

CORDULA NUSSBAUM

LMAA

66 MINI-PLÄDOYERS

FÜR MEHR MUT,

LEICHTIGKEIT

UND GELASSENHEIT

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Cordula Nussbaum

NTNT

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NTNT

66 ways to achieve greater  
courage, serenity and  
lightness of being



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## About the Author



# About the Book

Dear reader,

There are many doors open to us in our lives. When all is said and done, following our dreams and leading a meaningful life is actually quite easy. Yes, really! But trapped in a fast-paced and complex everyday life full of obligations, many of us do not feel lightness or ease, but pressure, stress and hardship. Increasing expectations and demands weigh heavily on our shoulders - in our professional lives and in our personal ones. Anyone who attempts to fulfil the demands placed on them – both the external ones and the ones we create ourselves - becomes worn down and perhaps even burns out completely. The end result of all this is that we suffer from a major need to reduce the pace and restore balance.

In order to escape the vicious cycle of overwork and exhaustion, we must learn to get better at saying “NTNT”: NTNT to overly-ambitious goals when they demotivate us, NTNT to our fear of failure, NTNT to the demands of others who cause us to live an inauthentic life. NTNT to those who tell us how we “should” be. NTNT to the compulsion to constantly be better and faster. NTNT to the ever-present sense of obligation.

In this inspiring book, Cordula Nussbaum shows how we can regain courage, serenity and lightness of being to live a meaningful, successful and happy life. She provides a rich selection of positive messages combined with stories, anecdotes and practical suggestions for action.

Learn to serve up a healthy and good-nature portion of NTNT with these 66 mini pledges - and create a life that pleases you.

- A plea for more self-care and zest for life
- Featuring inspiring stories, anecdotes and illustrations
- A rich selection of positive messages for greater courage, serenity, happiness and lightness of being



This little book provides 66 ideas for transforming your desires into real-life experiences. Some are tips that have enabled my personal growth. Others are lessons from my life that I want to share to set you on your own path to greater serenity, courage and lightness of being.

The 66 points don't contain all the "worldly wisdom" of my 49 years so far, but rather the thoughts that are currently closest to my heart. Accordingly, the book is not intended as *the* definitive toolbox for your personal path to self-improvement, but is simply a collection of ideas that have shaped me personally.

Read them, absorb them, digest them, and pay heed to those that move you. For the others, acknowledge them and accept that they might be right for another person and another way of life, just not for you. Learn to inject a healthy and good-natured dose of "NT, NT" into your life. I wrote the book with the acronym "No thanks, not today" in mind, but you could just as easily make your own interpretation:

*Nourish today, nourish tomorrow.*

The core idea underpinning the 66 suggestions is to let go of the things that make you unhappy. Stop doing the things that slow you down. Banish your fears, worries, concerns and nonsensical expectations with a playful kick on the rear end.

Say “NT, NT” with a smile on your face and feel the positive and liberating effect of shaping your life to your own preferences. As you read, try to recognise the decelerators, saboteurs and headwinds that hold you back from embracing possibilities. What stops you doing what you really want? Reflect closely and choose the right inspirations, the ones that will allow you to turn your headwind into a tailwind.

# 1. Break free

Trends determine what we do. We see this constantly in fashion: new cuts, colours and materials each season. We also see it in the topic of “personality” and how we engage with the concept of “me”. In the 1960s, the hippies of the Flower Power movement questioned the “meaningless” prosperity ideals of the middle class. They called for a notion of life that was free from constraints, and advocated self-realisation.

The 1980s brought a deluge of books and techniques for time planning. The credo was simply that you had to plan your time and your life as carefully as possible, then you would succeed. Things changed again in the 1990s, when we began to contemplate questions of meaning. The trend for “downshifting” saw the first working people deliberately choose to renounce material comforts - not because they sought to be “dropouts from society”, but because they had weighed up what really mattered to them. They wanted to be homemakers and mothers, not spokespeople for corporations. The search for personal meaning within or outside our professions is still in full swing. Recently, the majority of rail employees in Germany opted to take six more days of leave per year over a higher salary.

Shortly before the turn of the millennium, the majority of adults hedged their bets on quick money in the form of stocks and shares.

Even the most cautious of passbook owners were eventually persuaded to purchase the “people’s share” offered by German telecommunications firm Deutsche Telekom. A self-determined life - one that was outside the confines of the hamster wheel - seemed briefly within reach. The first dose of realism was delivered when the dot-com bubble burst in 2003. In 2007, the global economic crisis sent any remaining dreams of “easy-peasy financial freedom” flying into the abyss.

In the last few years, Generation Y – those born after 1980 - have experienced a shift in social values in the professional world and helped shape a new work-life trend: teams instead of hierarchies, enjoyment of work instead of status symbols, creative freedom, self-realisation and more time away from the office instead of in it.

Why am I telling you all this? Well, consider the slogan advertised by German magazine *Die Welt* a few years ago: “The world belongs to those who break free instead of caving in!” It may be that some of the above trends fit very well into your own concept of life – and if that is the case, feel free to get involved with them, to “follow the masses” instead of breaking free. At times, however, trends can put you under pressure, even if you don’t consciously realise it. It could be that concepts of life that are currently “in” that do not fit your needs at all. Self-realisation? Perhaps you prefer a secure job and get adequate fulfilment from your hobbies and free time. Is that “bad”? No, not at all! Some authors actively denounce the pressure for constant self-improvement. For them, the key message is: “We shouldn’t constantly compel ourselves to be better!” But does this pressure really exist? Who is forcing us to think about what we enjoy and how we want to live? On some level, yes, I agree with these authors: we don’t *have* to change. We do not have to make ourselves better; we can stay as we are. But we should do it with a very different mentality.

You see, sooner or later, every trend triggers a counter-trend. We can choose freely which ideas we want to follow and which not. Ironically, those who stubbornly proclaim, “Bah – I’m not taking take part in this self-improvement nonsense!” are conforming just as much as those who do. They’re railing against one group, but in doing so, complying neatly with another. Anyone who resists a

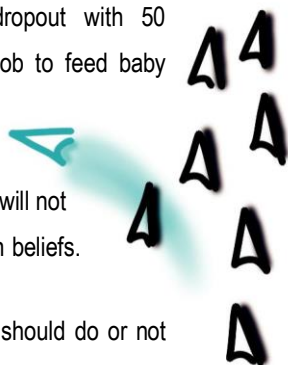
perceived requirement for the sake of not conforming is simply fulfilling another, namely: "Don't let anyone tell you what to do."

Acknowledge these trends, then listen to yourself: Which ones do you want to adopt? Which ones will be good for you, which not? Above, we mentioned that the world belongs to those who break free. Take this literally! Breaking free does not mean being forced to do something extraordinary or becoming a dropout with 50 possessions. It does not mean to quitting your job to feed baby monkeys in the jungle.

Break free from trends that are not good for you.

Say "NT, NT!" to societal "must-dos" that you know will not make you happy. Have the courage to live your own beliefs.

Muster the courage to break free from what "we" should do or not do, what "we" should think, what "we" should, believe. Trust that you are the best judge of what's good for you, and break free from everything else. That is really how the world becomes yours!



## 2. Get yourself crossed off the list

*“Only those who grow up and remain a child are human.” Erich Kästner*

How true this quote from Erich Kästner - but also how difficult for some people to be both, an adult and child. Some men and women remain stuck in the child phase, reluctant to make decisions or stand up for their actions. In its most extreme form, this attitude manifests in the victim mentality. There are also those who live according to the motto, “Live every day as if it were your last!” If we interpret this saying literally, it is not a positive one, since it absolves us of any responsibility. If we live only in the now and pretend that there is no tomorrow, why should we make provisions for a comfortable life in old age? Three things make us “adult”: taking complete responsibility for ourselves and our actions, making our own decisions and being financially independent.

However, some people believe that in order to be “grown-up”, they are also required to give up their playful inner child. They think they must endure the hardships of everyday life with deadly seriousness and live out the rest of their days in grey. How sad! Nourish your inner child, your curiosity, your zest for life, your playful mentality - then embrace your adult responsibilities as an added bonus.

You see, having responsibility is a gift. Taking responsibility enables us to shape situations and circumstances and make our lives worth living. It gives us true freedom and self-determination.

This is what I believe today – but as a teenager, I thought I had to choose between being childhood and adulthood. When my parents separated, I accepted responsibility for my family and became “grown-up” in an instant. This felt heavy and burdensome. My lightness was only restored when I found the quote by Erich Kästner and developed the view that being able to bear responsibility is a gift – and that was only a few years ago.

Become the designer of your own life. Secure for yourself the things you need, then get back to playing. The following story illustrates how powerful we can be when we take control of our own destiny.

*A great unrest prevailed in the forest. The animals had heard a rumour that the bear had a “death list”, and they couldn’t stop talking about it. They feared very much that one of them could be on it.*

*The eldest of the animals, a deer, was the first to pluck up the courage to go to the bear. “Hello, Mr. Bear,” he said, “I’ve heard about your death list, and I wanted to ask if I am on it.”*

*The bear took his list and looked at it. “Yes, you’re on my list, too!” he grumbled. The deer cried out loudly and ran away. Two days later, he was found dead in the forest.*



*The other animals became increasingly scared, but still lived in hope that the rumour of the death list was not true. The boar had no desire to live in this fear. It went to the bear and asked him the same question as the deer had done before. "You're on the list, too!" the bear replied. Two days later, the wild boar was found dead. The animals' fear was now unbelievably huge. Nobody dared walk freely in the forest. All the animals crept around and waited for the terrible things that were surely going to happen.*

*Only the hare thought to ask the bear, "Mr. Bear, am I also on your death list?"*

*"Yes," the bear replied curtly.*

*"Can you remove me from your list, please?" the hare asked.*

*"Of course, no problem," he said.*

### 3. »“There’s no such thing as ‘can’t!’” NT, NT!!

Do you know the saying “You can get it if you really want!” or “There’s no such as can’t!”? Do you believe in them? I don’t.

That’s not to say that we don’t need to want something in order to achieve it. If we only half-heartedly pursue a goal or a project, it is no wonder that we run out of steam prematurely. Why should we spend time, money or energy on something we don’t really want? This is what we’re doing when we set goals for the sake of it.

To really want something is good - but wanting alone is not enough. You can have the most amazing willpower and the best discipline, yet still miss the finish line by miles. Why? Because whether or not you achieve your goals is also dependent on other factors! Imagine your wishes as a large circle. The area covered by this circle represents what you are interested in and what you want to achieve. In the middle of this circle is a smaller circle, which represents the things you actually have the power to change.

This is the sticking point: that cannot influence everything we wish to. When we seek to make changes, we are always dependent on external factors. Some things favour our project; others hinder it. The art lies in recognising what we can and cannot influence.

What are the things you want to change in your life right now? What are your wishes, your dreams, your goals? Make a list – then check to what extent you are actually able to influence your path to these goals.

Is it the case that, hand on heart, you have no way to control your success? The answer is simple: stop trying! Alternatively, increase your sphere of influence. What can you do in the here and now to actively increase your chances of success? Imagine you want to influence the construction of the bypass around your home. Increase your sphere of influence by organising a demonstration, alerting the press to massive deforestation, or securing a vote on the local council.

Think about how you can increase your influence on topics that matter to you. Switching to a different role? Changing your job? Expanding your network? Continuing to educate yourself? Gathering experience? Imagine you want to write a bestseller. In order to do this, you need to first write a book. This is within your sphere of influence. Whether or not it will be a bestseller can only be decided afterwards, and only depends to a limited extent on you personally and the quality of your book. Bestseller or not is *not* within your sphere of influence - but writing the book increases your chances.

Influence what you can, and draw inspiration from the “Serenity Prayer” written by US theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and made famous in the 1940s:

*“God, give me the serenity to accept the things  
that I cannot change  
Courage to change things I can  
And wisdom to know the difference.”*

# Author Biography

## **Cordula Nussbaum**

Cordula Nussbaum studied journalism and psychology in Munich and Paris, is a qualified coach, and has worked as an economic journalist (FOCUS, Wirtschaftswoche, Süddeutsche). She has written multiple bestselling books and is an expert in high demand in the media world. She is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), the second woman in the German-speaking world to have received this distinction.

## In the Media

*“Cordula Nussbaum is an organizational expert and has a special mission. She wants to do away with the old theories of self-management.”* **Focus TV**

*“Germany’s best-known organizational expert.”* **WDR**

*“Cordula Nussbaum swims against the tide. For years, she has written the opposite of what some of the greats proclaim as dogmas.”* **Coaching today**

*“Germany’s number one expert for creative and chaotic self-management.”* **Bayern 3**

*“Top Coach for standout success.”* **Carinthian Economy**

*"With extraordinary ideas, Cordula Nussbaum inspires individuals' time- and self-management strategies, and shows novel ways to create powerful "It Works!-projects" that include more fun, success, and satisfaction in the professional and private life."* **Campus M21**

*"One of the most successful books in terms of time management in recent years."* **Magazine Stern**

*"Leading time management expert."* **RTL**