



# **The Best Advice I Ever Got: Lessons from Extraordinary Lives**

*Katie Couric*

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# The Best Advice I Ever Got: Lessons from Extraordinary Lives

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**The Best Advice I Ever Got: Lessons from Extraordinary Lives** Katie Couric  
**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**

In this inspiring book, Katie Couric distills the ingenious, hard-won insights of such leaders and visionaries as Maya Angelou, Jimmy Carter, Michael J. Fox, and Ken Burns, who offer advice about life, success, and happiness—how to take chances, follow one’s passions, overcome adversity and inertia, commit to something greater than ourselves, and more. Along the way, Katie Couric reflects on her own life, and on the shared wisdom, and occasional missteps, that have guided her from her early days as a desk assistant at ABC to her groundbreaking work as a broadcast journalist. Moving and empowering, *The Best Advice I Ever Got* is for all of us, young or old, who want to hear from some of today’s best and brightest about how they got it right, got it wrong, and came out on top—so we can too.

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## The Best Advice I Ever Got: Lessons from Extraordinary Lives Details

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**Katie Couric**

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# From Reader Review *The Best Advice I Ever Got: Lessons from Extraordinary Lives* for online ebook

## Ariana says

I really like this book. It's a collection of advice from successful people. Two of my favorite messages came from Michelle Kwan and Apolo Ohno.

Michelle Kwan:

"In the end, your finest moments in life aren't necessarily those in which you finish first but, instead, the times when you know that you simply gave it your best - when you did it heart and soul, and held nothing back."

Apolo Ohno:

"It's not really about the destination, but about what it took to get you there. After I've crossed the finish line in a race, I sometimes think to myself, Oh my gosh, the past four years of my life have been dedicated to a race that lasted only forty seconds...It's not about the forty seconds; it's about the four years, the time it took to get there. So that destination point no longer becomes the true focal point. It becomes a goal, it gives me a point to focus on, but in terms of overall importance it's not very significant. The things that I learned about myself and what I endured throughout those four years are really what mattered most."

I also enjoyed reading a story Bill Cosby tells about a time he botched a performance and started thinking that maybe he just wasn't a funny guy.

I'd like to buy this book. The stories are inspirational, and they're stories I'd like to share with my kids.

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## Thomas says

Who wouldn't want to read a book that includes Ellen DeGeneres quoting The Pussycat Dolls? Or Tyra Banks lamenting that she wasn't meant to be the next "Lady Taylor Perry Gaga Swift"? In *The Best Advice I Ever Got* Katie Couric compiles advice from comedians, politicians, writers, athletes, and more on various life topics such as perseverance, creativity, and giving back. She divides the book into neat categories such as "Don't Let the Turkeys Get You Down (On Rejection and Resilience)" and "Everyone Needs a Cheerleader (On Mentors and Encouragement)." While not every story spoke to me, this would be a book I come back to if I'm ever in need of a little more motivation. Couric shares several parts of her personal life too and it's hard not to feel empathy and respect for her after all she's accomplished - especially after all she's been through.

Here are three passages from my three favorite chapters:

"In the end, your finest moments in life aren't necessarily those in which you finish first but, instead, the times when you know that you simply gave it your best - when you did it heart and soul, and held nothing back." - Michelle Kwan, "Fall Down and Get Back Up."

"In the end, I received sixty rejections for *The Help*. Letter number sixty-one was the one that accepted me. After my five years of writing and three and a half years of rejection, an agent named Susan Ramer took pity on me. What if I had given up at fifteen? Or forty? Or even sixty?" - Kathryn Stockett, "Don't Give Up, Just Lie."

"The definition of success changes throughout your life. For me, the most important thing is to live with integrity, and not to give in to peer pressure. Never try to be something that you're not. To live your life as an honest and compassionate person. Those are the most important qualities to me. Stay true to yourself. Never follow anyone else's path, unless you're in the woods and you're lost and you see a path; then, by all means, you should follow that path. And don't give advice; it will come back and bite you in the ass. Don't take anyone's advice, either. So my advice to you is to be true to yourself and everything will be fine." - Ellen DeGeneres, "Be True to Yourself."

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### **Shannon says**

I listened to this book on CD and got most of the way through disc 2 (there are six total) before I gave up and returned it to the library. It's not bad, per se. Certainly the authors are well-meaning, and I can't help but like Katie Couric. But this book is loaded with more cliches and triteness than I can possibly describe. I liked a handful of essays - Bill Cosby's made me laugh, and Christina Applegate's made me nod along - but mostly it was just typical Hallmark card stuff: do what you love, don't sweat the small stuff, don't be afraid to fail - things that we all have heard a million times before. So, no, it wasn't terrible. And I'm betting that, if I'd listened long enough, something might have resonated with me, but I'm not convinced, and life is too short...which is something else I'd probably hear from this book, too.

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### **Cheryl says**

I bought this book in one of those buy-2-get-the-3rd-free deals and I'm glad I did. It is one of those advice books you keep on the shelf and refer to from time to time. I've had it for weeks, reading it in bits and pieces each week. In the intro, it's interesting to learn about Katie Couric's life and how she's dealt with the death of her husband and father, as well as the interesting and revealing tidbits about her early career.

The advice from each "extraordinary life" is sectioned off into chapters according to similar subjects--some very brief, some a few detailed pages. My rating is based on the wealth of advice that spans three generations (Couric really used her journalistic talent to round them up here).

A few of my favorites are from: Bill Cosby, Arianna Huffington, Alicia Keys, Vera Wang, Muhtar Kent, and Salman Rushdie whose advice is the same one he received from feminist writer, Angela Carter. He writes, "F\*\*\*\* the lot of them."

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### **Michele says**

I didn't love this book enough to give it a 4, but it probably deserves more than a 3.

Because Katie Couric has the career she has, she is able to ask famous people for their best advice. Some of it was really good. Some I could have done without. I did think reading the different essays made the "stars"

much more human to me (for the most part). My favorite part of this book is that I could read an essay, put it down for a while and come back to the next one.

It would probably be most beneficial to a young, just starting their own life, person, but there were a few nuggets that could even apply to a not so young, in the middle of her life, person like me.

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## **Vincent says**

I have a few issues with katie couric. Yes she lost a husband to cancer - join the crowd. Yes she is sick of being called perky. Boo-hoo. She gets paid \$10 million or so to sit in place and read the news for 22 minutes each night. Wrong!

So she decides to write a book about life lessons and it turns out the whole book includes on a couple pages of her thoughts. Everything comes straight from Vera Wang, Larry King, Drew Brees, Tavis Smiley, etc. No filter or editing - total cut and paste job.

So thankfully I did not spend a dime on this book but read it at the library.

As for the advice from all the guests - it's good but can be summed up as "don't give up, work hard, smell the roses."

I knew that and didn't need Bill Cosby to say so.

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## **Cindy says**

What I enjoyed about this book is that there are so many people in here that gave Katie Couric advice ~ and as a reader you can select the ones that you feel like reading. They are also organized by subject ~ if you don't care for looking up the person by name, you can read advice on work, passion, courage, etc..

My favorite advice came from Jay Leno, Donald Trump, Larry King, Matthew McConaughey, Joyce Carol Oates, Gloria Steinem, Nia Vardalos, Whoopi Goldberg, M. Night Shyamalan, Soledad O'Brien, Maria E. Salinas, Mitch Albom, Michael J. Fox, Maya Angelou..

I won't go quoting everyone of them because there's no point. You all can read the book yourself.

My favorite quote is from Jay Leno, he wrote "Marry someone who you would want to be, someone who wants to be help you be that better version of yourself" (237).

From Katie ~ which I think is from someone else ~ "A boat is always safe in the harbor, but that's not what boats are for" (202).

"When you start getting into the fear business, you blame your problems on other people" from Fareed Zakaria (214).

"Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway" John Wayne (1).

Great book, great advice, and good job Ms. Couric! :)

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## Olga says

I found this book while browsing the ebook offerings on my library's website and immediately thought a book of advice from successful journalists, artists, entertainers, politicians, entrepreneurs, and athletes would be interesting and informative. After all, their respective formulas worked for them, it can't hurt to find out what they are.

Some essays are very short (Twitter co-founder Biz Stone's is fittingly 140 characters long) and some are longer and filled with reminiscences but they all tell us something about the people who wrote them and in retrospect they all have the same messages: work hard, follow your heart and your dreams, stay true to yourself, don't give up, don't be afraid, don't quit, pay no attention to nay-sayers.

My favorite essays were the ones that tell a story as opposed to just throwing an idea my way. For example Bill Cosby talks about his first big break as a stand-up comedian and how he almost sabotaged his own chances at success, and Kathryn Stockett talks about going to a hotel to continue writing *The Help* despite all the rejections, and lying about it to her friends and family. Those are the essays that really stay with you because of how personal they are and I only wish they all were like that (no offense, Biz Stone). Another thing I wish for is that I didn't read this book as a novel, gulped it down, as it were. It is perfectly suited to reading an essay or two a day, letting the messages sink in, and should you decide to pick it up I would recommend that you take your time with it.

One thing that was very interesting for me is that while the general gist is the same for all the contributors' messages there were some differences and to me that reinforced the idea that has appealed to me for a while: the same thing doesn't work for everybody. For example Michael Bloomberg stressed the importance of coming to the office early and leaving late while another prominent gentleman (unfortunately I can't remember his name right now) talked about not dedicating all of yourself to your job and about remembering to spend time with your family because that part of life is of incredible importance.

This book is a great read, very inspiring and very motivating. If you're at a crossroads and thinking about the next step or are simply curious about how the people we see on TV and hear about on the radio got to where they are this book is for you.

Read more of my reviews at Bibliophile's Corner

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## Connie says

When Katie Couric was giving a college commencement speech, she got the idea of contacting some remarkable people for advice to offer to these students who were embarking on their new careers. She collected stories from people in a variety of fields--politics, the arts, sports, entertainment, newscasting, and philanthropy. She partnered with Scholarship America so all the proceeds from this book will fund college scholarships for those in need.

The stories came from intelligent people with their feet on the ground who had achieved big dreams. It was interesting to read about the humble beginnings of many of these writers, and how often the right mentor had helped open the door to success for them. Most of them were extremely hard workers who were very passionate about their chosen field. Some found fulfillment by devoting their lives to helping others. Over one hundred famous people shared their stories--some humorous and others serious.

The reader has to keep in mind that this was advice from a very famous subset of the population, the type of person that would be interviewed on a news show and who earns a good salary. Most of them had a good support system behind them, and a good education. There was nothing earthshaking and new here, but it was an interesting read to find out more about these extraordinary people.

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## **Emilie says**

So, I didn't have a strong opinion about Katie Couric one way or the other before reading this book. As I read I found myself liking her a lot. Her portions were funny, real and honest. I wish I could say the same for her celeb writers. I see her dilemma. She asks a slew of celebrities to share words of advice and some (and by "some" I mean "a lot") of the entries are awful. What can she do? Leave them out when people like Donald Trump spent all of 47 seconds writing something stale and trite?

There are many many many essays in this book and all of three struck a chord with me. The rest are really awfully written and so very cliché that it's painful to read. Through no fault of Katie's this book flopped.

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## **Marie says**

<http://mariesbookgarden.blogspot.com/...>

After delivering a commencement address, Katie Couric got the idea to gather commencement addresses and other advice from various celebrities, politicians, athletes, military commanders, philanthropists, and businesspeople. She opens each section with an anecdote from her own life...about her own childhood, how she got into television, losing her husband to cancer, raising her daughters, and being criticized for her work on the CBS Evening News.

I have always liked Couric, even though others have criticized her "perkiness." But I like perky. She's upbeat, energetic, friendly, and dynamic...the kind of person I'm naturally drawn to. She might be perky, but she's got guts, ambition, persistence, and drive!

I enjoyed it, and found some of the essays to be more powerful than others. A few I scanned over (such as the ones from some of the athletes and comedians). I read about the founding of the Blue Man Group and how the guys have used their fame for philanthropic purposes. I found myself nodding with Meryl Streep on the challenges female actors face and how females are conditioned to accept male protagonists but not so much the other way around. I was inspired by personal accounts of what prompted people to found charities that now help thousands or millions of people. I found myself dog-eared the pages to jot down fragments or quotes, including some that Couric used to open each section. Here are some the ones I liked:

"One person with passion is better than 40 people merely interested." --E.M. Forster

"Despite the obvious fault in the universe, it cannot be used as an excuse for not trying to be your best self. Instead, use unfairness as a starting point to be sure that your actions are the best you can muster, and find peace in navigating your time here with grace and humor whenever possible." --Valerie Plame

"Live is not so much what you accomplish as what you overcome." --Robin Roberts

"Acts of bravery don't always take place on battlefields. They can take place in your heart, when you have the courage to honor your character, your intellect, your inclinations, and yes, your soul by listening to its clean, clear voice of direction instead of following the muddled messages of a timid world." --Anna Quindlen

"Write down five things you love to do. Next, write down five things that you're really good at. Then just try to match them up! Revisit your list once a year to make sure you're on the right track." --Hugh Jackman

"Greatness is not found in possessions, power, position, or prestige. It is discovered in goodness, humility, service, and character." --William Arthur Ward

"Nobody ever erected a statue in honor of a critic." --John Wood

"You are carrying the future of America in your heart and your mind. So live your dreams and remember, whatever you choose to do with your life, you must also be a citizen of your country, your nation, and our interdependent world. Because while our differences make life more fascinating, our common humanity matters more." --William J. Clinton

Fareed Zakaria, international affairs journalist and bestselling author, talked about how much fear and blame there is in the U.S. today, while people do not appreciate how lucky we are. "If you listen to the political discourse in America today, you would think that all our problems have been caused by the Mexicans or the Chinese or the Muslims. The reality is that we have caused our own problems. Whatever has happened has been caused by isolating ourselves or blaming others."

"Find a way to say yes to things. Say yes to invitations to a new country, say yes to meet new friends, say yes to learn something new. Yes is how you get your first job, and your next job, and your spouse, and even your kids. Even if it's a bit edgy, a bit out of your comfort zone, saying yes means that you will do something new, meet someone new, and make a difference. Yes lets you stand out in a crowd, be the optimist, see the glass full, be the one everyone comes to. Yes is what keeps us all young." --Eric Schmidt, Executive Chair of Google

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## **Stephany says**

This was okay, but not life changing. Typical self-help and I wanted it to go a bit deeper than it did. Also, there was advice from Bill Cosby and Donald Trump that I fast-forwarded the audiobook through. No, thank you!

I think my favorite piece of advice was from Matthew McConaughey's dad in which he told Matthew to never say "I can't do X" because that assumes the feat is actually impossible and there is no way it can be done. Instead, say "I'm having trouble with X" because that means there is a solution and you just haven't discovered it yet.

As an aspiring novelist, I also took great comfort in the fact that Kathryn Stockett's bestselling book, *The Help*, was rejected 60 times before someone finally took a chance on it.

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## Laura Westmeyer says

It's always interesting to hear the stories and anecdotes that "successful people" are willing to share. I enjoyed this book - Katie Couric has a fascinating life and thinking about her experience alone made for a good read. The only major problem I personally had with this book was that the people chosen were primarily successful journalists, editors, actors & comedians. Not being in those professions, the advice wasn't as clearly applicable to my life as it might be to others. All in all, the writers were inspiring and served as a good reminder for things like "remember to stop and smell the flowers", "recognize what is important in your life, based on your priorities" and "be true to yourself" kind of themes.

Jimmy Carter is in there with his story related to "do your best, in all that you do", some famous newscaster talking about overcoming her need for perfection, Gloria Steinem had great advice, and there are many more, all organized by theme.

Alicia Keyes' account was probably my favorite in this anthology: "when you're faced with an important business decision, think to yourself, 'would I choose this, even if I were not going to gain a single penny from it?' If the answer is yes, that is what you should do to be the most true to yourself."

With so many stories, you are bound to find at least a few that you can relate to. I would recommend this book as a nice, light-yet-thought-provoking read.

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## Joy says

What was the tipping point for Malcolm Gladwell? What unscripted event made Meryl Streep who she is? How did Mario Batali cook up his recipe for success? In this inspiration-packed book, Katie Couric reports from the front lines of the worlds of politics, entertainment, sports, philanthropy, the arts, and business--distilling the ingenious, hard-won insights of leaders and visionaries, who tell us all how to take chances, follow our passions, cope with criticism, and, perhaps most important, commit to something greater than ourselves.

Among the many voices to be heard here are financial guru Suze Orman on the benefits of doing what's right, not what's easy; director Steven Spielberg on listening rather than being listened to; quarterback Drew Brees on how his (literal) big break changed his life; and novelist Curtis Sittenfeld on the secrets of a great long-term relationship (she suggests marrying someone less neurotic than you); not to mention:

- Michael Bloomberg: "Eighty percent of success is showing up . . . early."
- Eric Stonestreet: "Remember that the old lady who's taking forever in line is someone's grandma."
- Joyce Carol Oates: "Read widely--what you want to read, and not what someone suggests that you should read."
- Jimmy Kimmel: "When in doubt, order the hamburger."
- Apolo Ohno: "It's not about the forty seconds; it's about the four years, the time it took to get there."
- Madeleine K. Albright: "Never play hide-and-seek with the truth."

Along the way, Couric reflects on the good advice--and the missteps--that have guided her from her early days as a desk assistant at ABC to her groundbreaking role as the first female anchor of the "CBS Evening News". She reveals how the words of Thomas Jefferson helped her deal with her husband's tragic death from cancer, and what encouraged her to leave the security of NBC's "Today" show for a new adventure at CBS. Delightful, empowering, and moving, "The Best Advice I Ever Got" is the perfect book for anyone who is thinking about the future, contemplating taking a risk, or daring to make a leap into the great unknown. This book is for all of us, young or old, who want to see how today's best and brightest got it right, got it wrong,

and came out on top

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**Marla Stubbs says**

would make a great Graduation gift.

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