

Unit 1 Leap

Be Proud of Who You Are

Laura Thompson

Hello, my name is Laura Thompson, and I'm a guidance counselor at the local college. I also have a social media channel where I give advice to young students like you. Today I'd like to talk to you about two things that I hope will inspire you.

Let me start by asking you a question. Have you ever asked yourself whether you made a good impression on someone you just met? In fact, most people believe they make a worse impression than they actually do. Researchers performed an experiment where students were paired up for five-minute ice breaking conversations. They were then asked to rate how much they liked their partners. Additionally, researchers asked participants if they thought their partners liked them. Most participants' estimations of their partners' responses were pessimistic, which were opposite to the real responses. It turns out that participants do not make bad impressions but make better impressions than they think.

The researchers coined a new term, the "liking gap," for this difference in perception or the mismatch between how we perceive ourselves and what others actually think of us. How is this helpful for you? We often underestimate ourselves based on our assumption of how others might judge us. In other words, our fixed attitudes may prevent us from reaching our true potential. Don't worry about the impression you think you make on people; chances are you can be confident that the impression you make is just fine.

The second point I want to make today is about thinking that your personality is fixed. Many people believe that their personality falls into a specific category and often blame their weaknesses or failures on their personality type. For example, they may say they can't do something because they aren't that kind of person. However, personality categorizations are neither absolute nor permanent.

Try to remember yourself from ten years ago. Who was your favorite singer? What did you hope to become when you grow up? Do you feel the same way now? What will your answers be 10 years from now? I bet you don't know. Just like your likes and future dreams keep changing, so do you. If you choose to behave differently and make needed changes, your personality will also change. People are predictable and consistent over time only because they choose to be, so don't limit yourself to a certain type. Start crafting the person you want to become today.

"Giving Up" Has No Place in My Dictionary!

Jake Miller

Hello, everyone! Thank you for your warm welcome.

It's good to be back home, but I'm visiting you today not to perform but to talk to you about my life as a musician. Last year, after 20 years of hard work, I finally signed my first record company contract. I'd like to tell you a hopeful story and give some insight into the hard work that I had to put in.

Look at this picture of Picasso's The Old Guitarist behind me. My grandfather was a classical guitarist, and on my 13th birthday, he gave me this picture and a new guitar. After he passed away, I hung it up in my room as a reminder of his love for music.

I wasn't a musical genius, but I was better than most. I was popular at school festivals, and I thought I was born to be a musician. But things were far from easy. In college, I had to compete with classmates who were definitely more capable than I was. I don't even remember how many contests I went to and came up short. I kept failing no matter how hard I tried. It seemed like every disappointment made me lose hope more and more. I wanted to give up.

The funny thing was whenever anyone asked me to play a song for them, I would be so happy.

Although my dream was to record an album, the reality was I probably wouldn't make it. Then one day, I looked at the picture of The Old Guitarist on my wall. I suddenly remembered what my grandfather had told me about Picasso: only a tiny fraction of the thousands of artworks he created during his lifetime are recognized by the public. Then I thought of my grandfather and how he loved playing, practicing his art his entire life, even without fame. I realized the only way to become an old guitarist like him was to keep playing.

The happy ending to this story is that after having sent my recordings to countless producers, I finally found one who was eager to work with me. One thing led to another, and I finally signed a record deal. Opportunities only come to those who are prepared. I had spent years performing on unknown streets and writing songs no one recognized. The difficulties I faced were part of my journey. If you love something, keep trying. Someday an opportunity may come knocking at your door, and you have to be ready to welcome it.

Unit 1 Go Beyond

A Journey to Self-Love

During New York Fashion Week 2018, a woman with a brightly decorated prosthetic leg proudly walked the runway at a major fashion show. She was Mama Cax, a model and influencer.

Cax was diagnosed with cancer at age 14 and lost her right leg at 16 after surgery. At first, Cax was depressed and struggled to accept her new body. However, with the support of her family and friends, Cax learned to love it. One day when she was 26, Cax posted a picture on social media showing her leg. "I didn't think it could help anyone," she said in an interview, "But after receiving messages of support, I realized my story could inspire others." After receiving support from others, she began to use social media to share more about her life and to inspire others. She proudly posted pictures wearing stylish prosthetic covers and spoke out about body positivity and fashion. In 2016, she became the first model for the #RunwayForAll campaign. In 2018, she appeared on the cover of major fashion magazines.

When asked, "How did you come to embrace yourself?" she replied, "The truth is, like many people, I'm still on my journey to self-love. There are many barriers ahead." In addition to modeling, Cax showed her ability to overcome physical barriers by swimming, playing basketball, and mountain climbing. She even finished the New York City Marathon in a wheelchair.

Sadly, Mama Cax's journey was cut short in 2019. Although she is no longer with us, her journey will remain in our hearts, inspiring us to overcome limitations and find our own paths to success and happiness.