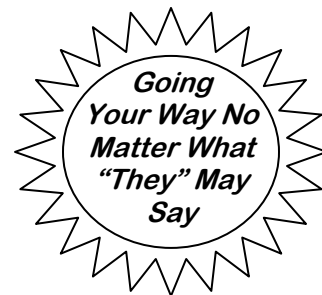


**Foreword by John Fuhrman**

Bestselling Author of *Leading Leaders to Leadership* and *Yes!*

**Press**

**On!**



**How Naysayers Cause Us  
To Grow and Succeed**

**Michael Kerrigan**

Author of the Innovative *What Choice Do I Have?*

A ***Possibility Press*** Book

# Press On!

**MICHAEL KERRIGAN**

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*Foreword*

**Press On Toward  
What YOU *Really* Want!**

**P**ressing on in the face of rejection—Wow! That’s the story of my life and it needs to be the story of yours as well, especially if it’s important for you to live a great life! For it’s only in pressing on that you can elevate yourself above the ordinary—and transcend the frustration of limits and rejection to a happier, more fulfilling life experience.

Jam-packed with wisdom, *Press On!* helps you deal with naysayers and others who would try to discourage you, take you off track, and hinder your progress. Pressing on toward your dream or objective—no matter what anyone else may think, say, or do—is the grandest adventure of life. It’ll cause you to stretch, grow, and become all you were meant to be. Michael skillfully teaches you, using brilliant examples, how not to let others’ agendas direct the course of your life.

Every successful person I know lives by the principles revealed in this ground-breaking book. Read it and you’ll know what they know in identifying naysayers for what they are—dream-stealing, objective-thwarting individuals who really don’t

understand what's inside of you to do—and *move on*. Some may not even want you to get ahead—of them!

Read and apply this remarkable book's teachings and focus on what you want, not what "they"—whether in person or online—say you should or shouldn't be, do, or have. Be sure to check out *Chapter 22, The Voice of Cyberspace*. It's an up-to-the-minute discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of using the Internet for advice, covering how to deal with naysayers on line.

Now what are you waiting for? Put the pedal to the metal and...*press on!*

Toward your continued success,

*John Fuhrman*

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*Prologue*

## **Ignore the Naysayers and *Press On!***

*To let the wishes or attitudes of anyone else derail you, including naysayers in person, in the media, or over the Internet, is unconscionable—as well as a source of great sadness and regret.*

**M**ost of us, at some point in our lives, believed anything was possible. For example, when we were children our visions of the future were limitless. We pictured ourselves being a firefighter, basketball star, famous singer, admired leader, an inventor, a writer, or something else. There was no question in our minds that this was the role we would play. We believed anything was possible—freedom, wealth, travel, adventure, stardom. We were so convinced that, by the time we turned twenty-one, we just knew we would change the world.

But much to our chagrin, far too many of us have let others have their way with us when it wasn't in our best interest. Before we realized it, we found ourselves detoured from pressing on toward our objectives, letting our heartfelt desires fade into oblivion. We got lost and settled for the mundane everydayness of an ordinary life.

Like many, we may have been lured into an inappropriate people-pleasing trap. We unthinkingly acquiesced to naysayers

and those whom we thought cared about us. Whenever they said we should or shouldn't be, do, or have something, we listened. Unfortunately, this kept us from growing and led to an increasing level of discontent. Sadly, we probably never even questioned it because this seemed to be the way life was for most everybody we knew—lackluster and unfulfilled.

We tried to cope with the pain by falling into bad habits like overeating, smoking, drinking, incessantly seeking entertainment and instant gratification, and by buying and doing things we couldn't afford. But none of these things worked; they only made matters worse. These attempts to compensate for a life not fully lived never led to happiness and success.

We became employees instead of business owners—second fiddle instead of conductor. We caved in to the seeds of doubt others planted in our minds. We got bogged down by doing what we thought we were *supposed* to do, rather than pressing on in our own direction—staying the course, going the distance. When we shared our aspirations, we were told we should just be thankful for what we have, we weren't being practical, or we were nothing more than dreamers.

We may even have been asked, “Who do you think you are?” The enlivened spirit of following the call to adventure, boldly meeting and overcoming challenges, and living the life we had once imagined no longer seemed so important.

We allowed naysayers to beat us up to where we ended up doing or not doing what they told us we should or shouldn't do—and we lost our way. Our vision of a brighter future may not have disappeared entirely, but it dimmed or went out of focus.

Continuing to do what others said was more important or more secure, our vision of the exciting life we had imagined got lost. Some of us even used the word *should* in our self-talk, as an excuse or permission not to grow and become happier and more successful. Life droned on as we gradually gave up the hope of having a better tomorrow. We had let one or more people discourage us. Our desires went into cardiac arrest and there was no

one around to help us revive them. We put our tails between our legs, went home, shut down, and forgot about them.

But why?

*Some people try to sabotage our desires, giving advice that only plants seeds of doubt—either personally or over the Internet. They really don't know us or the facts, nor do they truly care about what's on our hearts to do.*

It seems that all of us have had episodes of giving up what we really wanted for what we were told were good, sensible reasons. Or we second-guessed ourselves out of a fear of failure, never even attempting to run for office, start a business, or follow through on an idea for an invention. We let the negative influence of others cause us to turn our backs on our objectives.

*How sad....*

Acquiescing to naysayers who use the innocent-sounding six-letter word, should (or shouldn't) is at least partly responsible for many of us not being where we'd like to be. Of course, where *you* are now may be just fine. But only you know for sure. You may already be doing what you really want to do with your life. If so, congratulations! But two out of three people *aren't*—largely because they gave in to the naysayers.

Rest assured, this book is not intended to teach that should can never be used. There are certainly situations where it is appropriate and desirable, which are discussed later. However, should is typically not well received. When people are told they should or shouldn't be, do, or have something, it tends to elicit a feeling of rebellion. They feel anger at some level but may not even be sure why. They stuff their feelings, while resentment eventually builds to where they lash out in unexpected ways.

Most people don't think about how the word should, when used inappropriately, can negatively affect relationships, life choices, and leadership effectiveness. This book addresses those issues, sharing how to press on no matter what the circumstances may be.



Manipulators often use should to further their own agendas at the expense of others. They are not concerned about creating win-win situations. Win-lose may be just fine with them. They use should or shouldn't to coerce and control, and often give advice without being qualified to do so. They attempt to maintain the status quo. Naysayers try to instill fear and don't want others to get ahead of them. They tend to be jealous and discount other people's desires. "Misery loves company" prevails.

Some people also use should or shouldn't to establish or maintain order. Consider the family structure you probably lived in from the day you were brought home from the hospital, until you went out on your own. Your parents and older siblings may have started wagging their fingers at you, lecturing about the way life is around the old homestead—*their* homestead.

The older the sibling, the more he or she may have felt entitled, or even responsible, to tell you how things should or shouldn't be. Most of the time, however, they didn't use those words per se. They were more prone to use the power-packed phrases, "You'd better..."; "You must..."; or "You better not..." They didn't want you thinking you had a choice.

The implications may have been serious—if you did or didn't do what they said, you would be in BIG trouble! Childhood sibling relationships are only one example. Then, as adults, they often continue the habit of trying to establish or maintain control in dealing with others.

With the lingering unease you may have experienced from those encounters, you might have settled for many of the mediocre relationships you have today. Now that you've decided to press on and are, perhaps, associating with more positive people, you may be aware of undercurrents of dissatisfaction with some of your previously developed relationships. While you may have been doing your best to ignore those feelings, they are still there—that's understandable. Your siblings, as well as many of your long-time friends and acquaintances, may have chosen to maintain the status quo while you've chosen to move on. Think

about it. Are you still friends with everyone you knew in school or college? There just isn't enough time to maintain quality relationships where there's now less in common.

Millions of people have experienced the consequences of following naysayers' advice. You're hardly alone! We often use the negative messages we received and adhered to when we were growing up to guide us in our current decisions and activities—appropriately or not. How often have you done what you thought was expected of you, and stayed precisely where you were, happy or not? Acquiescing to naysayers boxes us in and holds us back.

And there we stay—*stuck!*

What if the Wright brothers had given in to those who said they should just continue building and repairing bicycles? What if they had bought into the conventional wisdom of the 1890s that said “If God had intended man to fly, he would have given us wings”? Today, the aviation and aerospace industries account for more than ten percent of the economy in the United States alone. Where would we be today if the Wrights had given in to naysayers? Where would we be today if all the innovators and business-minded people had surrendered to those who advocated the status quo of “We should be satisfied with where we are and with what we have”?

You've chosen to read this book because you're moving ahead. At stake is the realization of your potential, but only if you reach for it. You've gotten to the point where you're ready to move on from the constraints of the naysayers. You can now devote a larger part of your time and energy toward following through with more of your own choices. Challenging the inappropriate dictates of others will help you press on, while your example will encourage others to do the same. Dealing firmly yet kindly with those who would try to have you submit to their negativity can help you do what may now seem impossible.

Remember, naysayers can give advice based only on *their* perspectives and desires, not yours. They simply don't know what's

inside of you. This book will help you deal more effectively with others and their opinions while you go forward, doing what's best for you. You'll be clearer about and more committed to doing what's on your heart and encouraged to press on. After all, it's *your* objective; not theirs. They probably think they couldn't follow it themselves anyway. Or, perhaps, they're jealous that you're spending time on your positive new agenda and that you'll grow beyond them.

*"I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure—try to please everybody."*

—Herbert Bayard Swope

Apply what you learn in this book and you'll grow stronger in dealing with naysayers and their agendas. They'll no longer be able to stop or slow you down from pressing on toward greater happiness and success, and whatever you're striving for. You'll be making more decisions and taking more actions that are best for *you!*

Your vision of a brighter future, born of desire and faith, is the guidepost to pressing on. No matter how much the naysayers try to prevent you from moving on, stay the course. Muster the courage to awaken even the whisper of a dream. Cling to what you know is best for you and your family, and rely on those who support you.

Acquiescing to inappropriate naysaying compromises your better judgment and can ruin your life, which is far too precious not to live as you envision. Now is the time, once and for all, to discount the opinions of those who may be holding you back. Press on with a new sense of urgency. No matter what "*they*" may think, say, or do in their attempts to stop you from doing so, ignore their negativity and hold on tight to your objective. Go forward in faith and create the life you want.

Press on,

*Michael Kerrigan*

# 1

## ***A Good Reason Is Hard to Find***

*There's a fine line between caring and controlling.  
Make sure people aren't stepping over that line in their efforts  
to seemingly watch out for your best interest.*

**N**aysaying comes from just about everywhere, including parents, siblings, friends, bosses, co-workers, associates, the Internet, spouses, city ordinances, and even kids. They all try to control or manipulate us with varying degrees of success.

In their efforts to lord over us, some use guilt while others use fear. Still others rely on saying “It’s your civic duty” to get you to act in certain ways, based on *their* agendas. They say you should keep your nose to the grindstone, or tell you not to try anything new. These shoulds are intended to do two things: a) control your behavior and b) make life easier—*for them*.

We even generate shoulds for ourselves! A big one for many people is, just be happy with the way things are and forget about

my dreams. Notice the difference between being influenced by good and reasonable ideas, versus being controlled by guilt and an assortment of other emotion-packed directives. The difference is that guilt-charged shoulds are likely to leave you feeling angry, frustrated, or afraid.

Whether shoulds come from you or someone else, learn to recognize them when they appear. Tuning out should is the first step in dealing with it effectively. Put it where it belongs—outside your new world of reason. Don't let should interfere with your desire to do and be the best for yourself and your family.

### **Enter the Ever-Present Authority Figures**

Parents, teachers, bosses, and institutions, and a variety of others believe they need to direct you in one way or another—way beyond their role or responsibility.

Many parents take their cue from something quite basic—the wild. For example, a mother tiger nuzzles her cub this way and that, teaching it to feed, play, hunt, and do the things that tigers do. After all, the cub will need those skills to survive once it's away from its mother's caring supervision. For wild animals in their natural environment, this is the way it needs to be.

In the wild, an animal's options are limited. When it gets hungry, it better know how to hunt, or else. A tiger cub doesn't have the option of choosing between getting a quick bite at the corner restaurant, popping a frozen dinner in the microwave, or going to the local burger house for a mega meal.

For every learned or imitative behavior a tiger cub has, we, as discerning human beings, have one or more options. For every task an animal instinctively performs, we humans have choices. Always doing certain things in exactly the same way makes sense—but only if you're an animal in the wild. There, shoulds play a big role.

We've all had our experiences with parents, or other caretakers, who act like protective mother tigers. They gave us should orders because they believed that would keep us safe, educated,

liked, and, of course, germ-free. Remember being told you should—wash your hands, say thank you, and kiss Grandma goodbye? Parents want to keep their children in line with shoulds so they can live an error-less, pain-free life, and survive with minimal discomfort.

Parental advice is good, but there's a limit. If we weren't given some direction as youngsters, we might act like cats in the wild, carrying small rodents around in our mouths! But we grew up and moved out of the house a long time ago. Even so that hasn't prevented parents from picking up the phone and telling their adult kids to, essentially, wipe their noses! There's a fine line between caring and controlling. Make sure people aren't stepping over that line in their efforts to seemingly watch out for your best interests.

Now parents certainly aren't alone in issuing should orders and making should rules; teachers fall into the same trap. When you sat down in Mrs. Hollybush's class to learn algebra, she had a good reason to include should with her instructions. Solving an equation for "x" should be done by using a few specific steps, or else you simply won't get the right answer. Sure, you can guess. But guessing won't get you where you need to go. Furthermore, when you're directed to show your work, guessing is generally a red flag that you haven't a clue about what you're doing.

Once you wander into the world of the social sciences, things are a little less clear—more subject to viewpoints. For example, political science isn't math. In the world of the softer sciences, shoulds are almost always met with at least one side believing you shouldn't! For every group that says we should build a dam, there's another that says the river should run free. So who's right? The answer isn't nearly as clear as solving for "x." But making a decision together through considerate brainstorming, rather than accepting other shoulds, often produces the most beneficial solution.

### **It's the Law!**

Institutions are right behind parents and teachers in dispensing shoulds. Actually, they are probably the worst offenders when it

comes to using shoulds as their guiding lights. Rather than helping you grow to adulthood or pass the ninth grade, institutions aren't nearly so helpful or concerned. Shoulds, in their hands, have a more grating purpose. They're used to getting you to *conform*.

The expansion of Interstate 25 through the heart of Denver is a great example. This project, dubbed T-REX (yes, as in the unruly dinosaur), was originally scheduled to take four to seven years to complete. And by all accounts, it promised to be a noisy project as it jostled people living on both sides of the 19-mile stretch of unrelenting construction.

The time frame was a little vague because before any construction comes destruction—lots of it. In part, 12 old bridges spanning the highway had to be replaced. Here's what the state and the contractor told the affected residents: You should let us make a lot of noise 24 hours a day, especially during bridge replacement time. After all, it's for a good cause!

The reason for the project's vague timeline finally surfaces. If the demolition of the bridges is allowed to be carried out (loudly), even during normal sleeping hours, the project will take only four years. Otherwise, it could well take the full seven years. Fortunately, bridge demolition will be done in short segments and only at the front end of the project. And while it won't be at the noise-level of passenger jets taking off every minute for four years, people will definitely lose some sleep.

So, should people go along with what the sponsors of the project are proposing as the prudent thing to do? After all, the sponsors are pretty sure they know what's best. But not everyone agrees. Some opposing the project are simply not willing to do what they're being told they should. So are *they* right? Who knows? But at least they're aware of their options, rather than blindly following when shoulds are being thrown their way. Some people aren't willing to play a predictable, acquiesce-to-should, passive role. And, of course, it's these people who lead the pack of those less vocal in their opposition.

The institutional approach of using shoulds is *duty*-based—as in “it’s *your* duty.” It’s designed to encourage obedience to help the institution meet its deadlines and save costs while sacrificing the comfort of only a few for the supposed best interest of the many. As for the institution, the *many* is what’s important. But what about you? Frankly, the institution doesn’t really care. It has its own politically influenced agenda.

### **Yes Sir, Yes Ma’am?**

Everyone has his or her own preferences, priorities, wants, and needs. So how often will someone else’s priority be yours—especially when that someone else is the boss or has been designated as being in charge? This brings us to dealing with those who are calling the shots. They often throw their weight around—in some cases, just to flaunt the power they have in the position they’ve been given.

Everyone has had a boss at one time or another. When some start working, this person is often either the head burger flipper or the assistant shift manager. Typically, they are fairly focused as they go about issuing orders: “Get those fries out of that fat!” And the fries come out. If the employees to whom the orders are barked disobey, the boss knows there are always plenty of others who can replace them. (Have you noticed how some employers always seem to have a “Now Hiring” sign in the window?)

Most of us, unless we are self-employed, have to take orders from other sorts of bosses. We may even end up answering to someone who is supposed to be more skilled than the assistant shift manager. And how do we know that? They use shoulds! “Get those fries out of that fat!” becomes “You should get those fries out of that fat!” See the difference? They may sound a bit better and less authority-wielding but, as mentioned earlier, shoulds tend to build resentment.

Of course, good bosses are more sophisticated than that—especially those who reach management’s upper levels. As far as they’re concerned, shoulds have a much higher purpose: to meet



deadlines, increase the bottom line and, *always*, to control. (Note: From the finance-driven perspective, the scale of the project and the money involved are the only things that really separate “fries” from other, “higher” callings.) It happens in every business and industry, from the best-intended non-profit organizations to the largest corporations: should tends to have free rein. And it’s not good!

### **Going Off Automatic**

Now the intent here isn’t to get you to turn a deaf ear to should—especially when your boss is serious, which most of them tend to be. That would be irresponsible. The trick here is to truly listen to what’s being said and decide whether it *really* makes the best sense. You’ll ultimately have more control and get greater respect from others. Here’s an example of how it could work:

Your boss, Mr. Burns, thinks you should pay a visit to the water bladder manufacturing plant in East Aardvark because sales are down 15 percent from last year. “Check it out,” Mr. Burns says.

As you reflect upon it with your increased awareness of how should is used, you realize Mr. Burns tends to give out orders seemingly at random. He also disregards any scheduled time off he may have already agreed to give you before he barks out the new orders. You, like most employees, have always said yes to his orders—without thinking. As a result, you have disappointed your wife, your kids, and others, many times in the past because you gave in to Burns’s shoulds.

This time, however, you analyze Burns’s orders so you can determine their true meaning. Not only is this the right thing to do, but Burns’s new directive conflicts with plans you’ve already made and he’s already approved. The truth is that you have a business you’re developing. You and your wife had planned to spend the next two days at a related convention. The new directive is creating conflicts on a variety of fronts: nonrefundable

airline tickets, new information that will come out of the convention, contacts you would undoubtedly make and, of course, your wife's expectations of going—*with* you. Are you really going to let Burns have his way with you once more?

In a lot of cases, people receiving this order do what they were told without a second thought. They would do what they had always done before, regardless of any previous plans or the wisdom of the order itself. They'd fly out to East Aardvark International Airport first thing Monday morning, tour the plant, grill the production supervisor, visit the water bladder manufacturing operation, kick the tires of the big rigs down at the loading dock, and report *something* back to Burns. And why not? This is what they were told they should do. So they just do it!

Another thing to consider when analyzing this should is whether it is what Burns or any other boss really wants. Does he or they want someone who follows orders without thinking? In some cases, the boss may be too insecure to confidently receive feedback from one of his or her employees. But let's say, for example, Burns isn't insecure. Sure, he told you to check it out; but Burns has twelve things floating around in his head, and he was just speaking in shorthand. His concern (and that of *his* boss) is *really* about declining sales. Does this mean a trip to the manufacturing plant is necessarily the company's best first move? Probably not.

Now, it's time to take yourself out of automatic mode and consider more seriously the waning patience of your loving wife. You figure that you could probably get a lot more relevant information from the marketing department. At least it's a good place to start. If it's a problem with bladder quality, then a trip to the plant might be in order. If it's a challenge because the water bladder market is saturated, then the difficulty might reside in advertising or sales. Or maybe it's simply something beyond your control. One thing is certain though: Kicking truck tires at the loading dock isn't going to change the way prospective buyers look at water bladders.

The truly responsible thing to do, both as a professional and a loving husband, is to listen to and think about the should-order being given, consider the alternatives, and then act in a kind, measured, and reasonable way. As you listen and respond *appropriately*, several positive things begin to happen, including increased self-respect, regardless of how spontaneous or reasoned the order may have been.

When you listen to shoulds with empathy and understanding, and don't automatically say yes just to please the boss in the short-run, you'll more clearly perceive the assignment's importance and its meaning as well as your personal situation. You'll be able to assign specific values to the direction being given, the information the boss really needs, and the previous personal commitment you made. When you look at it all from the broader perspective, you'll be of more benefit to the boss as well as to yourself and your wife.

You might be saying that this is a communications issue. You're absolutely right. That is precisely what should is all about: communicating an idea with an authoritative, six-letter word, or one of its cousins, in an attempt to manipulate an instant yes. But how *you* respond is under *your* control, no one else's. You might ask Mr. Burns: "Is a trip to East Aardvark really what we need and, if so, can it wait until next week? I've prepaid for a weekend trip with my wife, and I'll really be in trouble if I tell her I've got to work." It could be as simple as that! Just be open and honest.