even when you'd rather hide.

For many years, I helped people through writing, mentoring, and quiet conversations. But speaking? That was another story. I was shy. The idea of

standing on a stage made my heart race and my stomach turn. I never imagined myself as a speaker—and I certainly never wanted to be one.

Then came the moment that changed everything.

I was having success building a business when someone asked me to speak at an upcoming event. I said no. Then they asked again. I said no again. The thought of it made me cry—I was terrified. The fear wasn't just about public speaking. It was about being vulnerable, being seen, and being heard.

After turning them down multiple times, someone looked me in the eye and said, "I never thought of you as a selfish person." I was stunned. "I'm not," I blurted out.

They nodded gently and said, "Then maybe you'll stop thinking about how you'll feel speaking—and start thinking that you could change one person's life. How would you feel about that?"

That question cracked something open in me. It shifted the focus from fear to purpose, from self-consciousness to service.

Within 30 days, I was standing in front of an audience of 500 people. And I didn't just survive—I connected. I shared. I made a difference.

That moment became the first of many. Over the years, I've spoken at conventions, led workshops for organizations, and written books that have reached people I'll never meet—but whose lives I've touched in some small way. And it almost never happened.

Legacy isn't always loud. Sometimes it starts with a whisper of courage. Sometimes it begins when someone reminds you that your story matters.

So when people ask what I do, or why I do it, I think of those early lessons. I think of the ripple effect of kindness. I think of the way my parents made people feel—safe, valued, understood. And I hope that when people think of me, they feel a little of that, too.

Because somewhere out there, someone needs a smile. Someone needs a reminder that they matter. And if a rubber ducky, a kind message, or a moment of connection can deliver that—then I'm honoring the legacy that began long before me.

Reflect & Respond: Your Legacy Survey

Take a quiet moment to reflect on the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers—just honest ones. This is your chance to stop, pause, evaluate, and move forward with intention.

Legacy in Motion

When people think of me, what do I hope they feel?

What values do I want to be known for?

What’s one story from my life that reflects the kind of legacy I want to live?

Respond vs. React

Think of a recent challenge—did I react or respond?

What helped me stay grounded in that moment?

How can I better choose response over reaction in the future?

Making a Difference

Who in my life has made a quiet difference for me?

What's one small way I can make someone feel seen this week?

If I were asked to speak to help just one person, would I say yes?

*Legacy isn't what you leave behind—it's how you
show up today, one kind choice, one brave step, one
ripple at a time.*

Chapter 2:

The Layers of Purpose —Why We Do What We Do

If you've ever watched a duck glide across the water, you know it looks effortless, but beneath the surface, those little webbed feet are paddling with purpose. That's how life works, too. What seems simple on the outside is often powered by layers of intention, effort, and heart.

Purpose isn't one thing. It's many things. It's the quiet whisper that nudges us to grow, the spark that drives us to help others, the practical need to earn, sustain, and enjoy life. And when those layers align, we don't just float—we flourish.

Let's explore the three powerful currents that shape why we do what we do:

Personal Growth: Become Who You're Meant to Be. This is the inward current—the journey of becoming.

For me, personal growth began with a whisper of courage. I was once the girl who hesitated to speak up, who felt safer behind the scenes. But something inside me longed to lead, to share, to connect. That longing became a quiet invitation to grow.

Growth isn't always loud. Sometimes it's the decision to say yes to a new opportunity. Sometimes it's the choice to forgive, to heal, or to try again. It's the moment you realize you're not the same person you were a year ago—and that's a good thing.

Personal growth shows up in many ways:

- Learning a new skill that stretches your confidence
- Saying "I'm ready" even when you're nervous
- Writing your story, even if your voice shakes
- Dancing through pain, because joy is still yours to claim

Growth is the foundation of purpose. It's how we discover who we are—and who we're becoming.

Contribution: Making Life Better for Others. This is the outward current—the ripple effect of service.

From the moment I started sharing my love of travel, I realized something beautiful: helping others plan their adventures wasn't just a job. It was a gift. I was helping people create memories, celebrate milestones, and reconnect with joy.

Contribution isn't about grand gestures. It's about presence. It's about listening, encouraging, and showing up with your heart wide open.

You contribute every time you:

- Send a thoughtful message that lifts someone's spirit
- Share a resource that makes someone's life easier
- Invite someone to dream bigger

Create a ducky-themed challenge that brings smiles and connection. When we contribute, we create legacy—not just through what we do, but through how we make others feel.

Financial Purpose: Sustaining and Enjoying Life

This is the practical current—the one that supports freedom, fun, and stability.

Let's be honest: financial purpose matters. It's not selfish, it's smart. It allows us to care for our families, invest in our passions, and live with intention. It's the difference between surviving and thriving.

When I discovered I could earn commissions on my own travel, it felt like a revelation. I wasn't just saving money, I was building something, something that could grow, support others, and reflect my values.

Financial purpose shows up when you:

- Build a business that aligns with your passions

- Say yes to income that supports your dreams
- Create options for your future, not just obligations
- Celebrating abundance as a tool for generosity

Money isn't the enemy of purpose, it's fuel. When earned with integrity, it becomes a bridge to joy, freedom, and impact.

When All Three Align— Here's where the magic happens.

When personal growth, contribution, and financial purpose flow together, life feels rich and meaningful. You're not just doing things—you're living with intention. You're growing into your best self, helping others rise, and building a life that supports your dreams.

It's like a perfectly balanced cruise itinerary:

- Time to reflect and grow
- Opportunities to connect and serve
- Space to relax, earn, and enjoy

That's when purpose becomes a lifestyle. That's when you're not just floating—you're soaring.

Reflect & Respond: Your Purpose Layers

Let's explore how these three currents show up in your life.

Part 1: Personal Growth

What's one way you've stretched or grown in the past year?

How has that growth shaped your confidence or clarity?

Part 2: Contribution

Who have you helped recently—and how did it feel?

What's one gift or story you can share to uplift someone today?

Part 3: Financial Purpose

What does financial freedom look like for you?

How can you align your income with your values and passions?

Purpose is layered. When you grow, give, and earn with intention, you create a life that floats forward with joy.

Chapter 3:

The Ripple Effect —

How One Act of Courage Inspires Many

There's something magical about water. Drop a pebble into a still pond, and the ripples stretch far beyond the point of impact. That's how courage works. One small act—one brave decision, one vulnerable share, one moment of "I'll try"—can ripple outward in ways we may never fully see.

I've seen it in my own life. I've felt it in yours.

Courage isn't always loud. Sometimes it's a whisper. Sometimes it's a quiet "yes" to something new. Sometimes it shows up when you'd rather hide. But every time you choose courage, you create movement—not just for yourself, but for others watching, waiting, wondering if they can do it too.

My First Ripple: Saying Yes to the Unknown

I remember the moment I said yes to starting my own business. It wasn't a confident yes. It was a shaky, uncertain, "Okay... I'll try." I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have a roadmap. But I had a spark. A nudge. A whisper that said, "This could be something."

That one, yes, changed everything.

It led to conversations, connections, and commissions. It led to themed dinners, ducky challenges, and joyful outreach. It led to helping others say yes to their own dreams. And it all started with one ripple.

Courage Is Contagious

Here's the beautiful truth: when you act with courage, you give others permission to do the same.

I've watched team members step into leadership roles because they saw someone else do it first. I've seen clients book their dream cruise because someone shared their story. I've seen shy voices become bold ones—because someone dared to speak up.

Your courage doesn't just move you. It moves others.

Think about it:

- When you share your story, someone else feels seen
- When you take a risk, someone else feels inspired
- When you float forward, someone else finds their rhythm You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be real.

The Power of Your Words— Words are ripples too, a kind message, a thoughtful comment, or a motivational post. These are not small things. They are seeds of change.

I've had people reach out months after reading something I wrote, saying, "That message stayed with me." I didn't know it would. I didn't plan for it. But that's the ripple effect.

So share your words. Share your wisdom. Share your heart. You never know who needs it— who will be borrowing courage and belief when needed. There are days when courage feels far away, when fear is louder than faith, when the waves feel too big.

On those days, borrow courage, borrow belief. Borrow the strength others see in you.

I've done it. I've leaned on mentors, friends, and even strangers who said, "You've got this." I didn't always believe it at first. But I borrowed their belief until I could build my own.

You don't have to paddle alone. You are surrounded by ripples of love, support, and proof that you are capable.

During my hospital stay and eight operations, there were plenty of times I had to muster up courage just to get through the day. I was physically vulnerable, emotionally raw, and spiritually stretched. And that's when the ripple effect showed up in full force. My children, my parents, my entire family, and dear friends surrounded me with love—visiting, calling, sending cards and gifts, reminding me I wasn't alone. And it wasn't just those closest to me. People I had met, having spoken around the country, reached out with encouragement, prayers, and belief. Their words echoed back to me in the quiet hours, reminding me to walk my talk. I had spent years inspiring others to rise, and now it was my turn to rise with them. I am deeply grateful for

every hand that held mine, every voice that lifted me, and every ripple of kindness that helped me float forward when I wasn't sure I could.

Creating Ripples with Intention

You don't need a stage to make an impact. You just need intention.

Ask yourself:

- What ripple do I want to create today?

- Who can I encourage, uplift, or inspire?

- What story can I share that might help someone else float forward?

Your life is a lighthouse. Your actions are waves. Your purpose is the tide that carries others home.

Reflect & Respond: Your Ripple Map. Let's explore how your courage creates an impact.

Part 1: Your First Ripple

What's one brave decision you've made that changed your path?

How did it feel to say yes, even when you were unsure?

Part 2: Ripple Recognition

Who has inspired you with their courage—and how did it affect you?

What ripple have you created that others have noticed or thanked you for?

Part 3: Ripple Intentions

What's one ripple you want to create this week?

How can you act with intention to inspire someone else?

One act of courage creates a ripple. One ripple becomes a wave. One wave can change the shore.

Chapter 4:

Choose Your Thoughts, Choose Your Path — The Power of Inner Storytelling

Every day, we write stories in our minds. Some are filled with hope and possibility. Others echo with fear and doubt. But here's the truth: we are the authors. We hold the pen. And the story we tell ourselves— about who we are, what we're capable of, and where we're headed—shapes everything.

Your thoughts are not just passing clouds. They're the script of your life. And you get to choose:

- Will this be a tale of terror or triumph?

- Will you play the shero/hero or the understudy?

- Will you whisper, "I can" or surrender to "I can't"?

Let's be clear: this isn't about pretending everything is perfect. It's about choosing your perspective, even when the waves are rough. It's about deciding that your story matters—and that you're worthy of the leading role.

You Are the Shero (or Hero)

You don't need a cape or a spotlight to be the shero of your story. You just need courage, the kind that shows up in quiet moments, when no one's watching.

Being the Shero (or Hero) means:

- Owning your voice, even when it shakes
- Rising after setbacks, even when it's hard
- Choosing joy, even when fear tries to steal it

You can be the understudy, waiting in the wings or you can step onto the stage, flaws and all, and say, "This is my moment." The choice is yours.

Thoughts Are Stories—So Choose Wisely

Your mind is a storyteller. And it's powerful. It can spin tales of disaster, doubt, and dread. Or it can craft visions of hope, healing, and happily ever after.

Here's the difference:

- “I can’t” becomes I Certainly Am Not Trying
- “I can” becomes I Certainly Am Now

It's not just wordplay, it's mindset. It's the difference between shrinking and shining.

When you catch yourself spiraling into fear, pause and take a moment to regain your composure. Ask:

- “Is this the story I want to live?” “Is this thought helping me float forward?”
- You can rewrite the narrative. You can choose a plot twist. You can say, “This chapter ends in victory.” Faith Over Fear is loud. It demands attention. But faith is steady. It whispers, “Keep going.”

Choosing faith doesn't mean ignoring fear. It means acknowledging it—and moving anyway. It means trusting that the next step will appear, even if the path isn't clear.

Faith says:

- “I don't know how, but I believe it's possible.”
- “I've been through storms before—I'll float through this one too.”
- “I am guided, supported, and stronger than I think.” When fear tries to take the lead, let faith take the mic.

Borrow Belief When You Need It Sometimes, your own belief feels shaky. That's okay. That's human. In those moments, borrow the belief others have in you.

Think of the friend who said, “You’ve got this.” The mentor who saw your potential before you did. The community that cheers you on, even when you wobble.

Let their belief be your buoy. Let it carry you until your own confidence returns.

You don’t have to paddle alone. You are surrounded by love, support, and proof that you are capable. Float forward with intention.

So here’s your invitation: Choose your thoughts like you choose your outfit for a special dinner—intentionally, joyfully, and with flair. Choose your role like you choose your cruise itinerary—with excitement, curiosity, and a sense of adventure. Choose your story like you choose your legacy—with love, courage, and purpose.

You are the author. You are the Shero (or Hero). You are the one who gets to say, “This is how my story goes.”

Reflect & Respond: Rewrite Your Inner Story

Let’s explore how your thoughts shape your journey—and how you can choose a new narrative.

Part 1: Thought Awareness

What’s a recurring thought that holds you back?

How can you reframe it into a story of possibility?

Part 2: Role Reclaiming

Are you playing the lead in your life—or waiting in the wings?

What's one bold action you can take to step into your starring role?

Part 3: Faith & Support

When has faith helped you move forward despite fear?

Whose belief in you can you borrow today—and how can you thank them?

Our thoughts are the script. Your faith is the compass. Your choice is power. Float forward—your story is waiting.

Chapter 5:

Float Forward Trusting the Momentum of Purpose

Once you've discovered your purpose, whether through growth, contribution, or financial clarity—there's a moment when the current begins to carry you. You're no longer paddling just to stay afloat. You're moving. You're flowing. You're floating forward.

But here's the truth: momentum doesn't always feel magical. Sometimes it feels messy. Sometimes it feels like you're waddling in circles, unsure if you're making progress. And yet, every step, every small action—is part of the journey.

I remember a season when I felt stuck. I had the vision, I had the heart, but I didn't know what to do next. I kept asking myself, "Is this the right move?" I wanted certainty, I wanted a map.

But purpose doesn't always come with GPS. Sometimes, it comes with gentle nudges:

- A conversation that sparks a new idea
- A challenge that reveals your strength
- A moment of quiet that reminds you why you started

And when you follow those nudges, something shifts. You begin to trust your rhythm. You stop waiting for perfect conditions and start creating movement.

That's what happened when I leaned into my travel business. I didn't have all the answers. But I had passion. I had community. I had a ducky-sized dose of courage. And that was enough.

I started showing up consistently sharing stories, offering help, and celebrating others. Slowly, the momentum built—not because I forced it, but because I flowed with it.

The Power of Small Steps

Floating forward isn't about giant leaps. It's about small, intentional waddles:

- Sending one message of encouragement
- Hosting one themed dinner that sparks connection
- Writing one paragraph that brings your book to life

Each step matters. Each step builds. And before you know it, you're not just moving—you're leading.

When the Waters Get Choppy

Of course, momentum doesn't mean smooth sailing. There will be waves. There will be doubts. But here's the secret: you don't have to paddle alone.

Lean on your community. Revisit your purpose. And remember that even ducks wobble before they glide.

When the water gets rough:

- Pause and reflect
- Reconnect with your “why”
- Celebrate how far you've come

Because floating forward isn't about perfection, it's about persistence. Reflect & Respond: Your Momentum Map

Let's explore how you can build and trust your own momentum.

Part 1: Recognizing Movement

What's one small step you've taken recently that moved you forward?

How did it feel to act, even without certainty?

Part 2: Navigating Doubt

What tends to slow your momentum—and how can you gently respond to it?

Who or what helps you stay grounded when the waters get choppy?

Part 3: Creating Flow

What's one consistent action you can take this week to build momentum?

How can you celebrate progress, even if it's imperfect?

Momentum is built through movement. Trust your rhythm, take the step, and let purpose carry you forward.

Chapter 6:

Legacy in Motion —Living Your Values Every Day

Legacy is often spoken in hushed tones, as if it's something reserved for the end of life—a final chapter, a closing note. But I've come to believe that legacy isn't what we leave behind. It's what we live right now. It's in how we speak, serve, celebrate, and show up. It's in the choices we make when no one's watching. It's in the stories we tell, the smiles we share, and the courage we model.

Legacy is motion. It's rhythm. It's the gentle waddle forward, even when the path is uncertain. **Everyday Legacy: The Power of Small Choices**

You don't have to build a monument to leave a mark. Sometimes, legacy is a handwritten note, a kind word, a moment of presence.

Every time you:

- Encourage someone to believe in themselves
- Choose grace over judgment
- Share your story with vulnerability
- Celebrate someone else's win

It's not about perfection. It's about intention. It's about showing up with your values and being heart-wide open.

Legacy Is a Lifestyle

For me, legacy is woven into everything I do—from the way I greet someone on a cruise, to the way I design a ducky-themed message, to the way I speak about my parents and children with reverence and joy.

It's in the way I honor my family's resilience, the way I reflect on my hospital journey with gratitude, and the way I turn challenges into chapters.

Legacy isn't a someday thing. It's a today thing.

Leading with Values

Your values are the compass of your legacy. They guide your decisions, shape your relationships, and define your impact.

Ask yourself:

- Am I leading with kindness?
- Am I choosing courage over comfort?
- Am I creating connections wherever I go?
- When your values lead, your legacy follows.

Walking Your Talk

Legacy is most powerful when it's consistent, your words match your actions, and your message is lived, not just spoken.

During my hospital stay, I had to walk my talk in unexpected ways. I had spent years encouraging others to rise, float forward, and embrace joy. And now, I had to do the same—through pain, through uncertainty, through eight operations that tested my spirit.

But I wasn't alone. My children, parents, entire family, and dear friends surrounded me with love. People I had met from speaking around the country reached out with encouragement, prayers, and belief. Their support reminded me that legacy isn't just what we give, it's what we receive. It's the community we build through consistent care.

I'm grateful for every card, every call, every gift. They were reminders that my ripple had reached others— and now, their ripples were reaching me.

Legacy Is a Daily Decision

You choose your legacy every day:

- In how you respond to challenges
- In how you treat others
- In how you honor your story

You can choose to be the Shero (or Hero). You can say “I Can” (I Certainly Am Now). You can choose faith over fear. You can choose to borrow belief until your own returns.

Legacy isn't a destination. Living with purpose, passion, and playfulness is a daily decision.

Reflect & Respond: Your Living Legacy

Let's explore how your values shape your legacy in motion.

Part 1: Values in Action.

What are three values that guide your daily decisions?

How do those values appear in your work, relationships, or outreach?

Part 2: Legacy Moments

What's one moment when you felt your impact ripple outward?

How did it feel to know your story mattered to someone else?

Part 3: Daily Legacy Practice

What's one small action you can take today to live your legacy?

Who can you thank, encourage, or uplift as part of your ripple?

Legacy isn't only what you leave behind, it's what you live, moment by moment, with love, courage, and intention.

Chapter 7:

Celebrate and Paddle — Honoring Your Wins While Moving Forward

We live in a world that often says, "What's next?" before we've even had a chance to say, "Wow, I did that." But here's the truth: celebration is not a detour from progress-it's part of it. It's the breath between strokes, the sparkle in the splash, and the moment we pause, reflect, and say, "I'm proud of how far I've come."

Celebrating progress doesn't mean you've stopped paddling. It means you've acknowledged the strength it took to get here. It means you've honored your growth, grit, and grace.

And yes, you can celebrate with confetti, cupcakes, or a rubber ducky dance party. But you can also celebrate quietly, with gratitude, reflection, and a renewed sense of purpose.

The Myth of "I'm Not There Yet"

So many of us delay our celebration until we reach the imagined finish line.

We say:

- "I'll celebrate when I hit the big goal."
- "I'll rest when I've done enough."
- "I'll be proud when it's perfect."

But progress isn't a single moment-it's a series of brave choices. It's the email you sent, the conversation you had, the chapter you wrote, the cruise you planned, the courage you showed.

You are "there" every time you move forward, choose growth, and show up with heart.

Celebration Is Fuel

When you celebrate, you energize your journey. You remind yourself why you started. You reconnect with joy. You build momentum-not by pushing harder, but by honoring what's already working.

Celebration can look like:

- A gratitude journal entry
- A call to someone who cheered you on
- A social media post that says, "This matters to me."
- A quiet moment with your favorite tea, reflecting on how far you've come

It's not about ego. It's about encouragement. It's about saying, "I'm proud of this step-and I'm ready for the next."

I believe in the power of many mini celebrations-those joyful pauses that honor progress along the way.

Whether it's a personal breakthrough, a step forward in education, a business milestone, or a career win, these small moments of recognition fuel momentum and build confidence. They remind us that success isn't just about the final destination but the journey, the effort, and the courage it takes to keep going. Mini celebrations are like little sparkles on the path, lighting the way forward and making the process feel purposeful and fun. They help us stay motivated, grateful, and connected to the deeper "why" behind our goals.

My Celebration Moments

I've had many milestones- some big, some beautifully small. I remember the first time someone said, "Your story helped me". I remember the themed dinner that turned into a community. I remember finishing a chapter of my book and saying, "Yes, this is it."

I remember celebrating in the hospital, not because I felt strong but because I was surrounded by love. My children, my parents, my entire family, and friends reminded me that healing is progress, that presence is purpose, and that every call, card, and gift was a celebration of life itself.

Those moments didn't stop my journey. They strengthened it.

Keep Paddling Forward

Celebration doesn't mean you've arrived. It means you're awake to the journey.

You can honor your wins and still move forward. You can say, "I'm proud of this," and ask, "What's next?" You can float with joy and paddle with purpose.

Here's how:

- Reflect weekly on what went well
- Share your progress with someone who believes in you
- Set your next intention from a place of gratitude, not pressure
- Celebrate others- because their wins are part of your ripple too
- Progress is a rhythm. Celebration is the beat. Keep dancing.

Say It Out Loud: I Can (I Certainly Am Now)

When you celebrate, you affirm your identity. You say, "I am someone who grows. I am someone who tries. I am someone who floats forward:'

You don't say "I can't" (I Certainly Am Not Trying). You say, "I can" (I Certainly Am Now). You claim your role. You own your story. You lead with light.

And when doubt creeps in, borrow belief. Borrow the joy others see in you. Let their celebration remind you of your worth.

Reflect & Respond: Your Celebration Compass

Let's explore how you can honor your wins while staying in motion.

Part 1: Celebration Inventory

What's one recent win, big or small that deserves celebration?

How did you feel when you accomplished it?

Part 2: Celebration Style

What's your favorite way to celebrate progress?

Who can you invite to your celebration this week?

Part 3: Forward Momentum

What's your next step-and how can you take it with joy?

How will you remind yourself that progress and celebration go hand in hand?

Celebrate the step. Honor the strength. Keep paddling forward—your journey is worth every joyful splash.

Chapter 8:

Paddle with Purpose — Staying the Course When the Waves Rise

The Wake After the Celebration

Celebration is a beautiful pause—a moment to honor progress, reflect on growth, and share joy. But what happens after the confetti settles? The journey continues. And sometimes, the next stretch of water isn't smooth. It's easy to lose momentum when the applause fades or when new challenges arise. This chapter concerns what comes next: how we keep paddling forward with intention, even when the waves rise.

Progress isn't linear. It's a rhythm of movement, pause, recalibration, and courage. After every celebration, there's an invitation to recommit—not just to the goal, but to its deeper purpose.

Purpose Is Your Rudder

When the water becomes unpredictable, your purpose becomes your rudder. It doesn't eliminate the waves but helps you steer through them. Purpose gives direction when motivation wavers. It reminds you of why you started, who you're becoming, and what legacy you're building with each stroke.

Your purpose might be rooted in:

- A family story that shaped your values
- A desire to uplift others through your work
- A personal transformation you want to share
- A playful philosophy (like rubber ducky resilience)

When you paddle with purpose, even the slightest movement feels meaningful. You're not just drifting—you're navigating with heart.

Waddle Forward, Even If It's Wobbly

Let's be honest: forward isn't always graceful. Sometimes it's a sideways shuffle, a hesitant step, or a moment of stillness before the next push. That's okay. Waddling is progressing, too.

This section is a gentle reminder that:

- You don't have to have it all figured out
- You're allowed to move slowly
- You're allowed to rest and reset
- You're allowed to wobble

The key is to keep going, to trust that each step—no matter how small or imperfect part of the journey is. Think of a duck paddling beneath the surface: calm above, determined below. That's you—graceful resilience in motion.

Reset, Recenter, Repeat

Life will tug you in different directions. That's why building a rhythm that helps you realign is essential. I call it the Reset, Recenter, Repeat method—a gentle cycle that keeps you connected to your values and vision.

Reset: Pause. Breathe. Reflect. What's working? What needs adjusting?

Recenter: Reconnect with your “why.” What matters most right now?

Repeat: Take one small step forward. Celebrate it. Then do it again.

You can even create a ritual around this—light a candle, journal for five minutes, or take a walk with your favorite playlist. These moments of intentional reflection become anchors in the waves.

“What's one thing I can do today that honors my purpose?” Let that question guide you when things feel uncertain.

Legacy in Motion

Legacy isn't a grand finale—it's a daily decision. It's built in the quiet moments, the kind words, the courageous choices, and the playful pauses. Every time you paddle forward with purpose, you're shaping your legacy.

You're showing others that resilience can be joyful. That progress can be playful. That healing can happen in motion. Whether you're leading a team,

writing a book, dancing through pain, or sending a ducky-themed message to brighten someone's day, you're creating ripples that matter.

So paddle on, with sparkles in your wake and purpose in your heart.

Reflection Exercise: Your Legacy in Motion

Take a quiet moment to reflect on your recent paddles—those small, meaningful actions that moved you forward. This exercise is designed to help you honor your progress, reconnect with your purpose, and gently recommit to your next steps.

Step 1: Celebrate Your Sparkles. List three mini celebrations from the past week. These can be personal, professional, playful, or profound.

Step 2: Reconnect with Your “Why” Write one sentence that reminds you why you're on this journey. Let it be honest, heartfelt, and uniquely yours. “I paddle forward because...”

Step 3: Choose Your Next Waddle. What small step can you take this week that honors your purpose? It doesn't have to be big—just intentional.

My next waddle is:

Optional Bonus: Ducky Doodle Prompt Draw (or imagine) a ducky paddling through waves, with sparkles around it. Label the sparkles with your mini wins. Let this visual remind you that you're creating ripples with every stroke.

Purpose doesn't erase the waves—it teaches you how to ride them.

Chapter 9:

Pause, Reflect, Waddle —Finding Purpose in the Ripples

There's something magical about the moment you pause to reflect. It is not because everything is perfect, but because you finally permit yourself to breathe, to reflect, to ask, "Is this still the path I want to be on?"

Pausing doesn't mean quitting. It means honoring the moment, listening to the whispers beneath the noise, and asking yourself not just what you're doing but why.

For a long time, I thought I knew my path. I had dreams of service, helping others, and making a difference. I imagined a life of impact, shaped by compassion and guided by purpose. And in many ways, I lived that. But life doesn't always follow the map we sketch out in our minds. Sometimes, it hands us a rubber ducky and says, "Float with this for a while." And that's where the magic begins.

The Wobble of Change

When your path starts to shift, it can feel unsettling. Like the ground beneath you is wobbling. You might wonder, "Am I making a mistake?" or "Will people understand?" I've felt that. I've lived that. And I've learned that change, especially the kind that nudges you toward growth, is often scary and sacred.

There were seasons when I felt like I was drifting, like I had lost the rhythm of who I was. But in those moments, I discovered something powerful: the pause is where clarity lives. It's where you reconnect with your values, vision, and voice.

People who love you will often have strong opinions. They want the best for you, and their concern comes from a place of care. But they don't always know what's best for you. Only you can feel the tug in your heart, the quiet knowing that says, "This is the right thing." So, I've learned to thank them for their love, their concern, their support-and then gently, confidently, keep waddling forward.

The Pause Isn't the Destination

A pause is like a rest stop on a long road trip. You don't plan to stay there- you stop to stretch, refuel, grab a snack, and check the map. It's a moment to recalibrate, not a place to unpack your bags. But sometimes, that pause- mainly when prompted by a significant life shift- can turn into "paralysis analysis." You start overthinking every ripple, every possibility, every what-if. You second-guess your instincts, stall your momentum, and forget that the journey is meant to continue.

I've been there. I've lingered too long at the rest stop, wondering if I should turn back, take a different route, or wait for someone else to tell me what to do. Eventually, I realized that clarity doesn't come from standing still but from movement. Even a gentle waddle forward can break the spell of indecision.

The pause is powerful-but only when it leads to reflection, not stagnation. It's a sacred space to ask, "What's next?" and trust yourself enough to take the next step. You don't need to have the whole path figured out. You just need to keep moving toward joy, purpose, and the version of you waiting on the other side of the pause.

Letting Go to Float Forward

Stepping away from my original plan wasn't easy for me. I had to let go of what I thought I was supposed to do and embrace what I was truly meant to do. That meant trusting my instincts, listening to my heart, and allowing joy to guide me.

And you know what? It was the best thing I've ever done.

Because of that shift, I found freedom, creativity, and an authentic and energizing way to help others. I discovered that purpose isn't a single destination, it's a series of ripples. Each one leads you closer to who you really are.

I began to see my life not as a straight line, but as a pond full of possibilities. Each ripple-whether caused by a choice, a challenge, or a moment of grace- was part of the bigger picture. And when I embraced that, everything changed.

The Power of Reflection

Reflection isn't just about looking back. It's about looking inward. **It's about asking:**

- What brings me joy?

- What drains my spirit?

- What am I clinging to that no longer fits?

- What am I being invited to explore?

These questions don't always have easy answers. But they open doors. They soften resistance. They allow you to waddle forward with intention.

I've learned that reflection is a gift we give ourselves. It's a way to honor our growth, to celebrate our resilience, and to realign with our purpose. It's not indulgent—it's essential.

Waddling with Purpose

Now, I see those moments of change not as detours but as divine invitations—invitations to waddle forward with courage, even when the water feels unfamiliar, to reflect on what matters, and to float toward joy.

Waddling isn't about rushing. It's about moving with grace. It's about trusting that even small steps create ripples. It's about knowing that your path is valid—even if it looks different from what others expect.

So, if you're in a season of transition, know this: You're not lost. You're evolving. And that's a beautiful thing.

Reflection Exercise: Your Ripple Map

Take a moment to draw your own ripple map. Start with a circle in the center labeled "Me, Today." Then add rings outward for:

- Past choices that shaped you
- Current values that guide you
- Future hopes that inspire you

Notice how each ripple connects, how each moment—big or small—has helped you float forward.

When the path shifts, don't panic—pause. Reflect. Waddle forward. The best chapters often begin with a change.

Chapter 10:

Ducklings in Tow — Guiding the Next Generation Through Life's Waves

There's a quiet magic in watching ducklings trail behind their mama, one paddling with purpose, trusting the path, learning by doing. It's not about perfection. It's about presence. It's about showing up, wobbling forward, and trusting that love will lead the way.

I've had the joy and honor of raising five incredible children and now delight in watching seven grandchildren grow into their own rhythms. Each one is a unique melody in the symphony of our family. And beyond them, I've met countless other children through travel, outreach, and yes, through the whimsical joy of rubber ducky magic. These ducklings may not share my name, but they share my heart. They remind me that legacy isn't limited to bloodlines- it's built through connection, kindness, and the courage to show up joyfully.

Life's Waves and the Lessons We Leave

Life doesn't come with a map. It comes with waves: some gentle, some wild. And as we ride them, we're constantly teaching-whether we realize it or not.

Our children and grandchildren are watching:

- How we respond to disappointment
- How we celebrate small wins
- How we speak to ourselves when no one's listening
- How we treat strangers, friends, and those who challenge us

They're learning from our attitude, from our pauses, from our resilience, and from our joy.

And now, I get to witness the ripple effect. I see my grandchildren using phrases I've whispered for years. I see them comfort others with the same grace I tried to model. I see them lead with kindness, laugh with abandon, and paddle forward purposefully. Seeing the seeds you've planted bloom in the next generation is one of life's greatest gifts.

The Expanding Flock

Through my rubber ducky outreach, I've met children from all walks of life, some shy, some bold, all curious. These ducklings are drawn to joy, the color, and playfulness. But what they stay for is the connection, the encouragement, and the reminder that they matter.

Whether it's a child on a cruise who lights up at a ducky surprise, or a teen who finds comfort in a message of resilience, I've learned that joy is a universal language. When shared with intention, it becomes a bridge between generations, between strangers, and between hearts.

I never imagined that a simple rubber duck could become a symbol of healing, hope, and legacy. But here we are, floating forward, together.

The ABCs of Attitude —26 Lessons for Life’s Journey

These are the attitudes I hope to pass on-not just to my children and grandchildren, but to every duckling I meet along the way. They're gentle paddles forward, guiding lights in stormy seas, and reminders of what truly matters.

Letter	Attitude	Message
A	Authenticity	Be real. Your truth is your power.
B	Bravery	Try, even when it's scary. Courage grows in motion.
C	Compassion	Lead with kindness for yourself and others.
D	Determination	Keep going. Waddles count.
E	Empathy	Listen with your heart.
F	Faith	Trust the journey, even when you can't see the shore.
G	Gratitude	Say thank you often. It changes everything.
H	Humor	Laugh. It lightens the load.

I	Integrity	Do what's right, even when no one's watching.
J	Joyfulness	Choose joy-it's a powerful strategy.
K	Kindness	Sprinkle it everywhere.
L	Legacy	Live it daily. Let your actions speak.
M	Mindfulness	Be present. The moment matters.
N	Nurture	Care for your gifts, your growth, your people.
O	Optimism	Look for the light. It's always there.
P	Purpose	Let it guide your paddling.
Q	Quietude	Find peace in stillness.
R	Resilience	Bounce back. Float forward.
S	Service	Help others rise. That's real success.
T	Trust	In yourself, in others, in the process.
U	Understanding	Seek to know before you judge.
V	Vision	Dream boldly. Paddle toward it.
W	Wisdom	Learn from every wave.
X	eXample	Be the one others want to follow.
Y	Yes	Say yes to growth, to grace, to new adventures.
Z	Zeal	Live with passion. Let your spark shine.

Reflect & Respond: Your Duckling Legacy

Let's take a moment to honor the ripple you're creating.

Part 1: Ripple Recognition

What's one moment when you saw a child or grandchild live out a lesson you modeled? _____

How did it make you feel?

Part 2: ABC in Action

Choose three ABCs that feel most alive in your life right now. How can you embody them more intentionally this week?

Part 3: Legacy Letter

Write a short note to your ducklings: What do you want them to remember most when life gets wavy?

I'm blessed to be the mother of five children and the grandmother of seven, though one precious child now watches over us from heaven. Each holds a unique place in my heart, and I'm endlessly proud of who they are and their chosen paths. What brings me the most joy is how beautifully different they all are—each one setting their own goals, chasing their own dreams, and growing in their own way.

Sometimes I reflect on my early days as a young mom and wish I had known then what I've come to understand now: that it's okay not to have all the answers, that presence matters more than perfection, and that love, when given freely and consistently, becomes the most substantial legacy of all.

Chapter 11:

The Emotional Pond —Floating Through Feelings with Grace

Every pond has its mood. Some days it's calm and glassy, reflecting the sky perfectly. Other days, it's stirred by wind, rippling with movement, unpredictable and wild. Our emotional lives are no different. We each carry an inner pond, sometimes peaceful, sometimes stormy, always alive.

I've come to see emotions not as obstacles but as water we're meant to float through. They're part of the journey, part of the rhythm, and part of the reason we grow.

Naming the Waters

When we're young, we're often taught to "be strong," "stay positive," or "keep it together." But strength isn't about suppressing emotion, it's about learning to name it, feel it, and move through it without shame.

In my own pond, I've floated through:

- Grief that felt like fog
- Joy that sparkled like sunlight
- Frustration that stirred up sediment
- Peace that settled everything

Each emotion has its own texture and temperature. When we learn to recognize them, we become better paddlers, more compassionate, more grounded, and freer.

Teaching Our Ducklings to Float

As a mother of five and grandmother to seven (with one precious soul in heaven), I've seen how emotions ripple through generations. Our children and grandchildren learn not just from what we say, but from how we respond to life's waves.

When I cry, they learn that tears are safe. When I laugh, they know that joy is welcome. When I pause, they realize that reflection is powerful. When I wobble, they learn that grace is stronger than perfection.

Even the children I meet through rubber ducky joy—on cruises, in outreach, in everyday moments—feel the warmth of emotional authenticity. They sense when someone is safe to be real with. And that’s the legacy I want to leave: one that says, “It’s okay to feel. You’re not alone.”

Emotional Buoys — What Keeps Us Afloat

In the middle of emotional waves, we need anchors. We need buoys as gentle reminders that help us stay afloat. Here are a few I return to often:

Faith over fear: I remind myself that I’m held, even when I feel adrift. Mini celebrations: I honor progress, even when it’s small.

Borrowed belief: When my own confidence wobbles, I lean on the love of others. **Rubber ducky joy:** I find healing in playfulness, in color, in connection.

These aren’t just coping tools, they’re life rafts. They help me float through grief, uncertainty, and change with a little more grace.

Emotional Check-In: What’s in Your Pond?

Take a moment to pause and reflect. What’s stirring in your emotional pond today?

- Is the water calm or choppy?

- What emotions are floating near the surface?

- Which ones are hiding beneath?

- What do you need to feel more balanced?

You don't need to fix anything. Just notice. Just name. Just breathe.

Reflection Exercise: Your Pond Journal

Draw a pond in the box on the next blank page. Around the edges, write the emotions you've felt this week. Inside the pond, write:

- What helped you float through each one
- What you learned from the experience
- What do you want to remember next time the water gets rough

This isn't about perfection—it's about presence. It's about honoring your emotional rhythm and trusting that every ripple has a reason. And if emotions get a little out of hand—if the ripples turn into waves—take a deep breath, a step back, and pause for the cause. My oldest daughter has a beautiful way of helping her children regulate in those moments. She gently says, "Smell the chocolate... blow out the candles." It's a simple, sensory reminder to inhale deeply and exhale slowly. To ground. To reset. To float through the feeling instead of being swept away by it.

That kind of emotional wisdom—passed down with love—is the heart of legacy. It's how we teach our ducklings to paddle through life's storms gracefully.

Your emotional pond is sacred. Let it ripple. Let it reflect. Float through the feelings. Grace will meet you there.

Chapter 12:

Waddling Through the Waves — Finding Joy Again After Loss

Grief doesn't follow a straight line. It loops. It dips. It crashes like waves against your chest, then recedes just long enough for you to catch your breath. It surprises you with quiet moments of beauty, even when your heart feels broken.

There's no timeline for healing. No checklist for moving forward. But there is a choice to keep waddling through the waves, even when they feel heavy, when your feet sink into the sand, and when the horizon disappears in mist.

After losing my child, I didn't know how to breathe, let alone how to smile again. The pain was deep, raw, and unrelenting. The world had tilted, and I was left trying to stand on uneven ground. I remember the silence, the kind that echoes louder than any sound. The kind that makes you question whether joy will ever return.

And yet, slowly, I noticed the small things: A sunrise that felt like a hug from heaven, a song that reminded me I wasn't alone, a rubber duck that made me laugh through tears.

Joy didn't come back all at once. It tiptoed in. It whispered, "I'm still here." And I chose to listen.

Grief and joy can coexist. They don't cancel each other out. They dance together-sometimes awkwardly, sometimes beautifully. And when you allow both to be present, you begin to rediscover your purpose. You start to remember that love doesn't end -it transforms. It becomes why you keep showing up, creating, and loving.

I started writing again, speaking again, and creating again-not because the pain disappeared, but because I wanted to honor the love that never will disappear. My child's memory became a lighthouse, not a place of sorrow, but a beacon of grace. A reminder that even in the darkest waters, there is light.

When someone loses a child, no matter what their age, the silence can be the hardest part. Well-meaning people often avoid mentioning the child,

afraid it will cause more pain. But we truly long for the opposite- we want you to speak their name, share their stories, and keep their memory alive.

Saying things like, “I’m thinking of them today,” or “Tell me more about what they loved” can be deeply healing.

What's not helpful are phrases like, “At least you have other children,” or “They're in a better place,” which, though well-intended, can feel dismissive of the depth of our grief.

The truth is, we never stop being their parents. We carry them in our hearts, our words, and our everyday moments. Their legacy lives in the way we love others, the way we show up, and the way we choose joy again.

So please, don't be afraid to talk about them. Let us remember. Let us cry. Let us laugh. Let us keep them alive in the only way we still can-through love that never ends.

I share this chapter not to say, “I've moved on” but to say “I'm still moving,” and that's enough.

Reflect & Respond: Rediscovering Joy

Let's gently explore how joy can return-even during grief. These questions are designed to help you honor your journey and reconnect with what makes your heart smile.

Part 1: Honoring the Loss

What memory brings both tears and warmth?

How has this loss shaped your perspective or deepened your empathy?

What traditions or rituals help you feel connected to your loved one?

Part 2: Welcoming Joy

What small moment recently made you smile?

What brings you comfort when the waves feel heavy?

Where do you feel closest to your loved one: in nature, music, art, or silence?

Part 3: Purposeful Waddling

What creative outlet or connection helps you feel most alive?

How can you honor your loved one through your actions or legacy?

What message would you share with someone who feels stuck in grief?

What does "joy" look like for you today, not someday, **but** now?

***You don't have to be ready. You just must be willing to waddle forward
with love.***

Chapter 13:

Quacking Through Life —The Art of Waddling with Wit

Let's be honest: life is a bit of a circus. Some days you're the ringmaster, others the juggler, and occasionally... you're the duck in the tutu trying to keep it all together while waddling across a tightrope. And you know what? That's okay.

Because when life gets weird, loud, or downright wobbly, sometimes the best thing you can do is quack. Yes, quack, not scream, not sulk, and not spiral. Just quack.

Why Quacking Works

Quacking is a release. It's a reminder that you don't have to take everything so seriously. It's a way to say, "I'm here, I'm flapping, and I'm doing my best." It's the sound of resilience with a sense of humor. And you do not have to quack out loud, just remember to quack to yourself.

I've quacked through:

- Lost luggage
- Missed flights
- Tech fails during presentations
- Surprise rainstorms on good hair days

And one memorable moment when I dropped a rubber ducky into a soup at a cruise dinner (don't ask)

But I've also quacked through:

- Starting a new career at an age when people expected me to retire
- Shifting from fear to faith when I spoke on stage for the first time
- Saying goodbye to a chapter that no longer fit, even when it was comfortable
- Welcoming a new grandbaby with tears of joy and awe
- Holding space for grief when someone I loved floated on ahead

- Each time, I had a choice: panic or paddle. I chose to quack.

The Quack Philosophy

Here's what I've learned:

- If you trip, quack, and keep walking.
- If someone misunderstands you, quack and clarify.
- If you're overwhelmed, quack and breathe.
- If you're celebrating, quack louder and throw confetti.
- If you're grieving, quack gently and let the ripples carry you.

Quacking is emotional CPR. It's a reset button with feathers. It's the sound of someone who's decided to keep going—with grace, grit, and a little giggle.

Quack Through the Big Stuff

Let's talk about the big splashy moments that change your life, whether you're ready or not.

- New Career? Quack through the imposter syndrome. Waddle in with curiosity. You're not behind—you're just arriving with wisdom.
- Marriage? Quack through the chaos of merging lives. Love is messy and beautiful, like a duck trying to dance in a thunderstorm.
- New Baby? Quack through the sleepless nights and spit-up surprises. You're building a legacy one giggle at a time.
- Loss? Quack softly. Float gently. Let others paddle beside you.
- Empty Nest? Quack with pride. You raised a flock. Now it's your turn to soar.
- Retirement? Quack with flair. You're not done—you're just changing ponds.

When Quacking Isn't Enough

Let's be clear: quacking isn't denial. It's not ignoring real emotions or profound moments. It's a playful pause that helps you reset before responding. If things get heavy, I still pause for the cause. I still breathe. I still reflect. But sometimes, before I do all that, I quack. Just once. Just to remind myself that I'm still here. Still floating. Still fabulous.

Reflection Exercise: Your Quack Pack

Let's build your personal quack toolkit.

Step 1: Your Quack Triggers

List three situations that make you want to scream, cry, or hide. Now imagine quacking through them instead.

Step 2: Your Quack Squad

Who are the people in your life who quack with you—who laugh, lighten the mood, and help you float forward?

Step 3: Your Quack Reminder

Write a phrase you can say to yourself when life gets wobbly. Something like: "I'm not sinking—I'm just splashing with style."

"When life gets loud, don't lose your feathers. Quack through it. Waddle forward. And remember joy is a strategy, not just a mood."

10 Quack-Back Phrases for Wobbly Moments

"I'm not sinking—I'm just splashing with style." (Your wobble is part of your wonder.)

- "I'm not off course—I'm just exploring a scenic detour." (Detours often come with better snacks and surprise wisdom.)
- "I can paddle through this—one ripple at a time." (No need to conquer the whole pond in one splash.)
- "Even ducks look awkward when they take off. Grace comes later." (Progress isn't always pretty, but it's still progress.)

- “I’m allowed to pause. Pausing is powerful.” (Stillness isn’t weakness—it’s wisdom in motion.)
- “I’ve floated through worse. I’ve got this.” (Your past resilience is your present proof.)
- “I’m not broken—I’m just mid-waddle.” (Healing, growing, shifting—it all looks a little funny in the middle.)
- “Joy is still an option—even here.” (Even in the puddles, there’s room for a splash of light.)
- “I don’t need to be perfect to be purposeful.” (Feathers ruffled? You’re still flying toward meaning.)

I’m building a legacy, not just surviving a moment.

Every wobble is part of your story—and someone else’s inspiration.

Chapter 14:

Flocking Together —The Power of Community

We heal in connection, celebrate in connection, learn in connection, and even earn in connection. We grow in connection, stretching beyond our comfort zones with the support of others. We reflect in connection, finding clarity through shared stories and gentle listening. We rise in connection, lifting each other when the waves feel heavy.

We dream in connection—borrowing belief when our own feels shaky. We rest in connection— knowing someone else is holding space while we pause. We create in connection—turning ideas into impact through collaboration. We remember in connection, keeping legacies alive through shared love. We sparkle in connection—because joy multiplies when it’s shared.

Whether it’s a cruise ship full of strangers who become friends, a group chat that turns into a lifeline, or a quiet moment shared with someone who simply understands—community is where we remember we’re not alone.

I’ve seen it again and again. A rubber duck passed from hand to hand becomes a symbol of hope. A shared story opens the door to someone else’s healing. A group of travel advisors cheer each other on—not as competitors, but as companions.

Community isn’t just about numbers. It’s about presence. It’s about showing up. It’s about saying, “I see you,” even when someone feels invisible.

When I was rebuilding myself physically, emotionally, and spiritually, it wasn’t just the professionals who helped me heal. It was the people who stayed, the ones who checked in, the ones who didn’t need me to be “okay” to love me anyway. They became my flock, my circle of grace.

And now, I try to be that for others. I create spaces where people feel safe sharing. I celebrate mini milestones, not just my own but theirs. I remind people that joy is not a solo journey, it’s a ripple we create together.

Community is built in the small moments: a comment that says, “You’re doing great.” a message that says, “I thought of you today.” a ducky surprise that says, “You matter.”

And when we flock together, we don't just survive—we soar.

Reflect & Respond: Strength in Connection

Let's explore the role the community plays in your journey. These prompts invite you to reflect on the people who lift you—and how you can do the same for others.

Part 1: Recognizing Your Flock

Who has shown up for you in unexpected ways?

What qualities do you value most in your community?

How has someone's presence helped you heal?

Part 2: Creating Ripples

What small gesture could you offer someone today?

How do you celebrate others progress or joy?

What kind of space do you want to create for those around you?

Part 3: Legacy in Community

How does your story inspire connection?

What traditions or messages do you hope your community carries forward?

What does “flocking together” mean to you?

Feathers don’t form a flock—it’s composed of love. When we waddle together, we lift each other higher than any solo flight ever could.”

It is essential to be part of a loving flock and remember that your presence matters. Together, everyone can rise one waddle, one wave, one heart at a time.

***I am part of a loving flock. My presence matters, my ripples reach far,
and together we raise one waddle, one wave, one heart at a time.***

Chapter 15:

Paddle Like You Mean It —Embracing Momentum When It Matters

Not every season is slow. Some seasons ask us to move boldly, paddle fast, rise urgently, and respond with heart. These are the moments when life feels electric—when ideas flow, opportunities knock, and your inner ducky kicks up a joyful wake beneath the surface.

Not every season is meant for floating. Some are meant for flying, for launching a new project, for saying yes to a speaking engagement, for reaching out to someone who needs your light, for dancing even when your legs ache, for writing with fire in your fingertips, for showing up with energy that surprises even you.

These seasons don't last forever—but they're sacred. They remind us what we're capable of. They show us how far we've come. They teach us to trust our instincts, timing, and calling.

And just like ducks, we don't always look like we're paddling fast. On the surface, we may seem calm. But underneath, we're moving with purpose—driven by love, guided by legacy, fueled by joy.

So when the season calls for speed, don't hold back. Paddle like you mean it. Let your momentum be a celebration of everything you've prepared for. And know that the pause will come again—when it's time. Sometimes, the duck paddles fast—feet fluttering beneath the surface, eyes focused on the horizon, heart beating with purpose.

And that's okay. There are times in life when we're called to move, to act, to leap and to say yes before we overthink.

Momentum isn't chaos—it's clarity in motion. It's the moment when your purpose aligns with your energy. It's the spark that says, "Now is the time."

I've had seasons like that—when inspiration struck and I wrote for hours, outreach flowed, connections bloomed, and the ducky joy spread faster than I could keep up. Instead of resisting the pace, I leaned in, paddled with intention, and trusted the current.

Fast paddling doesn't mean frantic. It means focused. It means fueled by love, not fear. It means honoring the urgency of your calling.

Sometimes, we need to move quickly: respond to an opportunity that won't wait, speak when the moment is ripe, and reach out before doubt creeps in.

And just like ducks, we may look calm on the surface—but underneath, we're moving purposefully. That's not something to hide. It's something to celebrate.

The key is knowing when to paddle fast... and when to pause. Both are sacred, part of the rhythm, and help us waddle forward with grace.

Reflect & Respond:
Honoring Your Momentum

Let's explore the seasons of movement in your life. These prompts invite you to reflect when you've paddled fast—and why it mattered.

Part 1: Recognizing the Rush

When have you felt a surge of energy or inspiration?

What helped you stay focused during a busy season?

Part 2: Purposeful Motion

What does “paddling with intention” look like for you?

How do you balance momentum with mindfulness?

Part 3: Celebrating the Sprint

What recent moment felt like a joyful burst of progress?

How can you honor your fast-paced seasons without burning out?

*Sometimes the duck paddles fast—and that's when the magic happens.
Trust the motion. Honor the moment. Let your purpose set the pace.*

Chapter 16:

Lessons from a Rubber Duck —Wisdom in the Waddle

You might think a rubber duck is just a bath-time toy. But those of us who know better—who've tucked duckies into cruise cabins, handed them to strangers, or used them to spark joy in the middle of a storm—understand rubber ducks are teachers.

They don't speak, but they say so much. They don't move, but they inspire motion. They don't judge but invite laughter, healing, and connection.

Here are just a few things only a rubber duck can teach us:

1. Float, Don't Flail

Rubber ducks don't fight the water. They float. They trust the current. They bob with the waves. They remind us that sometimes, the best thing we can do is stop struggling and let life carry us for a moment. Even when the waters feel uncertain, the ducky shows us that surrender isn't weakness—it's wisdom. It teaches us to pause, breathe, and let grace do the heavy lifting.

2. Joy Is Contagious

Have you ever handed someone a rubber duck and watched their face light up? It's instant. It's pure. It's proof that joy doesn't need to be complicated. A ducky teaches us that silliness is sacred—and that laughter is a bridge between hearts. It reminds us that playfulness can be a powerful form of healing.

Sometimes, the smallest giggle can ripple into someone's whole day.

3. You're Allowed to Be Seen

Rubber ducks don't hide. They're bright yellow, unapologetically cheerful, and impossible to ignore. They teach us to show up boldly, to be visible, to let our light shine, even when the world feels dim. They don't shrink to fit in—they glow to stand out. A ducky reminds us that authenticity is magnetic, and that being seen is a gift we give ourselves and others.

4. Stillness Has Power

A duck can sit quietly on the edge of a tub or a shelf and still make an impact. It doesn't need to do much to remind us of comfort, childhood, or kindness. It teaches us that presence matters more than performance. Stillness isn't stagnation, it's sacred space. The ducky shows us that sometimes, just being there is enough.

5. Connection Can Be Simple

Rubber ducks have traveled the world—passed from hand to hand, left as surprises, used in ambassador programs, and given joy. They remind us that connection doesn't need a script. Sometimes, a simple gesture says, “You're not alone.” They prove that kindness doesn't need a caption—it just needs intention. One duck, one moment, one smile can open a heart.

6. Legacy Can Be Lighthearted

A ducky doesn't need a monument. It becomes a legacy through moments, through stories, through smiles. It teaches us that what we leave behind doesn't have to be heavy, it can be joyful, playful, and deeply meaningful. Legacy isn't always loud, it can be gentle, quirky, and full of love. The ducky reminds us that even laughter can echo for generations.

7. You Can Be Small and Mighty

Rubber ducks are tiny. But they've sparked movements, comforted grieving hearts, and inspired entire communities. They remind us that you don't have to be loud to be powerful. You just must be intentional. They teach us that impact isn't measured by size but by sincerity. Even the slightest ripple can change the course of someone's day.

Reflect & Respond: Duck-Wisdom in Your Life

Let's explore how these ducky lessons show up in your own journey.

Part 1: Floating Forward

When have you let go and trusted the current?

What helps you stay afloat during challenging times?

Part 2: Sharing Joy

What's a small gesture that brought someone unexpected joy?

How can you be a bright spot in someone's day today?

Part 3: Living Your Legacy

What playful tradition or symbol represents your values?

How can you use lightness to leave a lasting impact?

*Rubber ducks don't just float—they remind us how to live—with joy,
presence, and purpose, one ripple at a time.*

Chapter 17:

Waddle in Line —The Wisdom of Ducks Crossing Roads

There's something oddly mesmerizing about watching ducks cross a road. They don't rush. They don't panic. They move in a line—one behind the other, like they know exactly where they're going. And maybe, just maybe, they do.

This everyday moment holds quiet brilliance. When ducks cross a road, they teach us how to move through life with intention, connection, and a little bit of waddle-powered grace.

1. Follow with Trust, Lead with Care

The duck in front isn't just walking, it's guiding. And every duck behind it is trusting that path. It's a reminder that leadership isn't about being loud but steady, clear, and kind. And that following isn't weakness—it's wisdom when the path is safe and the heart is aligned.

2. Stay in Formation, But Honor Your Pace

Each duck moves at its own rhythm, yet the line stays intact. There's no pushing, no rushing—just a shared journey. It teaches us that unity doesn't mean uniformity. We can move together while honoring our own steps. It's okay to waddle differently, as long as we're moving forward together.

3. Pause for the Crossing

Cars stop. People wait. When ducks cross, the world slows down. It's a gentle reminder that sometimes, we need to pause for what's precious—to honor the small, the sacred, the silly—and let it pass in peace. Moments like these invite us to breathe, observe, and appreciate the wonder in the ordinary.

4. Protect the Littlest Waddlers

In every duck parade, there's usually a tiny one trailing behind. And the bigger ducks make space, slow down, and shield them. It's a beautiful lesson in compassion: Make room for those still learning. Guard the vulnerable. Celebrate the courage it takes to cross. Because every step matters, especially the smallest ones.

5. Cross with Confidence

Ducks don't hesitate. They step onto the road like they belong there. And maybe that's the secret: To move through life like you're meant to be here. To cross boldly, even when the path is unfamiliar.

Confidence isn't about knowing, it's about trusting the journey.

6. Waddle Proudly

There's no shame in the waddle. It's quirky. It's adorable. It's uniquely duck. And it reminds us that our walk—our way—is worth celebrating. We don't have to strive like others. We just must move forward, one joyful step at a time. The waddle is a badge of authenticity—proof that we're showing up as ourselves.

7. Hide, Seek, and Smile

And then there's the beloved tradition of hiding and finding rubber duckies on cruise ships—a game that's become a global smile-generator. Tucked behind stairwells, perched on railings, or nestled in nooks, each ducky carries a message far beyond its plastic shell. It's a reminder that joy can be unexpected, that connection can be playful, and that even in the vastness of the sea, someone thought of you. These tiny treasures whisper, "You're part of something," and invite us to pause, smile, and maybe even pass the joy forward. The cruise duck reminds us to slow down and celebrate the little surprises in a world that often feels rushed. It's a floating symbol of kindness, curiosity, and the magic of shared delight.

Reflect & Respond: Your Duck Parade

Part 1: Who's in Your Line?

Who are you following with trust right now?

Who might be following your lead?

Part 2: Crossing Moments

What road are you crossing in life right now?

What helps you move forward with confidence?

Part 3: Waddle Wisdom

What makes your walk unique?

How can you honor your pace while staying connected?

Part 4: Hidden Joys

Have you ever found a surprise that made your day?

How can you be someone's unexpected smile this week?

When ducks cross a road, they don't ask permission. They just go together, gently, and with purpose. That's how we change the world. One waddle at a time.

Chapter 18:

When the Duck Falls Out of Line — Finding Your Way Back with Ducky Power

Not every duck stays in formation. Sometimes one waddles off, distracted by a butterfly or a shiny puddle. Sometimes the wind shifts, the path blurs, and the duck finds itself alone—out of sync, out of step, unsure. And isn't that just like life?

We all fall out of line sometimes. We lose our rhythm, we forget our direction, and we question our purpose, our pace, and our place in the parade.

But here's the ducky truth: Falling out of formation isn't failure. It's a pause. A pivot. A chance to reflect and realign.

1. The Drift Is Natural

Even the most focused duck can veer off course. Life is full of distractions, detours, and unexpected waves. The drift doesn't mean you're broken, it means you're human. It's okay to lose your way. What matters is what you do next.

2. Rubber Ducky Power: The Comeback Cue

Rubber duckies don't have GPS. But they do bounce. They float back. They bob up. They reappear when you least expect them. That's their secret power: resilience wrapped in cuteness. When you feel lost, think of the rubber ducky—small, simple, and full of comeback energy. It doesn't panic. It doesn't quit. It just keeps showing up.

3. Rejoin the Line, One Waddle at a Time

Getting back to your purpose doesn't require a grand gesture. It starts with one small step. A message sent. A moment of stillness. A memory of why you began. The duck doesn't sprint to catch up—it waddles. And that's enough. You don't need to rush. You just need to return.

4. The Line Waits for You

Here's the beautiful part: The duck parade doesn't leave you behind. It slows. It shifts. It makes space. Because true community doesn't punish the pause—it honors it. You're not forgotten. You're not too late. You're still part of the flock.

5. Purpose Isn't a Straight Line

Rubber duckies don't travel in perfect paths. They spin. They bob. They drift. And yet, they always find their way back to joy. Your purpose isn't a rigid road, it's a rhythm. And even if you lose the beat, you can always rejoin the dance.

Reflect & Respond: Your Waddle Back

Part 1: The Drift

When have you felt out of sync or off course?

What helped you recognize the need to realign?

Part 2: The Ducky Reminder

What's your "rubber ducky power"—the trait that helps you bounce back?

How can you use it today to take one step toward your purpose?

Part 3: Rejoining the Line

Who or what reminds you that you're still part of the flock?

What's one gentle action you can take to reconnect?

Even when the duck falls out of line, it's never truly lost. It's just earning to waddle back—with grace, grit, and a little rubber ducky power.

Chapter 19: The Waddle Planner

A Gentle Guide to Purposeful Progress

“Life isn’t a race, but it’s not a standstill either. It’s a waddle—steady, joyful, and full of purpose.”

Introduction

Life isn’t about racing to the finish line, it’s about moving with intention, savoring the scenery, and staying true to what matters most. Whether you’re floating through calm waters or navigating unexpected ripples, this planner will help you reflect, reset, and realign. Inspired by the wisdom of rubber duckies and the beauty of steady progress, each section invites you to pause, celebrate, and take one joyful step at a time.

So grab your favorite pen, take a deep breath, and let’s waddle forward—with heart, humor, and purpose.

Section 1: Your Current Pace

Reflect on how you’re moving through life right now. What areas of your life feel rushed or pressured?

Where are you moving too slowly or avoiding action?

What does a balanced, joyful pace look like for you?

My Waddle Words (3 words that describe my ideal pace):

Section 2:

Mini Milestones

Celebrate the small wins that often go unnoticed.

What's one thing you accomplished this week that deserves a cheer?

What tiny step moved you closer to your dream?

How can you reward yourself for showing up?

Mini Celebration Idea:

Section 3: The Drift Check

Notice where you've lost momentum or clarity. Is there a goal or dream you've postponed?

What's been holding you back—fear, perfectionism, distraction?

What gentle reminder would help you re-align?

Rubber Ducky Power Phrase (to bounce back): "I may drift, but I always float back."

Section 4: Comparison Detox

Refocus on your own journey.

Who or what are you comparing yourself to lately?

How does that comparison make you feel?

What's one way you can celebrate your unique path today?

Affirmation: “My waddle is mine to love. I move with purpose, not pressure.”

Section 5: Dream with a Deadline

Give your goal a loving timeline.

What’s one thing you sincerely want to accomplish?

What’s a realistic, joyful deadline to begin or complete it?

What’s the first step you’ll take this week?

My Dream: _____

Start Date: _____

Mini Check-In Date: _____

Section 6:The Waddle Tracker

Use this weekly tracker to stay gently accountable.

WEEK ONE

Steps I Took	ONE THING I CELEBRATED	My Pace

*You don't have to sprint to matter. You must keep waddling—with joy,
heart, and purpose.*

Chapter 20:

The Unsinkable Duck —Choosing Hope When Life Gets Heavy

Some ducks float through calm waters, while others face storms, ripples, and unexpected waves. But the most inspiring ducks, the ones who leave a legacy—are the ones who refuse to sink.

My father was one of those ducks. He lived with MS, a condition that brought discomfort, limitations, and daily challenges. But he never gave up on his hopes and dreams. Even when his body resisted, his spirit paddled forward. He didn't just survive, he inspired.

And I've met others like him. People with disabilities choose joy, purpose, and movement—even when the world tells them to stop. They don't wait for perfect conditions. They waddle anyway.

1. The Buoyancy of Belief

Rubber ducks float—not because the water is gentle, but because they're built to rise. People who keep going through hardship have that same buoyancy. They believe in something bigger than the pain. They trust that their story matters. They choose to rise, even when it's hard.

2. The Weight of Giving Up

Some people give up with far less struggle—not because they're weak—but because they've forgotten their buoyancy. They let fear anchor them, comparison deflate them, and forget that floating is a choice.

3. The Unsinkable Spirit

The difference isn't strength—it's surrender. Those who keep going have learned to surrender the need for control, perfection, or ease. They embrace the wobble, trust the waddle, and know that even if they drift, they can always float back.

4. Rubber Ducky Reminders

Rubber ducks don't sink. They bob. They bounce. They reappear. They remind us that we're allowed to struggle—but we're not meant to stay stuck.

When life feels heavy, remember the duck: You were made to rise. You were made to ripple. You were made to keep going.

5. How to Be the Duck That Doesn't Give Up

Float with faith: Even when the path is unclear, trust that you're still moving forward.

- Waddle with purpose: Take one small step, even if imperfect.
- Bounce back: When you fall out of formation, return with grace.
- Shine anyway: Let your story be seen. Let your resilience be felt.
- Pass the duck: Encourage someone else. Remind them they're unsinkable too.

Reflect & Respond: Your Unsinkable Self

Part 1: Your Buoyancy

What belief helps you rise when life gets heavy?

Who in your life models unsinkable strength?

Part 2: Your Waddle Forward

What's one area where you've felt like giving up?

What's one ducky reminder you can use to keep going?

Part 3: Your Ripple Effect

How can your story inspire someone else to stay afloat?

What legacy of resilience do you want to leave behind?

Rubber ducks don't sink—and neither do you. Even when the waves rise, your spirit floats. That's the power of choosing hope, one waddle at a time.

Chapter 21:

Quack Back —The Art of Ducky Self-Talk

Every rubber duck has a voice. It might be a squeak, a squawk, or a cheerful quack. But here's the secret: The most powerful voice you'll ever hear... is your own.

Self-talk is the soundtrack of your journey. Like a rubber duck floating through waves, your words can either keep you buoyant or leave you bobbing in doubt.

1. The Inner Pond

Imagine your mind as a pond. Some days it's calm. Other days, it's full of ripples, lily pads of worry, and unexpected splashes.

Your self-talk is the duck that swims through it all. It can paddle with purpose... Or flap in circles.

2. The Quack You Choose

There are two kinds of ducks in your head:

Duck Type	What It Says:	What It Does
Doubt Duck	"You're not good enough."	Sinks your spirit.
Daring Duck	"You've got this, even if you wobble."	Keeps you afloat.

The difference? Choice. You choose which duck gets the mic.

3. Squeak with Kindness

Rubber ducks don't criticize. They don't say, "You waddled wrong." They just float, smile, and squeak with joy.

Your self-talk should do the same:

- Celebrate your effort.
- Cheer your courage.
- Forgive your flops.

4. Ducky Mantras for Daily Paddling

Here are a few rubber ducky affirmations to keep your inner pond peaceful:

- “I waddle at my own pace—and that’s enough.”
- “Even when I drift, I’m still afloat.”
- “I’m allowed to squeak, splash, and shine.”
- “Progress is a paddle, not a race.”
- “I’m the duck that dares to dream.”

Stick one on your mirror. Write one on a sticky note. Or whisper one before a big moment. Let your ducky voice lead the way.

Reflect & Respond: Your Quack Track

Part 1: Pond Check

What’s the tone of your self-talk lately gentle or judgmental?

Which duck has been louder: Doubt Duck or Daring Duck?

Part 2: Reframe the Ripple

Take one negative thought and rewrite it in ducky style. Example: “I messed up. I waddled off course, but I’m still floating.”

Part 3: Daily Ducky Dialogue

What’s one mantra you’ll quack to yourself tomorrow morning?

How can you model kind self-talk for someone else?

And remember: Talk to yourself with the same respect and admiration you’d give to your favorite duck in the flock. You’ve paddled through storms, made ripples of kindness, and floated through moments others might sink in. You deserve words that lift, not weigh you down. So, quack back with courage. Cheer your own waddle. And let your self-talk be the gentle splash that keeps you afloat.

Your inner duck is listening. Speak with love, paddle with purpose, and squeak with joy.

Chapter 22:

Float Beside Me —Friendship in the Wake of Challenge

Rubber duckies don't paddle ahead and leave others behind. They float beside you. Quietly. Steadily. Joyfully.

And that's what true friendship looks like, especially when someone's going through a storm. We all know someone facing a challenge:

Grief. Illness. Uncertainty.

And while we may not be able to fix it, we can float with them. We can be the duck that doesn't drift away.

1. Be a Buoyant Friend

Rubber ducks don't sink under pressure.

They stay afloat—and help others do the same.

Being a buoyant friend means offering hope, not solutions. It means saying, "I'm here" without needing to say more. Your presence, not your perfection, matters most.

2. Squeak When Needed, Stay Quiet When Not

Sometimes your friend needs a squeak of encouragement. Other times, they just need silence.

Rubber ducky wisdom teaches us to listen for the moment:

- Offer a laugh when the mood allows.
- Sit in stillness when words feel heavy.
- Let your energy match their needs.

3. Don't Paddle Away

When someone's hurting, it's tempting to step back. We worry we'll say the wrong thing. We fear we're not enough.

But rubber ducks don't abandon the pond.

- They stay close.

- Even if they're just bobbing quietly nearby.
- That's what friendship looks like:
- Gentle loyalty.

4. Bring the Ducky Joy

Joy doesn't erase pain—but it can soften it.

- A surprise ducky.
- A silly meme.
- A handwritten note with a squeaky pun.

These small gestures say, "You're still allowed to smile." Rubber ducky joy reminds someone they're still seen, still loved, and still worthy of light.

5. Float at Their Pace

- Not everyone heals quickly.
- Not everyone wants advice.
- Rubber ducks don't rush—they match the rhythm of the water.

Be the friend who honors someone's pace. Let them drift. Let them rest.

And when they're ready to paddle again, be there to cheer.

Reflect & Respond: Friendship That Floats

Part 1: Your Pond People

Who in your life is going through a challenge right now?

How can you float beside them with compassion?

Part 2: Your Ducky Gesture

What small act of joy could you offer this week?

How can you remind someone they're not alone?

Part 3: Your Friendship Philosophy

What does being a better friend mean to you?

How can you model ducky loyalty in your relationships?

True friends don't paddle ahead, they float beside you, squeak when needed, and remind you that joy still exists, even in the ripples.

Chapter 23:

Paddle Forward — Today Shapes Tomorrow

Rubber duckies don't have rearview mirrors.

They don't look back and wish they'd floated differently. They paddle forward—one ripple at a time.

And so do we.

Every choice we make today, every word, every pause, every act of kindness sends a ripple into tomorrow.

Even the most minor squeak can echo into someone's future.

But here's the truth:

- We can't go back.
- We can't re-float yesterday's waters.
- And that's okay.

1. Grace Over Guilt

- You've made choices.
- Some you're proud of.
- Some you wish you could redo.

But rubber ducky wisdom says:

- Don't sink into guilt—float into grace.
- Guilt keeps us stuck in yesterday's pond.
- Grace invites us to paddle forward.
- You are not the sum of your past mistakes.
- You are the strength of your present choices.

Even if you've drifted off course, you can always re-center. You can still squeak with joy even if you've squeaked in frustration.

2. Doubt Is a Ripple, Not a Whirlpool

- Sometimes we doubt what we can do now because of what we didn't do before.
- We think, "I missed my chance."
- "I messed up."
- "I'm not who I used to be."

But ducky wisdom reminds us:

- You're still floating.
- You're still here.
- And that means your story isn't over.

Doubt may ripple through your thoughts, but it doesn't have to pull you under. You can acknowledge it, honor it, and then paddle through it.

- You are allowed to grow beyond your past.
- You can believe in your future—even if it looks different from what you imagined.

3. Today Is a Paddle, Not a Pause

- Every day is a paddle stroke.
- Even if it's small.
- Even if it's slow.

What you do today—The kindness you offer, the boundaries you honor, and the dreams you nurture all shape your tomorrow.

- You don't need a perfect plan.
- You just need a paddle and a little purpose.
- Even a gentle bob forward is progress.
- Even a quiet ripple matters.

4. You Can't Refloat Yesterday

- Rubber duckies don't rewind.
- They don't try to re-float yesterday's waves.
- They honor the journey and keep moving.

You may wish you'd said something different, done something sooner, or let go a little earlier. But the pond doesn't flow backward, and neither should your heart.

- Instead of regret, choose reflection.
- Instead of shame, choose learning.
- Instead of "I should have," choose "I will."

5. Celebrate the Courage to Begin Again

Every day you wake up and choose to paddle forward—

- That's courage.
- That's growth.
- That's ducky joy.

You don't need to be perfect. You just need to be present.

Celebrate the mini milestones:

- A brave conversation.
- A moment of stillness.
- A decision to try again.

These are the ripples that shape your legacy.

6. Your Past Is a Pond, Not a Prison

Your past is part of your story, but it doesn't define your destination. It's a pond you floated through—not a place you're stuck in.

- You learned.

- You grew.
- You squeaked.
- You stumbled.

And now, you paddle forward with more wisdom, grace, and ducky resilience.

Let your past inform you, not imprison you. Let it be a chapter, not a cage.

Reflect & Respond: Paddle Forward with Purpose

Part 1: Pond of Possibility

What small action today could ripple into a better tomorrow?

What intention do you want to carry forward?

Part 2: Let Go of the Backward Paddle

What past moment are you ready to release with grace?

How can you honor what it taught you without holding onto regret?

Part 3: Your Ducky Declaration

Write one sentence that affirms your forward momentum. Example: “I paddle forward with joy, purpose, and grace.”

Part 4: Doubt Detox

What doubt are you holding onto because of your past?

What truth can you replace it with today?

You can't paddle backward but can choose how you float forward. And every ripple you make today is a gift to your tomorrow.

Chapter 24:

Bobbing Through the Bumps —Ducky Wisdom for Disappointment

Rubber duckies don't glide across glassy water every day.

- Sometimes the pond is choppy.
- Sometimes the current pulls.
- Sometimes they get stuck in a corner or knocked off course by a splash they didn't see coming.

And yet... they float.

That's the ducky way.

- Not perfect. Not predictable.
- But persistent.
- Joyful.
- Resilient.

1. Setbacks Are Part of the Paddle

Life isn't a straight line—it's a wobbly waddle.

There will be moments when things don't go as planned:

- A dream delayed.
- A door closed.
- A "yes" that turns into a "not yet."

Rubber duckies remind us that setbacks aren't the end of the story. They're just part of the journey—a ripple, not a sinkhole.

2. Disappointment Doesn't Mean You're Defective

- When something doesn't work out, it's easy to turn inward.
- To question your worth.
- To wonder if you're broken.

But duckies don't blame themselves when the water gets rough.

- They bob.
- They bounce.
- They wait for the next wave.

You're not defective, you're just in a moment of drift. And drift doesn't mean done.

3. The Bounce-Back Is Built In

- Rubber duckies are designed to bounce.
- You can push them down, and they pop back up.
- That's their magic—and it's yours too.

You've bounced back before.

- From heartbreak.
- From failure.
- From fear.

And you'll do it again. Because resilience isn't something you earn, it's something you remember.

4. Disappointment is a Teacher in Disguise, which teaches something:

- Patience when the tide is slow.
- Perspective when the path shifts.
- Compassion when someone else is bobbing beside you.
- Disappointment sharpens our vision.

It helps us see what matters. It humbles us, stretches us, and—if we let it—strengthens us. Rubber duckies don't just float through the storm; they learn the rhythm of the waves.

5. Strength Isn't Loud—It's Steady

We often think strength looks like boldness, bravery, or big wins. But sometimes, strength is quiet. It's the choice to keep showing up.

- To keep paddling.
- To keep believing.

Rubber ducky strength is soft but steady. It's the kind that says, "I may be small, but I'm still here."

6. Joy Can Still Float

Even in disappointment, joy is possible.

- Not the loud kind.
- Not the confetti kind.
- But the quiet kind that says, "I'm still here."

Rubber ducky joy is about choosing lightness even when the pond feels heavy. It's about laughing through the wobble. It's about finding one thing to celebrate—even if it's just the fact that you're still afloat.

7. You're Not Alone in the Pond

Every duck has faced a splash. Every person has faced a setback. You're not the only one bobbing through a hard moment. And that's the beauty of the ducky community:

- We float together.
- We squeak for each other.
- We remind one another that disappointment is real—but so is hope.

8. The Waddle Forward

After the splash, after the drift, after the doubt—there's a choice.

- To paddle again.
- To move forward.
- To trust that the next ripple might carry you somewhere beautiful.

Rubber duckies don't give up. They don't sink. They just keep waddling. And so can you.

Reflect & Respond: Bobbing Through the Bumps

Part 1: Naming the Splash

What recent disappointment or setback has knocked you off course?

How did it make you feel?

Part 2: Finding Your Bounce

What helped you float through a past challenge?

What ducky reminder can help you bounce back now?

Part 3: Waddling Forward

What's one small step you can take today to move forward?

Who can float beside you as you do?

*Rubber duckies don't avoid the splash—they bounce through it.
Disappointment may ripple, but joy still floats. And so do you.*

Chapter 25: The Towel Animal Principle

Small gestures. Big impact. Lasting imprint.

If you've never cruised, let me paint the picture. You've spent the day exploring, maybe snorkeling, journaling, or breathing in the salt air and letting yourself be still. You return to your cabin, open the door, and there it is: an animal towel.

A creature made entirely of folded towels. Sometimes it's a swan with a chocolate kiss tucked under its wing. Sometimes it's a monkey hanging from a hanger. Sometimes it's a dog, a rabbit, or a creature you can't quite name—but it's smiling at you in its own way.

No one announces it. No one asks for applause. It's just there. Waiting. A quiet celebration of your presence.

And here's the thing: it's temporary. By morning, it'll be gone. But the feeling? That lingers.

The towel animal principle is this:

You don't have to be grand, permanent, or perfect to make someone feel seen. You must show up with care.

It's the same joy when someone finds a rubber duck tucked into a nook on a cruise ship. Maybe it's hidden but it is meant to be found. Sometimes it's handed to you with a wink and a smile. It's unexpected. It's playful. And it says: You're part of something joyful.

Rubber duckies don't sink. They rise from ordinary materials and become something memorable. You can do the same.

In life, we're all towel folders and duck hidiers. We shape moments from what we have—words, gestures, time—and offer them to others. A kind text. A handwritten note. A compliment that lands. These are our towel animals. Our rubber duckies. Our reminders that joy doesn't need a stage, it just needs intention.

Small gestures, significant impact, lasting imprint.

These aren't just phrases, they're lifelines. A small gesture can be the first crack of light for someone feeling invisible. For someone doubting their worth, it can be proof that they matter. For someone navigating grief, change, or quiet overwhelm, it can be the reminder: You're not alone. These moments don't fix everything, but they soften the edges. They say, "I see you. I care. You're worth the fold."

Reflection Prompt:

Think of a time someone surprised you with a small act of kindness. How did it shift your day, mood, and sense of being seen?

Mini Action:

Create a towel animal or rubber ducky moment today. Fold a gesture. Leave a note. Send a message. Make someone feel noticed—not for their achievements, but simply for being here.

Some of life's most powerful encouragements are folded quietly and left without fanfare. Others are tucked like duckies—waiting to be found.

Chapter 26:

What If, Someday, Determined... or Situational? — Choosing Your Duck

Inside every pond, there are four kinds of ducks.

They look similar on the surface—bright, cheerful, bobbing along. But listen closely, and you'll hear their inner dialogue.

One whispers, "What if I fail?" Another sighs, "Someday I'll start."

A third paddles forward and says, "I'm doing this."

And the fourth? It tilts its head, reads the ripple, and says, "What's needed right now?"

These ducks aren't just metaphors. They're mindsets. And they shape how we move through life.

1. The "What If" Duck

This duck is full of questions—but not the helpful kind. It quacks with doubt, hesitation, and fear.

- "What if I'm not ready?"
- "What if they don't like it?"
- "What if I mess it all up?"

The "What If" duck lives in the pond of paralysis. It circles the edge, never quite diving in.

But here's the truth:

- "What if" can be reframed.
- "What if" you succeed?
- "What if" you inspire someone?
- "What if" this is the moment everything changes?

Rubber ducky wisdom says:

1. Don't let the "What If" duck lead the parade.

Let it ask better questions—and then follow the "Determined" duck instead.

2. The "Someday" Duck

This duck loves to dream. It imagines big things—books, businesses, adventures. But it's always waiting.

- "Someday I'll write that chapter."
- "Someday I'll take that trip."
- "Someday I'll believe in myself."

The "Someday" duck floats in the pond of postponement. It's gentle, hopeful, and quietly afraid.

But rubber duckies don't wait for perfect weather. They float anyway, squeak in the rain, and paddle through puddles.

"Someday" is a beautiful idea. But "Today" is where the magic happens.

3. The "Determined" Duck

This duck doesn't have all the answers. It doesn't always feel ready.

But it paddles anyway.

- "I may wobble, but I'm moving."
- "I'll learn as I go."
- "I'm showing up, even if it's messy."

The "Determined" duck lives in the pond of progress. It celebrates mini milestones, honors effort over perfection, and chooses action over avoidance.

This duck is your inner cheerleader. Your bounce-back buddy. Your reminder that courage isn't loud, it's consistent.

4. The "Situational" Duck

This duck is a shapeshifter. Not in disguise—but in wisdom. It knows that different waters call for different waddles.

- Sometimes it’s bold.
- Sometimes it’s quiet.
- Sometimes it floats.
- Sometimes it dives deep.

The “Situational” duck doesn’t always pretend to be one thing. It reads the room, the ripple, the rhythm.

It adjusts—not to please others, but to stay aligned with purpose. This duck is:

A “What If” duck when caution is needed.

A “Someday” duck when dreaming fuels hope.

A “Determined” duck when action is the answer.

It’s the duck that says:

“I can be soft and strong.”

“I can pause and still progress.”

“I can change my pace without losing my direction.”

Rubber ducky wisdom says: Flexibility isn’t weakness—it’s grace in motion.

Reflect & Respond: Your Duck Parade

Part 1: Duck Check

Which duck has been leading your thoughts lately?

What’s one way you can feed your “Determined” duck today?

Part 2: Reframe the Quack

Take one “What If” thought and rewrite it with hope.

Example: “What if I fail?” “What if I grow in ways I never imagined?”

Part 3: Someday to Today

What’s one “Someday” dream you can take one step toward this week?

Part 4: Situational Wisdom

Think of a moment when you had to shift gears emotionally or mentally. What kind of duck did you become—and what did you learn from that pivot?

You don’t have to be one kind of duck forever.

You just have to be the kind that keeps paddling with purpose.

Chapter 27:

Back on Track —Staying Focused While Serving Others

Life doesn't always follow a straight track. Sometimes you're cruising, focused and fired up.....and someone needs you. A detour appears. A moment calls for your heart. And just like that, your train of thought derails.

But here's the truth, even trains that derail get repaired, rerouted, and roll again. So can you.

The Ducky Philosophy of Focus

Rubber duckies don't panic when the current shifts. They float, adjust, and paddle forward again when the time is right.

When you pause to help someone, you're not failing. You're living your values, learning how to return to your track with intention, not guilt.

How to Stay Focused (Even When Life Pulls You Sideways)

Here's your ducky toolkit for staying on track while still showing up for others:

The "One Thing" Reset: After helping someone, ask yourself: What's the one thing I was doing before? Write it down. That's your re-entry point.

Mini Milestone Mapping: Break your big goal into tiny steps. That way, even if you're interrupted, you can jump back in without feeling lost.

Graceful Boundaries: It's okay to say, "I'd love to help—can I circle back in 20 minutes?" You're not abandoning others; you're honoring both needs.

Visual Anchors: Keep a sticky note, a ducky charm, or a tracker nearby that reminds you of your current focus. It's your visual "track marker."

Celebrate the Return: When you get back on track, don't just dive in—smile, stretch, and say, "Here we go again." That moment matters.

Helping Others Is Part of the Journey

You're not just building a business, writing a book, or planning a cruise. You're building a legacy of presence.

Helping others doesn't derail your purpose, it deepens it.

Just remember: your train still needs fuel. Your duck still needs direction. And your heart deserves the same care you give to others.

Reflection Prompts

1. What usually pulls you off track—and how do you feel when it happens?

2. What visual or verbal cue could help you re-center quickly?

3. How can you honor your goals and gift for helping others this week?

Even a train that derails isn't broken, it's just waiting for the right hands, the right tools, and the right moment to roll again.

Chapter 28: The Duck Who Danced in the Storm

Some ducks wait for sunshine. Others paddle through puddles. But this duck? She dances in the storm.

She doesn't pretend the thunder isn't loud. She doesn't ignore the wind. She just chooses rhythm over retreat.

1. Storms Come in All Sizes

Some storms are loud, a big change, or cause fear. Others are quiet—self-doubt, comparison, fatigue.

But every storm offers a choice:

- Hide in the reeds
- Float with the current
- Or... dance.

Dancing doesn't mean ignoring the hard stuff. It means honoring it with movement. It means saying, "I'm still here. I'm still me."

2. The Duck Who Danced Anyway

She wasn't the fastest. She wasn't the fanciest. But she had heart.

- She twirled through grief.
- She wiggled through worry.
- She tapped her webbed feet to the beat of resilience.

Her dance wasn't perfect. It was powerful.

Because every step said: "I choose joy. I choose motion. I choose me."

3. Ilene's Storm Dance: A True Story

There was a time I was in the hospital, facing something unimaginable. The doctors weren't sure if they could save my right foot. They spoke of amputation. And I saw the sadness in my family's eyes—heavy, quiet, full

of fear. But something rose up in me. Not denial. Not despair. Determination.

I blurted out, “Then I’ll have to find a way to keep on dancing.” Because I love to dance. And when I hear music, I just have to get up and dance.

That moment wasn’t about feet. It was about spirit. It was about choosing joy even when the rhythm changes. I didn’t know what the outcome would be.

But I knew this: My soul would keep dancing.

4. What’s Your Storm Dance?

- You don’t need choreography.
- You don’t need applause.
- You just need presence.

Storm dancing looks like:

- Laughing through tears sending a kind message when you feel low
- Writing one sentence when the chapter feels too big
- Putting on music and moving your shoulders, even if your feet can’t follow

Rubber ducky wisdom says: Storms don’t stop the dance. They deepen it.

Reflect & Respond: Your Storm Dance

Part 1: Name Your Storm

What storm are you weathering right now big or small?

Part 2: Choose Your Step

What’s one small movement you can make today to honor your strength?

Part 3: Celebrate the Wiggle

Write a note to yourself: “Even in the storm, I am worthy of joy.”

You don’t have to wait for the sun to shine. You are the light. Dance anyway.

Chapter 29:

Saying Yes to New Possibilities (Even When the Timing Isn't Perfect)

There's a moment in every duck's journey when the pond looks too quiet, the sky too uncertain, and the lily pad too small to launch. But life doesn't wait for perfect conditions, it invites us to paddle forward anyway.

Saying yes doesn't always come with clarity or confidence. Sometimes it comes with messy feathers, half-packed bags, and a heart still catching up. But the yes itself? That's the ripple. That's the shift. That's the beginning of something new.

I've learned that the ducks who leap—waddle toward the unknown with a curious quack and a hopeful heart—rarely regret it. They may circle back, they may change course, but they grow. They stretch. They discover parts of the pond they never knew existed.

So, if you're waiting for the "right time," let me gently say that it may never feel perfect, but it might be perfectly right.

Say yes, even if your wings feel a little soggy, your map is still unfolding, and even if you're unsure how deep the water is.

Because the pond is wide, the sky is open. And your ripple matters. Often, what holds us back isn't the reality of the leap—it's the story we've imagined about it. We tell ourselves we're not ready, qualified, or brave enough. We picture worst-case scenarios, awkward moments, or invisible critics lining the shore. These stories feel real, but they're just fog on the pond.

Here are a few of those foggy tales we tell ourselves:

- "I need to be more prepared before I start."
- "Other people are already doing it better."
- "I'll probably fail, so why try?"
- "I'm too old, too young, too late."

- “I don’t have enough time, money, or energy.”
- “What if people judge me or think I’m silly?”
- “I missed my chance—it’s not meant for me anymore.”
- “I need permission or validation before I leap.”
- “It’s selfish to want something more.”
- “I should wait until everything feels certain.”

When we pause long enough to question these stories, we realize: the hesitation isn’t true, it’s a tale. And tales can be rewritten.

Paddle-Forward Prompts

If you’ve felt a tug toward something new but haven’t quite taken the leap, consider these gentle questions:

What’s something I’ve daydreamed about more than once but told myself “Not now”?

If fear or timing weren’t a factor, what would I try just for its joy or growth?

What compliments or encouragement have I received that I’ve brushed off—but secretly wanted to believe?

What small step could I take this week to test the water, even if I’m not ready to dive in?

If I looked back a year from now, what would I regret not exploring?

***The right time rarely knocks. But when you paddle toward possibility,
the pond makes room for your ripple.***

Chapter 30:

When the Music Pauses —Finding Grace in the Silence

There's a moment in every dance when the music fades. Not because the joy is gone, but because life asks us to listen differently.

Sometimes the beat stops. Sometimes the rhythm slows. And sometimes, we find ourselves standing still unsure if the following note will ever come.

But here's the truth I've learned on land and at sea: The pause is not the end. It's the invitation.

The Stillness Between the Waves

Cruising taught me something unexpected. When the ship glides through calm waters, a hush settles over everything. There are no crashing waves, no dramatic swells, just stillness.

And in that stillness, you notice things:

- The shimmer of moonlight on the surface
- The quiet hum of the engines
- The gentle rhythm of your own breath. Life is like that, too.

We rush from one celebration to the next, one goal to another—until something forces us to stop.

- A diagnosis.
- A loss.
- A shift in direction.
- A moment of grief or grace.

And suddenly, we're floating and not moving forward. Not sinking. Just... suspended.

The Ducky Pause

Rubber duckies don't panic when the water's still.

- They float.

- They trust.
- They wait.

They know the current will return, and they know the splash will come. But for now, they honor the pause.

I've had my own ducky pauses:

- The silence of grief when my child passed, and all I could do was hold space for love
- The moment I faced losing my foot and chose to dance anyway
- The quiet after a speaking event, wondering if my words truly landed
- These pauses weren't empty.
- They were sacred.

They reminded me that healing doesn't always come with noise. Sometimes it arrives in whispers.

The Gift of the Pause

When the music stops, we often feel lost. But what if silence is the gift?

In the pause, we find:

- Clarity: What truly matters becomes visible
- Courage: We learn to sit with discomfort
- Connection: We hear the voice of faith, family, and our own soul

The pause teaches us to:

- Listen without rushing
- Reflect without judgment
- Breathe without performing
- It's not about productivity

- It's about presence

Reflection Prompts: Embrace the Pause

Part 1: Sound Check

What voices fill your silence—are they kind, critical, or curious?

What message is trying to reach you in the quiet?

Part 2: Grace Inventory

Recall a time when a pause led to unexpected growth. What changed?

Who helped you float when you couldn't paddle?

Part 3: Ducky Declaration

- “Even when the music stops, I am still worthy of celebration.”
- “I float with faith. I pause with purpose. I rise with resilience.”

Part 4: Mini Celebration Moment

Celebrate the courage it takes to be still.

When the Beat Returns

Eventually, the music returns. It might sound different. It might move more slowly. It might carry a new rhythm shaped by everything you've learned in the silence.

And when it does, you'll be ready. Not because you rushed through the pause, but because you honored it.

- You let it soften you.
- You let it strengthen you.

- You let it remind you that your worth isn't tied to movement—it's rooted in presence.

The pause is not punishment. It's a prelude. So float gently, breathe deeply, and trust that your next dance will be even more beautiful.

Chapter 31:

The Drift Isn't the End

Sometimes, we don't even notice we've drifted—until the shoreline we once recognized feels distant and unfamiliar. Life doesn't always announce its detours with flashing lights or warning bells.

More often, it's a slow, quiet slide: a missed morning ritual, a forgotten dream, a voice that's grown faint inside. But drifting isn't failure. It's feedback. It's the ocean whispering, "You're still afloat. Now, let's find your way back."

I've come to believe that drifting is part of the rhythm of resilience. Like a rubber duckie bobbing in the waves, we're built to stay buoyant—even when the current pulls us off course. The key isn't to panic or judge the drift. It's to pause, notice, and gently realign. This chapter invites you to do just that—with grace, curiosity, and maybe even a little celebration.

Because here's the truth: even the most purposeful vessels drift. Seasons shift. Winds change. And sometimes, drifting reveals a view we wouldn't have seen had we stayed rigidly on course. It's not about perfection—it's about presence. When we stop fighting the current and start listening to it, we often discover what's been calling us all along.

So if you're feeling off-track, untethered, or unsure, take heart. You're not lost—you're learning. You're not sinking, you're stretching. And the moment you choose to realign, even slightly, you begin to reclaim your direction. Not with force, but with faith. Not with shame, but with celebration.

Buoyancy Check: Encouraging Exercise

Let's make this real. Find a quiet moment and reflect on these prompts:

Where have I felt adrift lately—emotionally, spiritually, or creatively?

What anchors me when I feel most like myself?

What's one slight shift I can make this week to paddle back toward purpose?

Choose one action—tiny but meaningful—and celebrate it. Even a single paddle stroke counts. And if you're feeling playful, place a rubber duckie somewhere visible to remind yourself: You're unsinkable, even when the waves feel strong.

Drifting isn't defeat—it's the ocean's way of asking if you're ready to choose your direction again.

Chapter 32:

If I Had All the Money in the World — Spending with Soul, Not Just Sparkle

Let's play a little game of "what if." What if every financial worry disappeared? What if your bank account overflowed with abundance? What if you had all the money in the world?

- Would you buy a yacht?
- Build a castle?
- Fill your closet with glitter and gold?

Or would you do something deeper? Something duckier?

The Currency of Purpose Rubber ducky wisdom says:

- Money can buy comfort, but it can't buy meaning.
- It can build a mansion, but not a legacy.
- It can fill your hands, but not your heart.

So if I had all the money in the world, I'd spend it on:

- Moments that matter
- Memories that heal
- Movements that uplift

Because true wealth isn't measured in dollars, it's measured in impact.

What I'd Build with Boundless Wealth

Let's dream big—and dream boldly.

1. A Global Ducky Network

Imagine rubber ducky ambassador programs in every country. Hospitals, schools, and cruise ships filled with ducky joy—symbols of resilience, healing, and connection.

2. Legacy Libraries

Spaces where people could read, reflect, and write their own stories. Filled with books that inspire, journals that invite, and quiet corners for dreaming.

3. Healing Cruises for Families in Grief

Voyages for those who've lost loved ones, where the ocean becomes a balm, and every wave whispers, "You're not alone."

4. Mini Celebration Grants

Small gifts for big-hearted people to celebrate progress, honor courage, and remind someone they matter.

5. A Purpose Playground

It was a place where kids and adults alike could explore creativity, kindness, and community. It had dance floors, storytelling stages, and ducky splash zones.

Reflection Prompts: Your Wealth, Your Way

Part 1: Dream Without Limits

If money were no object, what would you create? Who would you help—and how?

Part 2: Spend with Soul

What values would guide your giving? What legacy would you want to leave behind?

Part 3: Ducky Declaration

"I may not have all the money in the world, but I have all the heart I need to make a difference."

True wealth isn't what you keep—it's what you give. So spend your days like currency, investing in joy, generosity, and the kind of legacy that floats forever.

Chapter 33:

We do not always need to be chasing

We live in a world that rewards motion. The faster we move, the more productive we seem. The louder we speak, the more we're heard. The busier our calendars, the more validated we feel. But what if the fundamental breakthroughs that shift our stories and soften our hesitation don't come from acceleration but stillness?

I used to think pausing meant falling behind, and if I stopped paddling, I'd sink. But I've seen the pause as a sacred space, a quiet harbor where clarity docks and courage refuels. It's not a detour from progress; it's part of the rhythm of resilience. Like a cruise ship slowing to dock, the pause allows us to recalibrate, refuel, and reconnect. It's where we ask: What am I carrying that no longer serves me? What am I rushing past that deserves reverence?

The pause isn't passive, it's powerful. It's where we hear the whisper beneath the noise. It's where we remember that rest is not weakness, and reflection is not delay. It's where we stop paddling just long enough to notice the stars. And in that noticing, we begin to realign—not with urgency, but with intention.

I remember a moment on a cruise when everything slowed. The ship had docked early in the morning, and most passengers rushed off with excursion plans and bucket lists in hand. But I lingered. I sat on the balcony with coffee in hand, watching the stillness of the harbor. No agenda. No urgency. Just the quiet hum of possibility. That pause—unplanned and unhurried—gave me more clarity than any itinerary ever could.

It reminded me that we don't always need to chase the next thing. Sometimes, we need to let the next thing find us. In the stillness, I heard my voice again, the one that gets drowned out by deadlines and distractions. It whispered, "You're allowed to rest. You're allowed to listen. You're allowed to be."

That's the power of the pause. It's not a break from your story—it's a breath within it. A moment to ask, What's true for me now?

What's ready to be released?

What's quietly waiting to be embraced?

Take five minutes today to pause—no agenda, no productivity. Just breathe and ask:

What's trying to speak to me in the quiet?

What clarity is waiting in the stillness?

The pause isn't where progress ends, it's where purpose begins to speak.

Chapter 34:

Borrowing Belief — When You Can't See Your Light, Let Someone Hold the Candle

There are days when your sparkle dims, when the waves feel too high. When the dance feels too heavy. And you wonder, “Do I still have what it takes?”

Rubber ducky wisdom says:

Even the brightest duck needs a buddy to paddle beside them.

The Power of Borrowed Belief

Borrowed belief isn't a weakness. It's wisdom. It's saying:

- “I don't feel strong right now... but I'll lean on your strength.”
- “I can't see the path... but I trust your flashlight.”
- “I forgot my worth... but you remembered it for me.”

We borrow belief from:

- A friend who sees our potential
- A mentor who speaks truth over our doubt
- A child who reminds us we're still magical
- A community that cheers us on, even when we wobble

My Ducky Moments of Borrowed Belief

I've borrowed belief many times:

- When I first spoke publicly, heart pounding, unsure if my words mattered
- When I started my travel business, I wondered if I could really make waves
- When grief clouded my joy, and my flock reminded me that Sammy's light still shines

But one of the most significant shifts came when I stopped worrying about what people thought of me.

That fear—of-judgment, of not being enough, had kept me quiet for years. And then, people began to show me how I could make a difference. They saw something in me I hadn't yet seen in myself.

- They held the candle.
- They passed me the mic.
- They reminded me that my voice wasn't just welcome—it was needed.

That's when I felt freedom. That's when I overcame my fear of speaking. Not because I suddenly became fearless...

But because I borrowed enough belief to take the first step. For Those Who Feel That Way Too...

- If you're reading this and thinking, "That's me,"
- If your voice feels stuck,
- If your sparkle feels dim,
- If you're afraid of what others might think...

Here are a few ducky thoughts to help you paddle through:

1. Your voice is a gift, not a performance. You don't have to be perfect—you just must be present. `
2. Someone out there needs your story. Even if it's messy. Even if it's quiet. Even if it's still unfolding.
3. Borrow belief until your own grows stronger. Lean on someone who sees your light. Let them hold the candle until you're ready to shine.
4. Waddle anyway. Speak even if your voice shakes. Dance even if your feet wobble. Show up even if you're unsure.
5. You are not alone. There's a whole flock cheering for you. And I'm one of them. Reflection Prompts: Who Holds Your Candle?

Part 1: Your Belief Circle

Who do you turn to when your confidence wavers?

What words have lifted you when you couldn't lift yourself?

Part 2: Be the Candle

Who might need your belief today?

What message can you send to remind them they matter?

Part 3: Ducky Declaration

- “I may borrow belief today, but I will pass it on tomorrow.”
- “I float with faith. I speak with courage. I shine with borrowed light until mine returns.”

Borrowing belief isn't giving up—it's gathering strength. So, when your light flickers, let someone hold the candle. And when theirs dims, be the one who shines.

Chapter 35:

Waddle with Intention — Turning Borrowed Belief into Bold Steps

There's a moment—quiet, powerful—when borrowed belief becomes your own.

It doesn't come with fireworks. It doesn't announce itself with a trumpet. It arrives softly, like a ducky ripple on calm water.

It's the moment you say:

- “I think I can do this.”
- “I'm not waiting for perfect.”
- “I'm ready to waddle forward.”

From Floating to Forward

Borrowed belief is beautiful.

- It's the life raft when you're sinking.
- It's the flashlight when you're lost.
- It's the hug when you feel invisible.

But belief isn't meant to be borrowed forever. It's intended to be planted, nurtured, and grown.

This chapter is about that growth. It is about the moment you stop floating and start moving faster. The moment you realize you are unique, quirky, and imperfect strides are enough.

My First Bold Waddle

I remember the first time I spoke publicly.

- My heart was doing the cha-cha.
- My voice was a little shaky.
- But I stood there anyway.

Why?

- Because someone believed in me.
- Because I stopped worrying about what people thought.
- Because I realized my story wasn't just mine, it was a bridge to someone else's healing.

That was my first bold waddle. Not graceful. Not polished. But intentional. And that made all the difference.

What Is a Bold Waddle?

A bold waddle isn't loud. It isn't flashy. It's a choice.

It's saying:

- "I will post that message, even if only one person reads it."
- "I will dance at the wedding, even if my knees protest."
- "I will share my story, even if my voice trembles."
- "I will start the business, even if I don't have all the answers."

It's a movement with meaning. It's an action with heart. It's courage in motion.

Ducky

Wisdom:

Waddle Forward, Fear Behind

Rubber duckies don't race. They don't compare. They float. They bob. They waddle. And they do it with joy. Your bold steps don't have to look like anyone else's. They just have to be yours.

So waddle forward:

- With intention
- With grace
- With a splash of silliness

Reflection Prompts: Your Bold Waddle

Part 1: The Moment You Moved

What's one time you took a step that scared you—but you did it anyway?

Who helped you believe in yourself?

Part 2: Your Next Waddle

What's one small action you've been putting off because of fear or doubt?

What would it look like to do it with intention—not perfection?

Part 3: Ducky Declaration

“I waddle with intention. I float with faith. I splash with joy.”

“My steps may be small, but they are mine. And that makes them mighty.”

For the Reader Who's Still Waiting...

If you're still floating, still borrowing belief, still wondering if your steps matter—this is your gentle nudge.

- You don't have to leap.
- You don't have to soar.
- You just have to waddle.

One step. One post. One conversation. One dance. One act of courage.

And then another. And another. Until you look back and realize... You've come so far.

***Boldness isn't the absence of fear—it's the decision to move anyway.
Waddle forward. The world needs your rhythm.***

Chapter 36:

The Pond Where You Belong — Finding Your Flock in Every Season

Some flocks form in sunshine. Others gather in storms. But every flock matters—because belonging is a lifeline, not a luxury.

Life’s Changing Waters: When We Need New Flocks

As we paddle through life, we encounter moments that reshape us. These experiences often call for new kinds of support, understanding, and connection:

Life Experience	Flock You Might Seek
Health Challenges	Support groups, wellness communities, compassionate listeners
Grief or loss	Bereavement circles, memory-keepers, gentle-hearted friends
Divorce or separation	Empowerment groups, healing retreats, rediscovery partners
Career transitions	Mentorship networks, entrepreneurial circles, dream chasers
Retirement or empty nest	Hobby clubs, travel communities, legacy builders
Parenting struggles	Parent groups, special needs communities, grace-givers
Mental health journeys	Safe spaces, therapy circles, stigma-free allies
Faith shifts	Spiritual seekers, open-hearted explorers, prayer partners
Identity exploration	Affirming communities, truth-tellers, mirror-holders

Creative rebirth	Artistic collectives, idea incubators, cheerleaders
Aging and reflection	Wisdom circles, storytellers, legacy keepers

How to Find Your Flock

Finding your flock isn't about popularity, it's about resonance. Here are some gentle ways to discover who's meant to paddle beside you:

Listen to your ache:

What kind of support do you crave right now? That's your compass.

Follow your curiosity:

Join a group, attend a workshop, comment on a post. Connection often begins with a slight ripple.

Be brave enough to be seen. Vulnerability is the invitation. When you share your story, your flock can find you.

Notice who lifts you:

Pay attention to who makes you feel lighter, braver, more yourself.

Create what you need:

If the pond doesn't exist yet, build it. Others are waiting for someone to go first.

Ducky Reminder:

Flocks Can Be Temporary or Timeless.

Some flocks stay for a season. Some for a lifetime. Both are sacred. You might outgrow a pond—and that's okay. You might return in one year—and that's beautiful.

Reflection Prompts: Your Flock Map

- What season are you in right now?

- What kind of support or companionship feels most nourishing?

- Who's in your current flock?

- Who helps you float, not just survive?

- Who might need you in their pond?

- How can you be a gentle ripple in someone else's journey?

Your flock may change, but your need for belonging never does. Keep paddling toward the people who hear your squeak and honor your wobble.

Chapter 37:

So You've Been Ducked —A Quacking Good Recap

Congratulations, dear reader. If you've made it this far, you've officially been ducked. Not the prank kind. The soul-sparkling, squeak-affirming, joy-infusing kind.

You've floated through metaphors, waddled through wisdom, and possibly questioned your life choices.

Let's take a moment to celebrate what you've absorbed, adapted, and maybe even quacked out loud. Thoughts

You Might Be Thinking (And We Hope You Are)

- "I deserve mini celebrations. Even if it's just for remembering where I parked."
- "Resilience isn't about being tough—it's about wobbling forward with flair."
- "Borrowed belief is real. And sometimes my ducky believes in me more than I do."
- "I can paddle through grief, joy, and glitter—all in the same week."
- "Legacy isn't a someday thing. It's a right-now ripple."
- "I can sparkle, squeak, and take up space in the pond."
- "Rubber duckies are not just bath toys. They are emotional support icons."
- "I can dance even when life feels like a soggy towel."
- "My flock may change, but my need for belonging never does."
- "Healing can be hilarious. And sometimes healing looks like a duck in a tutu."

Ducky Achievements Unlocked

- You've reflected on your purpose
- You've embraced your wobble
- You've laughed (hopefully) at least once
- You've considered dropping ducks on cruise ships
- You've imagined your inner ducky giving you a pep talk
- You've written, doodled, or at least mentally squeaked

Reader Badge: Certified Ducky Thinker

You now qualify for:

- Spontaneous joy outbreaks
- Unapologetic sparkle
- Deep conversations with shallow bath toys
- The ability to inspire others with a single squeak

Reflection Prompt:

What's Your Favorite Ducky Lesson?

Which chapter made you laugh, cry, or text a friend?

What ducky wisdom are you carrying into your next season?

What would it say if your inner ducky could leave a sticky note on your mirror?

You've been ducked. You've been seen. You've been reminded that joy is not optional, it's essential.

Chapter 38:

Operation Quack back —Living the Ducky Way Out Loud

You’ve read the stories. You’ve squeaked through the metaphors. You’ve earned your Certified Ducky Thinker badge.

Now it’s time to quack back—to the world, to your community, and to your own reflection. This chapter is your mission briefing. Your rubber ducky is not just a symbol—it’s a lifestyle.

What Is Operation Quackback?

It’s the art of living with:

- Joyful defiance (even when life feels like a soggy sponge)
- Purposeful presence (even when the pond is noisy)
- Playful resilience (especially when the current gets rough)

It’s about turning ducky wisdom into ducky action.

Quackback Moves You Can Make Today

Ducky Move	Real-Life Action
Drop a duck, leave a smile	Hide a rubber duck with a kind note in a public place
Celebrate a mini milestone.	Toast yourself for sending that email, making that call, or showing up.
Borrow belief, then lend it.	Tell someone, “I believe in you.”
Waddle through awkwardly with grace	Try something new and laugh through the wobble.
Float with someone in grief.	Send a message that says, “I’m here. No need to paddle alone.”
Squeak your truth	Share your story, even if your voice shakes.

Build a new pond	Start a group, a ritual, or a tradition that brings people together.
Sparkle unapologetically	Wear an outfit. Be the duck.

Reflection Prompt: Your Quackback Plan

1. What ducky lesson do you want to live out loud this week?
-
2. Who in your life could use a little squeaky encouragement?
-
3. What’s one playful ritual you can start to remind yourself of your sparkle?
-

The world doesn’t need more perfection—more people willing to squeak, wobble, and show up with joy.

Chapter 39:

When the Sparkle Fades —Staying True When Joy Feels Distant

You’ve squeaked with joy. You’ve danced through storms. You’ve floated through triumphs. But now... the pond feels still. The glitter has settled. The sparkle? Dimmed.

This chapter is for the quiet moments. The ones that whisper, “Am I still shining?” The ones that ask, “Does this ripple still matter?”

The Dull Days Are Part of the Dance

Even the most radiant ducky has days when the water feels heavy. Joy isn’t a constant—it’s a rhythm. And sometimes, the beat slows so we can listen.

These moments aren’t failures, they’re invitations, to pause, to reflect, and to remember.

Ducky Wisdom: Float First, Sparkle Later

Rubber duckies don’t sink when the bubbles disappear. They float quietly and faithfully, waiting for the next wave.

You don’t have to sparkle to matter. You just have to stay afloat.

Reigniting the Sparkle: A Gentle Guide

Create a “Sparkle Shelf”. Fill it with reminders of joy—photos, affirmations, ducky trinkets, notes from loved ones—and let it be your visual lifeline.

Schedule a Mini Celebration: Even if it’s just “I got out of bed” or “I sent that email.” Progress deserves confetti.

Start a “Bubble Journal”:

- Each entry begins with “Today, I floated because...” It’s a way to honor resilience, not just results.
- Ask for a Sparkle Loan: Reach out to someone who sees your light. Let them remind you and let their belief buoy you.

Move to the Music: Even if it's a slow sway in your kitchen. Movement reconnects you to rhythm—and rhythm rekindles joy.

Reflection Prompts: Sparkle in Stillness

1. What does “sparkle” mean to you today—energy, connection, creativity, peace?
2. Who in your life reflects your sparkle back to you when you forget it?
3. What's one small ritual you can commit to this week to honor your float?

You are not your sparkle. You are your float. And that float is sacred.

Chapter 40:

Waddle Into Wonder —When It's Time to Try Something New

There comes a moment when the familiar feels... too familiar. When the sparkle isn't gone—it's just asking for a new lens. This chapter is a gentle nudge to stretch your wings, shift your view, and say, "Why not now?"

Learn a New Language: Quack in a Different Tongue

Language learning rewires your brain, boosts confidence, and connects you to new cultures.

Start with playful phrases. Imagine your ducky saying "bonjour" or "hola" with flair.

Try apps like Duolingo or Babbel or join a local language club. Bonus: make it a group challenge with your flock!

Mini Prompt: If your ducky could speak another language, what would it say first—and to whom?

Start a Craft Project: Create with Your Hands, Heal with Your Heart.

Whether painting, knitting, scrapbooking, or making ducky-themed bookmarks, crafting is a celebration of presence.

Host a "Craft & Quack" night with friends or family—everyone brings their own project and shares stories.

Let your creations reflect your journey. Imperfect? Beautiful. Messy? Meaningful.

What's one craft you've always wanted to try but never permitted yourself to begin?

Travel Adventures: Float Beyond Familiar Shores

You don't have to go far—sometimes a new town, a quirky roadside attraction, or a themed cruise reignites your spark.

Make it purposeful: visit places that reflect your values, dreams, or heritage.

Reach out to me and I'll share some excellent travel adventure ideas—from heartwarming cruise traditions to hidden gems that spark connection and curiosity. Whether you dream of a solo escape or a group getaway, I've got stories and suggestions to make your next journey unforgettable.

Mini Prompt: Where would your ducky love to travel next—and what would it teach you along the way?

Volunteer: Give Your Sparkle to Someone Else's Pond

Volunteering isn't just service, it's soul work. It reminds you that your ripples matter.

Choose causes that align with your heart: children, animals, travel, healing, storytelling.

Create a "Kindness Calendar" with one small act each week. Invite your readers to join.

Mini Prompt: What's one way you can share your sparkle this month—with no expectation, just love?

Trying something new isn't about being perfect, it's about being present. It's about saying yes to the unknown, and trusting your float will find its rhythm.

Chapter 41:

Duck Your Doubts — 20 Rubber Ducky Quotes to Remind You You’re the Boss of Your Thoughts

Your thoughts are like ripples in the pond—some gentle, some stormy, all yours to shape. This chapter is a collection of ducky-inspired affirmations to help you float above fear, steer through self-doubt, and remember: You’re the only one holding the paddle.

20 Rubber Ducky Quotes to Quack Back at Negative Thoughts

1. “I float because I choose to, not because the pond is calm.”
2. “No one else gets to narrate my story—I’m the duck with the mic.”
3. “Even when the water’s murky, I decide what I see.”
4. “My sparkle isn’t up for debate—it’s mine to protect.”
5. “Thoughts are like bubbles—I can pop the ones that don’t serve me.”
6. “I’m not stuck—I’m just pausing mid-paddle.”
7. “Comparison is a leaky floatie. I choose confidence instead.”
8. “I don’t chase ripples—I create them.”
9. “I’m allowed to rewrite the script in my head—starting now.”
10. “Fear may quack loudly, but I choose which voice gets the spotlight.”
11. “I’m not behind—I’m on my ducky timeline.”
12. “Every thought I choose is a feather in my float.”
13. “I don’t need permission to believe in myself.”
14. “I’m the lifeguard of my mind—no negative thoughts allowed in the deep end.”
15. “I can think of something new. Right now. Right here.”
16. “My mind is my pond—I decide what swims in it.”

17. “I’m not my past paddles—I’m today’s direction.”
18. “I choose grace over guilt, every time.”
19. “I’m not waiting for calm waters—I’m building inner peace.”
20. “I’m the duck. I’m the ripple. I’m the wave. I choose it all.”

Reflection Prompt:

Which quote speaks to you most today—and why? Write it down. Tape it to your mirror. Whisper it to your ducky. Let it guide your next paddle.

Your thoughts are your superpower. And like a rubber ducky in a whirlpool, you can always choose to float with purpose.

Chapter 42:

The Ripple Effect—Living a Life That Floats

You don't have to be the wave to make a difference. You just must float with intention.

Life is full of moments that seem small at the time—choosing kindness over convenience, showing up when it would be easier to stay home, speaking truth when silence feels safer. These moments don't always come with applause. But they matter. They create ripples.

Rubber duckies don't sink because they're designed to stay buoyant, even when the water gets rough. So are you. You were built to rise, not just for yourself, but for those watching quietly from the shore, wondering if they can rise too.

This chapter isn't about grand gestures...

It's about:

- Sending a handwritten note to someone who's grieving, not to fix their pain, but to remind them they're not alone.
- Choosing to forgive someone silently, without fanfare or announcement, just releasing the weight so you can float forward.
- Making your bed every morning, not because anyone sees it, but because it tells your soul, "I'm showing up for my life."
- Smiling at the cashier who looks exhausted, offering a moment of grace in a day that may feel invisible to them.
- Taking a deep breath before responding, choosing calm over reaction, and modeling emotional resilience for those around you.

Each of these is a ripple. Each one says, "I'm here. I care. I choose to float."

A Short Story: The Lunch That Lifted Us

On one of my cruises, I found myself seated at lunch beside a woman whose eyes held more weight than words. As we chatted, she began to share pieces of her story: grief, loss, and a season of life that felt like sinking.

I listened. And then, gently, I told her about the rubber ducky.

I explained that it's not flashy or fierce, but it floats—always, no matter the waves. I told her how I use it as a metaphor for resilience, joy, and the quiet decision to rise even when life feels heavy.

She paused. Then she smiled. “I think I need a rubber ducky,” she said. We laughed. But it wasn't just laughter, it was lightness. A moment of lift. A ripple.

Later that day, I left a little ducky at her cabin door. No note. Just a reminder: You don't sink. You rise.

Three Questions to Reflect On:

What's one quiet decision you've made that shaped your life meaningfully?

Who in your life has created a ripple that reached you—and how did it change you?

If your life were a ripple, what values would you want it to carry outward?

You don't have to be the loudest voice or the most significant wave. Just live your life with heart—and the ripples will reach farther than you know.

Chapter 43:

Time for a Check-Up from the Neck Up — Resetting Your Mindset, Ducky Style

Your sparkle starts in your thoughts. And just like your favorite ducky needs a rinse after a long cruise, your mind needs regular check-ins to stay clear, kind, and buoyant.

This chapter invites you to pause and ask, “What’s floating in my head—and is it helping me paddle forward?”

What Is a “Check-Up from the Neck Up”?

It’s a moment of intentional reflection, a mindset reset, and a gentle nudge to examine your thoughts, beliefs, and inner dialogue.

It’s not about judgment, it’s about awareness. Because you can’t change what you don’t notice, and you can’t sparkle if your thoughts are stuck in the mud.

How Often Should You Check In?

Let’s be clear: Once a year is not enough. You wouldn’t wait 12 months to clean your glasses or fluff your feathers—so don’t wait that long to clear your mind.

Here’s a ducky-inspired rhythm to keep your thoughts fresh:

Daily: The Morning Float

Ask: “What do I want to feel today?”

Choose one empowering thought to guide your day.

Bonus: Pair it with a ducky affirmation like “I float with purpose” or “My ripple matters.” Weekly: The Ripple Review

Reflect on your highs and lows.

What thoughts helped you float? Which ones dragged you down? Celebrate one mindset win—no matter how small.

Monthly: The Pond Scan

Dive deeper: Are your goals aligned with your values?

Are you thinking in ways that support your growth, joy, and connection?

Adjust your inner dialogue like you'd adjust your travel itinerary—with intention and grace.

Quarterly: The Sparkle Strategy Revisit your vision.

Are your thoughts helping you move toward it—or away from it?

Create a “Thought Upgrade” list: beliefs you’re ready to release, and new ones you’re ready to embrace.

1. The Thought Audit: Write down your top 5 recurring thoughts this week. Circle the ones that lift you. Put a star next to the ones that need a rewrite.
2. The “Quack Back” Technique When a negative thought waddles in, respond with a ducky affirmation. Example: Thought: “I’m not doing enough.” Quack Back: “I’m floating forward, one ripple at a time.”
3. The Mirror Moment Look yourself in the eye and say: “I’m the lifeguard of my mind. I choose grace today.”
4. The Ducky Reset Ritual: Take 5 minutes each morning to:

Stretch

Sip something warm

Say one thing you’re proud of

Visualize your ducky floating strong

Set one intention for the day

Reflection Prompts

What thought has been weighing you down lately—and what would your ducky say back?

What's one belief you're ready to release?

What's one new thought you want to practice this week?

Mini Celebration: The “Neck-Up Nugget

Create a weekly ritual where you celebrate one mindset win—big or small. Did you speak kindly to yourself? Did you pause before reacting? Did you float through a tough moment with grace?

That's a nugget worth squeaking about.

Your thoughts are your superpower. And like a rubber ducky in a whirlpool, you can always choose to float with purpose.

Chapter 44:

Ditch the Once-a-Year Resolution — Embrace the Daily Ripple Instead

We've all done it. January rolls in, and we declare: "This is the year I'll sparkle brighter, paddle faster, float stronger."

But by February? The glitter fades. The goals get foggy. The ducky feels deflated.

Why? Because one big resolution can't carry you through 365 unpredictable days. But one daily intention? That's a ripple you can ride.

Why Daily Beats Yearly (Every Time)

Yearly resolutions rely on motivation. Daily actions build momentum. Yearly goals feel overwhelming. Daily goals feel doable.

Yearly plans wait for perfect timing. Daily choices honor progress over perfection. Yearly resolutions break easily. Daily ripples bend, bounce, and build resilience.

Imagine this: If you made one small, intentional choice each day— That's 365 chances to succeed, not just one.

The Power of Daily Ducky Decisions

- Instead of saying, "This year I'll be more grateful," Say: "Today, I'll write one thing I'm thankful for."
- Instead of "I'll get healthy," Say: "Today, I'll drink water before coffee."
- Instead of "I'll grow my business," Say: "Today, I'll reach out to one person with purpose."
- Instead of "I'll be more present," Say: "Today, I'll put my phone down during dinner."
- These are not resolutions. They're ripples. And ripples change everything.

Daily Ripple Tracker

Create a simple system to celebrate your daily wins:

Day	Ripple Action	Mood Check	Mini Celebrations
Monday	Send a kind message		Danced to one song
Tuesday	Drank 8 glasses of water		Took a sunset photo
Wednesday	Wrote in the journal		Lit a candle and paused
Thursday	Shared a ducky quote		Called a friend
Friday	Took a walk		Bought a sticker for my planner

You don’t need perfection. You need presence. And a little sparkle in your step.

Reflection Prompts

What’s one small thing you can do today that aligns with your values?

What daily ripple would make you proud if you repeated it for a week?

What’s one way you can celebrate your daily success—no matter how tiny?

One day of sparkling is lovely. But 365 ripples of intention? That’s legacy.

Chapter 45 Continued:

Duck, Decide, and Dive In —The Ripple of Choice

There's a moment in every duck's day when the current shifts. Maybe the lily pad you loved floats away. Maybe the cozy corner of the pond gets too crowded. Maybe a door closes with a loud quack! And you're left blinking at the silence.

But here's the ducky truth: Every ending is a beginning in disguise. And every beginning starts with a choice.

When One Pond Closes, Another Opens

You might not see it right away. You might paddle in circles for a bit. But eventually, you'll spot it: A new pond. A new path. A new possibility.

It might look different from what you imagined. It might be deeper, wider, or filled with new ducklings. But it's there waiting for you to choose it.

The Courage to Choose

Making a decision isn't always easy. Sometimes it feels like standing at the edge of the dock, wondering if the water's too cold or the splash too loud.

But here's the secret: The splash is where the magic happens.

- Choosing to leave a pond that no longer fits? Brave.
- Choosing to speak up when you've been quiet? Bold.
- Choosing to believe in your ripple again? Transformational.

Ducky Decisions That Change Everything

Let's celebrate the choices that open doors:

Choice	Ripple Effect
Saying "yes" to a new adventure	Open your wings to growth.
Saying "no" to what drains you	Protect your sparkle
Asking for help	Build bridges and flocks

Letting go of perfection	Invites joy and authenticity
--------------------------	------------------------------

Choosing to try again proves your resilience.

Reflection Prompts: Paddle with Purpose

1. What's one door that recently closed—and what might be opening because of it?
2. What decision have you been avoiding that could lead to a better pond?
3. What would your ducky self say if they were cheering you on from the sidelines?

Mini Celebration: The “Decision Dip”

Each time you make a brave choice, imagine your ducky doing a celebratory dive: Splashing into new waters, leaving behind the old lily pad, creating ripples that reach others.

You don't need to have it all figured out. You just need to choose—one paddle, one word, one step.

When the pond shifts, don't panic—pivot. Every closed door is a ducky detour to something better. Choose to waddle forward with courage, and the ripples will follow.

Chapter 46:

The Superpower of Shero/Hero Ducky

If you asked me which rubber ducky I relate to most, I wouldn't hesitate to say Shero Ducky, with its cape fluttering in the breeze, eyes sparkling with purpose, and heart beating to the rhythm of service, sass, and celebration.

She's not the loudest in the flock. She doesn't fly or shoot lasers. But she does something far more powerful—she shows up every single day.

Whether comforting a child, leading a dance party, or whispering encouragement to someone who's forgotten their worth, Shero Ducky waddles into the moment with grace, grit, and glitter.

Her Origin Story

Shero Ducky was born from a puddle of tears and a splash of laughter. She emerged when I realized that strength isn't about never falling but rising with style. Her cape? It is sewn from stories of resilience. Her boots? They are made for walking through grief, joy, and everything in between.

She doesn't need a spotlight. She creates one wherever she goes.

Her Powers

Empathy Vision: She sees hearts, not just faces.

Joy Beam: Her smile can melt the frostiest mood.

Waddle of Wisdom: She moves slowly, intentionally, reminding others to pause and reflect.

Celebration Spark: She throws mini parties for progress, not perfection.

And her most excellent power is belief lending. When someone's confidence is low, she lends them hers—no questions asked.

Reflection Prompt

If you were a superhero rubber ducky, what would your powers be?

What cape would you wear?

What message would you leave behind for someone who needs it?

Write it. Name it. Claim it.

Mini Celebration

Today, celebrate your inner Shero/Hero. Whether you danced through pain, encouraged a friend, or simply chose kindness when it wasn't easy, you showed up. That's heroic.

Light a candle. Wear something bold. Leave a note for someone. Let Shero Ducky guide your waddle.

Chapter 47:

What the Duck Knows

Rubber ducks are symbols of joy, resilience, and the gentle reminder to float through life's waves with a little more lightness.

But behind every rubber duck is a real duck. And real ducks? They're master teachers.

What a Rubber Duck Represents

- **Playfulness:** A rubber duck invites smiles. It's a reminder that joy doesn't need permission.
- **Comfort:** It brings warmth and familiarity whether tucked into a child's hand or hidden on a cruise ship.
- **Connection:** It's a bridge—between strangers, between generations, between hearts.
- **Resilience:** It floats. No matter how rough the water is, it stays upright.

Rubber ducks are the ambassadors of delight. But real ducks? They're the professors of purpose.

Lessons from the Real Duck

1. Glide Above, Paddle Below

Ducks appear calm on the surface, but beneath the water, they're paddling with determination. Lesson: Grace doesn't mean ease. You can move through life with poise even when the work is hard.

2. Stick Together, Fly Far

Ducks migrate in formation, supporting each other. Lesson: Community matters. We go further when we lift each other.

3. Quack Your Truth—Loud or Soft

Some ducks quack boldly, announcing their presence with gusto. Others are quieter, more reserved.

Lesson: There's no one right way to be heard. Whether your voice is loud or gentle, it still matters.

4. Follow the Line—or Straggle with Purpose

Ducks often waddle in neat little lines, but there are always a few stragglers, curious, distracted, or simply taking their time.

Lesson: You don't have to be ideally in step to belong. Sometimes the ones who fall behind are the ones who notice the beauty others miss.

5. Float, Don't Flail

When ducks rest, they float. They trust the water to hold them.

Lesson: Surrender isn't weakness. Sometimes, floating is the bravest thing you can do.

6. Nest with Intention

Ducks build safe, soft places to nurture life.

Lesson: Create spaces—physical or emotional—where growth can happen.

7. Embrace Your Duckness

Some ducks are leaders. Some are loyal followers. Some are wanderers who take the scenic route.

Lesson: There's wisdom in every role. Your presence matters whether you're guiding the flock or waddling at your own pace.

Reflection Prompt

Think of a time when you felt like a rubber duck—light, joyful, or even silly.

Now think of a time when you were the real duck—quietly paddling, showing up, staying afloat. Were you the loud quacker or the gentle hum? The leader in line or the thoughtful straggler? Write it down. Honor both.

Mini Celebration

Today, celebrate your dual duskiess. Float when you need rest. Paddle when you feel purpose. Quack how you quack. Waddle how you waddle. And always—always—lead with love.

Not every duck quacks loudly. Some simply ripple the water with quiet presence—and that, too, is leadership.

Chapter 48:

The Molt Moment—When Ducks Let Go to Grow

We've floated, waddled, quacked, and nested. But there's one quiet transformation ducks go through that we haven't yet honored: molting.

Molting is when ducks shed their old feathers to make way for new ones. It's not flashy. It's not fast. And during this time, ducks can't fly. They're grounded, vulnerable, and in transition.

Sound familiar?

What Molting Teaches Us

1. Growth Requires Shedding

Ducks don't cling to worn-out feathers. They release what no longer serves them—even if it leaves them temporarily exposed.

Lesson: Letting go is part of becoming. Whether it's outdated beliefs, old roles, or worn-out routines, release makes room for renewal.

2. Grounded Doesn't Mean Stuck

During molting, ducks stay close to water. They rest. They wait. They trust the process.

Lesson: You don't have to soar to be progressing. Sometimes, staying grounded is exactly what you need.

3. Vulnerability is a Phase, Not a Flaw

Molting ducks are quiet, less mobile, and more dependent on their environment. But they're not broken—they're rebuilding.

Lesson: Vulnerability is not weakness. It's a sacred space where healing and transformation begin.

4. New Feathers, Same Duck

After molting, ducks emerge with fresh plumage. Stronger. Sleeker. Ready to fly again. Lesson: You're still you—just renewed. The essence remains, even as the outer layers change.

Everyday Molting Moments

The Empty Nester: When the kids are grown and gone, and the house feels too quiet. You're not losing your role—you're molting into a new one.

The Career Shift: When someone else gets the promotion, or you're stepping away from a job that once defined you. You're not falling behind—you're shedding what no longer fits.

The Friendship Fade: When a close connection drifts, and you feel left out. You're not forgotten—you're making space for new relationships.

The Aging Transition: When your role in the room changes, and younger voices lead. You're not obsolete—you're evolving into a wise guide.

The Grief Pause: When someone you love is gone, and the world feels paused, you're not broken—you're molting through memory and meaning.

Reflection Prompt

Which moment are you in right now?

Are you shedding a role, a relationship, a rhythm?

What new feathers might be forming—quietly, patiently, beneath the surface? Write it down. Bless the transition. You're not behind. You're becoming.

Mini Celebration

Today, honor your molt moment. You don't have to fly. You don't have to lead. You just have to trust that transformation is happening—even if no one else sees it yet.

*Molting isn't pretty, but it's powerful. Sometimes the quietest seasons
shape the strongest wings.*

Chapter 49:

The Power of Preening—Tending Your Feathers, Tending Your Soul

Before ducks take flight, they preen.

To preen means to groom and arrange feathers carefully using beaks to smooth and clean. It's a daily ritual of maintenance, protection, and preparation. For ducks, it's essential. For us, it's a metaphor for tending to our inner world.

Preening isn't about vanity. It's about readiness. It's about honoring your design and protecting your peace.

What Preening Teaches Us

1. Self-Care Isn't Optional

Ducks don't skip preening because they're busy. They make time—because their well-being depends on it.

Lesson: Your care matters. Whether it's a morning stretch, a quiet prayer, or a moment to breathe, tending to yourself is not selfish, it's sacred.

2. Boundaries Are Built Feather by Feather

Preening strengthens a duck's waterproof barrier. It keeps the cold and wet from seeping in.

Lesson: Every act of self-respect—saying no, resting, protecting your peace—is a feather in your boundary. Build it with intention.

3. Preparation is Quiet but Powerful

Before ducks take flight, they preen. They don't rush. They ready themselves.

Lesson: You don't have to hustle to be productive. Sometimes the most powerful preparation is quiet, deliberate, and unseen.

4. Alignment Matters

Ducks align their feathers so they can move with ease. Misaligned feathers slow them down.

Lesson: When your values, actions, and energy are aligned, life flows more freely. Take time to realign when things feel off.

Everyday Preening Moments

The Morning Ritual: Journaling, devotion, stretching—these are your preening moments. They set your tone.

The Quiet No: Saying no to something that drains you is a form of preening. You're waterproofing your spirit.

The Pause Before the Leap: Before a big decision, you reflect, you prepare, you breathe. That's preening. The Realignment: When your schedule, relationships, or goals feel off, you pause to adjust. That's preening, too.

Reflection Prompt

What does preening look like in your life?

Is it a ritual, a boundary, a moment of stillness?

What feathers need smoothing today?

Write it down. Honor the act. You're not wasting time—you're preparing to soar. Mini Celebration!

Today, celebrate your preening. Tend to your feathers. Align your energy. Protect your peace. And know that every quiet act of care prepares you for your next flight.

Preening isn't about perfection—it's about preparation. When you tend to your feathers, you tend to your future.

Chapter 50:

The Ripple Effect—How One Waddle Can Change the Pond

Ducks don't make waves by trying. They simply move. One gentle paddle, one curious waddle, and the water responds.

You may not see the full impact of your actions. But they matter.

Every kind word. Every brave choice. Every moment you show up with love—it ripples. And those ripples? They reach shores you'll never stand on.

What the Ripple Effect Teaches Us

1. Small Doesn't Mean Insignificant

A single duck crossing the pond creates movement. You don't need a megaphone to make a difference.

Lesson: Your smallest acts—smiles, notes, check-ins—can shift someone's entire day.

2. You're Always Creating Impact

Even when you feel invisible, your energy leaves a mark.

Lesson: You don't have to be seen to be felt. Your presence matters more than your spotlight.

3. Ripples Multiply

One ripple touches another, and another. Kindness spreads. Courage inspires.

Lesson: You may never know how far your influence travels—but trust that it does.

4. Stillness Has Power Too Even when you pause, your presence creates space.

Lesson: You don't have to be in motion to create change. Sometimes, your calm is the ripple. Everyday Ripple Moments

You encourage someone who's doubting themselves—and they go on to encourage five more. You share your story—and someone finds the courage to share theirs.

You forgive quietly—and someone watching learns grace. You show up with joy—and it softens the room.

You may never see the full circle. But you started it.

Reflection Prompt

Think of a moment when someone's small act changed your day.

Now think of a moment when you did that for someone else—maybe without even realizing it.

Write it down. Honor the ripple. You are a wave-maker.

Mini Celebration

Today, celebrate your ripple. You don't need applause. You don't need proof. You just need to trust that your love, your light, your ducky wisdom—is moving through the pond, one gentle wave at a time.

Your ripple may begin with a whisper, a waddle, or a quiet act of kindness—but its reach is limitless. You move the pond just by being you.

Chapter 51:

The Sweetness of the Last Page—When Endings Feel Like Hugs

You can feel it. The end is near. Not in a dramatic, tearful way—but in that soft, sunset kind of way.

Like the last bite of dessert. Like the final song of a dance party. Like the moment you zip up your suitcase after a soul-filling visit.

Endings aren't just about letting go. They're about holding on to the joy, the growth, the memories. And sometimes, the wisest words come from the littlest voices.

A Grandson's Wisdom

One day, after a wonderful visit filled with laughter, hugs, and ducky giggles, my grandson noticed his sister looking sad as they packed up to leave.

He turned to her and said,

“Don't be sorry, we have to leave. Be happy we got to come.” That's it. That's the whole philosophy.

Endings aren't sad—they're proof that something beautiful happened.

What Ducks Teach Us About Goodbyes

Ducks don't cling to the pond. They take flight when it's time.

They trust the rhythm of seasons, the pull of migration, the call of new skies.

Lesson: You don't have to fear the end. You just must honor the journey.

Everyday Endings That Hold Joy

The last day of vacation: You're not losing the trip—you're carrying it with you.

The end of a chapter in life: You're not closing the book—you're turning the page.

The goodbye hug: You're not saying farewell, you're sealing the memory.

The final bow after a performance: Whether it's a dance recital or a speech, that last moment celebrates courage and creativity.

The last page of a journal: You're not closing a book—you're capturing a season of your soul.

At the end of a group project or event, you're not saying goodbye to the team—you're honoring what you built together.

The last bite of a shared meal: You're not finishing dinner—you're sealing a memory of connection and comfort.

The end of a season: Whether it's summer's last sunset or winter's final frost, you're not losing time—you're making space for what's next.

Reflection Prompt

Think of something that's ending soon—a season, a project, a visit, a role. Instead of mourning it, celebrate it.

Ask yourself: What did I gain? What will I carry forward? What joy can I tuck into my heart? Write it down. Let it be your souvenir.

Mini Celebration

Today, celebrate the sweetness of the last page. Smile at the sunset. Waddle into the next chapter with gratitude. And remember—every ending is proof that something meaningful happened.

Don't be sorry it's ending. Be grateful it happened. That's how you carry joy into what comes next. (inspired by my grandson's wisdom)

Chapter 52:

The Loop of Becoming—Why the End Is Just the Beginning

You've reached Chapter 52. Fifty-two weeks of ducky wisdom, reflection prompts, and soul-sparking lessons. You've floated, waddled, molted, preened, and paddled through joy, grief, growth, and grace.

But this isn't the end. It's a turning point.

Now, the invitation is simple:

Start again.

Each week, revisit one chapter. Let it speak to you anew. Let it meet you where you are—not where you were.

Because here's the beautiful truth:

You will be different.

Your answers will shift. Your thoughts will deepen. Your reflections will surprise you.

Why Your Responses Will Change

You've Grown: Life has added new layer experiences, relationships, challenges. What once felt distant may now feel personal.

You've Shed and Rebuilt: Like molting, you've let go of old feathers. You've gained new ones. You read with fresh eyes.

You've Loved and Lost: Grief reshapes us, and so does joy. A chapter about floating might now feel like a lifeline.

You've Found New Roles: Maybe you're now the mentor, the straggler, the quiet quacker. Your perspective evolves.

You've Remembered Your Strength: What once felt like a whisper now feels like a roar. You see your resilience more clearly.

The Power of Re-Reading

Re-reading isn't repetition, it's revelation. It's like walking the same path with new shoes, new weather, and a new heart. Each chapter becomes a mirror, reflecting not just the words—but who you are now.

Reflection Prompt

Choose one chapter to revisit this week. Read it slowly. Ask yourself: What feels different? What feels familiar? What feels like a message I needed today?

Write it down. Let it be your compass.

Mini Celebration

Today, celebrate your loop of becoming. You didn't just finish a book. You began a rhythm. A weekly ritual. A gentle unfolding. And every time you return, you'll find a new version of yourself waiting in the pages.

The end of the chapter isn't the end of the story. It's the beginning of a deeper conversation—with yourself.

Epilogue: The Ripple Effect

I didn't write this book to tell you I survived.

I wrote it to show you how we float:

Through impact

Through grief

Through the unexpected waves that crash into our lives without warning.

Rubber duckies don't sink—and neither do we. Not because we're invincible, but because we're intentional.

We choose buoyancy. We choose joy.

We choose to turn trauma into testimony, pain into purpose, and setbacks into sacred pauses.

Every chapter, every metaphor, every moment shared here is a ripple—one I hope reaches you, reminds you, and maybe even lifts you.

*So, have you ever said, **"I feel like I've been hit by a truck, I have."***

Not just figuratively. I literally was.

And I've felt the kind of heartbreak that no parent should ever have to feel. The loss of a child isn't something you recover from.

It's something you carry.

Like a wave that never fully recedes.

Like a silence that echoes louder than sound.

But even in that grief, I found a reason to float, to honor, to remember, to ripple outward with love.

I could let PTSD define me, or I could redefine it.

So, I did.

PTSD became Perfect Time Stay Determined. because I am still here, still breathing, still floating— and every challenging moment I choose to stay

determined, to rise, to ripple,(and maybe quack so to speak)because even when life hits hard, we don't sink.

Rubber duckies don't sink.

And neither will you.

About the Author



Ilene Meckley

In *Rubber Duckies Don't Sink*, Ilene Meckley invites readers to rediscover their buoyancy. With stories that sparkle and insights that stick, she offers a fresh perspective on overcoming hesitation, embracing growth, and celebrating progress. Whether you're navigating a tough season or simply ready for a new chapter, this book will lift your spirits and remind you: you were made to rise.

Ilene Meckley is a keynote speaker and author whose life's work celebrates resilience, possibility, and connection. With decades of experience empowering others through coaching, outreach, and entrepreneurship, Ilene blends heartfelt storytelling with actionable encouragement. Her legacy includes a celebrated career where she inspired thousands through her leadership and warmth.

Now leading a travel and marketing business, Ilene invites others to explore new horizons, literally and metaphorically. *Rubber Duckies Don't Sink* uses playful metaphors and reflective insight to help readers overcome hesitation and embrace growth.

Ilene's outreach style is methodical, joyful, and deeply personal. Whether she's crafting motivational blog posts, mentoring new partners, or celebrating her 113th cruise, she leads with clarity, celebration, and care.

Her mission is simple: to help others become goal-getters, not just goal-setters.

Rubber Duckies Don't Sink

Rubber Duckies Don't Sink is a buoyant invitation to rise. With sparkling stories and practical wisdom, Ilene Meckley helps readers overcome hesitation, embrace growth, and celebrate progress—no matter the season.



Ilene Meckley is a keynote speaker, author, and entrepreneurial coach known for her joyful, actionable outreach. A lifelong motivator and travel business leader, she blends heartfelt storytelling with playful metaphors to inspire resilience and possibility. Whether mentoring partners or celebrating her 113th cruise, Ilene leads with clarity, care, and celebration.

Ilene Meckley

