

CREATIVE WAYS TO EMBRACE CHANGE
AND BUILD MENTAL RESILIENCE
TO TRANSFORM YOUR CAREER & LIFE

Chameleon Mindset

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Section 1 – The Chameleon Mindset and Ways to Retrain Yo’ Brain

When I was thinking of a way to begin this novel, the words failed me. And so, I did what any great novelist would do — I looked to the great oracle of Google. When I searched for the best opening lines in a novel, I came across *Moby Dick*, an outstanding entry to a fantastic story. And so, I adapted it for this cause.

Who is Nikki Green? Is she even real?

No, it’s no good – whenever I say it out loud, my British accent breaks and my very American accent comes forward to start laughing. Well, it is the famous laugh heard ‘round the office, so that seems a great way to start as well. Perhaps we can still introduce some British spelling into this quirky novel if my British accent won't suffice.

There are so many answers to those short questions. But you'll have to go back to my first book, *I Laugh in the Face of Danger (and other life lessons that should have taught me better)*¹ to learn those secrets. That was my story, about my ever-changing life growing up with six parents and my career in Silicon Valley.

This book is about your story – your Chameleon Mindset is the tale you are about to reveal through these pages. Your mindset is a set of beliefs that shape how you make sense of the world and yourself. It influences how you think, feel, and behave in any given situation. Defining the current parameters of your mindset, its limitations and strengths, will set you on your path in life. And altering or adapting that path to life’s challenges is how you will define your Chameleon Mindset.

¹ Nikki Green, *I Laugh in the Face of Danger (and other life lessons that should have taught me better)*, Chicago, Green Chameleon Collective, 2021.

Let's begin your next evolution.



Throughout this book and the accompanying journal, you will find interactive ways to immerse yourself into the world of the Chameleon Mindset. Scan the QR Codes with your smartphone to begin. I've created a Spotify playlist of songs that inspired me during the writing process and evoked each chapter's emotion. If you have some recommendations for the song list, don't forget to reach out and share them with us through social media!

Chapter 1 – Zed is for Zebra

Pandemic Reflections

How did your pandemic go? Was it nice and smooth? A wonderful break from the everyday stress of your job or commuting to the office? Did it slow your life in unpredictable ways and allow you time to think about your needs and the future?

Or was it stressful and full of worry? Did you lose your job? Were you forced into unemployment just to keep a roof over your head and food on your table? Did you wonder every day how you would make ends meet?

Or maybe the stress wasn't from losing your job. Perhaps you had a partner or pets jockeying for space in your flat while you tried to work from your kitchen table? Maybe you also had kids running around underfoot, asking for help with schoolwork or needing other assistance? Did you find yourself helping everyone but yourself, non-stop, all day, without any relief?

I'm sure the pandemic years were not all roses and sunshine. I'm sure at some point you were stressed. Sometimes about significant things. And other times, about seemingly nothing at all. Either way, these were significant times that we are all reflecting on as we exit year two of this strange turn of global events.

But how could we have handled it better? I'm not talking about the ongoing controversies over wearing masks and closing businesses. Instead, how could each of us have dealt with the frequency of change in ways that would have allowed us to reduce anxiety and find calm? That's what I tend to explore in this book.

Even when life goes smoothly, there are always bumps in the road. Some are small bumps you can traverse slowly before continuing your journey. And other bumps are so large

they make you wish you had a thick outer skin of tough scales that allow you to plough through any challenge and come out the other side unscathed. But even though that's a nice wish, rarely are we in a place to just push through, armour intact.

We live in an ever-increasingly connected world, wherein one person's decision has a ripple effect on those around them. And it's these ripples that often cause our anxiety. They make us doubt our intuition and desire to accept the change in front of us. We want to resist that change and keep our anxiety at bay. But by doing so, we create more stress by not confronting these anxiety-inducing endeavours or dealing with the central issues behind them.

Few people are ready to tackle the chaos without that thick skin – to abandon all self-care and leap into danger without a thought. But what if you could build up your mind with mental “scales” that would help you face and overcome these challenges easily? Would you make an effort to change?

Are You a Chameleon or a Zebra?

Chameleons have been getting a bad rap from psychologists and sociologists for too long. They are portrayed as creatures too afraid of the world around them to be their authentic selves. To describe someone as chameleon-like suggests they don't know who they are and, therefore, simply blend in, always trying to fit into the crowd.



A recent scientific study² has revealed that nothing could be further from the truth. It says that chameleons are highly evolved to attract the things they want in life (a mate, shelter, temperature regulation, or food) with rapid changes in their skin colour – the ultimate Law of Attraction. The evolution of skin colour is a unique feature that no other species on the planet possess. And the green colour we associate with hiding or blending in with the crowd is, in fact, their natural, calm state of Zen.

When today's Internet gurus talk about being 'authentic', they advise people to be a zebra, not a chameleon. They tell us that we should always stand out and stay true to ourselves, no matter the situation. They teach us to blame others when we are not accepted or when others don't understand our uniqueness instead of helping to educate others and build a bridge of communication with kindness and consideration. I don't believe this way of standing out is very sage advice because, in my experience, it only gets us eaten by lions.

I speak as the ultimate chameleon, following a life of constant and often unexpected change. When we are out of tune with our environment and lack the desire to better ourselves and our community, we quickly become a community of one because, as we know, no two zebras have the same stripes.

This personal balance is a fine line that each of us walks daily. When is it OK to relax, be ourselves, and enjoy a patch of grass on the open plain? When do we need to be alert and aware of our surroundings and learn from the changes in our habitat, our tribe, or our competition? Here's where having a Chameleon Mindset can help.

² Teyssier, J., Saenko, S., van der Marel, D. *et al.* Photonic crystals cause active colour change in chameleons. *Nat Commun* **6**, 6368 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms7368>.

These pandemic years have been a struggle, initiating non-stop change for many of us while, conversely, also keeping us entirely in our place. It has created a need to heighten our awareness of the impacts those changes have on our lives and react accordingly for our survival. But we weren't prepared mentally, emotionally, or behaviourally for any of it. Many of us stayed as zebras, refusing to adapt to the life-altering circumstances surrounding us.

The vital question to ask yourself is, during the pandemic, were you a chameleon or a zebra? Did you morph with the rapid change of events before you? Or did you resist, struggle, and get eaten by lions?

<i>Chameleon Mindset</i>	<i>Zebra Mindset</i>
Creative Adaptability	Stubborn & Steadfast
Risk Tolerance	Zero Tolerance
Emotional Intelligence	Emotional Immaturity
Growth & Abundance Mindset	Fixed & Scarcity Mindset
Law of Attraction	Law of Diminishing Returns