

From *Karamo: My Story of Embracing Purpose, Healing, and Hope* by Karamo Brown. Copyright © 2019 by Karamo Brown. Reprinted by permission of Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Inc.

As the resident culture expert, therapist, or life coach on *Queer Eye* (you can decide what you want to call me), I help people evaluate how they respond to their internal and external struggles. While my *Queer Eye* castmates make over the contestants' style, home decor, diet, and grooming, my job is to make over their hearts and minds—which is why I love being on the show.

As I write this from the set of *Queer Eye* in Kansas City, Missouri, I have just had a long but rewarding week helping a hero (that's what we call the guests on the show) who was struggling with forgiveness and needing closure. It was my first time exploring this theme this season, and I was very excited about it. I'd spent almost every night coming up with the most impactful ways of helping this hero get to a space where he understood that getting closure from the trauma that had happened in his life began with forgiving himself, then forgiving the person who inflicted the trauma, and, last, accepting that this experience was meant to provide him with a lesson so he could be the amazing person he was destined to be.

Earlier today, my *Queer Eye* castmate Bobby Berk walked into the trailer that the cast uses when we're on set. He stood over me as I sat at my computer and read what I was planning to do with the hero in order to help him get to a place of forgiveness and closure. (To be honest, I like when my castmates, especially Bobby, take a sneak peek at my plans.) Before I could say anything, I felt a small drop of water hit my hand. I turned around and saw that Bobby had tears in his eyes.

"Damn you, Kar-Oprah," he said (that's his nickname for me). "Now you're making me cry, just reading what you're going to be doin'." I laughed, but his response told me I had figured out an effective way to help our hero grow and roll smoothly into his destiny.

(Side note: I wish I could tell you which hero I'm talking about, but contractually I'm not able to write about that person. But once season 3 drops, I wonder if you'll be able to guess who it is.)

Even as I write about this powerful moment, I'm reminded of all the other ones that have happened in these past months. In February of 2018, *Queer Eye* began streaming on Netflix. In less than a year, the boys and I had been to London, Australia, and Japan for the show. We were invited to the Emmys, presented an award—and won three of them. But the most fulfilling thing has been impacting the lives of our heroes and our viewers at home.

Each of us has pulled from not only our training to help people, but also our own personal lives. I'm on *Queer Eye* because I have learned how to manage conflict, both internally and externally. I have had many ups and some major downs that have almost broken me at points—but ultimately, they have made me the man I am. I wasn't always on this path. My journey has included identity confusion, physical and emotional abuse, addiction, violence, and a suicide attempt.

I was born in Houston, Texas, in November 1980 to immigrant parents. They had moved to this country from Jamaica to create the life they desired for their children and for themselves—a life full of love, hard work, opportunity, and empathy for others. All their children would go on to attend college, have highly respected professional careers, and find love with amazing partners. I know it was their dream, but to see it actually happen has to have blown their minds. And to see their baby, their only

son, go on to build a successful career in television and to be on the Emmys stage winning awards? Now that, I'm sure, they couldn't have imagined.

But it took years of really evaluating my own life for me to understand how to find purpose, healing, and hope within the conflicts that have riddled my life. I've had to overcome many obstacles. And along the way, I have learned that to have a healthy life, you must acknowledge tensions or disagreements—not avoid them. Each moment in my life that I viewed as horrible or hurtful at the time was actually a message that I needed to receive, learn from, and use to inspire others.

I've failed plenty of times as well. But as my granny, Sybil—yes, the one I quote on *Queer Eye* all the time—used to say, “Failure isn't the opposite of success, it's part of it.” In this book, I'm going to share intimate stories from my own life in order to show you how I respond to conflict—in hopes that it will inspire a change in you and allow you to get closer to your authentic self. Growth is a journey, not a destination.

To truly embrace purpose, healing, and hope in your own life, having the proper language to put your feelings into words is crucial.

Emotions do not happen in response to events, they happen in response to our *thoughts* around that event. Having the vocabulary to name your emotions helps you to see how the way you're thinking is creating them.

When I mastered identifying my feelings, I recognized their temporary nature—which freed me from much suffering and gave me clarity so I could grow through my conflicts.

By the end of this book, you'll have gained a better understanding of how to use the proper language to communicate with yourself and others by seeing conflict as a springboard to a better you.

If I can find purpose, healing, and hope, then trust me—you can, too. I'm confident that the stories I share of trauma and growth can be a compass for you to find your way toward the life you want and deserve.