

Five *on*
Friday

Musings on Mental Health

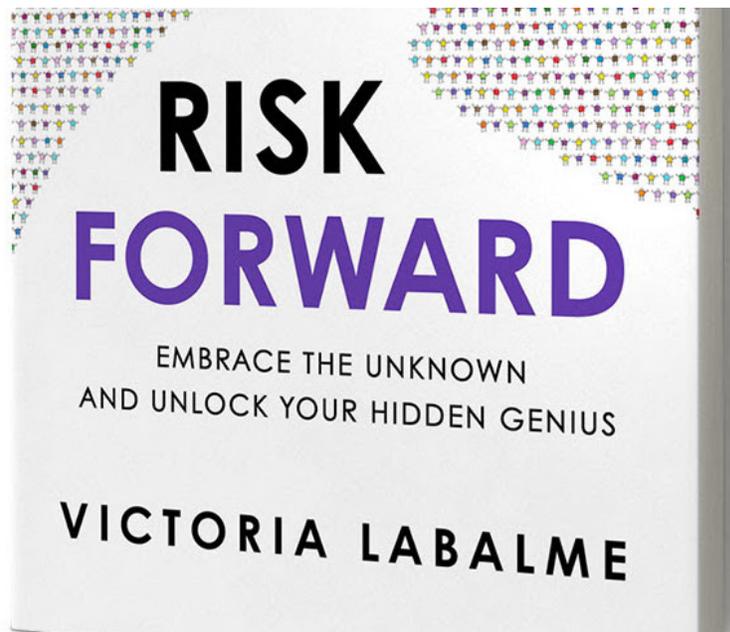
Risk Forward

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We might have imagined that with the vaccine rollout out, this topsy turvy world would feel more settled, but that is not how life goes. The pandemic has been a storm of uncertainty. We have spent more than a year wondering, worrying, waiting, wanting. And it continues: Is it really okay to meet in person? Mask or no mask? Why are cases in Europe on the rise again? Will the vaccine protect against the new variants? And so it goes...



[Photo Credit](#)

I recently had the opportunity to talk with Victoria Labalme, consultant, coach, Hall of Fame keynote speaker, and author of a book published this week, [Risk Forward](#). The opening page begins, “Some people in life know exactly what they want to achieve. This is a book for the rest of us.” For all of us figuring out what the post-pandemic world will be, this wise and creative book takes us on a journey that is sure to bolster our mental health and enhance our abilities to thrive in these particularly uncertain times.

1. What inspired you to write [Risk Forward](#)? “There is a myth out there that success requires having a plan, well-defined goals, and a clear path forward. All of this can be helpful at times, but I wrote *Risk Forward* in response to my own experience and the experience of so many successful people I know who found their way forward without always knowing where they were going. There are parents, teachers, and mentors who – though well-meaning can really throw you off course or make you feel worse about yourself when they say, ‘where do you want to be in 1 year, 3 years or 5?’ The truth is sometimes we don’t know; the vision is still unfolding. As I say in the book, clarity is not the place from which we begin, but rather the place at which we ultimately arrive.”

2. What do you mean by [Risk Forward](#)? “*Risk Forward* is an approach to moving forward, heart open, heading into the unknown even if we’re a little off balance. The key is to stay connected to what I call your Inner Current. In a world full of uncertainty, your Inner current – that inner line of wisdom – will help you find your way forward.”

3. How can [Risk Forward](#) help us navigate the pandemic? “The book opens with the recognition that for all of us, at various points in life, we find ourselves in the Fog of Not Knowing—a period of transition, when the path, the plan, or the project is not yet clear. This happens at many moments in life – even without a pandemic. It could be that you’re in a transition with your health, your relationships or with your career. It could be that you just graduated or are entering a new phase in your life; it could be that you’re figuring out your next steps on a project or trying to make an important decision. When you’re in the Fog of Not Knowing, if you can meet that void without grasping for the most convenient way out, but have the courage and tenacity to reconnect with what matters most and what lights you up, what you discover can be a future beyond your expectations and imagination.”

4. What do you mean when you say that we each have a Crimson Star? “The Crimson Star is that idea or opportunity that beckons us forward – that piques our interest, curiosity and brings excitement. Sometimes it makes no sense – we can’t always explain the reasoning to others. Sometimes, too, other people dissuade us

and discourage us. But it's not until we have the courage to step into the unknown and head toward that Crimson Star that we discover where we are next meant to go."

5. What is your hope for *Risk Forward*? "My hope is to alleviate unnecessary suffering. People who have experienced *Risk Forward* - and I say 'experience' because it's a book filled with experiences, drawings, profound exercises, and humor — say that the book is comforting and affirming. It's giving people permission to trust themselves, to move forward on their own terms and in their own way, even if they don't know exactly where they're heading. The most touching part is that people are now buying the book for others they care about and love. Everyone's on their own path and has their own hidden genius. This book helps remind us of that."

Thousands of years ago, Lao Tsu said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. With Risk Forward, Victoria Labalme's words and whimsical illustrations convey an unconventional wisdom sure to inspire readers to take that daunting first step, and then the next... More than a book, it's an experience.