



The Five Keys
to Being
Fiercely You
Jackie Huba

When I found out that there was such a thing as a “drag cruise,” complete with forty of the country’s top drag queens and twelve hundred drag aficionados from all over the world, I couldn’t wait to sign up!

As an aspiring female drag queen (yes, women can do drag), I had been learning makeup and wig styling from my drag mother for a while but still hadn’t mastered it by the time of the cruise. So when I met Phi Phi O’Hara, runner-up to the winner on Season 4 of RuPaul’s Drag Race (the cult hit reality drag queen competition show hosted by RuPaul), I mustered up the courage to ask if she would help me with my makeup for the Black Hearts costume party. To my surprise, she immediately said yes! And she’d also help me with my promotional photo for a performance at my drag mother’s upcoming show.

The night of the party, I brought my dominatrix-inspired outfit to Phi Phi's cabin: a black studded bra and corset, black high-waisted brief, black vinyl lace-up boots, fishnet hose, and a poker-straight, black shoulder-length wig with bangs. When I showed her the long straight black wig, she thought it would look better as a ponytail, so she worked some voodoo magic on the black wig—and voilà! It became a long ponytail that she attached on top of my head. Then she whipped out a can of black hairspray and began to spray all of my Brunette hair black to match the new ponytail. When my look was finally complete, I didn't look anything like myself, but I looked sickening! For the first time, I felt like an actual queen. Lady Trinity, my drag alter ego, had come alive.

At 3:30 a.m., after cocktails galore and a ton of dancing, it was time for the photo shoot, so we made our way to the main lobby, where Phi Phi directed me to the top of the Swarovski crystal staircase. I made my way to the vertical center of the staircase and awkwardly tried to strike an attractive pose, legs outstretched and crossed, my left hand on my hip. I felt like I just looked stupid. All of a sudden I felt stone-cold sober, so instead of experiencing an alcohol-induced brazenness, I just felt really insecure. Somehow we completed the shoot with no one in our crew guffawing at my awkward poses or faces.

When Phi Phi showed me the photo the next day, I was dumbfounded. I couldn't believe it was me. In it I'm a vixen, posing seductively on the black stairs, looking hot as shit. Especially for a forty-eight-year-old woman.

The photo now hangs on my bathroom wall so I can see it every single day. I use it to remind myself of how awesome I am. I don't say that with arrogance; I say it with pride. That photo reminds me of the first time I was able to see an image of myself as a powerful woman. I know that if you want this feeling, that moment will come for you too, when even if you aren't doing drag, you will realize that you can pull off big changes within that reflect your fiercest self. I guess you could say that cruise was my coming out—in drag. It was the first time that Lady Trinity had been fully realized as a character, an alter ego.

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On that cruise, I found my need for fierce. I was hooked.

But what about you? When was the last time you did something that astounded those around you, that amazed yourself, that was outside of your comfort zone? Has it been a while? Was it in your childhood, or at college? If it was recent, did you need the help of a drink or two to muster up that courage? That's pretty common. But when was the last time you felt intimidated, insecure, afraid to do something because it might be wrong? Or when was the last time you watched someone else do something bold and you thought, "That's amazing! But I could never do that?" Unfortunately, that's pretty common, too. Why? Fear. We often hold ourselves back from our true potential because of all kinds of fears—fear of failing, fear of rejection, fear of being laughed at, even the fear of being our most glorious self.

This lack of confidence shows itself most measurably in our work lives, especially in women as compared to men. In a study by Hewlett-Packard, women working at the company applied for promotions only when they believed they met 100 percent of the qualifications necessary for the job. The men were happy to apply when they thought they could meet 60 percent of the job requirements. The study showed that women felt confident only when they feel perfect. A 2014 U.S. gender parity study at Bain & Company looked at employees' career aspirations and their confidence in getting a top management position. Both men and women were equally confident about their ability to reach a top management position at the start of their careers. However,

over time, women's aspiration levels dropped more than 60 percent while men's stayed the same. As both of these studies demonstrate, we women are holding ourselves back from our professional goals and aspirations because of our lack of confidence.

Marianne Williamson, a celebrated spiritual teacher, author, and lecturer, directly addressed this issue when she wrote:

“Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory... that is within us.”

So let's release these inhibitions and fears in order to be the fabulous people we imagine we could be. What would your life be like if you could actually become that dazzling diva you dream of being? It would be shinier than all the sequins on a stage full of drag queens, that's what! It would be more powerful than all those nagging, negative voices that live with you and inside your head.

Imagine for a moment, though, what would happen if you and all the people you know were set free from their fears and were able to embrace a life of exuberance. Can you feel that energy simmering? That spark of excitement, of possibility, is actually power—plain and simple. It is the new meaning of an old word that is changing, and that word is FIERCE.

The Oxford English Dictionary still defines “fierce” as “having or displaying an intense or ferocious aggressiveness.” Violence is implied. It has been a bloody word, often used to refer to battle. But the word “fierce” is in the process of morphing into something else, something more refined. The Urban Dictionary serves up several definitions of “fierce,” such as “having exceptional quality, being bold, displaying chutzpah, cool, and eye-catching,” and being used to describe someone “who is on fire and possesses too much swag for the common man or woman to handle.” As we see it, the word “fierce” means bold, empowered, confident, fabulous, remarkable, outspoken, and strong. We want a world that’s full of this kind of fierce. We want our friends to be fierce. We want you to be fierce.

And we’ve found a way to do that. We’ve found the fiercest collection of people on the planet, and we want to share with you what we have learned from them so that you can be your most fabulous and confident self by thinking like they do.

Ladies and gentlemen, we give you...THE DRAG QUEENS!

So just how does a middle-aged ex-IBMer, ex-computer programmer, former corporate executive, author, and straight woman go from that to performing in drag as the glamorously fierce Lady Trinity? Here's how it all started.

Raised in a blue-collar family, I (Jackie) did everything I could to be the best daughter possible: I got straight As in school, behaved perfectly, earned a degree in computer science, and became a hardworking marketer at IBM. I was always the good girl, doing the right thing, never making waves. I did fine, but never felt good enough. After a failed marriage and another failed long relationship, I started to question who I was. I found myself on my own, in my forties, at the lowest point in my life. I was bored with the work I had been doing, felt stifled creatively, and knew I wasn't living up to my potential. I felt insecure and knew something drastic needed to happen. At forty-seven, though, I wasn't sure that I had the confidence to reinvent myself and do something completely different. I was stuck.

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During this time, not coincidentally, I found myself freakishly drawn to and inspired by pop superstar Lady Gaga. She even became the subject of my last book, *Monster Loyalty: How Lady Gaga Turns Followers into Fanatics*. Here was a woman who had created a powerful, disruptive persona—complete with crazy makeup, big wigs, wild costumes, and tall heels—and had successfully conquered the misogynist, male-dominated recording industry.

I began to think, doesn't everyone, every day, create personas as we act out the various roles we play in society? You have a professional persona you create for work, a more nurturing persona with your kids, a free-spirited persona when you are out with your friends, and I could go on and on. All of these personas together make up our personality. But in adult life we often alter our personas too much in order to fit into society. We worry about what others will think of us. Sometimes it's just easier to conform rather than stand out. This is especially true for women. Psychology tells us that self-doubt derails us from pursuing our passions and accomplishing our greatest goals. Fear and doubt keep us clinging to conformity and stop us from being our best selves.

And, sure enough, there I was one night in my every-day uniform—a wrap dress with comfortable (and, I'd later learn, dowdy) slingbacks, alone, feeling defeated on the couch, surfing through channels when I stumbled on RuPaul's Drag Race. I simply could not keep my eyes off of those drag queens. Here were men going balls out (or, more precisely, in) to create these fierce,

fabulous, female characters for the stage. I watched them, envious, as they unabashedly transformed themselves into whatever their hearts desired, unafraid to flout the socially acceptable boundaries of beauty by experimenting with costumes, cosmetics, and wigs that defied expectations and even gravity. Here were men revering womanhood and pulling together the most feminine, most fabulous, and most glamorous traits that I (supposedly) just naturally possessed. No limits, no apologies, just strong, bold, dynamic femininity accessorized with a stiletto-sharp wit and a give-no-fucks attitude. As I watched season after season, I began to realize that drag queens are terrific role models for how to build confidence: they create bold personas, own the way they look, command attention using powerful body positions, aren't afraid to take risks, and can shake off criticism with a flip of their wig. When I found myself in challenging personal and business situations, I started thinking, "What Would a Drag Queen Do?" I wondered how I could live every day with that sense of empowerment.

Something that RuPaul said really changed my thinking about how I could attain the same confidence as the queens I watched on the show. She said, "You're born naked and the rest is drag."

Most of us think of drag as being a performance art for the stage. But RuPaul's insight is that we create and perform personas in our everyday life. Whether you know it or not, you are doing drag right now. You do drag every day. Your drag is not just what you wear, but also how you act, what you say, how you say it, and how you carry yourself. And we can transform ourselves into

any persona we want, just as we did when we were kids on Halloween. What I wanted was the power and confidence of the drag performers I saw on TV. Hell, if men could make this amazing transformation into fierce glamazons through drag, why couldn't I? So while still doing my day job, I decided that I, Jackie Huba, would become—wait for it—a drag queen!

As I mentioned earlier, women can do drag. When most people think of drag performers, they think of men performing as female characters who are, of course, called drag queens. Actually, there are other lesser-known categories of drag: women who perform in drag as male characters are called drag kings, and women who do drag as female characters are known as bio-queens, faux queens, or simply female drag queens. That's what I wanted to do.

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I began to immerse myself in the world of drag. I watched hundreds of live drag performances, went on two drag cruises, interviewed the world's top drag queens about how they create their powerful female personas, and got their advice on how to do the same for myself. Many of the queens I interviewed have been on RuPaul's Drag Race, because in the drag world these performers represent the best of the best.

I mentored with a local drag mother; developed my own drag persona named Lady Trinity; learned how to do theatrical makeup, wig, and costume styling; mastered the art of lip-syncing; and learned to playfully seduce my audiences (large and small). I've performed in some of the top drag events in the world. And I've met multitudes of others who've also been transformed by their love of drag queens. I want you to be transformed the way they were.

My love and reverence for the art of drag and the performers who are transformed by it has changed my life. And choosing this path to become a female drag queen has been one of the most terrifying and rewarding choices I have ever made. Doing drag has bestowed upon me strategies to manage my self-esteem issues, helped me to take myself less seriously, and enabled me to live my life more boldly. In short, I now own my own power. And I love it!

This is your chance, your opportunity to also make a change. You are tired of hiding the shiny, sparkly parts of yourself because of the fear of criticism. You want to experience the feeling of being your most fabulous self. You want to be confident, strong, full of life. You want to be more fiercely you.

The lessons we can learn from drag queens are rooted in well-researched concepts in psychology. You see, if you are going to be your fiercest self, you need to develop a persona that is intensely fabulous. Because it is this intensity, this over-the-top quality, your persona takes on a life of its own to become the fully real for you. Only then can you call on it in your everyday life to help you manage those confidence-jarring situations.

The good news is that this fierce and fabulous queen-like persona is already present somewhere in your psyche. And believe it or not, she fits well inside you.

Through my transformation into the fierce Lady Trinity, and interviews with the top drag queens in the country, I discovered Five Keys to Fierce that will unlock your inner fabulousness and help you think like a fierce drag queen in your everyday life.

The Five Keys to Fierce

Key One: Create Your Drag Persona

For RuPaul and other drag queens, creating an alter ego, or persona, goes beyond the outward transformation achieved by wigs, makeup, and costuming. Queens create whole new characters, which they express as a separate identity from their everyday selves.

When I (Jackie) decided to do drag, one of the very first things I had to do was develop my drag character, including coming up with a name and an aesthetic.

To start the naming process, I first wrote down attributes I wanted my drag character to have: classy, fearless, confident, sleek, precise, complex, sexy—all things I wanted to be. Then I thought about movie characters I have been drawn to in the past. My favorite movie of all time is the Matrix, and its lead female character, Trinity, is a kind of superwoman. I decided to combine “Lady” from Lady Gaga with Trinity to get Lady Trinity. I loved it!

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According to Carl Jung, one of the founding fathers of psychology, the persona is a public sense of self, and even though everyone has multiple personas, if you believe that the persona is all that your personality is composed of, you might be too adjusted to the outer world and not enough to your inner world. The truth is that we are complex people who need both an inner identity and an outer image. And this is why drag works so well. Through our drag persona we can present more bold and confident version of ourselves to the world.

Key Two: **Always Look Sickening in Everyday Drag**

Drag queens are experts at using wigs, clothing, shoes, and accessories in the most imaginative ways to create their magnetic personas. They dress to command attention.

What you wear doesn't just send a message to the world; it also sends a message to your own brain. Everything that you put on, that you enclothe yourself in, not only broadcasts outward who you want to be perceived as, it also broadcasts that same information inward to your own psyche. In other words, what you wear affects how well you think and how good you feel about yourself. Psychologists call this "enclothed cognition."

So let's talk about lingerie. Because, believe it or not, there have been academic studies on our undies. Christina Tsaousi, in her doctoral dissertation for the University of Leicester in England, discovered that women chose their underwear not only for its function but, more importantly, for the way they wanted to be perceived by the people who might see it. So if you truly want to experience yourself as fabulous, the next time you're shopping for underwear, pick up some "power panties!"

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Key Three: **Strike a Pose and Embody Your Power**

Whether they're working during a dance number or just standing in one place lip-syncing a dramatic ballad, drag queens radiate fierceness onstage by using powerful body positions that demand all eyes on them. From the moment a queen steps onstage, she owns the place. Body positions and movements can increase feelings of power and confidence, and the rest of us can strike a pose in everyday ways by putting our bodies into higher power posture positions.

Posture changes affect us in such a powerful way due in large part to the neurotransmitters in our brains and the hormones in our bodies—specifically, dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and testosterone. It's biological. Confidence, it turns out, is created and sustained by more than one of our genes, these hormones, and the combination of how we think and what we do. Our thoughts, actions, and biology all play parts in how we perceive ourselves as powerful and confident; so this means that how we use our bodies can cause changes in our brain, and those changes can help us feel more powerful. It's a wonderful cycle.

Stepping up, striking a pose, and shining those pearly whites can bring about positive changes in your brain, which will mean more powerful brain chemicals lined up to support you!

Key Four: Tell Your Critics to Sashay Away

Although drag queens are celebrated for their performance art, they are also magnets for criticism. Anyone who flouts gender norms seems to ruffle feathers in our still heteronormative culture. All of this criticism has bred a kind of tough-as-nails culture in the drag world.

Successful queens learn to shake off the haters and not worry about what other people think.

With so much criticism out there, why are we so hard on ourselves? Why are we our own worst critic? It's negative self-talk that can prevent you from taking risks or trying new things.

That's why it's as important to banish inner critics as outer critics. While drag queens have learned to have a "give as good as you get" attitude to ward off outer critics, it's time to take the same approach with self-internalization as well. Name your inner critic Felicia, and tell her "Bye!"

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Key Five: You Better Werk!

Drag queens are some of the most hardworking people in show business, and they are constantly striving to keep their performances fresh. This means taking risks by trying new looks, new songs, or new dance moves every week. There's little time to perfect these, so queens have to exude confidence when bringing new routines to the stage or else the audience can see the doubts. There is no time to ruminate over what didn't work in the last performance.

Taking action is risky. Those action steps look good on paper and sound good in theory, but they sure are hard to actually do, aren't they? The key is to be willing to take a risk to do something that you love, that you care about, and that fills you with passion.

All you need to do before an interview, a speech, or any potentially high-risk or high-stress event is to "power prime" your brain. Take a few minutes beforehand to write down a moment when you were powerful, and then take those feelings with you.

These keys unlock the wisdom that will set you free: you get to control who you are in this world. Too many of you feel controlled by your significant others, your bosses, your friends, your children, your parents. We want you to consider less what other people think and instead focus on becoming who you were meant to be. Only you can let out that inner queen who is confident

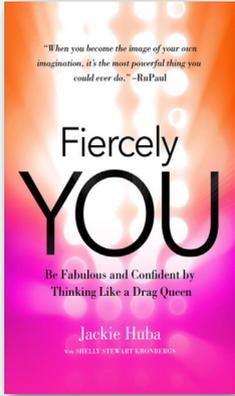
in herself no matter what other people think. Only you can create the amazing person you see inside your head and feel in your heart.

You don't actually have to become a drag queen to gain these benefits of feeling fabulous and more confident, but it could be fun. And you may learn that you love sequins or stiletto heels. The idea here is to take the ways that drag queens create fierce, bold personas and apply them to our everyday lives to create self-confidence. But in order to apply them, we can't just change our thinking; we have to change our actions. There are ways to incorporate a fabulous new you that don't break the dress code at work, but do sneak in a hint of fabulous.

Would you like to have a powerful, confident inner drag queen that you can access any time you feel insecure? Can you imagine the power that can reside inside you as a fierce alter ego? Remember, all you have to do is ask yourself when you feel fear... What Would a Drag Queen Do?

That's WWDQD, honey! 🍯

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Jackie Huba is the author of four books, including the brand new book, *Fiercely You: Be Fabulous and Confident by Thinking Like a Drag Queen*. The book is a creative, playful approach to the serious problems people face regarding confidence and risk taking. She also translated the book into an unforgettable TEDx talk last year, making TED history with her presentation “Unleash the Power of Your Inner Drag Queen,” which was the first ever TED Talk done by a female drag queen. Find out more about the book, drag workshops and WWDQD? merchandise at [EnterTheQueendom.com](#).

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