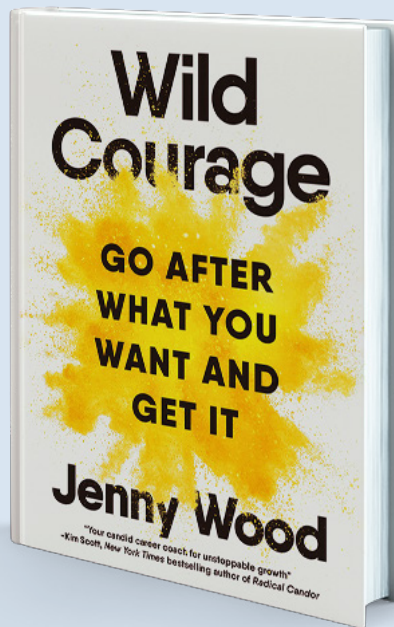


# Book Snaps™

In-depth reviews of best-selling business books.



## Wild Courage

Go After What You Want and Get It

By Jenny Wood

Jenny Wood is a Google executive, founder of Own Your Career, speaker, writer, mom, and pilot, known for her fearless approach to life and work. After a bold move that led to marrying a stranger she met on the subway, she committed to always pursuing what she truly wants. Her writing has appeared in Harvard Business Review, Entrepreneur, Inc., and Forbes. She holds a B.A. in Economics and International Business from Brandeis and was a research associate at Harvard Business School. Jenny lives in Boulder with her husband and their two children.

A Book Review by Soundview

## Rewrite Fear, Reclaim Your Power

Fear can be difficult to move past. When faced with pursuing one's desires, it often whispers reminders of failures, what-ifs, and more, and those can be crippling. This can lead to missed opportunities, resulting in promotions and projects being passed on to others. Unacknowledged fear puts life on hold, but it's not too late to change that. Fear doesn't have to have the last negative word.

But what if fear says that what is being chased after is too valuable to let go? What if that fear can be harnessed to propel us towards the desired success? If fear can be acknowledged, felt, and set aside, there is room for courage to pursue what is desired.

In *Wild Courage: Go After What You Want and Get It*, Jenny Wood encourages her readers to live life with courage, pursuing what they truly want and fighting against the fear that would hold them back. She says that money, talent, or anything else is standing in the way of one's success but themselves. Since that's the case, there is only one obstacle to overcome, and that's the mindset of fear, which tells them not to reach for what they desire. It can, and likely will be, uncomfortable, but taking agency and viewing fear as a compass pointing in the chosen direction will lead to the ability to follow one's ambitions and achieve the goal.

The desire to fit in is ingrained from childhood, so when the decision is made to strike out on a different path, it is natural to fear what others will think or say. It's time to take action, despite fear, and summon the necessary courage to succeed. That begins with having a mindset of success before success comes. Once the fear of not succeeding has been pushed aside, the fear of being labeled must also be addressed, specifically the labels associated with breaking social norms to achieve one's goals: **Weird, Selfish, Shameless, Nosy, Manipulative, Brutal, Reckless, and Bossy**. These traits don't stand alone. Each trait is linked to each other throughout *Wild Courage* and it's easy to see how they are related and lift each other up. Having the courage to utilize one of these traits will lead to having the courage to utilizing each of them in day-to-day life

Wood transforms these labels into Traits that are powerful principles for success and are the title of the chapters. She purposefully puts these in bold to differentiate these positive Traits

from the negative connotations they are associated with. Each chapter of *Wild Courage* is laid out in a way that makes it accessible for the reader to reference a particular thought or idea that Wood proposes quickly. Chapters always begin with a definition of the trait being discussed and then conclude with Trait Traps, which are barriers to help bring attention to when these strengths are potentially turning into weaknesses. She states that each Trait requires nothing other than courage to achieve the set goals, and that courage will only grow the more it is utilized.

## Weird

Being weird, like all of the Traits that are discussed in *Wild Courage*, is often thought of negatively. It's thought that fitting into societal norms is better and will make fewer waves, but while this may be true, it can be harmful. Sometimes, aspects of what makes humanity unique can be overlooked in the pursuit of what others want, and that can lead to a loss of creativity, new ideas, and individuality.

Everyone is unique, and in that lies their greatest strengths and ability to utilize them to further their career by highlighting those aspects of themselves and working to reach their goals. Being true to themselves will help to avoid being forgotten on one's chosen career path. When trying to impress others, playing it cool might work alright in high school, but outside, playing it hot is a commitment to bringing energy and creativity to the spaces that need them. Taking a calculated risk, such as speaking up in a meeting, even if it might not be the right thing to do at that moment, can help ensure your name is at the top of the list for new opportunities.

It's also essential to push past the discomfort that comes with leaning into **Weird**. It can help carve out a path to reach goals, rather than waiting for the opportunity to fall into the sphere of influence randomly. By discovering what piques interest and identifying areas that need improvement, that knowledge can be shared with leaders and managers so they know who to share opportunities with when they arise.

## Selfish

Being selfish is generally discouraged and thought of as bad, but when it comes to protecting oneself and moving into places where opportunities will come, being **Selfish** means advocating just as strongly for oneself as well as colleagues and friends. In order to be **Selfish**, it is essential to learn how to say no to the small things that do not serve to advance the ultimate goals. It might feel scary, but it will show others dedication and necessary, valuable contributions to the team.

Purposing to be **Selfish** also means acknowledging needs and wants and doing what is necessary to meet them, even if it feels uncomfortable. Yesterday's ambitions need to be aligned with today's, and that means making decisions based on day-to-day experiences so that they serve long-term goals. If there isn't a spark of excitement or energy about what has been worked toward, it's time to revisit whether this is still something that needs to be worked toward.

It is also essential to be **Selfish** when thinking about potential jobs and the managers that will be interacted with. The acronym START stands for Style, Thoughtfulness, Attitude, Responsiveness, and Transparency. By evaluating opportunities with these qualities in mind, particularly when speaking with managers, it will be easier to ensure that the reader is **Selfish** and has the allies they want and need.

## Shameless

**Shameless** means that a new strength and courage are put behind the exertion to bring dreams and goals into reality. There are times when shame is an appropriate emotion, but it can quickly become toxic and manifest itself as anxiety or stress, which takes a significant mental and emotional toll. To combat this, it's time to discover Power Assets and learn how to leverage them. Label and name the top three strengths and share them with managers, mentors, and anyone else who can have a positive impact on one's career. It is possible to experience a new level of confidence and demonstrate how they can be utilized to achieve success.

It's essential to reframe thoughts surrounding shame so it has an appropriate place and doesn't force unnecessary burdens to be carried. This can be done by utilizing the Truth and Tales tool, which encourages examining the situation and recording the facts of what happened. Once that has been done, separate the tale being spun and then reframe it in a **Shameless** way, one that sticks closer to the facts and leans more towards a neutral, if not positive, approach.

Learning how to speak up can be hard because sometimes, uncomfortable truths might be shared. Questioning the inner voice that staying quiet is better than sharing what is needed is essential, and it will help your confidence grow. It may feel uncomfortable to be the first to ask questions at a meeting, but it will encourage growth and discourage the addition of unnecessary words to what needs to be said. It will also encourage the reader to celebrate their wins in a society that often discourages them. Celebrate the wins, both large and small, and shut down the negative self-talk and insecurities that need no space.

## Obsessed

When work feels important and doing less than one's absolute best threatens the moment of the project, it's a sign that it's the right thing. In this new definition, being **Obsessed** means setting a new, higher standard and not accepting anything less. Instead of coasting, select an item from a to-do list and promise to give it complete attention until the task is completed. Be purposeful about the work that needs to be done, and when faced with a new project or objective, create a planning document to show stakeholders that it's being taken seriously and not being procrastinated.

Getting others involved in the building process is vital, but it must be done effectively and efficiently. Start sending the meeting agenda to team members so they know what to expect when they come into the meeting, and it will be easier to stay on track. The IKEA effect shows that if team members are involved,



*Success at anything requires putting in a lot of work, and mistakes will be made. However, what matters is continuing to move forward and working towards progress.”*

the meeting output is better. Consistency is key when being **Obsessed**. Showing up and purposing to do the thing well, yes, but also learning how much output each task needs so life can be broken down into attainable chunks of time, so the exertion a task takes doesn't lead to burnout.

## Nosy

It is ingrained from childhood that being nosy is a bad thing and asking too many questions isn't a good thing. Being **Nosy** means being insatiably curious and digging deeper than others might. It can be a practical asset and a sign of a great leader. It can also result in answers to questions that others may not know how to ask. Being **Nosy** also helps negate moments of awkwardness when meeting someone new, as the focus is on the other person and their wants and needs, rather than inward.

It can also be helpful to flip the script and, instead of starting sentences with “I”, start by focusing on the other person. By placing the emphasis on others and not saying “I”, they will be more engaged by feeling the genuine warmth that is being shown. Asking questions, even if they feel basic or obvious, can be a decisive move because people typically enjoy sharing their thoughts and ideas. By inviting them to do so in a **Nosy** way, it allows them to share and provides the asker with the knowledge they are seeking. This doesn't mean to ask questions when the answer is already known; instead, lead with humility to support the other people in the room.

Being **Nosy** also means watching others and picking up the traits that they do well. A conversation doesn't necessarily need to happen, particularly if they are too senior a leader to ask for mentorship. If that is the case, purpose to observe them and make notes. Doing this will make it possible for their skill sets to be acquired and utilized in toolbox of the observer.

## Manipulate

This word is often associated with a negative connotation because it is perceived as a means of exerting control over others. **Manipulate**, as defined by Wood, means having the courage to influence other people and lead with empathy. To maintain and sustain relationships, it's essential to minimize strain and tension, making it feel effortless. Figuring out the office politics at play and then learning how to **Manipulate** those in charge, investing and connecting with them, is essential and will eventually lead to having a seat among them.

Even if the initial instinct is to ignore office politics and pretend they don't exist, it is vital to squash those feelings and figure out the flow of power in the office. This can be done by talking to

others to understand who needs to be consulted with to ensure a project succeeds, mapping out the those who have the power to move a project forward or stop it in its tracks and finally, to seek power. Purpose to find ways to be at the table and make sure that it isn't just everyone else's voice that is being heard.

Being fluent in influence is an essential part of **Manipulating**, extending it, and exerting it, and this needs to be done in every direction. Wood states that power grows through proximity, so it's essential to be visible, present, and network with all team members, including skip-level managers, potential mentors or sponsors, and peers. Building influence can also happen by being authentically generous with others in the organization, not just with time and being purposefully available, but by sharing gifts, ideas and praise.. Being generous is an underused and easy way to build relations with others and it also simply feels good to give to and invest in people.

## Brutal

While being brutal typically means being sarcastic, biting, or blunt when interacting with others, here it means having the courage to protect one's time and energy so they can be focused on what is truly important. Creating and maintaining firm boundaries can be difficult, but it is key to prioritizing what matters most, which means being **Brutal**. Part of this means saying no to performative work, where the focus is on being responsive because it isn't clear what efforts matter to the outcome, and focusing on saying yes to the rewardative work. This is the work that may require being unresponsive at times, as the focus is on major business outcomes (e.g., ensuring an important report is completed instead of rushing from meeting to meeting, leaving other work undone).

Another way to be **Brutal** is to let go of the need to always clear out the emails that are sitting in the inbox so there are no unread or replied emails.. Emails tend to multiply and become overwhelming, so Woods recommends following the Four F's. Using Filters to sort through emails so newsletters, casual communication, and more are in their correct space. Next, focus on emails only during specific time blocks throughout the day. Before going on vacation, feel Free from the burden of catching up on emails upon one's return. Finally, before replying to an email, take a moment to address what feelings have arisen so that the immediate heated response doesn't come back to impact future relationships.

When the workload threatens to become overwhelming, it is often a knee-jerk reaction to focus on the big-ticket projects and then delegate the smaller tasks. Instead of doing this, be **Brutal** and drop those smaller tasks. Delegating and deferring those

smaller tasks postpones the inevitable, so without announcing it, focus the energy on the bigger, more important projects and let the less importance quietly disappear.

## Reckless

Being **Reckless** means having the courage to take calculated risks and becoming comfortable with moving in low-risk/high-reward ways. Because there are so many options and paths to take, it is necessary not to become too trapped focusing on the what-ifs and the possibilities. Feeling a little dangerous in the world is a good thing; instead of waiting until tomorrow to start taking risks, start today. Success at anything requires putting in a lot of work, and mistakes will be made. However, what matters is continuing to move forward and working towards progress.

It's also important to note that not feeling totally ready is a good thing. Being 100% ready for the task leaves no room for spontaneity, and there is a risk of losing passion for the project at hand. Every task should present a challenge that will ultimately lead to growth. Preparation and planning are essential, but don't let them be hindered by fear and prevent forward progress. Make moves toward a goal, and then work to map out a path to reach it. Setting aside ten minutes a day to work towards the objective, particularly for new ventures, will allow for opportunities for growth and action, rather than stagnation.

## Bossy

Being bossy doesn't sound like a good thing and is often associated with words like domineering, dictator, and worse. However, being **Bossy** is totally different. It requires humility and courage to listen to others in the room and then lead well. Leaders aren't supposed to have all the answers; that distinction belongs to team members. Instead, leaders are supposed to ask questions so they can help others succeed.

It can feel scary at times, but an essential part of leadership is letting the others on the team do their job. This means relinquishing whatever control that had been previously clung to and helping and allowing others to shine. Doing the day-to-day tasks only requires half of one's attention, and communication is necessary in every direction possible. Coaching the team to success means being the coach of a successful team, and that is a positive thing.

Particularly for those new to leadership roles, it is vital to be humble and shadow team members. This will allow the leader to get to know their team members' strengths and weaknesses, and prevent any awkward blunders. Whether the work is being done virtually or in a physical office, take the time to get to know the other team members and invest in learning about each person's role and their preferred working style.

In *Wild Courage: Go After What You Want and Get It*, Jenny Wood shares nine traits that often carry negative connotations and are typically suppressed in today's world. Throughout the book, she teaches how to transform what are perceived as unfavorable traits into positives and how to leverage them to become a

better leader. In addition to this, she also shares how these traits, even when used positively, can trip the reader up and become a weakness. Each chapter ends with a Trait Trap, which serves as a simple barrier to alert readers when these strengths are turning into potential weaknesses.

*Wild Courage: Go After What You Want and Get It* is a positive read that encourages readers to step outside their comfort zone to achieve their dreams and live the lives they want. No more looking for affirmation or permission, those who follow Wood's guidance decide to take action despite whatever fear they may feel. They have the courage to move forward and achieve their goals.

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