

Mel Robbins

International Best-Selling Author of
The 5 Second Rule

The High 5 Habit

Take control of your life
with one simple habit

The High 5 Habit

Also by Mel Robbins

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HAY HOUSE, INC.

Carlsbad, California • New York City
London • Sydney • New Delhi

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Published in the United States by: Hay House, Inc.: www.hayhouse.com® ***Published in Australia by:*** Hay House Australia Pty. Ltd.: www.hayhouse.com.au • ***Published in the United Kingdom by:*** Hay House UK, Ltd.: www.hayhouse.co.uk • ***Published in India by:*** Hay House Publishers India: www.hayhouse.co.in

Project editor: Melody Guy

Cover design: Skye High Interactive, Inc.

Interior design: Skye High Interactive, Inc. and Nick C. Welch

Interior photos/illustrations: Courtesy of the author

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Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4019-6212-8

E-book ISBN: 978-1-4019-6213-5

For Chris, Sawyer, Kendall, and Oakley

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Wait, Wait . . . There's More!

A Gift from Mel

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CHAPTER 1

You Deserve a High 5 Life

Let me tell you about a day, not very long ago, when I made a simple discovery. I call it the High 5 Habit and it will help you improve the most important relationship in your life—the one you have with yourself. I’m going to share with you the story, the research, and how you can use this habit to change your life too.

It all started one morning as I was standing in my bathroom brushing my teeth, and I caught my reflection in the mirror, and thought:

Ugh.

I started picking apart all the things I don’t like about myself—the dark circles under my eyes, my pointy chin, the fact that my right boob is smaller than the left one, and the saggy skin on my stomach. My mind started going: *I look horrible. I need to exercise more. I hate my neck.* Every thought I had just made me feel worse about myself.

I looked at the time—my first Zoom call started in 15 minutes. *I’ve got to get up earlier.* I thought about the deadline I was up against. The deal I was trying to close. The emails and texts I hadn’t responded to. The dog that had yet to be walked. My dad’s biopsy results. And all the things the kids needed me to do today. I felt completely overwhelmed and I hadn’t even put on a bra or had coffee yet.

Ugh.

All I wanted to do that morning was pour myself a cup of coffee, collapse in front of the TV, and just forget about all the things that were bothering me . . . but I knew that was the wrong thing to do. I knew that no one was going to swoop in and fix my problems or finish the projects on my list or

exercise for me or handle that difficult conversation I needed to have at work.

I just wanted . . . a fricking break . . . from my life.

It had been a hell of a few months. The stress was nonstop. I'd been so busy taking care of and worrying about everyone and everything else, who was taking care of me? I'm sure you can relate to that on some level too. In moments like this, when the demands of life pile up and your attitude tanks, it can create a downward spiral.

I needed someone to tell me, *You're right, this is hard. You don't deserve this. It's not fair . . . and if anyone can handle it, it's YOU.* That's what I wanted to hear. I needed reassurance and a pep talk. And, even though I'm one of the most successful motivational speakers in the world, I couldn't think of a single thing to say.

I don't know what came over me. Or why I did it. But for whatever reason, standing there in my bathroom, in my underwear, I lifted my hand to my tired reflection in a kind of salute. *I see you*, was all I wanted to say. *I see you and I love you. Come on now, Mel. You've got this.*

I realized midway through this gesture that my salute to myself was a simple high five. Recognizable, unmistakable, and as common as a handshake. We've all given and received high fives countless times in our lives. Maybe there's even something a little cheesy about them. But there I stood, braless and uncaffeinated, leaning against the bathroom sink, high fiving my own reflection.

Without saying a word, I was telling myself something I desperately needed to hear. I was assuring myself that I could do it, whatever *it* was. I was cheering for myself, and encouraging the woman I saw in the mirror to lift her chin and keep going. As my hand touched the mirror and met my reflection, I felt my spirit lift a little. *I wasn't alone. I had ME.* It was a simple gesture, an act of kindness toward myself. Something I needed, and deserved.

Immediately, I felt my chest loosen, I squared my shoulders, and I cracked a smile at how corny the high five seemed, but suddenly, I didn't look so tired, I didn't feel so alone, and that to-do list didn't seem so daunting. I went on with my day.

The next morning, the alarm went off. Same problems and same overwhelm. I got up. I made my bed. I walked into the bathroom and there was my reflection: *Hey there, Mel*. Without thinking, I smiled and found myself high fiving myself in the mirror again.

On the third morning, I got up and realized I was thinking about and *looking forward* to now seeing my reflection so I could give myself that high five. I know it's weird, but it's the truth. I made my bed a little quicker than usual and walked into the bathroom with a sense of enthusiasm that no one should have at 6:05 A.M. The only way I can describe it:

It felt like I was about to see a friend.

Later that day, I wondered about the times in life when I've gotten a high five. Naturally, I thought about playing team sports when I was younger. I thought about the road races I used to run with my girlfriends. Or watching baseball games at Fenway Park and how the stadium erupts with high fives when the Red Sox score. Or high fiving a friend when they got that promotion, or broke up with that loser, or played the winning hand in a game of cards.

And then I remembered one of the highlights of my life: running the New York City marathon in 2001, just two months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks killed 2,977 people and destroyed the Twin Towers.

For 26.2 miles, spectators jammed the sidewalks and for as far as the eye could see American flags hung from apartment windows in every building as the course wove its way through all five boroughs that make up New York City.

If it had not been for the people watching, who, for 26.2 miles, packed both sides of the route and high fived me and cheered for me, there is no way I would have made it. On my own, I just don't have that kind of Navy SEAL stamina. I get winded carrying groceries up two flights of stairs. At the time, I was a new mom, working full time with two kids under the age of three, who hadn't done the proper training for a race that long. Heck, my sneakers were barely broken in, but it had always been on my bucket list to complete this race, so when I got a chance to run it, I was determined to do it. There were so many moments when my knees buckled, my bladder leaked, and my mind pleaded, *No way. I can't do this*. At times, I slowed to

a hobble. *Why didn't I train harder? Why did I buy new sneakers two weeks ago?* Near mile 13, I was begging the volunteers at the water station to agree with me that I should quit. They wouldn't hear it. *Quit? Now? But you've come this far!* Their encouragement silenced my doubt, so off I went.

You are so much stronger than you think.

The only reason I completed that marathon was because of the constant encouragement and celebration I received along the way. If I had listened to the voices in my head, I would have stopped running at about mile seven, when the blisters on my feet tore open and each step became crazy painful. It felt so good to be cheered for—that's what kept my mind focused and my body moving. Those high fives were what fueled my belief that I could in fact do something I had never done before.

When I felt discouraged as so many other runners kept striding past me, it was the slap of a stranger's hand that kept me from quitting. And that's the thing: a high five is so much more than a slap of a hand. It's a transfer of energy and belief from one person to another. It awakens something within you. It's a reminder of something you've forgotten. Every high five said *I believe in you*, which made me believe in myself and in my ability to push forward, step by step, for six hours until I crossed that finish line and achieved that goal.

When you think about the remarkable power of a stranger's high five, it's easy to draw parallels between life and running a marathon. Both are long, rewarding, challenging, and painful at times. Imagine if you woke up every morning and you could tap into that same high five energy cheering you on as you ran through your day-to-day life?

Stop and think about it. How does criticizing yourself actually help you?

What if you could flip that and learn how to cheer yourself forward every day, every week, every year of your life, step by step, as you move toward your goals and your dreams? Just imagine if YOU were your biggest cheerleader, fan, and encourager. It's hard to imagine, isn't it? It shouldn't be.

I want you to answer this question honestly: *How frequently do you cheer for yourself?*

I bet you just came to the same conclusion I did. Almost never.

The question is, *Why*? If being loved, encouraged, and celebrated feels so darn good, if it keeps you going and helps you achieve your goals, why don't you do it for yourself?

It's the old "Put the oxygen mask on yourself first" thing.

I've heard that saying a million times, but the truth is, I never really knew how to do it in my day-to-day life. Boy, did this high five in the mirror open my eyes: to put yourself first, you need to cheer yourself into that position because that's exactly how you put everyone else there.

Think about how great you are at supporting and celebrating other people. Cheering for your favorite teams, following your favorite actors, musicians, and influencers. You buy tickets to their games, give standing ovations at their shows, follow their recommendations, purchase their new clothing lines, and carefully keep track of all their achievements, from Super Bowl wins to Grammy Awards.

You also do a great job of supporting and uplifting the people you love in your own life—your partner, children, best friends, family members, and co-workers. You plan birthday parties and celebrations for everyone in your family, you take on extra work to support your overwhelmed colleague, and you're the first one to pump up your friend when they show you their dating profile (*You look amazing!*) or start a side hustle selling supplements (*I'll take a year's supply*). You encourage everyone else to chase their goals and dreams, including the woman you just met this morning in the yoga class. When the instructor mentioned the upcoming teacher training certification program, you didn't skip a beat: *Are you going to sign up? You should! You have a beautiful downward dog.*

But when it comes to celebrating and encouraging yourself, you not only fall seriously short—you do the opposite. You trash yourself. You look at yourself in the mirror and pick yourself apart. You tear yourself down and argue against your own goals and dreams. You bend over backward for other people and never for yourself.

It's time to give yourself the encouragement you deserve and you need.

Self-worth, self-esteem, self-love, and self-confidence all begin by building those attributes within your SELF. That's why I want you to begin every day with a high five in the mirror. It's a habit you should learn, you should understand, and you should practice every single day. And that's just the beginning.

In this book, you'll learn dozens of ways to make supporting and celebrating yourself a habit. Using research, science, deeply personal stories, and the real-life results that the High 5 Habit is creating in people's lives around the world (and you'll meet a lot of them throughout this book), I'm going to prove to you and inspire you to take control of your life by high fiving yourself in all kinds of cool ways—every single day. The High 5 Habit is more than something you do—it's a holistic approach to life, a proven mindset, and powerful tools that reprogram the subconscious patterns in your mind.

You will also learn how to identify the thoughts and beliefs that take you down mentally, like guilt, jealousy, fear, anxiety, and insecurity. And more importantly, you will practice flipping them into new thought and behavior patterns that lift you up and keep you moving forward. And of course, I'm going to break all this down and show you how to do it, explain the research that proves why these tools work, and I'll even be there supporting you every day (more to come on that soon).

This is bigger than knowing how to wake up happy, or pick yourself up when you're feeling down, or hype yourself up for the biggest and most exciting moments of your life (all of which you'll learn how to do in this book).

It is about understanding and improving the most important relationship you have in the world—the one with your SELF. In these pages, you'll learn about your most fundamental needs and how to fill them. You'll also discover proven mindset strategies to help you get through *every* moment—the highs and lows, ups and downs—and never give up on the person you're staring at in the mirror.

How you see yourself is how you see the world.

As you might imagine, I've thought a lot about high fives in the process of writing this book, probably more than anyone should. What I realize now, after practicing the High 5 Habit, is that I've spent the first half of my life picking apart my reflection or altogether ignoring the woman I saw reflected back. It's ironic when you consider what I do for a living.

As one of the most booked motivational speakers and bestselling authors in the world, my job is to give you the tools and the encouragement you need to change your life. My confidence in you gives YOU confidence in you. When I really stop and think about it, my job is the embodiment of a high five. Everything I share—whether it's on the stage, or in books, YouTube videos, online courses, and social media posts—every single thing I do is meant to tell you *I believe in you. Your dreams matter. You've got this, keep going.*

I've been giving you high fives for years.

And even though I've been high fiving you, I haven't always been that great at giving them to myself. I am my own worst critic. I bet you are yours. It's only recently, when I started high fiving myself, first in the mirror and then in so many other symbolic ways, that things fell into place. When you learn how to see and support yourself, it gets easier to catch those moments when you start going mentally low and flip into a more powerful and optimistic frame of mind. With a positive mind, you'll be motivated to take positive actions to change your life. When you're equipped with that kind of high five energy and attitude, you can make anything happen.

When I stopped trashing myself and started giving my reflection a high five instead, it was more than an encouraging gesture on a low day. It flipped that self-criticism and self-hatred on its head. It changed the lens through which I viewed my life. That was the beginning of a massive shift in my life. A line in the sand. The beginning of a brand-new connection to the most important person in my life—myself. A new way of thinking about myself and about what was possible for me. It inspired me to create an entirely new way of experiencing life.

That's why I wrote this book.

It's time to cheer for YOU.

Ask yourself how you want to feel in every aspect of your life. Don't you want a high five life? A high five marriage, a high five job? Don't you want to be a high five parent and a high five friend? Don't you yearn to be seen and acknowledged and to feel the momentum of your strength and conviction pushing you forward?

Of course you do. That's what this book is all about: confidence and celebration of your SELF. With it, you can do or be anything. It ignites a chain reaction. It helps you create forward momentum, jump into celebration, forge a trusted connection with yourself, and bask in the high energy of joy.

The most powerful forces in the world are encouragement, celebration, and love. And you have withheld them from yourself. You're not the only one. We all do it.

Maybe you struggle to love yourself or can't change no matter how hard you try. Or maybe you're kicking ass and taking names, but can't truly enjoy life because you focus on what's wrong, not what's going right. Maybe your past is littered with horrible things that have been done to you, or horrible things you've done to other people.

No matter what's happened to you, I want you to see the truth.

You have a beautiful life right in front of you, and you can't see it. You have an incredible future that is just waiting for you to take control and create it. You have the most amazing ally, hype squad, and secret weapon staring at you in the mirror—and you ignore them. If you want to play a big game in life or just be happier, you must wake up and start treating yourself way better than you have been. It starts with that moment every morning, face-to-face with yourself in the mirror.

It starts with you.

If you want more celebration, validation, love, acceptance, and optimism, you must practice giving those things to yourself. For real. It starts with YOU. If you don't cheer for yourself and your dreams, who else will? If you can't look yourself in the mirror and see someone worth loving, why would anyone else? And speaking of everyone else: when you learn how to love yourself and support yourself, it helps every relationship in your life. When you can celebrate YOURSELF, it helps you cheer louder for others: your friends, your colleagues, your family, your neighbors, and your partner. That's because your relationship with yourself is the foundation of every relationship you have in life.

A word of warning.

At first, the high five will seem simple on its face, even stupid or weird. So humor me for a second, because there's a lot of research here.

The way it works on your subconscious mind and at a neural pathway level is deep. How it changes you lasts way longer than the handprints you'll leave all over your bathroom mirror. In the beginning, the high five is just something you do, but over time the validation, confidence, celebration, optimism, and action that it symbolizes becomes a part of who you are.

Here's the thing that's been a revelation to me: you can work hard, while being soft with your soul. You can take chances, screw up, and learn the lesson, without burying yourself in shame. You can have huge ambitions and still treat yourself and others with gentle kindness. You can face really hard and terrible situations in life and double down on optimism, resilience, and faith to get you through. When you stop making yourself wrong for how you're feeling, you'll immediately feel better.

It's only when you learn how to cheer, encourage, and support yourself through the ups and downs, that you'll naturally stop struggling and life will start flowing in the direction that is meant for you. You have no idea how much easier things could be if you stopped being so hard on yourself. How much more beautiful life could be. How much more rewarding the highs would become if you aren't constantly taking yourself so damn mentally low.

You deserve to be celebrated.

Not a year from now. Not when you get that promotion or lose that weight or achieve that goal. You deserve to be cheered for, as you are, where you are, right now, starting today. You not only deserve it—you need it. It satisfies your most fundamental emotional needs: to be seen, heard, and acknowledged. More than that, based on research, you thrive when you receive this kind of support. Feeling encouragement, believed in, and celebrated are the most inspiring forces on the planet.

That's why I believe your daily life should be infused with habits of celebration and optimism. By intentionally and deliberately cheering for yourself just for waking up, starting your day, and developing the habits to keep supporting yourself *no matter what*, you can burst through every single thing that's holding you back, change your life, and achieve your own personal fulfillment.

After a few weeks of high fiving myself in the mirror, I knew this simple habit was changing me in profound ways. I no longer focused on the things I thought I hated about myself. I began to realize the LEAST interesting thing about me is how I look. The best part and most lovable part is what's on the inside.

What happened to me will happen to you, too.

When you make high fiving yourself a daily habit, you will discover the secret to self-love and self-acceptance. This is another weird part about high fiving yourself: you stop seeing the physical you and you see the YOU within. The person and all that your life represents.

You're not just seeing your physical self in the mirror—you are greeting your presence, like a neighbor waving to you from their front porch. You raise your hand and silently say to yourself, *Hey you! I see you! You got this. Let's do this*, every morning. All of this will have a major impact on your mood, your feelings, your motivation, your resilience, and your attitude.

Before the High 5 Habit, I used to start my day feeling like I was pushing a boulder up a hill. Now I was leaving my bathroom every morning feeling

the wind at my back.

Each day, as I raised my hand to my reflection, that connection with myself grew stronger.

In fact, it felt so good that one day, I snapped a picture of myself doing it and posted the photo on social media. You know, because that's what we influencers do. We share the love. I did not write a caption or an explanation. Not even a hashtag. I just posted the image to my Instagram story of me high fiving myself in my bathroom mirror and went on with my day.

Turns out, I'm not the only one on the planet who needed a high five that day.