

PROTECT YOUR PEACE

**NINE UNAPOLOGETIC PRINCIPLES
FOR THRIVING IN A CHAOTIC WORLD**

TRENT SHELTON

**PROTECT
YOUR
PEACE**

ALSO BY TRENT SHELTON

The Greatest You: Face Reality, Release Negativity, and Live Your Purpose

*Straight Up: Honest, Unfiltered, As-Real-As-I-Can-Put-It Advice for Life's
Biggest Challenges*

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*This book is dedicated to my mother, Aqua Shelton.
Thank you for showing me the importance of peace.*

You will live on forever. I love you.

*This book is also dedicated to my father, George Shelton.
Thank you for instilling the values in me that have now inspired the
world.*

I love you, Dad.

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INTRODUCTION

Constant Battle

Before we get started, I want to take a second to say thank you. Thank you for taking ownership over your life. Thank you for embarking on a journey the majority of people may never go on. Many people talk about change. Many of them project the image of change. But the reality is, according to some recent research, only 8 percent actually put in the work to *create change*.

The goal is not for you to start this book—anyone can do that. The goal is for you to *finish* the book, be in that 8 percent, become what I call an “8 percenter,” and understand what *protecting your peace* is all about.

If I could pass on one thing to my kids and loved ones, that’s what it would be: how to create and *protect their peace*. I don’t mean me protecting their peace *for* them. I’m talking about showing them how protecting my peace changed *my* life, in the hope that it will inspire them to create their own unique formula. The intention of this book is similar. I haven’t created a strict how-to manual that tells you exactly what to do to protect *your* peace. Instead, I’m going to share my process, and what I have gained from creating it, to help you jump-start a process of your own. Along the way, you’ll come to understand what I mean when I talk about peace—and why protecting yours is the most important thing you can do.

THE BATTLE FOR YOUR PEACE

I need you to understand something. What we will discuss in the following chapters is a matter of life and death. I’m not talking about physical death—at least, not right away—but a different kind. You see, losing your peace will lead to an internal death. The death of your dreams and your goals. The death of your best, most fulfilled self.

The battle going on for your peace is a silent one—and there have been too many people who have already lost these silent battles. In a world full of posts, filters, and Photoshop, it's not hard to guess why many of us feel so let down when we aren't perfect. When trying to be perfect (a losing game 100 percent of the time), we fail to talk about our silent battles. This can lead to serious depression, one of the major thieves of our peace. In 2021, 48,183 people in the United States alone took their life by suicide.¹

I dedicated my life to helping people in 2009. The catalyst was when one of my best friends, my college roommate, Anthony, took his own life. At the time, I felt I could have done more. I felt like I wasn't there enough. It was gut-wrenching to be so close to someone but then realize how far away I was from understanding what he was going through. Although it was devastating, Anthony's life was not lost in vain. At that moment, I redefined my mission, which led me to many callings that I couldn't have imagined before. It led me away from the career I'd hoped to have as a pro football player. It led me to create my nonprofit organization RehabTime, a platform that has allowed me to speak from my heart and develop ideas that have resonated with people around the world. It has led me to a place where I can inspire people to recognize their greatness and become the best version of themselves. And it's led me to create this book for you.

I know God has allowed me to have certain experiences in my life, so that I can be a vessel to assist others in realigning themselves on the path toward peace. I've learned to identify common themes that I see in people who are losing their peace so that I can help them on this path. And the path starts with disconnecting from whatever may be stealing your peace to begin with. I'm guessing that you're familiar with many of these thieves yourself. Maybe you're in a silent war with one or even several of them right now. That's okay. I've been there. Just because you've had a few bad chapters, that doesn't mean your story can't end well. *Those chapters don't have to define your life.* In fact, they can be used to *refine* your life, depending on your perspective and willingness to heal.

If y'all are with me and ready to boost your life with the key ingredient that so many overlook daily, I need you to repeat this mantra with me out loud:

I. Declare. War!

War against anything and everything that is taking away from my . . .

P-E-A-C-E

This simple five-letter word is the key that unlocks ultimate satisfaction and true happiness. *Internal wealth.*

A PRESCRIPTION FOR PEACE

What comes to mind when you think of the greatest wealth in the world? Dollar signs? Certain celebrities? The blue check mark on your socials? Mansions? Extra commas and zeros in your bank account? If so, don't feel bad. Many of us associate wealth with these *things*. In fact, that's how I thought for many years of my life. I believe we are programmed to think this way. It's part of the age we live in. Isn't it ironic that although there is a heavy cost that goes along with each of the items listed above, the inner peace that you cannot see or hold in the palm of your hand is what is truly priceless? *Peace does not depend on everything going on around you. It depends on what is going on inside you.*

Look up the word *peace* in the dictionary, and you'll see it defined something like this:

1. Freedom from disturbance; tranquility.
2. A state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended.

The second definition brings me back to an important point. There *is* a constant battle, both internal and external, that we all face for our peace every day. In today's world, where technology is advancing by the day and there is never a shortage of distractions, the enemy just gets stronger and stronger. One of my goals in this book is to help you understand where the battle lines are. I want you to understand your own worth so you'll know just how much you have to fight for.

I have heard before that some things in life are simple but not easy. For example, going for a walk in nature is simple for many of us. But distractions like scrolling on our phone might make it not so easy to find the time to go for that walk. Simple, not easy. Like many aspects of life, when I think of

peace, it seems *simple* in its nature—yet *not easy* to attain or sustain. It must be protected at all costs.

**THERE IS A
CONSTANT
BATTLE, BOTH
INTERNAL AND
EXTERNAL, THAT
WE ALL FACE
FOR OUR PEACE
EVERY DAY.**

So, in this book, I want to offer you my own prescription for peace.

My personal prescription—we'll call it the Protect Your Peace Process—involves nine principles, divided into three sections. The first section, Protect Your Energy, discusses the power of boundaries, the importance of disconnecting from negative distractions, and knowing your own worth. The second section, Protect Your Mind, teaches you how to trust your vision, guard your focus, and shift your perspective. In the final section, Protect Your Soul, we'll talk about how you can create happiness, align internally, and live in fulfillment. At the end of each chapter, you'll find a Protect Your Peace Practice to help you put the ideas to use right away. I hope you keep note of your responses and share them on your social if you're inspired. Be sure to tag me @TrentShelton so I can see how you're doing!

A CRITICAL MESSAGE

Before we dive in, I have to share another foundational piece that led me to this moment with you. In 2015, life was the definition of bittersweet for me. My career as a speaker and coach was taking off, the videos I made were spreading, doors were opening, and people were starting to discover me. I embarked on a 32-city tour. My team handled all the logistics, rather than using Ticketmaster, Live Nation, or anyone like that. We sold out every U.S. city and were fortunate enough to book several shows outside the United States.

But then I burned out. I had very little peace. Everything was great externally, but internally I was defeated. I hate to say it, but these gifts and blessings God had given me began to feel like a burden. I felt like I was in prison within my purpose. That was on me, though. I had yet to understand boundaries, or the other principles of peace that we are going to dive into in this book.

In San Francisco there was one memorable night when I felt empty but determined to fill others up. I remember praying backstage, "God, please just use me. I don't know what I have left in me, but please just use me how You want to." Despite feeling drained, I was able to get onstage and deliver. After my talk I went around smiling and taking pictures with attendees, still feeling empty inside. I found the back door of the venue, which led to a smoky alleyway, like in the movies. It was dark and I thought I was alone, so I let

myself break down. “What’s going on?!” I cried out. *This is supposed to be better; I am supposed to feel better.*

Just then I looked up and saw what appeared to be an unhoused man listening to me.

To make myself feel better, I thought, *let me bless this man*. I reached into my pocket for a hundred-dollar bill and held it out. “No, I don’t need that,” he said. “Don’t feel sorry for me. I actually feel sorry for you. I see your name and face on the billboard and how you are the guy everyone is here to see. I’m looking at you right now and it seems like you have a lot missing from your life. It seems like you have everything that means nothing. It may look like I have nothing, but I still have everything. That’s because I have peace. I have peace in my life that’s unconditional, and my spirit can always identify a soul that’s missing what it needs most.”

I hopped in my rental car and drove down to the waterfront, which was not far away from the venue. The salt in the air and the sea breeze on my face was deeply refreshing as I looked out over the bay and just prayed. I simply asked God to fill me up with peace. This was the moment where the words *protect your peace* were birthed into my soul and became a standard of how I would live my life from then on.

Looking back and piecing all of this together, I now realize that God not only helped me on stage that night. He also gave me the gift of a breaking point, and he gave me a messenger in a form that I did not expect, which led me to seek what I now see as the single most important thing. My pursuit of peace officially started in that moment. Since then it has taken me through many ups and downs. Each step along the way has continued to emphasize that no matter how much you seem to have externally, it will never define or sustain your happiness. That comes from realizing what is truly important in life. That comes from your *peace*. The time is now to recognize and protect it!

What I’m sharing with you in these pages is my journey. I hope it will inspire you to go on your own journey, which might look different from mine. I am here to give you everything I have. But like I have always said . . .

It all starts with you!

PART I

**PROTECT
YOUR
ENERGY**

PRINCIPLE 1

SET BOUNDARIES

Life is too short to spend another day at war with yourself.

— RITU GHATOUREY

Welcome to the first part of our journey together. I'm glad you're here. Over the next three chapters, we will dive deep into the importance of *protecting your energy*.

Energy is everything. It should be protected by any means. It's our most precious resource, so it deserves the utmost respect. This is vital to your life, because the more you tolerate from this world, the more you separate from your inner peace. Think of protecting your energy as a safeguard for your personal well-being. Imagine it as drawing a protective circle around yourself. In this circle, your energy isn't wasted but used wisely on what truly matters to you. This is the kind of life worth living, isn't it? Each time you protect your energy, you send a powerful message: "I value myself." By the end of Part I, my sincere hope is that you establish firm boundaries that cannot be compromised, recognize the importance of disconnecting as needed, and feel confident in understanding your own worth. Now let's get to work on the first step: setting these boundaries.

Let's be real: the world comes at us fast these days. Demands and requests pour in left and right, from our work and our communities, from our friends and families, or from complete strangers. These demands often come in with no regard to whether or not they're good for *you*—chances are, they're from people who want your time, your money, your energy, and ultimately your *peace*. The more you let these requests and demands in, the more you give yourself away. Keep doing this and then one day—*boom*. You're done. You've given all yourself away, and you don't know how to get yourself

back.

There was a time in my life when I was spread too thin. Trying to take care of situations over here, people over there, and issues somewhere in between. Trying to be everything everyone wanted me to be. But my life gained so much clarity when I began to feel the power in setting boundaries. When I claimed the right to say, “Nah, I ain’t feelin’ that.” Felt the power in standing up for myself and telling people what I wasn’t going to tolerate. I put boundaries in place so that I could live my best life. Some people took offense. Some people saw this as me being cold, distant, or unhelpful. That’s fine with me. Like I said, I developed this skill so that I could live my best life, and if me living my best life offends you, then I don’t need you around. Sorry / not sorry!

Let’s get one thing out the way: I am going to challenge you. Straight up. If this was easy, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. You’re going to need some thick skin. If you’ve already got that, great. If not, don’t worry—I’ll help you add it to your bag as well. But you’re going to have to hear some tough truths. There’s no other way through.

FLIP THE SCRIPT

Here’s the first of those tough truths: many of us are professional people-pleasers, or “Triple Ps,” as I like to call them. Triple Ps are worried about what other people think and easily manipulated by the perception that they’re letting someone down. But when we seek to please others above even ourselves, it almost always leads to being drained, burned out, or feeling stuck. We give it all away to others and leave nothing in the tank for ourselves.

How do I know? I’ve been there. I believe I have one of the biggest hearts out there, and before I figured out how to create boundaries for myself—before I figured out how to protect my own peace—it used to get me in a lot of trouble. Not anymore! I refuse. Does this mean I’ve got it all figured out now? No. I catch myself slipping sometimes. But after some practice, I know what to watch for and how to recall my boundaries rather than just pleasing others.

How did I do it? First of all, it was a *must* for me to grow my emotional intelligence, and it was a *must* for me to figure out how to not only create but

stand firm on my boundaries. As I like to say: I love helping people with their problems—until their problems become my problems. That’s a boundary I’ve created, and I stand on it.

I believe many of us struggle with setting boundaries because we worry too much about what other people think. Worry and guilt are first cousins—worry is the reason why people don’t set boundaries; guilt is the reason people don’t stand firm on them. Our ideas about self-worth more often come from how others see us than from how we see ourselves. Sad but true. If we’re programmed this way, but we decide to look at what we want (instead of what others want for us), it opens us up to feeling we’re letting people down and failing to live up to their expectations for us. We start to feel we have to choose what *they* want over what *we* want in order to avoid that painful guilty feeling.

Do you battle with these negative feelings? Do you worry that you’re letting people down? Do you feel guilty when you can’t show up for someone when they ask you to because you are choosing to show up for *you*?

If so, you have come to the right place. Our first order of business in the Protect Your Peace Process is to flip the script on all that. When you feel worry or guilt, it’s not all the way bad because it means that you really care. You have a big heart and you’re connected to the people around you. But what about *you*? Don’t you deserve that same level of care and connection with yourself? Pouring that love into others can’t last when you aren’t consistently pouring it back into you first.

ADD BOUNDARIES TO SUBTRACT STRESS

Often we say yes when our energy is telling us to say no. We say “sure” when we aren’t sure. But why? Not all of us are trapped by worry and guilt. But some of us feel it’s what we need to do in order to “keep the peace.” But let me ask you something: Are you really keeping the peace when you throw your own peace out the window? Does it make sense to help others keep *their* peace when doing that is the direct cause of you eliminating *yours*? You’re not keeping the peace. You’re losing *your* peace, and when you lose your peace, you start a war within yourself. Nipsey Hussle said it best: “Would you rather be at peace with the world and at war with yourself? Or be at war with the world and at peace with yourself?”