FROM INTERNATIONAL PILOT
to AUTHOR, COACH & SPEAKER

GROWING FORWARDS

with Charlotte Hillenbrand



I found myself in tears in the baking aisle of Coles one day. Not because of the empty shelves of the pandemic – though we all remember that despair – but because I knew I had hit bottom.

In the previous 18 months, I had been stood down as an international airline pilot when the Australian borders closed, lived through six months of uncertainty before it was clear I would actually lose my job, and finally – what truly pulled the rug from under me—lost my pilot's licence for medical reasons, which meant I would never fly again.

Losing my job stung, but it was nothing compared to losing the chance to ever do it again.

That's what had me sobbing next to the flour that day.

Not only did I have to leave the store with some shred of dignity intact, I also had to build a new future for myself.

Lucky for me, I had spent lockdown diving into subjects that felt vital: resilience (what is it and can we actually grow it?), applied neuroscience (how does the brain work, and how can we make it work in our favour?), and conversations with professional women. I discovered that even strong, capable women—CEOs, entrepreneurs, leaders—were quietly battling impostor syndrome, burnout, and that hapless feeling of "is this it?"

Patterns began to emerge:

· We underestimate our inherent strengths and chase qualifications, thinking we need more to stand out.

· We ignore our values, leaving us adrift and irritable, wondering why life feels off.

· We discount small steps, craving big leaps, only to crash and feel like impostors.

I came home from Coles that day knowing I had to build myself up. I leaned into my strengths, clarified my values, and took ridiculously small steps—because small steps, taken consistently outpace the giant leaps we never take.

I wrote it all down, and realised if it could help me, it could help others. That became my 2023 book, Growing Forward – Navigating Change with Ease.

Gentle, not pushy, like a conversation over a cuppa: change doesn't need to be dramatic or exhausting. Small, slow, intentional steps can create profound results.

I know my method works because I've lived it —publishing a book and coaching others toward aligned, sustainable success. I also know it works because when I ignore it, I end up a Sudoku-playing, procrastinating mess…

Charlotte
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