

# Be your own Hero

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After years of doubting my capabilities in writing this book, I did it! I followed my dream and calling. But I couldn't have done it all alone.

Therefore, I wanted to thank people personally:

*My friends, for accepting me for who I am.*

*Veerle and Koen, Sabine, and other therapists and nurses, for all the listening and support during my therapy process.*

*My teachers and other school staff during my whole nursing school. You have made me fall in love with my profession. And you always lifted me up when I felt at my lowest. You never gave up on me in times that I was already giving up on myself.*

*My mom and dad for letting me realize the type of person I wanted to become, through the hell they made me go through.*

*Krista and Paul for providing me with a home where I could be myself and grow into an even better person. You two are amazing people with a huge heart of Gold.*

*And everyone who had a particular impact on my life at certain times.*

*And last but not least, my heavenly Father whom I got to know all over again.*

*Thanks are to the Lord.*

*"So, I guess we are who we are for a lot of reasons. And maybe we'll never know most of them. But even if we don't have the power to choose where we come from, we can still choose where we go from there. We can still do things. And we can try to feel okay about them."-Steven Chbosky<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> (Charlie - *The Perks Of Being A Wallflower*, z.d.)

## I am just me!

I am me putting the past to light.  
The future and present seem a delight.  
Turning my back to the past shelf,  
surrendering to my authentic self.

I'm broken and hidden inside.  
I'm grieving I deal with my pride.  
I'm relieving others to go their ways.  
I'm just commanding for love to obey.

I'm aching but I'm healing.  
I'm flying but depleting.  
I'm singing but lost in song.  
I'm gleaming yet I don't belong.

So, open me up.  
And perform what you can.  
I'm at your call and your waking demand  
This yearning inside this wrecking ball  
This soulless demise this whispering fall.

I'm shaking but strong with might.  
I hate it but  
Love it with care..  
I'm awakened but hiding to fight  
I'm erasing but drawing the lines.

So, come and scream into my lungs.  
Push around my mind and soften me up.  
Fight through my arms and drain from my cup.  
Pull out each bone and loosen my tongue.

For my mind made up  
That I am done...

I may be done but not finished.  
I may be broken but not diminished.  
I may be reaching for the stars for **help**.  
But not embracing one more traumatic step.

I may be laughing when I'm willing to cry.  
I may have tears in the brown of my eyes.  
Still, I am not weak, done or diminished.  
I am just me trying to reach the finish.

## Letter from God.

I know you are tired, standing next to measuring sticks, not reaching high enough, not being enough. But may I tell you something? You're using the wrong tools. I never chose those methods; those are not *my* ways. I don't care what the world is telling you: how what you *do*, defines who you *are*, how what you *own* reflects your *worth*. No, my child. No, a thousand times. You are a person of worth: Not for what you do. Not for how you look. Not for what you own. Not even for who you know. I don't use the tools the world uses. They are of no value to me. You are a person of worth, I take delight in you. I value you. Not only sometimes. Not when you lose a few pounds or get a raise. Or accomplish something that makes the world clap. Today. Now. You are valued. You are precious.

And you **ARE** enough.

## My depression

No one ever talks about that empty feeling.  
The feeling where you just sit in your room...  
And stare at nothing...  
Where you just lay in bed...  
Not able to sleep...  
Just thinking...  
Thinking...  
Thinking...  
Until you can't take it anymore and you break down...  
Unable to cry...  
Because you don't feel anything, you just feel empty.



## Introduction

*Be your own hero* was brought to life out of the saying :” Progress before Perfection”. In a society where success would generally come before progress, it can be tough to avoid setting high expectations on oneself. Anno 2023, in an era of technological social media centered discourse, has brought up a whole new core desire of perfectionism.

By opening Instagram or Pinterest, the first thing we encounter is pictures of people enjoying their best lives with materialistic wealth and status. One sad realization I had, while scrolling through my Instagram was the impact it all had on my physical insecurities. All I saw on that specific moment was beautiful girls with “hot” bodies and pretty faces. All I could point out was the extra weight I was carrying, the imperfections on my face, and so on.

They seemed, to me, to have everything that I ever dreamed of, and most of them were younger than I was! So where did I fail?

It really took me years to take that pair of self-inflicting glasses to determine and give empowerment to what I did have, for who I actually was. In July 2019 (around my birthday), I made the promise to learn how to accept myself in such a way that I would be able to attract my own well-deserved success. A success, which I would put all the hard work in to achieve. The one big road block I started to encounter during that process was my past and how it had impacted on my view on change, as I believe that change is the biggest requirement to a deep identity switch.

Embracing that was going to be the key to my success. But how? How do I start to discover and accept myself? While writing these three main questions came straight to mind:

- Who am I at my core? Who am I authentically?
- How am I being perceived?

- How would I like to be perceived?

These three questions made me wonder who my 1.0 version of myself was, and fantasize about what the 2.0 version would look like. By that time I started to fantasize about this huge, seemingly highly impossible, identity switch. I was preparing myself to leave the psych ward I'd been staying in for the prior 15 months. It seemed like I could face the world as never before. I just needed a kick in the butt and start the biggest adventure of my life: finding out who I was.

If I had the chance to bless the old me with something, it would have been this book. The reason why is that I was not prepared for the hard and exhausting fight that was waiting for me. I had spent all these months working on myself, speaking about everything that happened to me for the very first time, de-covering all the wounds that I naively thought were already scarred shut. But I had absolutely no clue what to do next. It felt like re-discovering the world without any structure to be able to lean on.

After long research and endless crying sessions, I, finally, put my heart into taking that step. That one step into my own aftercare plan. Something you need to know is that when you come out of psych, you need to follow a whole aftercare plan. Aftercare is just a continuity of your recovery game plan for when you're back in the outside world. At that moment I was still seeing a psychiatrist every two weeks and a psychologist every week. Those two people were amazing and it helped a lot to not fully be alone in that process. But besides talking about the same recurring things and prescribing some sleeping pills, I was missing so much depth and expansion that I decided to try to fill the void for myself.

By retrospection on that period of time, I can say now that, by doing that, I jumped blindly as a blind person without a cane. I didn't see any directions. I just jumped.

There I was without any aftercare, in a new environment. At that moment I had just moved into my housing in Mechelen, living with two other people that I didn't know. Because of the unknown situation I had put myself in, I saw myself entering an atmosphere of confusion and anxiety.

As I was getting used to being in Mechelen more and more, I started to get to know new people. Have you ever felt so insecure with new acquaintances and social interactions that you create yourself a doppelgänger? That's what I did! At that moment I created Lisa. Actually, I'm not being fully honest, I didn't create Lisa. I re-created her out of the imaginary friend I had as a kid.

Lisa was the complete opposite of who I was. She was strong on the inside and on the outside, and so self-confident. She was just a badass girl scared of nothing. She wouldn't take shit from anyone.

As I was meeting more and more people, Lisa was becoming more and more popular. I was partying and drinking every 2-3 days. I was enjoying all this extravaganza. If I'm totally honest, I'm not entirely sure that I was really enjoying it. Lisa did but Marie, she was just lost and still so confused and fragile. I was just compensating it with my party life. Until covid-19 struck...

When Covid-19 started, it felt like Lisa died and the whole empty dancefloor was given to my inner me. When the first lock-down started, I was still grieving the loss of Lisa. I felt so confused and overwhelmed by the loneliness I was facing. During that time I felt an inherent need to re-start the questioning process, I was talking about earlier.

I still didn't know how to start. The only intense need I experienced was the need to create a 2.0 version of myself. With a lot of research and readings, I found a plan. In that plan, I decided to work on four different levels: the theoretical level, my 1.0 version, my 2.0 version of myself, and my action/battle plan.

As mentioned before, “ change is the biggest requirement to a deep identity switch”. I had nothing to lose. I knew how hard it would be, but I just had to try.

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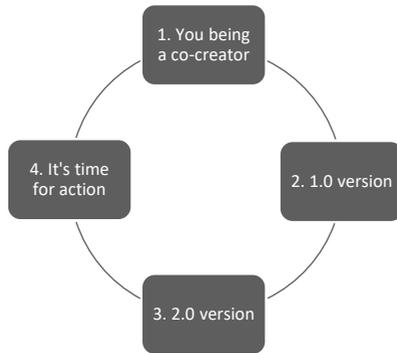
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“Be your own hero” is a summary of me achieving, or rather trying to achieve that battle plan. Let me warn you, my recovery is not your recovery. The roadblocks I have been facing during my journey may not be the ones you are about to face. Just be prepared to fight. Be sure to hold on, it is going to be worth it.

A beautiful Bible verse from the Gospel of Matthew says:” Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”. (Matthew 7:13-14)

If I would have continued living according to that parallel entity, Lisa, I don’t think I would be alive today. I would have worked myself into my own destruction. On the other hand, it’s still not the time for me to leave this calling, I feel deep down, I had to fulfill it. I was called to break that cycle of self-victimization. Only by doing that for myself, I could help and inspire others.

## My battle plan:



It's been proven that 46% of everything we do, we do as a habit.

According to Oxford Dictionaries, a habit is a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up. For example a smoker, a habit would be the fixed agenda of cigarette timing. The person wakes up and takes a cigarette with the morning coffee. Whether that same person needs to wait for a bus or train, a cigarette. Done eating? He or she needs to smoke. Being bored? Some more nicotine.

When we look at numbers, an average earthly smoker, has the habit of smoking 10-12 shags a day, 20-25 a day for chimney smokers. Another example of over popular existing is thinking. Did you know that 60.000 thoughts are filling up your day? And most of them appear to be repetitive. Overthinking is one of the most painful self-inflicted diseases because by overthinking our own identity we open the door to self-sabotage. In an era of mutual self-sabotage, it is important for us to realize that we are co-creators of our story/movie. We aren't just victims of some circumstances.

Before you decide to shut the book, let me clarify what I just stated. I know that most of the things I've been through were not my

fault. On the other hand, it is my duty to control my way of reacting to my past. I'm a victim of their actions but I'm a creator of my reactions. For instance, a person has been arrested for trying to murder his or her neighbor. When standing in the court, the defense attorney proclaims the importance of the sexual abuse and emotional neglect that happened 35 years ago. Would you think it gives the suspect enough reasoning to take someone else's life just because he or she is feeling revengeful toward his/her parents?

I can understand that the past trauma broke that person but I don't think it can smoothen out the circumstances of screwing up badly in life. Besides, to be able to create a decent reaction it is important to know the one way you absolutely wouldn't want to use?

That's why it is important to accept your story and embrace the beautiful soul that survived the storms. Only by doing that, you will be in your abilities to fight back on a healthy way. That's why the first two segments of the diagram are seen as the theoretical/ research part of the journey. That part stands for the preparation of the practical work awaiting.

As a good friend of mine once said:" There needs to be self-healing before self-development can happen". You need to dig and get to the root of whom you think you are and heal the inner child before being able to grow.

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Next to the theory we will travel through the practical side of this journey. As already mentioned, by looking at your 1.0 version of yourself you are

preparing the ground to plant a seed to let your 2.0 version of yourself grow bold.

Do you remember the three questions I talked about:

1. Who am I at my core? Who am I authentically?
2. How am I being perceived?
3. How would I like to be perceived? Who do I want to become?

Picture this, how would you feel if you would end up in a movie and you could play your dream character? It would be awesome, wouldn't it? How would that character look like?

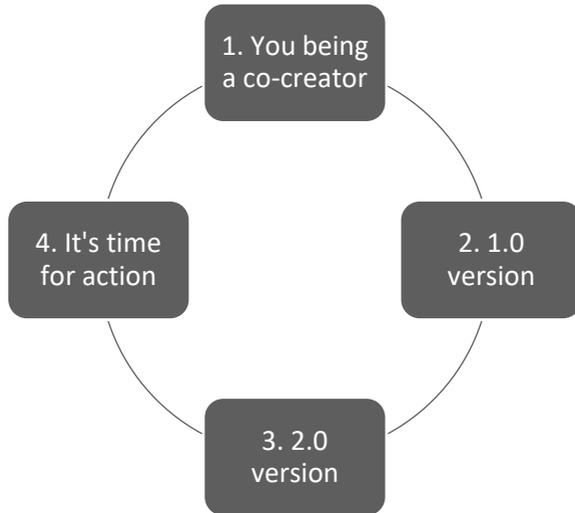
Your imagination may be blocked by the shame and guilt you're still feeling toward that 1.0 version of yourself. Let me tell you something. There are so many things in your life wherefor you're not in control. Take time but at the end, you'll have to let it go. You're only responsibility is to focus on the things of which you are in control.

It is your right, an obligation even, to give yourself permission to dream big. Some of you may have been growing up in broken homes where dreams and ambitions were not a priority. But I want to tell you that you deserve permission to dream and imagine your 2.0 version. Please don't get stuck in past endless struggles.

I can imagine you have no time left, next to an overbooked stressful agenda, to create yourself a dream character. Still, it is my prayer for you to just take 10 minutes a day to let your inner child dream of a life where everything would be possible.

Last but not least, after dreaming comes action-taking. You now created an abstract 2.0 version of yourself, but what are you ready to give or give up to reach that? Go look deep inside your core. How do you think you can switch your identity in a way people change their perception of you? What is the first step that you need to take? I remember my first

step. My first step was to stop being in toxic relationships. So, I became single unlimitedly. In further chapters, I'll explain my further battle plan with some more examples.



When looking at the diagram, you see no end point between 4 and 1. That means that, whenever needed, start the whole process all over again. As life passes by, one singular person changes or goes through roadblocks with new reactions as a result. So, it would be completely normal if you would restart the “be your own hero” journey.

I wish you a blessed and insightful journey. Don't ever give up, because it is all worth so much more than you could ever expect.

Greetings,

Marie.

## **Part I: The theory**



## Introduction

One thing I'd never imagined going through in my entire life was the pandemic crisis that the world started to go through at the end of December 2019. As a lot of youngsters, I thought that such a sanitary problem could only happen in history. Till the first day of wearing a mask or even being locked inside my home because the outside world seemed too dangerous for our health.

When Covid-19 started to spread in Belgium, I had just started my studies to become a nurse. With a passionate and motivated heart, I decided to follow a dream. I just wanted to help and take care of people. But soon enough, we got the email stating we will receive online classes from inside our homes. I was scared in the beginning because I didn't know what to expect. What I didn't expect was the turmoil that I was going to face.

The outside world has become dangerous but my inside world was even more frightening. I got stuck with myself and my thoughts. While wanting to go outside to fly them I had no other choice than to face the demons I kept quiet for too long. One of my biggest problems/questions that I needed to work on was my own identity. Who was I? Why was it that difficult for me to live together with what was happening inside of me? Everything I thought was fixed from the past came '*uppercutting*' me straight in my face. Where did I have to start?

When I started asking myself those questions, I just knew. I knew that I had to make it one of the greatest projects I was going to create. I