

Every minute of every day, we overlook  
the most important choice we can make...

# THE FORGOTTEN CHOICE

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SHIFT YOUR INNER MINDSET, SHAPE YOUR OUTER WORLD

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**BRENDA BENCE**

“...self-empowering...  
Get it!”

Kirkus Reviews



Readers' Favorite

“...one of the best  
guides around...”

BlueInk Reviews (Starred Review)

We all want a fulfilling life, yet most of us fall short of realizing the goals and dreams we envision. But what if all it takes to achieve what you desire is to remember one simple choice?

Over the past 20 years, global leadership coach Brenda Bence has helped thousands of clients take control of their lives and careers in order to craft the future they want. Now, she shares that wisdom in this groundbreaking book, allowing you to achieve the same results.

The solution lies in remembering ***the forgotten choice***—a little-known decision you make every moment that either holds you back or opens doors to unlimited possibility.

Using Brenda's simple and immediately applicable approach, you will be able to...

- Face the unknown with a sense of excitement and adventure
- Feel more in charge of your future
- Get what you want in relationships, work, finances, health, and beyond

Packed with fascinating real-life examples, ***The Forgotten Choice*** reveals how you really *can* have the fulfilling life you want—and it's easier than you might imagine.



**Brenda Bence** is the multi-award-winning author of 11 books, and her articles have appeared in hundreds of publications across the globe. Ranked one of the Top Fifty Leading Global Coaches and a former *Fortune 100* senior executive, Brenda has firsthand knowledge of the challenges faced by leaders and people from all walks of life. In *The Forgotten Choice*, she drills down to the core of life issues and shows how the path to transformational change is as close as your next thought.



[www.BrendaBence.com](http://www.BrendaBence.com)

## Praise from around the world for *The Forgotten Choice*

“*The Forgotten Choice* is a powerful guide to how you can create real, lasting behavioral change—beginning with your mindset and ending in life-long habits. With excellent writing and engaging storytelling, Bence makes you reflect on the way you perceive your life and how you can use the tools you already have to change the things that hold you back from success. A must read!”

— Marshall Goldsmith, Thinkers 50 #1 Executive Coach and only two-time #1 Leadership Thinker in the world

“*The Forgotten Choice* is one of the best guides around for redirecting your perspective on life, creating what you want, and being happy with what you have. Author Brenda Bence’s warm, comforting writing style is crisp, trustworthy and spot-on, resulting in a rapid, easy read.”

— Starred Review, *BlueInk Reviews*

“*The Forgotten Choice* is one of those rare books that, with a new way of seeing what we do every day, can change the course of one’s life. If you feel powerless to change anything that is not quite right in your life, let *The Forgotten Choice* give you back the power.”

— Marianna Pascal, Top 100 TEDx Speaker Worldwide

“Enlightening, inspirational, and self-empowering advice ... riveting ...”

— “Get it!” Review, *Kirkus Reviews*

“*The Forgotten Choice* is more than a self-help book. It is a book that will help the reader to live life on their terms, craft their present and future, and make sure their life is what they want it to be.”

— 5-Star Rating, *Readers’ Favorite Reviews*

“I love this original and inspiring book. It challenges you to think about yourself and motivates you to transform your perception and see the world full of opportunities. Absolutely wonderful and a must read!”

— Krista Baetens, Executive Asia, Corporate & Institutional Banking, NAB

“I began reading Brenda Bence’s book, *The Forgotten Choice*, in the afternoon and didn’t stop until I had read it from cover to cover! The many real-life examples Brenda shared demonstrate her principles and processes in practice and make them so applicable. What a wonderful book!”

— Mike Maloney, Author of *Choosing to be Gay*

“This book was empowering and engaging. I will be recommending it to everyone!”

— Julie Schmidt, Vice President of Finance and Administration and Treasurer, Doane University

“*The Forgotten Choice* is more than just a useful reminder. It’s an encouraging guide to thoughtful action—and to action in your thoughts. Brilliant!”

— Ron Kaufman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Uplifting Service*

“The beauty of *The Forgotten Choice* is its simplicity. The examples are engaging, and the techniques are practical and easily applied in both personal and professional settings. I will be sure to recommend *The Forgotten Choice*.”

— Gordon Cameron, Head of Ex US Divestitures, Takeda

“Rooted in theory, yet steeped in practical examples and straightforward approaches, readers of *The Forgotten Choice* will learn how to reclaim their infinite potential on the way to creating their preferred futures. A must read for those who want to regain purpose and control of their lives.”

— Dr. Susan Fritz, University of Nebraska Executive Vice President and Provost

“The concept in *The Forgotten Choice* is game changing. It’s so simple to understand, but precisely because it is so simple, it is immediately applicable. What a good book!”

— Chin Yoke Yew, Lead Consultant, Paradigm Auditing and Consulting

“Lessons from *The Forgotten Choice* helped me to reframe my mindset pyramid and my approach to creating the future. This is a book I will keep tucked in my digital pocket as a reminder to never forget this choice.”

— Toni M. Ganzel, MD, MBA, Vice President of Academic Medical Affairs, Dean of the School of Medicine, Professor of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, University of Louisville

# THE FORGOTTEN CHOICE

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**BRENDA BENCE**



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# Introduction: The Forgotten Choice

**P**icture a pack of runners preparing for a cross-country race, and split them into two groups. The night before the race, you give one group of runners a map of the trail, showing them where they will run and what to expect. You tell the second group to show up on the morning of the race and figure out where to go by following the signs along the trail. Which group will end up with faster race times? The group that had the map beforehand. Why?

We're hard-wired for certainty. We like predictability, so when we know what to expect, we feel safe, we're more confident, and we get better results.

In life, there are moments when we *do* feel confident, safe and secure, on a "high." But then, something unexpected appears out of nowhere—an important relationship ends abruptly, your boss tells you your job is on the line, a competitor dramatically drops their price, or a previously unknown virus spreads through the world threatening lives. The result? Uncertainty rears its ugly head again, leaving us feeling powerless, weak, and tired.

As if on a rollercoaster, this pattern of ups and downs repeats itself, day after day, month after month. While most of us love the fast drops of a rollercoaster at an amusement park, it's the last thing we want in our everyday lives.

During times of uncertainty, it's key to focus on what's permanent, reliable, and unchanging—the constants in life. This book will reveal one of the most important constants that is available to you at any moment: the forgotten choice.

Once you remember it, this choice will allow you to permanently get off of the daily rollercoaster. And it will help you not just in times of uncertainty, but when faced with frustration, irritation, disgust, anger, grief, or any general sense of unease. Whatever challenges you face, the forgotten choice can help you get back to a place of feeling good again, of taking charge of your future.

The forgotten choice is 100% reliable—a choice we've always had available to us, but one that most of us don't remember. The problem is that we've been looking for solutions in the wrong place. Because what will truly improve our lives isn't *outside* of us. It isn't *doing* that creates change. No, the answer lies in *being*—in shifting our *inner mindset*—and that's what actually shapes our outer world.

Unfortunately, we aren't taught the fundamental truth that it is our mindset, consisting of our thoughts and beliefs, that drives what happens to us every day. Shaping a better life on the outside starts with how we think on the inside, and yet we woefully—and consistently—underestimate the power of our thoughts.

As a result, we play small, failing to recognize that we can control more of what happens in our daily lives than we realize. But in

order to take that control, we have to shift the way we think and challenge the long-held beliefs that have stood in our way. One of the greatest management minds of all time, Peter Drucker, said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” And that’s exactly what this book will show you how to do.

This foundational choice isn’t just about “positive versus negative thinking.” As you’ll learn, it’s something much more powerful and fundamental than that. And if this sounds mystical or like some sort of “magical thinking,” I assure you it’s not. As you’ll discover on the pages that follow, this concept is absolutely consistent with recent discoveries of modern science.

*(End of Introduction excerpt)*



## The Choice You Make Every Moment

**E**very day, from the minute we wake up until the time we go to bed, we are called on to make decisions—hundreds, if not thousands of little and not-so-little choices confront us daily. Many of our decisions can feel trivial, seeming to have little serious impact on our quality of life. Others, involving career, relationships, parenting, or health, seem to carry much more importance.

Even though the incredibly tough decisions don't present themselves every day—such as whether to end a relationship, start your own business, or buy or sell a house—none of us are immune from having to make big decisions.

Every time we make a choice—large or small—we are unknowingly aligning with one of two separate and distinct thought-systems: one which is founded in fear, and the other which is founded in what I call the “Joy of Possibility.”

This book will help you recognize the impact these two thought-systems have on every aspect of your daily life. It will bring to your awareness the tremendous ability you have to consciously choose the Joy of Possibility over fear, in order to create the life you want. **This is the forgotten choice.**

We all love choice and even feel empowered by it. **Yet, every minute of every day, we overlook this most important choice.**

Even though this choice is the single-most powerful decision we can make, we haven't been taught how to use it. We subconsciously reject it in favor of old, historic, programmed beliefs that don't serve us anymore.

This book will not only help you understand the forgotten choice but, more importantly, it will show you how to remember it regularly and use it to make positive, long-term changes. When we do this consciously and consistently, we begin to experience a higher level of satisfaction in all areas of our lives, including relationships, work, finances, and family life, just to name a few.

But in order for that to happen, let's step back for a bit, and look at where we've been and where we are as a human race. That will put this all-important choice into context.

## Why We're Not All Dancing in the Streets

**T**he lives we lead today were nothing but daydreams for our not-so-distant ancestors. Pause and reflect on what someone from just a few generations back would think if they were a fly on the wall, observing how we live. The idea of a daily, hot shower in a modern bathroom, sitting on a comfortable couch watching a television, or picking up a cell phone and calling anyone anywhere in the world would have been unheard of. Accustomed to cooking over open fires or coal stoves, our ancestors would marvel at even the most modest kitchens today, not to mention a refrigerator linked to your smartphone that can complete your grocery list. Most of our everyday problems are easily solved by a Google search or a quick chat with Siri. The revolution that technology has brought us in the twenty-first century is nothing short of astounding.

And it isn't just technology. We've evolved culturally and socially, too, and have experienced astonishing breakthroughs in health and medicine that we often take for granted. Our existence is so radically different from our ancestors' that our life expectancy

has now more than doubled, from an estimated 40 years of age back in 1918 to 100+ years in many countries.<sup>1</sup> Compared to our ancestors, children born today are actually getting *more than two lifetimes in one*.

So, we are living longer, better-quality lives than ever in the history of humankind. We are evolving at a remarkably rapid pace. We have a long list of amazing technological advances that make our daily lives so much easier. And we have a longer time to enjoy all of this while we are here.

Then why are we not all dancing in the streets with joy?

I wanted to find out just how we view this miraculous world we live in and how we would describe our existence today. I set up an online survey and made a request, followed by one simple question: “Pause and reflect on the state of the world today from a political, economic, social, and emotional standpoint. Now consider this: if the world were a person, what five descriptive words/adjectives would you use to describe that person right now? Fill in the blanks: ‘I would describe that person as \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.’”

Thousands of comments were sent in from thirty-four countries across six continents. The results? Almost 70% of the words were negative. The most frequent entries were some form of “confused, conflicted, angry, selfish, unpredictable, sad, uncertain, and fearful.” In summary, we live this amazing, never-experienced-

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1. Elizabeth Arias, Ph.D. and Jiaguan Yu, M.D., “United States Life Tables, 2017,” National Vital Statistics Reports 68, no. 7, June 24, 2019, accessed September 16, 2020, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68\\_07-508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_07-508.pdf), 46, 48.



before existence, and yet most of us perceive the world as a negative place. Why?

I believe it's because we tend to look outside of ourselves for how to make our lives better. We look to the tangible to solve our problems and bring us happiness. We look to the things we buy, to spouses or significant others, to money, to politicians, to new laws, to the latest new gadget. We say, "If only I had more money, if I could afford a nicer home, if I were in better physical shape. If I could just find more capable employees, if my spouse would just be more thoughtful, if our kids would just behave, if we weren't spending sleepless nights worrying about our aging parents, if I could just get that promotion, if ... [fill in the blank with your own answer here], *then*, I would have a truly great, stress-free life." The problem, it seems, is that for us to have the lives of our dreams, everyone and everything outside of us has to change.

Since we believe our problems are coming from outside us, we also look outside of ourselves for solutions. We look to others for validation, acceptance, and appreciation. We look to our diplomas, careers, finances, homes, cars, and clothes to give us a sense of status and worth. Perhaps we adopt the latest nutrition fad or fitness craze, or we follow a guru. We've become so focused externally that we gauge our success based on how many "likes" or "retweets" we just received. Is it any wonder we live in a world where we see the glass as half empty?

Whenever we believe that responsibility for our lives rests outside of ourselves, we place control in someone else's hands. Then, when we don't get the outcomes we desire, we end up playing the blame game. We point to other people or things as the source of our misery—to governments, corporate greed, entitlement

programs, the rich, the poor, or to people with different political or religious beliefs. This way of thinking leads us to see ourselves as victims.

Clearly, based on the survey results, this external focus is not working. Deep inside, we know we're looking in the wrong place, but we keep focusing externally anyway, in hopes that it will eventually change our lives for the better. What's driving that?

I think the answer lies in one of the single-most important events that has happened in recorded history. Occurring about 100 years ago, this incident had the potential to completely alter how we look at life. But within a relatively short period, it was glossed over and shelved, shuffled quietly onto the back burner of history.

The lead-up to that event and the reason why it's been glossed over make up one of the most fascinating chapters of our human history.

## How Intangibles Became Taboo

It all began with a famous apple incident—but not the Steve Jobs kind nor the Garden of Eden variety. The apple I’m referring to is the one that fell out of a tree some 300 years ago and landed on the head of an English mathematician and physicist, Isaac Newton. Considered one of the greatest scientists of all time, we know him best for discovering gravity (thus, the apple reference), but Isaac Newton did far more than that. His scientific discoveries revolutionized the world and ushered in a massive shift in perspective that had been building for a long time—a perspective which still permeates our thinking today. And this perspective is why the potentially life-changing event I’m about to highlight ended up being pushed aside in our mainstream thinking.

With the rise of “Newtonian Physics,” the perception of the universe, which up to that point had fallen mostly under the domain of religion and philosophy, shifted into the hands of the scientific community. The next few-hundred years brought one exciting discovery after another, as science embraced the view

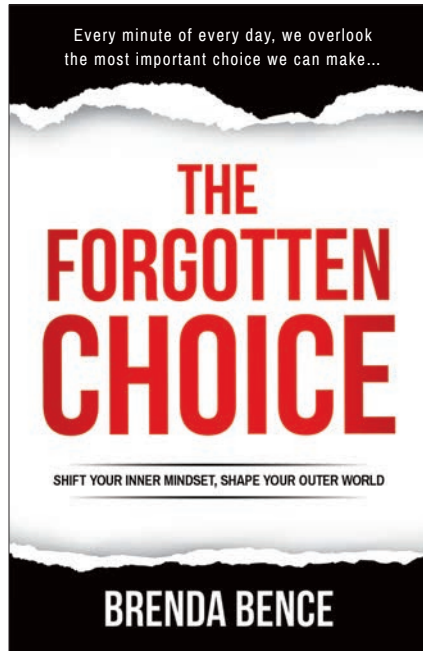
of the world as a “machine” of sorts—a machine that operated within a basic cause-and-effect framework. The prevailing belief was that, through discovering the laws by which the universe operated, you would be able to determine, calculate, and predict everything. Over time, this foundational belief became accepted as fact. So, physicists and mathematicians focused on the *tangible*—what we could see, touch, and measure—while the *intangibles* were relegated either to the realm of religion or to the stuff of magic. That remains the predominant viewpoint still embraced by much of the world today.

There were tremendous upsides to the Newtonian focus on form, but there were also downsides. This focus caused anything *intangible* and outside of the analytical, tangible world to be considered “taboo.” The tangible was what intelligent, legitimate people focused on. This means that anything *intangible*, other than what fell under the auspices of religion, was fodder for witch doctors and crazy people.

Over time, the intangibles became considered more and more “woo woo,” and before long, the accepted view, not just in the scientific world but in most mainstream thinking, was: if something wasn’t provable—if it couldn’t be seen or touched—it was not to be taken seriously. It was too “out there”—too silly for smart, reasonable people.

And that was the prevailing thought for the three centuries that led up to the world-changing event we’ll cover next.

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