



Foreword

Welcome to *Women Who Influence!*

I am honored and humbled to have the privilege of introducing this book to you.

You are reading a collection of personal stories from an array of amazing female influencers. If you open your heart, mind, and soul to its contents, these stories will resonate with you and change your life.

Women Who Influence is the sequel to *Women Who Ignite* and *Women Who Inspire*—both published by Kate Butler, a role model and dear friend who has a truly remarkable ability to bring exceptional women together for connection and inspiration. Kate has touched the lives of so many women through her books, workshops, events, and personal-coaching business, relying on her guiding principle that “not only is anything possible, but everything is possible.”

In every sense of the word, Kate is a true influencer. I am personally excited about this topic because I believe there is an influencer in all of us—someone who inspires or impacts ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Kate and I met in 2012 at a women’s retreat led by our mentor, Patty Aubery. All three of us were embarking on our own unique paths to embrace our “inner influence” to share with the world.

Kate was a young mom with a successful career, finding her voice and realizing her true purpose. Patty was coming into her own as a female thought leader, committed to empowering women. And I felt called to “inspire and reach the masses.”

Three women, intersecting, just as the lives in these chapters are intersecting with you.

At the age of thirty-three, I was in the middle of a seemingly great life. I was surrounded by incredible friends; I had a consistent career and the ability to travel. Yet something was always pulling at me, always missing—my true path. One night, I stood alone, feeling frustrated and unsure of my existence, and asked aloud, “What do you want from me?” I asked because I wanted to know, because I needed to know, but most importantly, I asked because I knew there was a greater purpose for me. In that moment, the answer became clear—to inspire and reach the masses.

As a goal enthusiast, I knew I could accomplish almost any task that lie before me. I had just asked for the ultimate task, how to fulfill my purpose, and my answer came immediately. Now I had a quantum goal to achieve. My fears and insecurities had to take a back seat. I had work to do.

And that is the story of how GoalFriends® was born.

That conversation happened almost twenty-five years ago. At the time, those words terrified me. I’d never thought of myself as a leader. I was too shy. I wasn’t qualified. I didn’t know how to inspire the masses! And yet I knew I was purposeful.

Today, those words, “inspire and reach the masses,” are etched into my soul and form the foundation for everything I do. Since that night, they have been the fuel that drives me. They keep me humbled and determined. They are my reason for being.

Through the journey of embracing my purpose, I’ve learned this: Within each of us is an influencer. That includes you. I discovered that there is no magic formula of traits or experiences you need in order to impact the people around you. An influencer may have been a leader her whole life, all the way back to kindergarten when she organized games on the playground, or she may be an activist who promotes social change. But an influencer might just as easily be a quiet person who rarely speaks up, a shy person with bold ideas, or someone with whom you have a chance encounter. Mine was my mother.

My mom worked her entire career as a waitress. She influenced me by being a great role model and fostering my ideals. While working relentlessly to help provide for her family, she impacted everyone she served. Her work ethic influenced me to begin babysitting at

age ten, to get a worker's permit at thirteen, and, through the years, to go on to start my own business. This eventually led me to launch a global platform for women just like you.

Today I sure do miss my mom's presence. Her absence makes me cherish, all the more dearly, the legacy she imparted. You see, my mother's legacy, the inheritance she left me, has funded part of my own efforts to influence.

I created GoalFriends, a global platform designed to connect and uplift the influencer in each of us. GoalFriends brings women together in intimate groups to encourage and help one another, just like the women in this book. When we women enlighten one another with our hard-won knowledge and experiences, when we support one another to realize our dreams and goals, and when we share and bond with love and laughter, we can accomplish anything together.

The GoalFriends movement has grown exponentially, spreading organically across the globe, inspiring women of many nations and cultures to connect, to celebrate, and to grow. Each woman has her own unique path and is becoming even more extraordinary every day. Each is learning to listen to her own voice, be true to her own purpose, and live the life she always wanted. And each is learning to embrace her influence, because the best influencers step fully into their roles.

In this book, you'll read stories from women who do exactly that. Each author shares her journey in the spirit of leading *you* to fulfill *your* destiny as a woman of influence. These women have turned challenges into opportunities. They've conquered their fears and taken the road less traveled. They've discovered the joy of pursuing their highest callings. Their stories will rivet you, embolden you, and transform you.

It is my honor and privilege to present this book to you. My hope is that you will connect with these stories and discover the influencer in you.

May faith and love guide your unique journey,

Darlene Whitehurst
Founder, GoalFriends, LLC
President, Adsource Media Inc.