<u>Brook's Top Thirteen List</u> of must do's in order to live a life full of happiness, joy, self-confidence, celebration, good self-esteem, a strong self-image, leadership, opportunity, success, love, trusting relationships, and overall self-worth....

1. **Analyze, Analyze, Analyze –** do not mindlessly accept and engage in songs, television shows, movies, magazines, and everything you hear on facebook or twitter – criticize it, analyze it, pick it apart! Know what you are saying, watching, buying, or joining.

2. **Keep a diary** – some things are private, and should stay private. Writing your every thought and every move online is forcing you to grow up out loud. Don't do it. Your thoughts should be written, but they should be written somewhere private. A diary is where we ask ourselves the questions: Who am I? What do I like? What do I want? What do I think? Live your life for you, not for everyone else to read about.

3. **Love your jiggle –** this rule is stolen from my friend Shanterra, but it is a good one. Get naked, stand in front of the mirror, and love your jiggle! If lovin' yourself doesn't come naturally, train yourself to do it. It's like memorizing lines for a play or practicing the perfect lacrosse shot – do it over and over again and it will start to sink in. Love your jiggle! Love your jiggle! Love your jiggle! Love your jiggle!

4. **Giving and taking feedback -** It's no secret that girls tip toe around each other's feelings, hoping not to shake the unsteady female social scene we all live in. This tip-toeing creates a false sense of right, and approval of our actions. What we need is honest and polite feedback from our peers, teammates, classmates, and all others who interact with us. We must create environments for ourselves where giving and taking positive and constructive feedback is second nature, and all are comfortable with the exchange.

5. **OMG....yes...it's disgusting! –** When your friend stands in front of the mirror and says "I hate my butt", don't say "what butt? You barely even have a butt...it's like so small it's non-existent". That is a nice attempt at being a friend, but it doesn't help the cause. Come back at her with a completely ridiculous and sarcastic response like "Ya...it's totally disgusting and huge....like seriously huge....like can probably be seen from outer space kind of huge!" Let her hear how ridiculous she sounds when she is beating herself up, and don't let her do it again!

6. **Shot of Self-Esteem –** Do not rely on one thing or one person to provide you with a sense of self-worth. Your self-esteem cannot yo-yo with your performance in sports, or in academic classes, or on the stage. Let your "thing" be a <u>part</u> of who you are, but not <u>all</u> of who you are. We all have a love-hate relationship with the things we "do", but don't let that carry over to a love-hate relationship with <u>you</u>.

7. **Never stop improving –** Know that there is always room for improvement in EVERY area of life. Take on a new challenge every week, and get better at something. Be a better listener, be a better student, be a better athlete, be a better friend. Take time to celebrate successes, but never stop improving.

8. **Enjoy a chocolate chip cookie –** You need to eat a chocolate chip cookie that isn't fat free, gluten free, calorie free, sugar free and taste free!! Just eat the damn cookie, enjoy the taste, and smile. This goes for all things in life – take time to relax and enjoy.

9. **Healthy Crew –** Another stolen rule from a good friend, Cindy Pierce. Surround yourself with good people, a "healthy crew" – people who make you feel strong, secure, and comfortable being you.

10. **Admit you screwed up –** We screw up all the time. We put our foot in our mouth, we break something, we sleep-in, we forget, we are human, and we screw up. Don't hide it. Don't make excuses. Admit your mistakes, and allow someone else the opportunity to forgive you. You will feel more confident, and actually make more connections by being honest with yourself and others.

11. **Role models –** find them, contact them, connect with them, and let them know how much you appreciate them. Maybe they don't know how much they mean to you– write them a letter, and tell them how much you admire them and why. And then take it upon yourself to become a role model for someone else.

12. **Do it for the story –** Life is about the story you have to tell at the end of the day. When opportunity knocks, answer the door. Be safe, be smart, take care of business, but have fun. If for no other reason, when approached with what seems like a good idea, jump in, make the best of it, meet as many people as you can, and be sure to tell the story for the rest of your life.

13. **Leadership is not a check box on your birth certificate -** We are not born leaders or non-leaders. Find your passion, declare that passion, and then lead others in that direction. Your leadership skills will be as strong as your passion is for whatever you have set your mind to. People will follow if they believe in your drive, your dedication, and your courage. Make them believe by setting the example, and fully committing to your vision.