

# Victory Stretches

Top Ten Tips for redefining your comfort zone & getting to a better place in life!

By Annmarie Kelly

**What is a victory stretch?** It's when you stretch out of your comfort zone so you can do something new or different, like achieve a goal, make a change, overcome a fear, start or end a relationship, etc.

Your comfort zone is a set of mental boundaries made up of familiar routine. It's like a cozy bedroom or family room where everything is familiar and where you feel safe and secure. In your comfort zone, you aren't challenged with anything that you can't handle. You've developed a comfort zone in your job, with your body, in relationships, and all parts of your life. Comfort zones serve an emotional purpose in your life; they are a form of self-protection.

Yet, just like that cozy bedroom eventually needs to be updated, repainted or rearranged, your comfort zone eventually needs to be updated and expanded. But, just like you might not want to do the work of changing a room in your house, moving out of your comfort zone is seldom desirable or attractive.

Victory Stretches are the work you do to get out of that cozy space in your mind. Victory Stretches are how you get to the better places of your life.

*Victory Stretches are what you do to become the greater, fuller, richer expression of the wonderful person you are.*

## Victory Stretch #1

# Daydream a BIG Dream

The great philosopher Disraeli once said, "Life is too short to be little." Yet "little" is what most women are encouraged to be. Stretching into their fullest, biggest, greatest selves is given lip service, but little more.

Wonder if it's true? Look at the ads and the pictures that accompany articles in magazines, even most women's magazines. Notice how women are dressed or posed like sex machines or like a big version of little girls. Look at marketing that includes men and women and notice how a man is positioned looking forward, standing firm, facing the camera. Then notice how the woman is positioned sideways (and often hanging from his broad shoulders).

Once you notice, how are you going to say “enough” to society asking you to take up as little space as possible?

**First stretch:** stop playing yourself small. In the classic book, *The Magic of Thinking Big*, author David Schwartz tells you, Think Big and you’ll live big. You’ll live big in happiness. You’ll live big in accomplishment. Big in income. Big in friends. Big in respect...the size of your success is determined by the size of your belief.”

Wonder if it works? Ask Oprah. Or Beyonce, Angela Merkel, Sheryl Sandberg, Condoleezza Rice and the many, many women who had the nerve (and the courage) to think themselves big.

*You can decide to stop playing your life “under the wire” so nobody will notice if you make a mistake. You can choose instead to live out loud and in living color! Yes, it’s an emotional stretch, but what a victory!*

## Victory Stretch #2

# Make your goals reflect your dreams

Are you multi-faceted skills yet so used to multi-tasking, that you sometimes let your best qualities get in your way? If you’re like most women, probably, so join the crowd.

Here’s how to fix the problem:

The first thing is to understand that you can’t live your best life if you don’t have goals. Or, even worse, if you have goals that conflict with your dreams. For example, your big dream is to live in and be part of an artistic area like Asheville NC or Sedona Arizona. Why haven’t you done it yet? Oh, because you have to stay at the job you have because you need the money. OK, that’s understandable.

BUT, while you are doing that money job, are you also making a serious goal and creating a plan to get to that artistic community? Exactly when do you want to be there? Sure, it might be 5-10-15 years down the road, but who cares. Set the date!

If your dream is to move, or start a business, or be an artist, make it your goal. Write your goal

in a clear, positive, easy-to-focus-on way.

Here are a couple examples:

- I sell my house and move to Sedonna by {date}, and it turns out to be the best thing I ever did.
- By this time next year, my business gets sold and I begin a my new career {describe in detail}.
- I go back to school starting this summer and get my nursing degree by {date}

## Victory Stretch #3 Plans

A goal without plans is a just a wish. A goal with a plan is something you can achieve.

Can you imagine picking a vacation destination and, start the first day of your vacation without a way to get there? You'd use a couple days just making reservations, planning the route, packing, etc. What a waste of vacation days! You wouldn't do that, would you?

Or what about inviting your family over for a holiday dinner and, when the day comes, the only food is what you already have in the house? You wouldn't do that to them. If you invite family or friends, you decide what you want to serve, when to buy the food, where to seat your guests and much more.

When you have a goal and don't make a detailed plan for accomplish it, it's the same thing as inviting people and not doing anything to get ready.

Plan out your goal the same way you would plan a vacation or dinner. With your goal as the end result, here's a ways to make your plan: Work backwards. Imagine you are already at your goal.

How did you get there?

What steps did you take?

Who helped you?

What do you have now that you didn't have at the beginning (e.g., financing, education, skills, mentors, customers).

Those questions are just the beginning. Once you get started, if you're "in" the end result, you'll think of more questions. Write them down and ask others for suggestions for things you might have missed.

If you really want your wishes to become realities, you must set a goal. Then, having a detailed plan will tell you what to do next, and each "next" will take you one step closer to your goal.

## Victory Stretch #4 Baby Steps

Giant leaps make for good shows but they can be uncomfortable, physically and emotionally. Conversely, "baby steps" are small, doable tasks that are hardly noticeable to others. Baby steps aren't as impressive as giant leaps, but chances are, you will take the baby steps. Conversely, a giant leap takes so much mental emotional preparation that you can easily be talked out of it – by yourself and others.

A baby step could be as easy as getting information online or as simple as making a phone call to a company to find out who the head of a department is.

Whatever your next step in your plan is, break it into as many smaller steps as possible. Sometimes it helps to get a trusted colleague or a mentor help you break it down.

The smaller the step, the more likely it is that you will take it. The smaller the step, the less likely you will talk yourself out of it.

Yet, with each baby step you take, you're strengthening your victory muscles and getting ready for more challenging steps. You're building confidence. You're setting yourself up for success.

Yes, baby steps might take you a little bit longer but what would you rather: a slightly longer process with a successful outcome, or a giant leap that you never had the nerve to take.

*Baby steps can make the difference  
between success and disappointment.  
Which one will you choose?*

# Victory Stretch #5

## Pinpoint Your Challenges

I know – I know. You want to be positive and focus on your strengths. But ignoring your weak spots is one fast way to sabotage your efforts.

To avoid that, here's what to do:

- 1 - Think about what you do well. Make a list.
- 2 - Now think about what you don't do well.

Are you terrible at details?

Do you have trouble standing up for yourself?

Are you uncomfortable telling others about your accomplishments?

Do you need more education?

Are you short on money?

- 3 - Make another list and study it. How can you those challenges?

Can someone help you with the detail work?

Is there a night school course in assertiveness training – and can your friends practice with you?

Is there a class or a mentor who can teach you what you don't know?

Facing and eliminating or mitigating the challenges that you already know can easily get in your way will free you up to (1) focus on what you do best and (2) enable you to have the energy to handle the unknown challenges that will come up along the way.

Think of it this way: When there's a pile of stuff mucking up your victory path, pretending it doesn't exist will only make it stink more with each passing day. You have to find a way to clean it up, clear the path and keep moving forward.

If victory, and its resulting success, was easy, more people would be doing it – and they aren't. Don't be like them. Instead, embrace the victory process.

*Victory is about stretching out of your comfort zones.  
It isn't easy, but once out, you never go back.*

## Victory Stretch #6 WII-FM

Why do you want to stretch out of your comfort zone? It's a lot of effort. What will you get out of it?

Write down every good thing that will result from that victory stretch. Here are some examples:

I am glad I can take care of myself/myself and my family.

I can stop feeling like I'm less than others.

Doing what I love brings me joy.

I always wanted to do this, and now I am, so I feel fulfilled.

Nothing's going to stop me now!

If I can do this, I can do anything.

Knowing the WII-FM (what's in it for me) is as important as knowing your challenges. There will be days when you'll feel like giving up, when it will be easier to quit than to keep going or face your fears or anything else.

That's when you take out the WII-FM list and read it. The list will remind you of the "MORE" that you want, the desired "BETTER" that got you started at the beginning...and that, if you stop now, you'll never get.

So start the list with at least five WII-FMs. Then, each time you think of something else, add it to the list. The longer you make the list, the stronger your resolve will be to stick.

*Write down all the "good stuff" and **keep writing!***

## Victory Stretch #7 Ask Powerful Questions

Did you ever think that you cheated yourself out of great conversations or important information because you focused on the wrong things? Bet you have – bet you realized it later while replaying the conversation in your head. "Why did I say that?" or "why didn't I ask about that?" That's when you realize that you cheated yourself by not asking powerful questions.

If you're like most people, giving answers and making statements is part of how you interact with others. It's probably what you think about most when getting ready for a meeting or social event. Specifically, what you're going to say to the people you'll see. Sometimes you do it because you want to seem interesting to other people. Other times it's because you want them to think you're smart or good at what you do.

If you want better outcomes or make stronger connections, try focusing on asking powerful questions.

**What's a powerful question?** It seems a little intimidating, doesn't it. Well, think of some of the more common and very powerful questions that can change lives:

What do I want to do with the rest of my life?  
Will you marry me?  
Do you want this job?  
Should I move?

They aren't very intelligently worded, just common questions. However, the answers to these are crucial but wouldn't even come up if there was a question asked first. That's what makes them powerful.

Questioning Crusader Dorothy Leeds says that "if you increase and improve your questions by just 10%, you increase and improve your productivity by over 20%." She also says that instead of thinking about what you should say, she encourages you to think, "what should I ask" and then listen for the inside answer...and use it. One of Dorothy's favorite questions, and a perfect Victorious Woman question, is "What would an extraordinary person do in this situation?"

Here are some other examples of powerful questions that you could practice asking today:

What will happen to me if I stay in this job?  
What will happen to me if I stay in the relationship?  
What will happen to me if I don't change this behavior?  
What can I say to change his/her mind?  
What do you mean by that?  
I don't think I understand what you mean. Can you clarify what you just said?  
How did you come to that conclusion?  
Can you give me a specific example?



What sources did you use to develop that topic?  
What ideas influenced your choices/your opinions?  
Did I answer your question?  
Outline for me the steps I need to take.

*Write these questions down and keep them with you. Practice asking two of these questions every day for 30 days. Notice and keep track of what happens personally and professionally!*

## Victory Stretch #8 Take Risks

There's an old adage: If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you already got. It sounds good and makes sense; that's what makes any adage both important and memorable. But while the adage is easy to talk about, it involves taking risks...and that can be risky.

Why risky? By definition, taking a risk means that you could be facing danger, failure or loss. Risk usually involves stepping into unknown situations, challenging your personal status quo, losing something that you value (personal comfort, security of job, finances, relationships), and more. But without risk, your changes are limited to what life throws at you.

The most common risks include asking for a date, choosing a college, taking a new job, getting married, buying a house, leaving one job for another, and getting a divorce. You can probably think of a dozen more "everyday" risks...including crossing the street and getting on an airplane.

You take risk everyday but sometimes the risks are more out of your comfort zone and feel a little scarier. Sometimes, because of the scope of the risk, you say 'no' to it and toss it aside without consideration. And, sometimes when you do that, you lose big. Hindsight is always 20-20.

If you want to make the best decisions, and have fewer regrets, the most logical thing is to learn how to take calculated risks. Once you calculate the "price" of a risk, you can make a better decision.

Here's a three-step guide for how to become a calculated risk-taker:

- 1. Think it through.** Think of all the pros and cons. Will the pros make you happier, better, more prosperous, healthier? What will you do if any of the cons happen? Take the pros and cons out to 5 or 10 years in the future. For example:
  - “What happens if I take this job and I don't like the travel?”
  - “If I continue this relationship, how will I feel about those jealous feelings down the road...will I feel smothered?”
- 2. Set Goals.** Based on the pros and cons as well as you and the people involved, are these doable goals or pie in the sky? Use a real estate investment as an example. You see a house in a so-so part of town but there is a lot of positive activity going on there.
  - Your Goal: To make a 20% profit in seven years. To calculate your risks, ask:
  - How much will it cost to move into this house?
  - Do I need to fix it up? How much will that cost?
  - Based on the current and past market (not a “maybe” prediction), how much will this property increase in value by the time I want to sell it?
- 3. Analyze:** Look at the numbers. Go back to Step#1 and ask the questions. Is it still look like a good investment?
- 4. Take responsibility.** Nobody is in charge of your life but you. Whatever decision you make, are you willing to take full responsibility for it – no matter how it turns out? And, if it doesn't work out, will you want to blame, be angry at or feel resentful of someone else

Not every risk is going to work out; life happens. However, if you take calculated risks, you have a better than 50-50 shot that most of them will. If you take risks, life is going to give you ups and downs. If you never take a risk, life is going to give you ups and downs just the same.

What would you prefer – the risk that life throws your way and you have to deal with whether you like it or not, or the risk that you figure out and work through most of the bumps in advance with the idea attitude that you have a good shot at winning?

*Victory Stretches are a bit easy when you assess effectively and choose calculated risks.*

# Victory Stretch #9 Get Help

While most women like to think they can do it all without asking for help, it just isn't the case for any of us. Whether it's moral support, education, mentoring or literal, physical help, you need to get help.

Here's how:

1. **LIST** what you need help with
2. **FIND** at least 5-10 people you think can help you in those areas.
3. **TALK** to each person. Have a respectful conversation about where you are, what you're doing and what you need.
4. **ASK** for their help. This is often the most difficult part of the process. Women often hate asking, often for fear the request will be turned down. When you ask, be specific about what you need and for how long you need it. If you can make the arrangement something short-term, or at least give an end-date, that will make it easier for the other person to accept.
5. **DON'T** be discouraged if someone says 'no' because 'no' a good answer. It's better to know right now if someone can't or isn't willing to help you. Then you can quickly find someone else.
6. **HELP THEM.** If the person says 'yes' to you, then find out how you can help them. Nobody drives on a one-way street for long. If all you want is someone's help without a willingness to return the favor, then you are looking for a paid employee. Get one of those – it's better to pay than to be known as a user or taker.

Getting help, whatever kind it is, will help you get where you want to go faster and more easily. If you can find someone who will go with you on a two-way street (give and take), it will work for everyone. You get what you need. The other person(s) feel respected for what they are doing. It's a win-win!

# Victory Stretch #10

## Progress Not Perfection

The day after the annual Victorious Woman Girlfriend Gala, I usually debrief with myself, then with my spouse. A week or so later, I debrief with my committee.

Each year The Girlfriend Gala gets better. I'll admit that I have to shun the urge to look at what went wrong...and something always does. After eight years, I've learned to focus on what went right, on the progress not the perfection of this annual event. It's like this:

Year 1: Called some colleagues for a last minute pot luck at my house

Year 2-3-4: Pot luck at my house with an evite

Year 5: Piggybacked on someone else's fundraiser – they had the fund part and I did the party part. No committee. Talked an opera singer into coming from New York to receive a Victorious Woman award (she was a big hit!).

Year 6: All Victorious Woman with the first Victorious Woman-chosen beneficiary being a homeless shelter. No sponsors, one committee person. Raffle and Silent Auction Items were OK. Bigger than before, included a comedian and The Prosperity Sisters spoke. It was a lot of fun, pretty stressful, a good job.

Year 7: Two sponsors, one committee person with several "last minute" helpers. We got better at asking for donations so there were more and better raffle and auction items. My comedian colleague performed again; another colleague came from another state to give the keynote. People came back for a 2nd time, some for the 3rd time.

Year 8: Three sponsors, 4 committee members, fabulous swag bags, raffle and auction items. Last year's comedian sponsored this year's comedian. Girlfriends bought whole tables so they could sit together. Local action news van took film and a local newspaper covered the event. Perfection? Not quite!

Did I think, at any time, that I would stop doing this annual event? YES...every time.  
Did early glitches get resolved? YES...and new ones cropped up.  
Has every event been exactly how I wanted it? No...there's been a miss every year.

**BUT:** The Girlfriend Gala has gotten bigger and better every single year. Women start asking

me in February and March when it will be. Girlfriend Gala gets more attention, more women are coming back and bringing their friends. Girlfriend Gala make a little more money each year, which means a bigger donation. More women want to help and be part of the event – by bringing their friends, donating jewelry, pottery or crafts, gathering more donations.

So, the Annual Girlfriend Gala is not perfect. But there is progress every year. If I expected perfection, I'd be working hard for months and be disappointed at the end. Maybe I'd even quit. Progress, however, says :”Nice job this year...better than last year...will be even better next year. BRAVA! Now keep going.”

Just like the early years of Girlfriend Gala were very basic, your early victory stretches will be pretty elementary. Then maybe just OK, then a litte more. The more you stretch, the more you build up that victory muscle, and the better you get at making stretches...and you stretch with less stress.

If you are doing something new, accept that it won't be perfect right off the bat. In fact, it might not ever be perfect. Who cares? It might not be perfect, but it's probably damn good...and that's good enough!

*Count your successes by the content of your victory stretches, not the perfection of them. It's the content that counts!!!*

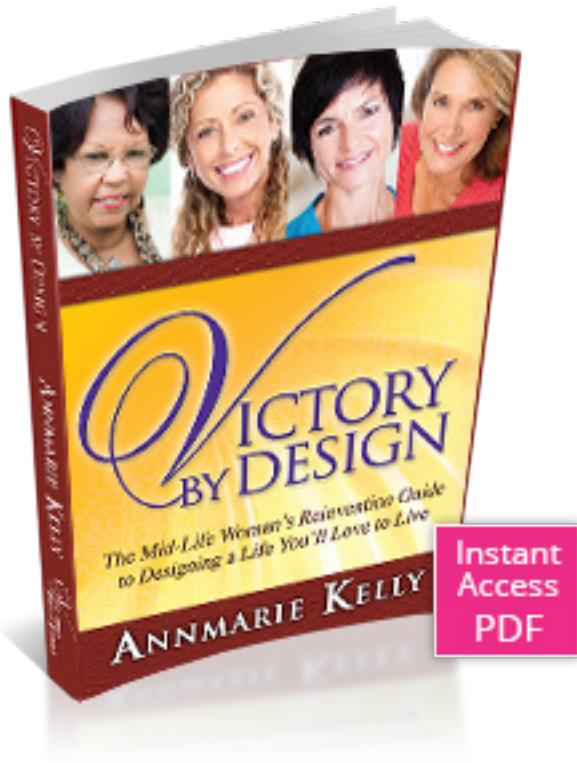


Whether she's working with corporations, women's leadership groups or professional associations, small businesses, government agencies, or with individuals, Annmarie Kelly encourages women to LIVE VICTORIOUSLY - out loud and in living color. She works primarily with women who are late Boomers and GenXers who are starting over after a life transition OR who are looking for a second chance for a successful career and a happy and satisfying life. Annmarie helps them develop their personal victory strategy for transforming adversities into opportunities. She encourages every woman to embrace the powerful "feminine victory" within by stretching out of their comfort zones and into authentic, personal leadership.

Learn more about Annmarie at [www.AnnMarieKelly.com](http://www.AnnMarieKelly.com)  
Get more Victory Tips at [www.VictoriousWomanProject.com](http://www.VictoriousWomanProject.com)  
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Step-by-Step instructions for you empty nesters and midlife women who are ready for a change to something better – to a life you love living. Victory by Design gets you out of your boring comfort zone and skyrockets you though your personal glass ceiling so you can experience the personal power that is that greater, even more fabulous expression of the real you.

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