I stared down at my second high school progress report in utter disbelief. I truly could not believe they were my grades—someone must have made a mistake. I read down the list time and again, the letters burning into my eyes: D, B-, C-, C+, A-, D. Ever since grade school I had thought of myself as an “A student.” I knew I was smart, and I hung out with the smart students. I even believed I deserved A’s. Yet, in reality I was merely skating through school, hardly doing any work. Finally, after six years of avoiding the truth, it all came crashing down on me in my freshman year.

That very day I stopped rationalizing my situation and made a conscious decision to change. I decided to get the A’s that were locked up inside me. The rest of that year was spent laboriously developing study skills and habits to improve my grades. I decided to spend a week at SuperCamp, a motivational and skill-building camp held on the Stanford University campus. My sophomore year I hit the ground running and received the first straight-A report card of my life. I never turned back. It was a great success, but it was also an awfully close call, nearly flushing my college aspirations down the tube.

If nothing else, my freshman year showed me the tremendous power of choice. Awareness of a major gap between our intention and our experience arrives as an attention-getting “aha,” a “whack on the side of the head.” If one can pin down the issue and accept the self-criticism offered by awareness, then they can begin to take ownership. The turning point comes as the person makes the choice to accept the truth, to “own it.” Once the problem is fully owned the decision must be made to take action, to do whatever it takes to succeed and “bridge the gap.”

I hope others who are unaware of the gaps in their lives can learn to take charge of their life. By taking ownership in our lives and exercising the tremendous power of choice, anything can be accomplished.

I’m living proof.

Excerpt from The 8 Keys of Excellence: Principles to Live By
by Bobbi DePorter