



## Executive Summary: Liz Murray

### WorkMatters Leadership Conference

#### *Leadership That Inspires*

May 8, 2009

I grew up with parents who used lots of drugs. They would get their welfare checks, buy drugs, get high, and then repeat the cycle again. When the welfare money ran out, they would sell anything, like our television or bicycles, for cash to buy drugs. One year, my mother sold our Thanksgiving turkey to a neighbor. That's the nature of addiction; it consumes a person.

When we ran out of welfare check money, we would go days without food. I remember thinking, "Perhaps if I sleep, then I won't be hungry." So I slept a lot. My sister and I would eat ice cubes because at least they felt like food. One time we even split a tube of toothpaste.

There are benefits in growing up how I did. One lesson I learned is that my life is my responsibility. No one owes me anything.

There are gifts and blessings that we can look for and find in our past—just as we can choose to look back on our faults. What we look for depends on where our hearts are.

Each of us knows, in the deepest part of heart, the life we were created to live.

I used to visit my mom in the hospital for five hours at a time. I would brush her hair and clumps would come off in my hand. When that became too painful, I promised to come back "later." When I heard she had died, I realized that we are not promised "laters."

Disempowered people blame and concern themselves with the past. Empowered people look forward to what's next and refuse to point fingers.

What transforms a life? One empowered choice after another.

#### Action Plan:

- ✓ Think of three self-made obstacles blocking your career aspirations. Write the name of each roadblock on a rock and place it on your desk to serve as a reminder not to let the obstacles hinder you.
- ✓ Make a list of "laters"—activities or conversations you've been postponing. For one week, arrive 30 minutes early to the office to devote effort and energy to accomplishing the "laters."