The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People



Second Edition

Created and Compiled
by Andrea Pennington, MD, C.Ac.
Now known as DaeEss 1Dreah

Featuring stories by:

Kenny Bey —Helga "Gegga" Birgis
Lizzy Bernthal, Ph.D. —Sarah K. Brandis
Catherine Callahan — Amy Davis
Busie Dhlodhlo —Susan Edwards
Julia Farmer — Ginseng Gray-Tilman
Rob Goddard — Homani
Deri Llewellyn-Davies — JOYce Petra Melendez
Julia Munro — Melissa Neff, Ph.D.
Ruth Owen — DaeEss 1Dreah Pennington
Elsa Regan — Joana Soares
Khaya Skhosana — Jeff Sutherland, MD
Gelu Truta — Ann Marie Wyrsch

Commented [SL1]: Is the JOY part supposed to be capitalized?



MAKE YOUR MARK GLOBAL PUBLISHING, LTD

USA & Monaco

The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People © 2023 Andrea Pennington, MD, C. Ac. (DaeEss 1Dreah)

Published by Make Your Mark Global Publishing, LTD

The purpose of this book is not to give medical advice, nor to give a prescription for the use of any technique as a form of treatment for any physical, medical, psychological, or emotional condition. The information in this book does not replace the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. It is intended only as general information and education. In the event that you use any of the information in this book for yourself, as is your constitutional right, the authors and publisher assume no responsibility for your actions. No expressed or implied guarantee of the effect of the use of any of the recommendations can be given. The authors and publisher are not liable or responsible for any loss or damage allegedly arising from any information in this book. Many of the names and personal details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in, or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the copyright owner(s).

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book via the Internet or any other means without the permission of the publisher are illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions and do not participate in or encourage any electronic piracy of copyrightable materials. Your support of the authors' rights is appreciated. And karma will get you if you violate this anyway!

While the authors and publisher have made every effort to provide accurate information regarding references and Internet addresses at the time of publication, the authors and publisher do not assume responsibility for errors or changes that occur after publication. The authors and publishers also do not assume any responsibility for third-party websites and/or their content.

Lead Editor: Lynette Stewart
Book cover design: Andrea Danon & Stefan Komljenović of Art Biro Network www.artbiro.ba

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Library of Congress Control Number: 22
The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People, 2nd Edition
Publisher: Make Your Mark Global, LTD
Ft. Myers, Florida

p431
Trade Paperback ISBN 978-1-7356790-8-2
Ebook ISBN 978-1-7356790-7-5

Subjects: Psychology
Summary: In *The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People*, Dr. DaeEss 1Dreal, formerly known as Andrea Pennington, presents 24 real life stories of people from various backgrounds and cultures who have dug deep within themselves to overcome, bounce back and move forward after facing difficult and even life threatening circumstances. What these stories all have in common is how they prove that the traits of resilience can be built and expanded with intention, so that we can thrive after trauma, and experience more growth than we thought possible. There is great hope and inspiration to be found here.

MAKE YOUR MARK GLOBAL PUBLISHING, LTD
USA
The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People © 2023 *Andrea Pennington*
For information on bulk purchase orders of this book or to book Dr. Andrea to speak at your event or on your program, call +33 06 12 74 77 09 or send an email to Booking@AndreaPennington.com

Commented [2]: Update

Commented [SL3]: Is this correct?

Also Compiled or Co-authored by Andrea Pennington

Sacred Medicine

Holistic Healing

Manifesting Love

Magic and Miracles

Life After Trauma

Time to Rise

Turning Points / Vendepunkter

Heart to Heart: The Path to Wellness

Resilience Through Yoga and Meditation

Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated to all of the beautiful souls
who have experienced burnout, loss, illness and trauma

May this book remind you that
you are stronger than you know

May you find inspiration and hope
while reclaiming your resilience

Preface to the Second Edition

The book you hold in your hands is a collection of very generous, honest stories from courageous authors. Each of them has opened up their heart to bring you insight into what led them out of pain, confusion and breakdowns into their present lives which are full of beauty, joy and light. These stories of resilience demonstrate that we are stronger than we know!

Because our authors are from a variety of countries and we are publishing these stories in English, you may notice that the spelling of words is sometimes in British English and sometimes in American English, depending on the author's country of origin. You'll also see that some phrases they use are unknown to you, as they are not always direct translations from their mother tongue.

In light of the fact that many of our authors are not native English speakers, our editor has worked hard to make each story clear and full of the impact the author intended. It is our sincere hope that we have done their compelling stories justice and that you will be moved and inspired by them.

Contents

Introduction.....1

Chapter 1

Resilience Trait #1: Insight & Emotional Intelligence..... 17

A Return to My Authentic Self by Khaya Skhosana..... 22

Listening to My Body's Wisdom by Melissa Neff, Ph.D. 33

Exercises & Journal Prompts..... 43

Chapter 2

Resilience Trait #2 : Flexibility & Adaptability..... 55

My Healing Motherhood Journey by Elsa Regan 59

Exercises & Journal Prompts..... 70

Chapter 3

Resilience Trait #3: Persistence 73

Persistence to Peace by Susan Edwards 76

The Power Within by Kenny Bey 87

Twelve Steps of a Recovering/Discovering Adult Child by Ann Marie Wyrsch 96

Exercises & Journal Prompts..... 107

Chapter 4

Resilience Trait #4: Tolerance & Compassion..... 111

Always in My Heart by Julia Farmer..... 115

The Silent Lion by Helga "Gegga" Birgisdóttir..... 125

Recovering from Caregiver Burnout by DaeEss 1Dreah (Andrea Pennington, MD) 137

Exercises & Journal Prompts 151

Chapter 5

Resilience Trait #5: Optimism 157
Hope for the Hopeless by Jeff Sutherland, M.D. 160
Every Challenge is Worth It by Ruth Owen 170
Exercises & Journal Prompts 181

Chapter 6

Resilience Trait #6: Confidence & Self-efficacy 185
Alchemy of Courage by Ginseng G 189
Found in Translation by Catherine Callahan 198
Your Money or Your Life by Amy Davis 208
Exercises & Journal Prompts 218

Chapter 7

Resilience Trait #7: Positive Self-talk 227
Seeing My Future by Joana Soares 231
Stepping off the Tarmac by Lizzy Bernthal, Ph.D. 242
Exercises & Journal Prompts 253

Chapter 8

Resilience Trait #8: Connection to Positive People 265
To Survive and Thrive by Julia Munro 269
How Angels Helped Me Quit Smoking by Gelu Truta 279
From Suicide to Success by Rob Goddard 290
Exercises & Journal Prompts 302

Chapter 9

Resilience Trait #9: Positive Emotion 307

The 'Doing' Trap and Learning to Feel bBy Sarah Brandis 310
Exercises & Journal Prompts 322

Chapter 10
Resilience Trait #10: Purpose + Meaning in Life 325
Purpose-led Resilience by Deri Llewellyn-Davies 329
The Star-Money, A Sequel by Homani 345
You Are the Key to Set Yourself Free by JOYce Petra Melendez 350
Purpose Driven Goals by Busie Dhlodhlo 361

Conclusion 371

Appendix 373
The Attunement Meditation™ excerpt from *The Real Self Love Handbook* by Andrea Pennington 413

Commented [SL4]: As I asked earlier, I'm assuming the capitalization of "JOY" is intentional?

INTRODUCTION

The topic of resilience is one that has fascinated me since childhood. Growing up with a family physician in the home, my mother, I often heard stories of devastation, loss, illness, and death on a regular basis. It wasn't that my mother brought her work home with her, it was because I worked as 'Office Manager' in her medical practice by the age of 13. I was good at filing, answering phones and making copies of patient records. And I was really good at listening.

Long before health coaches existed, my mom functioned as one. She wasn't the typical medical doctor you may think of who spends only a few minutes in consultation before handing out prescriptions and quickly rushing on to the next patient. My mother, or Dr. P, as she was fondly called, spent an extraordinary amount of time with her patients. She knew their family histories inside and out, and she knew about their dreams and hopes as much as she knew the levels of their blood pressure, fasting blood sugar, and cholesterol.

The time my mother spent counseling her patients, whether in the office or on hospital rounds, amounted to intensive coaching on lifestyle and behavior modification. Her guidance on adopting a growth mindset and her providing positive psychology-infused support made her the go-to doc to get your life, relationships and health straightened out.

Dr. P firmly believed in her patients' abilities to heal, recover, and even thrive in the face of illness. She knew how to draw out the innate strengths of her patients, how to shift their mindset to more positive and empowering thought processes and how to encourage them through their darkest hours. She knew how to inspire her patients to never give up, to persevere and to be kind to themselves in the face of tragedy. My mother was the first expert I witnessed coach people to become more resilient.

She knew how to do all of this, and more, because life had delivered to her devastating circumstances that forced her to develop those qualities for herself. Growing up in British Guyana in the 1930's, my mom was the youngest of 5 children born to an extraordinary, independent businesswoman. My maternal grandmother inherited a soap factory and by all counts was a strong entrepreneur and all-around force to be reckoned with. With a tall, imposing stature and confident tone of voice, she was respected and well revered in Guyana.

Commented [SL5]: I'd probably use the word instead, "five." That is usually recommended for numbers under 10, but it's a stylistic decision.

Sadly, my grandmother had type II diabetes, and in her ~~mid forties~~mid-forties, when my mother was only 11 years old, she succumbed to the disease. My mother watched her powerful, loving mom become bedridden and eventually die from complications of the disease. It left an intense wound inside her.

Because my mom's father was not in the picture, her siblings took charge of the business, the estate and my mom's schooling. They were shocked to hear that in her early twenties my mother intended to move to England to study nursing. She was met with horrified remarks about how inappropriate nursing would be., A~~a~~fter all, she would have to examine naked people.

But the experience of watching her mother die a painful death at home inspired my mother to pursue a career in the health field at all costs. When she was midway through her nursing degree, mom says she was shocked to find out that type II diabetes was not only preventable but also a treatable disease that didn't have to end in premature death. It was then that she became determined to use her knowledge and life force to never let anyone die of a preventable disease. She took up a healing crusade that would become her legacy.

When she immigrated to the United States in the 1950~~'~~s, she worked in a local hospital in Sacramento and discovered that American physicians were not as civil as their British counterparts. In particular, she was dismayed with the harsh way they spoke down to nurses and lorded their position over them. Never one to tolerate condescending attitudes, my feisty mother decided to go to medical school.

So, with three small children at home, she applied for medical school~~,~~ and got in. Despite her age (she was in her ~~mid thirties~~mid-thirties by then) and despite being recently divorced, she decided to stand up to the patriarchal medical system to demonstrate how a physician could be compassionate and not arrogant.

I admired the way my pint-sized, 5 foot 2 inch mother commanded the attention of prominent social and medical personnel along her career, all while being a compassionate~~,~~ health advocate for her patients. Being a woman of color in the medical profession required that she stand her ground on a number of occasions, to get the same privileges her white male counterparts received. She was driven and dedicated. And during that period of time, it is safe to say, that she dealt with racial discrimination and stress on a constant basis.

Though her professional drive and being a single mother meant that she worked outside of our home 5 days a week and some weekends, she also taught me the importance of rest, self-care, and play. Mom understood personally how the 10 resilience traits outlined in this book could create a stress resistant personality and lead to a vibrant, meaningful life. She lived these principles, made them her personal mantras and taught them with such gusto that her patients knew many of them by heart.

Commented [SL6]: As I mentioned earlier, I'd recommend changing all numbers under 10 to the word form. So "five" instead of "5." But it's up to you, of course! 😊

These resilience traits saved my mother from falling into despair and depression when she lost her mother at such a young age. They empowered her to take on an advanced degree despite facing racism and ageism while raising three kids as a single mother. These resilience traits even helped her keep dementia at bay for decades longer than anyone in her family. She became a physician at the ripe age of 40 and continued her crusade to nurture, coach and heal patients all the way up until she was nearly 70 years old. We even joined forces for a few years when I ran an integrative health center and holistic spa shortly after I finished my medical training.

From being mindfully tuned into the body, becoming aware of genetic and lifestyle influences on health, taking a positive mindset and perspective on recovery, and mixing them with a healthy dose of optimism, perseverance, and a determination to fulfill an inspiring purpose, my mother epitomized the Highly Resilient Person. Through her willful example, and those you'll read in this book, I'm confident that you can become one too.

What I learned about resilience from the years I shadowed my mother at her medical office was reinforced in medical school, my residency training and the past two decades of me working professionally as an

integrative physician, healer and mentor. In addition to my conventional medical degree, I received certification in acupuncture as well as Age Management Medicine, neurofeedback, nutrition therapy, trauma recovery and positive psychology. Most recently, I added Psychedelic Assisted Therapy certification to my trauma training.

Looking at our health, emotional wellbeing and relationships from multiple perspectives often requires multiple disciplines to manage them, and I'm grateful that my background has afforded me the ability to see health from many angles. I have since had the privilege of accompanying thousands of patients on their healing journeys and witnessing their often miraculous recoveries using an integrative and holistic approach. From terrifying diagnoses like cancer, multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's dementia, to obesity, depression and fibromyalgia, my exposure to the cause and cure of illness and disease has run the gamut.

In all my years of practicing medicine, leading retreats, and teaching workshops, I have faithfully continued in the steps of my mother by bringing focused attention, compassion, and plenty of face time to my patients to dive into their health, their past medical histories, and their early life experiences. The integrative and holistic approach to wellness I use has allowed me to guide patients toward self-healing in many cases, and accelerated recovery using conventional therapies in most others. Building resilience has become the cornerstone of my medical practice and psychological coaching.

Through my connection to doctors, therapists, and healers around the world, I have now been exposed to even more cases of people who have put these traits to work as they recovered from burnout,

stress-induced illness and even while overcoming the lasting physical and emotional effects of exposure to toxic or traumatic experiences in childhood. While the resilience research is quite extensive, most lay people are unaware of the ~~real world~~real-world applications of the clinical data. I am happy to report that the true stories presented in this book represent authentic examples of how resilience is built, reinforced, and relied upon in real life. I will share with you the latest research findings throughout the book which will show you that these are trustworthy and aim-worthy traits to pursue with actionable exercises and practices you can implement on your own.

Defining resilience

Commented [SL7]: Should this be capitalized? I'm assuming not but just wanted to ask.

Resilience is a well-defined term in science, psychology, and technology. Resilience is our innate ability to adapt positively in the face of significant loss, tragedy, trauma, health complications, and other life stressors (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Schwarz, 2018). In ecological terms, it is the capacity of an ecosystem to recover from perturbations in the environment. In organizations and groups, it is the ability of a system to withstand changes in its environment and still function well.

A resilient person is often described as being able to bounce back after a tragedy, illness, injury or recover after a setback. Being resilient usually brings to mind terms such as flexible, adaptable, durable, and of strong character. The developmental process of resilience is unique to each individual because people react differently to life stresses and trauma.

Resilience is an inborn capacity

We are each born with an internal program for resilience. Modern psychological research concludes that no matter the challenges we face, we have an inborn capacity to adapt to and recover from life's setbacks, illnesses, injuries, and accidents. According to medical science, ancient wisdom traditions and even a review of ancient philosophical literature, experts across the millennia have documented that each of us is born with the inherent potential to live a meaningful, happy and healthy life,; even in the face of serious adversity.

For most of us, unless there was significant birth trauma, a problematic pregnancy, or an inborn genetic disorder, we are born in a state of wellbeing. All of our organ systems are poised for a healthy life, full of the ability to weather the various storms of life with resilience and grace. We are born with the natural tendency to thrive, and this is a lifelong tendency.

Just as children bounce back after sickness and surgery, we adults can do the same. The innate biological wisdom for homeostasis and recovery can be tapped right now to recover from illness, injury and disease. Just as children change activities, hobbies and 'best friends' with ease, we adults can change the course of our lives from humdrum to rapturous with little resistance. In fact, we can be dancing, frolicking, and playing for decades to come. We are programmed for resilience.

The 5 Elements of Chinese Philosophy

My mother also introduced me to Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture while I was in medical school. I was inspired by the beauty and elegance of Chinese medical philosophy, which points to how we each can enjoy ageless vitality and optimal wellbeing throughout our lifespan. It's about allowing for and optimizing our life to return harmony to our energies.

The ancient Chinese philosophy and the Taoist concepts of the 5 elements along with acupuncture and qigong have truly been a blessing in my life to help understand our personal and universal energy. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) we each carry an energetic blueprint for optimal wellbeing, happiness and success. This energy imprint dictates how our body, mind and heart naturally integrate to make us whole beings for a long, healthy life of active, vibrant living. According to TCM, we can renew our vitality and return to a natural state of wholeness and wellness when we live in accordance with our true nature and the flow of nature around us.

The dynamic life force energy, or 'qi' in Chinese, flows through the sky, earth, our bodies, and our surroundings naturally. Where this energy flows, life flourishes. When this life force energy circulates harmoniously through all of our body's channels — or meridians — we can remain healthy and vital for a long, bountiful life. Even when life presents us with illness or injuries, the flow of life force energy enables us to quickly recover. We have an innate ability to bounce back even stronger than ever from illness, injury, shock, or trauma.

All of us, both women and men, have a mix of yin and yang energy. We are made with this fundamental polarity between receptive and

aggressive flow. An excess or deficiency of one or the other is what can lead to dis-ease. When we recognize that the human body is meant to return to a state of wholeness and vitality after intense periods of work or stress, it becomes imperative that we consider the many ways that we block our natural inclination for repair and rejuvenation.

Commented [SL8]: I assume the hyphen is intended. I know I've seen you use this before. 😊

At a cellular level, right down to our DNA, we can impact our physical and emotional health as well as our ability to recover from stress, illness, and injury. We influence our own wellbeing by honoring our own energy needs, respecting the cycles of life and the rhythms of the seasons and days. Rather than trying to force ourselves to live up to unrealistic external standards, which are often ~~an~~ unattainable and unhealthy, we can learn more about our inherent energy, what allows us to refuel and recharge and ensure that we take part in activities that engage a deeper sense of our being.

The TCM system explains that when we allow our natural energy signature to inform and guide our lifestyle we can live wholly, fully, and resiliently. In the Chinese medical view of the human body-mind, we are a microcosm or mini-version of the macrocosm of the entire universe and nature. Just as nature recovers after hurricanes, droughts, and volcanic eruptions, when we experience setbacks, illnesses, or bumps on our journey through life, they need not derail us entirely. Our own natural forces can bring us back to wellness and set us back on the course to optimal wellbeing and the pursuit of our highest ideals. This is what resilience is all about.

The Chinese have documented this natural ability for over 2,500 years, and now is the time for you to master it as well. You have the

potential to become the master of your whole life to enjoy optimal wellbeing of body, mind, spirit, environment, and relationships.

To get a sense of how the 5 elements of Chinese Medicine influence your resilience, please visit www.TheVitalityTest.com. There you will find a free online questionnaire developed by my colleague Nicholas Haines of the Five Institute. Taking the assessment will show you which of the 5 Chinese elements are your dominant influences: Water, Wood, Metal, Earth, Fire. Take the Vitality Test to learn more about what makes you brilliant and vulnerable to stress and how the 5 elements can be helpful in building resilience.

How we deplete our capability to recover

While we are each born with the inherent capacity for resilience, we can, however, become overwhelmed by the drama, trauma, and stress in our lives. Our innate vitality code directs several body systems to return us to a state of wellbeing. But prolonged exposure to stressful situations with inadequate resources for coping, managing, and diffusing the physiological stress response can overwhelm the body's ability to recover. It can even lead to considerable damage to multiple organ systems.

Overworked bodies, overloaded schedules, and overwhelmed minds use up our vital energy and can leave us feeling exhausted and fatigued. Your vital life force energy can become weak, stuck, or sluggish as a result of not living in harmony with your natural energy flow.

For example, not eating healthy food, drinking too much alcohol, or engaging in unhealthy behaviors, relationships and even toxic careers can cause your energy to become depleted or stagnant. When this happens, we experience dis-ease in a variety of forms. We may become sick, tired, or depressed, and devoid of joy or passion.

Fortunately, our bodies, including our brains, have the incredible capacity for recovery and rejuvenation. There is a reliable path to vitality, purpose and fulfillment which incorporates the well-regarded and well-researched domains of resilience, neuroscience, and positive psychology. The principles of these clinical domains are well represented in the stories of recovery in this book.

My burnout breakthrough

Despite my mother having three children, dealing with sexism and racism in the early part of her medical career, and working really hard, I never saw her drop from exhaustion nor suffer from burnout. Looking back, I can see that all of her self-care routines, including dancing, listening to the music of her homeland, and gardening were her ways of honoring her own energy type.

Early in my career, I strove to fit into the mold that the media and medical society put me into, without respect for my innate nature, and it nearly drove me into the ground. The first time I experienced burnout, it hit me hard. I was in my early thirties and had a lot of anxiety, fear, depression, and confusion in my head, in addition to physical weakness. I struggled to get out of bed in the morning, I felt emotionally drained, and I lost my motivation at work. I felt totally lost, running on autopilot, battling with imposter syndrome.

Because I had previously been so passionate and, enthusiastic with my job, I became curious to know where my mojo had gone. And I saw the same thing in many of my clients — from overworked parents and caregivers, to entrepreneurs, highly sensitive coaches, and empathic healers. I started to ask, "why do some highly functional executives, parents or superstars thrive despite high stress, and some succumb to burnout and exhaustion?"

In a search for wellness, I was given a referral to a well-known therapist. He was known for treating high-powered executives and influential people on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. During our initial session he told me that he thought my case would be easy to fix based on certain traits I already possessed and those he could help me build.

He told me one thing that drove me to research resilience and recovering from burnout. He said, "Andrea you need to become FAT. Flexible, adaptable, and tolerant." He explained that these were a few traits of highly resilient people, the types of people who run countries, own large multinational companies, and live as high-performing megastars. He told me that building up resilience could give me more internal peace and even greater productivity.

So, I began my study of burnout, resilience, and recovery. Over the years my research led me to add to the list several more characteristics of resilience which I present to you in this 2nd edition of The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People. I'm now more mindful of my tendency to take on projects that won't deplete me. And I'm better at setting boundaries to prevent me from overworking.

Commented [SL9]: Should usually put book titles in italics.

How resilience impacts our wellbeing

If balance and wholeness represent our natural state, why do some people bounce back easier than others? Why do some rise after defeat rather than wither into obscurity? Why do siblings born into the same families with similar exposures sometimes grow into adults with completely opposite states of wellbeing? Why do some victims of abuse become abusers as adults while their siblings, who also suffered abuse, become rescuers? What makes one child respond to a demanding, critical parent with perfectionism while another withdraws and becomes an underachiever?

It turns out that innate qualities of personality also influence how we perceive, interpret, and label our experiences. Throughout this book you will learn how to reinterpret, re-label and empower yourself to become more resilient and robust than ever before. Our mental attitude and focus also impact our ability to recover from setbacks. By reading the ~~real life~~real-life stories presented in this book, you'll see how you can adopt new ways of thinking and being which will enhance your resilience factors.

Recovering from and preventing burnout

This book has been inspired by the thousands of people I've encountered over the last two decades who've experienced health challenges such as chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, lupus, depression, and anxiety all due to excessive stress. Some of the stress was caused by emotional and physical abuse, some was caused by taking care of sick relatives or special needs children, and some was simply due to being overworked.

One of the end points we see as a result of living with excessive stress, is a wearing away of our resilience resources. Ultimately, if we do not release stress, replenish our energy, and maintain a healthy lifestyle, we may end up in burnout.

Burnout is defined as the progressive process of physical, emotional, and~~&~~ mental exhaustion. It is caused by long-term exposure to stressful, emotionally demanding situations. The common symptoms of burnout like overwhelm, chronic fatigue, depression and anxiety are usually associated with work (as in healing and helping professionals, teachers, entrepreneurs, CEOs), but burnout is also seen in caregivers of all kinds like parents in general and those with children having special needs, as well as caregivers for the elderly or sick, as I share in Chapter 4.

Research shows that people who are susceptible to burnout were initially highly motivated and enthusiastic about their work or role, but over time stressful conditions wore away their emotional and physical reserves, replacing them with disillusionment, cynicism, and all out depletion of their motivation. In the past we could work our butts off and hustle hard, relying on caffeine or energy drinks and resting on the weekends. But the pace of our lifestyle keeps pouring demands and desires upon us. Our time is a limited resource, but the demands keep coming. The old way of life is not sustainable. The combination of dependence or addiction to cope or keep up, overwork, and overwhelm wreak havoc on our physical and emotional wellbeing. Millions of people realize that the constant hustle does not lead to satisfaction or fulfillment, at worst it can lead to an early death, and at the very least poor physical health and mental illness.

Rates of burnout and exhaustion are at an all-time high — and given our lifestyle those rates will continue to go higher. We are more aware than ever of the dire need for recovery from stress, trauma, and everyday life trauma to keep families and whole communities together. Our individual and collective resilience is needed to recover from burnout and to prevent it from happening again. It's time to turn it around, before it's too late. Now is the time to find a new way to live and thrive, a new way to defeat stress, renew our energy and replenish our willpower. It's time for us all to develop more resilience.

The structure of this book

Each chapter of the book covers one trait of the top 10 traits of highly resilient people. After a brief explanation of the trait, one or more personal stories are presented by contributing authors. You will be inspired to investigate and improve the deepest aspects of your personality, the ones not taught in school and mostly reserved for psychotherapy offices, to help you enhance recovery, rewire your brain, and find the deepest meaning in life.

Because most of the 10 traits of resilience can be nurtured and strengthened with mindfulness and meditation practices, I have included an extensive excerpt from my book, *The Real Self Love Handbook: A Proven 5-Step Process to Liberate Your Authentic Self, Build Resilience and Live an Epic Life* in the Appendix of this book. The excerpt contains instruction on how to practice a 5-step mindfulness practice called the **Attunement Meditation™**, which I developed nearly 2 decades ago to support my patients recovering from burnout, substance abuse and eating disorder recovery.

You will find an audio recording of the Attunement Meditation™ and many other guided meditations on the Resources Page of our book website for your personal use. Visit www.Top10ResilienceTraits.com/Resources for all the downloads available.

It is my sincere wish that this book inspires and empowers you to reactivate your innate vitality code and build even more resilience.

Commented [SL10]: Obviously there is a formatting issue here (and in a few other places in the book). This might just be because I imported it into Word.

Resilience Trait #1
Insight & Emotional Intelligence

The number one trait of highly resilient people is insight. Research shows that resilience exists in people with high levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence (Schwarz, 2018; Kansky & Diener, 2017). These are key resources which build resilience. Insight empowers you to rebound from setbacks, breakdowns, and burnout more gracefully and increases the likelihood that you will come back stronger after recovering from overwhelm and overdoing. Part of self-awareness, or insight involves increasing your emotional intelligence. This helps you recognize your own emotional triggers that make you feel stressed or deplete your energy. This type of intelligence also helps you identify the feelings other people may be experiencing.

To develop a stress resistant personality, we begin by addressing a potential lack of insight, a lack of self-awareness. The absence of awareness is also defined as ignorance — but this does not mean stupidity, it simply implies 'not knowing.' Not being aware of or denying your own mental and emotional makeup and what you require to thrive will leave you at risk of burnout, illness, and even premature death.

Developing emotional intelligence and insight into your feelings while also becoming open, curious, and actively investigating your makeup will build resilience. More than that, developing greater self-awareness is the foundation of a life of peace, fulfillment, joy, ease and flow. Self-awareness is described as one's ability to see oneself clearly and objectively through the processes of introspection and reflection (Eurich, 2018). It is the psychological state of conscious knowledge of one's personal feelings, traits, and behaviors. According to the self-awareness theory, people are not their thoughts but rather an entity, or the conscious witness observing them; they are just thinkers who are separate from their thoughts (Duval & Wicklund, 1972).

Self-awareness exists on a spectrum because it may not be possible to attain total objectivity in self-evaluation. Nevertheless, self-aware people are constantly observing and evaluating their thoughts and emotions. Through introspection, people become aware of their behavioral triggers and mental stressors. It is only through personal reflection that people become cognizant of their feelings and emotions (Nida-Rümelin, 2017). Therefore, the process of self-awareness requires constant reflection and introspection. Through self-awareness, we may also become appreciative of other people's perspectives.

Self-awareness is closely tied to emotional intelligence, which refers to one's capacity to recognize, comprehend, and manage their own emotions and those of people around them in a positive manner to ease personal stress and empathize with others (Shahid, Stirling & Adams, 2018). While most of us do not have control over all of the emotions we experience, the ability to control the reaction to those

emotions allows us to manage life's stresses and live in harmony with our core values and standards (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017).

Research shows that people who are knowledgeable about their own mental and emotional processes are more likely to manage their mental and emotional responses to stressful events healthily, thus improving their resilience (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). Self-aware people also have a proactive approach to life. They develop plans in place to manage stressful life situations and improve decision-making (Shahid et al, 2018). As you'll see at the end of this chapter, we have included some helpful exercises to support you in developing more self-awareness.

The practice of self-awareness and emotional intelligence is intertwined. Emotional intelligence improves one's level of self-awareness. It is well known that emotionally intelligent individuals can receive and learn from constructive criticism gracefully during times of conflict—, which helps to improve their resilience. Emotionally intelligent people can practice self-regulation; they make rational decisions and remain calm even in stressful times. They also exhibit reduced stress and anxiety. Emotional intelligence is also highly preferred in leadership because it encourages self-awareness, empathy, relationship management, self-regulation, and effective communication in leaders (Issah, 2018).

Understanding yourself, who you really are and what makes you tick is where you begin to align your actions with your true nature. And this is the first step to activating your innate vitality code — the body's natural blueprint for recovery, resilience, and restoration. When you live in alignment with your authentic self and your core values, you allow your innate vitality code to turn on the body's rest

and recovery systems. And it helps you build a stress-resistant personality.

Without insight we tend to walk around blindly, reacting to life based on old programs, rather than tuning into greater wisdom in the present moment. Without insight you stay in self-denial and unhealthy lifestyles. Without awareness of your strengths and limits, you stay stuck in self-doubt.

With self-awareness and insight into who you really are, you can stop comparing your life, talents, burdens, and outcomes against anything or anyone outside of you. Instead, you get clear about your own system for wellbeing, your symptoms, and your stress triggers and you can create your own personalized recovery plan that works for YOU.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, one way you can increase self-awareness and insight is by taking the Vitality Test, developed by my colleague Nick Haines of the Five Institute. This free online questionnaire will show you which of the 5 Chinese elements are your dominant influences: Water, Wood, Metal, Earth, Fire. Visit www.TheVitalityTest.com to learn more about what makes you brilliant and vulnerable to stress and how the 5 elements can be helpful in building resilience. This will be useful as you read the stories presented in this book.

Our first personal story, by Khaya Skhosana illustrates how difficult it is to flourish when you are unaware of your subconscious triggers and beliefs. Growing up poor in South Africa, Khaya felt abandoned by his parents. Despite this, he was a clever child who excelled at school and subsequently carved out a successful career for himself.

Life looked rosy until Khaya turned 40 and lost everything dear to him. This started him on a journey towards meaning, awareness, and authenticity that he is grateful for.

Next, a story by Dr. Melissa Neff shows us how tuning into the messages of the body increases our self-awareness. Melissa struggled for years to get a diagnosis for her excruciating back pain. She tried many traditional and alternative therapies, some of which helped to an extent. She eventually tried neurofeedback to access her subconscious thoughts and memories, only to be horrified to find she's been abused as a child. Today, Melissa helps others who've also suffered from trauma at her neurofeedback clinic in Montana.

I hope that you will be inspired to see insight and emotional intelligence through a new lens with these stories.

A Return to My Authentic Self
By Khaya Skhosana

She put the candle on the floor next to where I was sleeping, crouched over my tiny body and gently shook my shoulder to wake me up. I opened my eyes. I was in a dream-like state with the candlelight blinding me. I could see my mother's sad but hopeful face. She told me that it was time for her to go, she was leaving me in the care of my aunt and great-grandmother, and that I should listen to and respect them. I only realised a few hours later when I finally woke up, that I had not been dreaming and that this was my mother saying goodbye to her six-year-old son. It would be a month before I would see her again.

This scene repeated itself once every month for the next six years of my life. In the early hours of Monday mornings, my mother travelled back to her work in the city; I remained in the rural homeland. I missed my mother so much throughout the month and the memory of her departure would reinforce the emotional pain of disconnecting from her which I'd initially felt a few months after my birth.

Where it all began

I was born in Minaar, on a small farm just outside the coal town of Witbank, in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. My parents had never married, and my father had disappeared before my birth. My mother lived with her grandmother because she'd also been born out

of wedlock. I initially built a strong bond with my mother, then suddenly, at three months old it was broken off. With my father gone, my mother was forced to assume a job as a sleep-in domestic helper at the age of 22 and could only see me on weekends. That was my first experience of physical and emotional disconnection from her. She left me in the care of her younger sister, my great-grandmother and just about any other adult around the house. There were four generations under one roof.

I bonded with my aunt as my caregiver, and considered her to be my mother. When I was just over three years old, I was introduced to a tiny baby that my aunt 'suddenly' had. From that day onwards, my aunt never had time for me; she either always had this little baby with her or was resting because she was tired. I felt a sense of disconnection from her similar to when my mother had initially left me for work. However, at this stage, I was old enough to go out and play with other kids from nearby households, and that is how I started building a bond with friends.

When I was six years old, my mother told me that the family had to move to a new place. On the day of the move, a big truck came and the adults started loading stuff into it – chairs, tables, boxes, tools, etc. We were bunched into the back of my grandfather's old Ford Ranchero pickup truck, while others sat on top of the pile on the truck. The vehicles left the farm's dusty road, travelling slowly, then joined a beautiful tarred road and immediately picked up speed. After a while, the tarred road turned into a bumpy gravel road, and a huge cloud of dust followed us, at which point the truck slowed again.

After what seemed like an eternity, we finally reached our destination. This was the rural homeland of KwaNdebele, set up by the apartheid

government to move Africans away from the cities. Several other trucks parked around us in all directions. The men started building a shelter with corrugated iron, and within two days it was a habitable shack.

The following Monday morning, my mother had to return to work in Witbank. This is the Monday she came with a candle to where I was sleeping to bid me goodbye for the first time.

Life continued in the homelands. Communities formed and I befriended Khende, a boy whose house was opposite ours. This friendship would prove valuable because unlike me, a boy from the farm, Khende was street-smart and could fight well. He would later protect me from school bullies when we started school the following year.

Most of my friends, including Khende, were also cared for by their aunts or older sisters and their grandmothers, while their mothers and uncles were away in the cities for work, and only came home once a month. The area had no economic activity or basic municipal services such as water, sanitation, electricity, etc. The common denominator amongst the families was poverty, which was staved off one weekend every month when the mothers and uncles who worked in the cities came home.

Return to Witbank

When I was about 12 years old, I visited my grandmother who lived in the township near Witbank. Having spent my childhood on a farm and in a rural homeland, I was dazzled by the streetlights that stayed

on throughout the night. There were proper houses built with bricks and mortar which had electricity, water, and a toilet inside. This was heaven compared to where I came from. The local primary school was a triple-story building, a far cry from my corrugated iron-built school without much furniture. I pleaded with my mother to allow me to stay with my grandmother, and in the end, after discussing it with her, she agreed.

Despite all the 'glitz and glamour' of the township, our family still lived in a shack in a huge yard that had been earmarked to build a church. We did not have electricity and by extension, we didn't have any of the electrical appliances such as fridges, TVs, or stoves. In other words, we still lived in poverty. However, unlike in the homeland where everyone was poor and in the same boat, here we stood out and felt isolated from the rest of the township folks. I felt ashamed of our poverty and struggled to fit in. I remember not being able to participate in conversations at school because they were about a popular TV sitcom at the time, and I did not watch it because we did not have a TV.

Being from a rural homeland and with low self-esteem as a result of my home environment, I was constantly bullied by the more street-savvy township boys. The bullying stopped when Percy, the strongest and most feared boy at school, befriended me. From that point on, nobody could touch me. Again, this time in a different environment, a friend came to my rescue. This solidified my belief in friendships.

The gift

The one blessing that defined my childhood and life, in general, is my cognitive gift. Throughout my school life, I was always at the top of my grade. I used this gift to finish high school with impressive results and get a scholarship. I was accepted by South Africa's top university. After graduating, I secured a training contract with a global auditing firm and went on to qualify as a chartered accountant.

My life in general flourished. I had a good profession, I got married and we were blessed with two boys. We lived in the best neighbourhood and our children went to top private schools. Life was good.

Hamster wheel

Soon after my 40th birthday, my life started unravelling. First, I was fired from my job. Even though this was reversed at the CCMA1, the damage to my self-esteem had already been done. Then, around the same time, I had a fallout with some of my friends, including my best friend at the time, because of their blatant attempt to tear my marriage apart. I realised that the perception I'd had about my friends had been completely false. I instantly removed myself from those friendships, preferring to spend my time with my wife and kids.

Then, my life took a turn for the worst. At the onset of the lockdown brought on by COVID-19, my wife and I separated. I needed emotional support and still had close friends to confide in. One

1 CCMA stands for Council for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration, an independent statutory body that adjudicates employer and employee disputes, mainly dealing with cases of unfair dismissals.

interfered and breached my boundaries, worsening the situation. Another breached my confidence and trust I had in him, and the last was supportive in all the right ways. My estranged wife filed for divorce; I did not challenge it and several months later we were divorced.

I experienced disconnection all over again, this time from all the relationships that I'd held dear and had used to define who I was, and that proved that I was worthy – my job, my friends, and my wife.

Awareness and the power of a narrative

Through my experiences, I learned that there are two preconditions to human flourishing – healthy attachments and authenticity, i.e., being true to ourselves. As humans, we are born completely dependent and remain so for longer than any other mammals on earth. As our sense of self develops, we learn that we need others to survive. We fulfil this need through attachment, which is the drive for affection and connection to others.

Ten thousand years ago we lived in harsh environments with wild animals and other tribes that were potential dangers. Our survival depended on our belonging to a tribe. Banishment from the tribe was equal to a death sentence; one could not survive alone in those harsh environments.

As a result, attachment is built into our nervous system for our survival. In this day and age, we build personas or egos and take up certain traits to fit in with our tribe or the environment. It's an instinctual adaptive response and our behaviour tends to be

influenced by what we subconsciously believe it takes to be accepted by the herd.

The disconnection I experienced during my upbringing, first from my mother and then from my aunt when she had her own child, was extremely traumatic to me. This was reinforced every time my mother bid me goodbye on her return to work.

To cope with the unbearable emotional pain, I began suppressing it by living in my head and having friends to fulfil my need for attachment.

However, the biggest trauma I suffered was a detachment from my authentic self. I completely lost touch with who I was and lived an inauthentic life. As a result, my life fell apart. The suppression of my feelings manifested itself in the form of appeasement, not setting healthy boundaries and putting other people's needs ahead of my own.

The misalignment of my behaviour and my authentic self caused dissonance. I felt ashamed of who I was, believed I was not worthy or lovable just the way I was, and thus had to become somebody else.

By blocking the pain from my heart, I simultaneously numbed all my other feelings, including love. I had often been told by romantic partners, at various stages of my life, including my ex-wife, that I was cold and emotionally unavailable, but I had never understood what that meant. Separating myself from my body by living in my head resulted in me not deeply experiencing my emotions. However, because emotions are messages from our subconscious mind, felt through the body, this further led to my loss of guidance from my gut feelings. My subconscious mind was running my life from a place of

fear and childhood wounding without my knowledge. This led to my making many irrational decisions.

Towards authenticity

Our authentic self always nudges us towards itself, but there comes a time when it realises that drastic action is required. In my case, all the inauthentic connections that I'd been hanging onto started crumbling and eventually collapsed. Once I was left by myself, with no job, no friends and no romantic partner to help me maintain the façade, I was forced to confront myself, go within, and search for my authentic self.

Fortunately, by the time the collapse occurred, I had already started the journey of seeking life's meaning. I immersed myself in psychology books and other materials to understand myself better. Through the practices of meditation, journaling, narrative therapy and being mindful, I started connecting with myself on a deeper emotional level and felt different emotions. For the first time in my life, I could feel acute physical pain in my heart as a result of emotional wounding. I sat with it, and realised that I'd never before allowed myself to experience this pain. This opened the door for me to experience other emotions on a deeper level. I now know what love feels like, as well as bliss, and other pleasant emotions.

I'd spent my entire life believing that I was not worthy or lovable because my father had abandoned me and by choosing to work instead of being with me, I thought my mother had rejected me. However, through the inner work I'm doing, I started questioning the validity of those beliefs, and new realities emerged. I became aware

that if I really had been abandoned and rejected as a child, I would not have survived. That I am still here is proof that someone took responsibility for my survival. Just because my day-to-day care did not come from my ideal source, my mother, it doesn't mean that she did not love me. I learned that my great-grandfather, the patriarch and leader of the family, had loved me so much and even regarded me as his brother, after whom he'd named me in his honour. Sadly, he passed away when I was two and I never got to know him.

The 'Stories with Soul' workshop offered by DaeEss 1Dreah helped me rephrase my false narrative about being rejected by my mother and opened me to the truth of her sacrifices. Working as a domestic helper in apartheid South Africa was tantamount to slavery. Our mothers had been called kaffirs and kitchen girls by their white employers and their children. My mother took responsibility for her actions, did whatever she could, and subjected herself to humiliation to make sure that I did not go to bed hungry. She did all of that out of love and I am eternally grateful to her.

I also took the Vitality Test, offered by the Five Institute, based on the Taoist and Chinese concepts of the five elements. My five element results showed very high levels of Wood energy, whose big question is 'Am I free?'. According to these results, if I do not have a sense of freedom, my authentic self does not come out. I spent most of my life imprisoned by the subconscious fears of abandonment and rejection, detaching me from my authentic self, a prerequisite for me to flourish.

Self-awareness has not only liberated me from these fears, but it has also allowed me to discover my authentic self. Most importantly, it has empowered me to have compassion towards myself, forgive my

past mistakes, accept myself the way I am, stop behaviours aimed at appeasing other people, and commit to living in alignment with my authentic self.

Awareness is the start; the real work is in living and practising lessons learned on a daily basis, which is a quest I am currently on.

About the Author

John Khaya Skhosana CA (SA) is the founder and CEO of Carepoint Advisory. His mission is, through his company, to empower doctors and other medical practitioners with financial literacy, so that they can create, grow and protect their wealth. He does this through online financial courses for doctors, speaking engagements and provision of financial management services, including tax, accounting, medical billing, investments, and business advice to assist doctors to run their practices effectively, conveniently, and more profitably.

Khaya has more than 20 years of experience in financial management and has held executive roles, mainly as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Director in various industries, including investment management, financial services, and medical administration. He is currently an independent member of the Audit and Risk Committees of the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) and the Police Service Medical Scheme (Polmed). He holds a BCom Honours degree and is a qualified Chartered Accountant and Tax Practitioner.

Connect with Khaya here: www.carepointadvisory.co.za

info@carepointadvisory.co.za

Listening to My Body's Wisdom
by Melissa Neff

My friend Danielle and I jogged down a zigzagged trail on Mount Jumbo, watching the breathtaking Missoula valley unfold before us like a descending spiral staircase. Ten years ago, I'd graduated from college and flown here in a rush to live with the first man who'd ever loved me back. Now, I was divorcing him, and it felt like the best part of my life was finally within arm's reach: I had just completed my dissertation on resilience and post-traumatic growth, I had just met the love of my life, and I had started writing a novel.

As I breathlessly updated Danielle, my foot caught on an uneven rock, and my body somersaulted to the ground. The burden of gravity thrust my right hand down to brace my fall, but I fell fast and hard. Within seconds, I heard the loud crack of my shoulder dislocating. A smaller, subtle rip bulged my lowest spinal disc out through its thick, protective wall, but I didn't know that yet.

Shoulder surgery repaired the dislocation, but over the next year, what began as intermittent low back discomfort grew more insidious. A year later, after I contracted gastroenteritis at a writing workshop, constant stabbing back pain became my new normal. It felt like there were miniature trolls in my lower back piercing me, over and over again, exacting revenge for a grudge I was not privy to. For ten long years, I fell deeper and deeper down a cavernous rabbit hole of pain. Although my career as a psychologist burgeoned, I wasn't able to

enjoy my success because I had become obsessed with trying to escape the pain.

I diagnose other people, but no one can diagnose me

Over the next several years, I saw doctor after doctor and received several diagnoses – sacroiliac joint dysfunction, facet syndrome, myofascial pain, a bulging disc, arthritis. But the cortisone shots, prolotherapy, chiropractic treatments, and medications didn't work for longer than a week or two. In the meantime, my attempts to keep moving in a body that was overly stiff and protective led to more injury and heartache. Just when I felt strong enough to bike again, I flew over my handlebars and shattered my elbow. A year after my elbow was healed, I broke my wrist. When I was strong enough to walk again, I tore my knee after falling on the ice. I resigned myself to fake-smiling through pain during water aerobics classes with 80-year-old women in the gym pool, jealous that some of them moved more lithely than I could.

In search of that one test finding or the single diagnosis that would explain what was wrong with me, I spent hours a day researching back pain and every way possible to treat it. I just wanted to move on, to get to the part of my life where things would feel easier. I was convinced there was a reason for everything, a label for everything, and a way to fix everything. Ironically, I spent every day at work conducting psychological testing on clients with symptoms that also were not easily explained, and I prided myself on determining the most accurate diagnosis for them. But behind closed doors, I grew more resentful that no one could figure me out.

As my physical therapists taught me how to sit, stand, lift, and walk with better form, I began to realize that I'd spent a lifetime shrugging my shoulders, slouching, and moving through the world unevenly, emphasizing my right side and often ignoring my left. My Pilates instructor was puzzled when she asked me to lift a leg and I lifted my hip instead. I was puzzled by her reaction until I began to see the true extent to which I was disconnected from my body signals. Over time, I realized that I had been living life almost entirely from the neck up, overemphasizing all things thinking over all things feeling. Like a string of broken Christmas tree lights that sputtered on slowly, one at a time, my rehabilitation efforts brought me back into a body whose signals had somehow turned off. It was surreal to feel as though I was meeting parts of myself for the first time. However, I was so distracted by pain that I didn't think to wonder why all these parts had been asleep.

Finding a new path through pain

Dejected and willing to try anything, I turned to alternative therapies, like Rolfing, acupuncture, Reiki, and energy work. A Reiki master saw flames arise from my solar plexus as I fled a native village in a past life. An Akashic records reader told me that the gastroenteritis I'd experienced at the writing workshop, after a week of discussing my story about a girl whose father had a dark secret, was actually an initiation into a new way of being. A woman who channeled angels told me that having a sixth (and extra) vertebra was a sign that I was a healer. I didn't know what any of it meant, or more importantly, how this information could translate into a pain-free life. These interventions helped more than any medical treatment, perhaps partly

because the practitioners were incredible people who made me feel seen, heard, cared for, and understood. Their work inspired me to get trained in Accunect, a form of energy medicine that involves using intuition to shift long-standing patterns, emotions, and beliefs. The first time I practiced this technique on my dog, I was able to dissolve a bone she had swallowed that would have otherwise led to surgery, had it shown up again on the repeat MRI. I was shocked to realize that perhaps my true calling was not to obsess over finding the perfect answers for other people, but to help facilitate clients to do deeper, transformational work within themselves.

Meanwhile, my pain had worsened to the point where I could not stand still for more than three minutes without going from a 0 to an 8 on the pain scale. I eventually insisted on being tested for what I knew was a tear in my lowest disc, which my doctor would only agree to after another year of useless physical therapy. After I got the disc tear repaired, I was sure that would be "it" – this was the surgery that would finally fix me. So, when I was not better six months later, depressed and desperate for relief, I followed a friend's suggestion to try neurofeedback for pain. By then, I had stopped placing all my resources into fighting against what was happening and trying to get back to who I used to be, and I had started to accept that I may never run or dance again. I began to consider that maybe there was a purpose in all of this and that maybe, one of them was to become more comfortable with what seemed like complete uncertainty. After all, I could no longer run from my anxiety, and I'd lost the concentration to be able to channel my feelings into writing about fictional characters. My novel sat on a shelf, gathering dust. I contemplated writing a memoir about how to heal from back pain,

but I couldn't bring myself to write a book that had no known ending.

Neurofeedback helped ease my pain a little, but more importantly, it enhanced my self-awareness. This treatment allows the brain to become aware of its own patterns and reset the nervous system back to a relaxed state. When I finally calmed down, I was astounded to learn how anxious I actually was. Around this time, a conflict with some family members threatened to lurch me back into fight or flight mode, so my neurofeedback therapist suggested that we do alpha theta. Alpha theta is a form of neurofeedback that triggers unconscious thoughts, feelings, and memories to emerge on a conscious level so they can be processed in a way that permanently lowers their intensity.

Lying in a chair in the darkness of my therapist's office, the moment the session started, a terrible truth flashed before me. In horror, I watched a silent movie reel unfold before my closed eyes. I saw myself as a young child being abused by my father. I observed the exact moment that I braced my left arm and low back to try to protect myself from what was happening. My legs kicked in the chair as I experienced a young child's intense fear all over again, but this time, as the adult version of myself who could now handle it. The calming alpha waves, which sounded like ocean waves, coursed through my brain, allowing me to relive repressed memories and tolerate very intense emotions that would have otherwise been intolerable.

When the session ended, I was bawling. My therapist handed me a pile of Kleenex as I choked out the details of the memories I'd just recovered. It took me a few more sleepless nights to realize a key insight: I'd just unearthed the root of my back injury.

Some dark tunnels lead to the light

I wish I could say that from there on out, I stopped experiencing pain, but that was not the case. In fact, I fell into another dark night of the soul while undergoing intensive trauma-related therapy to process the truth of what had happened to me. Four more years passed during which I could not write a single word. Writing fiction felt like a sham, but telling the truth felt even more vulnerable. I began the slow process of cutting out toxic family members from my life, and I withdrew from friendships that felt one-sided or unsupportive. In social situations, it became harder to pretend I wasn't angry or sad. Yet this emotional leakage, in combination with a growing sense of anger about what had happened to me and a realization that my chronic anxiety was not a character defect or somehow my fault, taught me to put myself first for the first time. With the support of my amazing partner, Peter, I gradually learned how to say no and to stop people-pleasing, and to show up for myself instead.

In a giant leap of faith, I attended a neurofeedback training in Los Angeles. In an even bigger leap of faith, I came home with a very expensive neurofeedback system and began to shift the focus of my clinical practice. I didn't know what I was doing other than that I was listening to the deep rumblings of my soul, which told me that I was going to change people's lives with neurofeedback in the same way it had forever altered mine.

As I slowly returned to my writing practice, I revisited the tenets ~~tenants~~ that the abused women in my dissertation had uncovered as the means for persisting through trauma. Rereading my dissertation felt both familiar and as if something I was learning now for the first time, as these concepts now resonated deeply, on a personal level. By

virtue of leaving a violent relationship, these women felt more connected to their true selves, returned to healthier relational functioning, and experienced renewed spirituality. Many of them not only bounced back, but also experienced growth in their views of self and others. Their coping and thinking patterns changed, as well. By virtue of their trauma, they became motivated to shift their life goals to activities geared towards helping others. It was uncanny to see how a process I had researched had become an unintentional road map I had blindly followed to crawl my way out of chronic pain and trauma.

This year, my back pain began to ease a bit after I had a lipoma in my SI joint removed, which I suspected was preventing me from exercising. The surgeon found that it was six times larger than expected and deeply embedded inside of my left low back, pressing up against my hip and SI joint, with its very own nerve bundle. As she showed what looked like a slimy worm, I sensed that long ago, a bundle of emotional pain had formed in me, one that encapsulated an innocent little girl's fear, horror, and shame. The little girl inside of me had unconsciously buried this darkness away, within a protective sheath, deep under the skin, where no one, not even her, could sense its presence. Burying the truth had allowed me to stay connected to an abuser whose "love" I thought I needed, but which totally disconnected me from myself. I developed the false narrative that I would only be safe and lovable if I denied the rumblings of my own body, and instead hyper focused on meeting other people's needs. But that painful, stubborn lump grew and grew until one day, it began to cry out for help and would not stop. It took me years of building my inner strength and resources to realize that I had the courage in me to dig the roots of this pain out, let it see the light of

day, and understand that it was not anyone else's job to fix me. All along, I had the power and strength to fix myself.

A week after my lipoma had healed, I walked around the track at the gym and thought that maybe I should try to jog. I lifted one foot up and then the other, moving in a slow, upright stance. About five minutes in, I felt a twinge in my low back, warning me to stop. In my mind's eye, I saw that little girl, my inner child, shaking in a corner. I assured her that she didn't need to be scared anymore, that she was safe now, that no one would ever hurt her again. Miraculously, acknowledging her fear stopped the pain. I continued on, wiping away stinging tears of gratitude as I felt my heartbeat pulse with the ecstasy of movement. It had been ten long, hard years, but I had healed my body, mind, and spirit by learning to finally listen to myself.

A roadmap out of trauma: Post-traumatic Growth

These days, I spend sessions listening to the crashing, calming waves in the alpha theta program while holding space for my clients as they undergo their journeys. In this twilight state, my clients have reported everything from communing with dead family members to conquering long-held fears and addictions to processing trauma and loss. It is an absolute privilege to engage in this work with people who are brave enough to look inside and face whatever shade of shadows and light they find within.

My goal is to help other people see that the "falls" they experience in life will be painful, but that adversities can also be initiations that lead us back home to ourselves. My resilience and post-traumatic growth

programs involve interventions at the mind, body, spirit, and relational levels. At the body level, I help people improve body awareness, understand the stress cycle, learn how to regulate their nervous system, and stay present in their bodies. At the spirit level, we create and maintain a spiritual practice and learn how to trust in the process. At the mind level, we improve self-awareness, create and maintain a growth-oriented mindset, become aware of and shift trauma-related responses, process distressing emotions, thoughts, and memories, set new goals and develop new beliefs, and create a new life narrative. At the relational level, I help people build resilience, create a tribe, do inner child healing work, eliminate people-pleasing behaviors, and learn how to set and maintain boundaries.

About the Author

Melissa Neff, Ph.D. is an integrative psychologist, personal growth and transformation coach, energy worker, speaker, and author in the U.S. She specializes in post-traumatic growth coaching, neurofeedback, workshops, and training.

Dr. Neff runs a neurofeedback clinic in Montana. On an international level, she works as a coach and trainer. She is passionate about teaching people how to live more resiliently, get in touch with their intuition, and become their own best healer. She will help you create a roadmap out of trauma that leads you back to thriving and reconnecting with your authentic self. She also loves to teach people how to manage their stress so that stress doesn't manage them.

You can find Dr. Neff in the following places:

Web: wellupandthrive.com

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/melissa-neff-75080b166

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/wellupandthrive

Tips to increase self-awareness and emotional intelligence

Ask yourself 'why' questions.

Asking yourself questions why you think and feel the way you do in specific situations allows one to do some self-introspection. This exercise can heighten your recognition of your thoughts and feelings towards yourself and others.

Write in a journal

The practice of journaling allows us to objectively reflect, observe and record our thoughts to bring clarity to our emotions or feelings. It is highly recommended to put some time aside to write down the positive and negative events of the day, taking account of the triggers of those positive and negative feelings. This recorded audit of thoughts and emotions leads to improved self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

It's especially important in this phase to write in your journal any events or times in your life where you can recall the influence of one or more of the 5 elements you discovered after taking the Vitality Test.

Here are some prompts you can use for journaling.

✓ How do you practice self-care? What are your favorite ways to release the stress and tension you experience every day?

✓ Are there habits or patterns you might have developed in childhood as survival strategies? (Like perfectionism, procrastination, imposture syndrome, putting yourself last, co-dependency, etc) which might have been helpful at the time, but may not be serving you anymore?

✓ Are you able to set clear boundaries and maintain these boundaries with yourself and others?

✓ How is understanding yourself and what makes you tick helpful in developing resilience?

Increase Stress Awareness

Are you aware of the things that cause you stress? Becoming aware of your stress triggers will help you be more aware of when your reactions may get out of hand. And you can then prevent disaster by having an alternative in mind. What are your stress triggers?

Think of the last time you felt annoyed, edgy, or irritable. Make a list of the things you know will set you off. For example, when I am forced to wait for people, I become irritated and can easily lose my cool.

Now write down at least 3 ways to avoid or prevent those stressful things from happening.

_____

_____

_____

Example:

When I have too many tasks to complete, I can become stressed and anxious.

Solutions:

✓ Create a time management plan that outlines the time needed to complete each task. And do not overbook or over commit yourself to more tasks than may fit into your daily routine.

✓ Do the boring or least fun tasks first to get them out of the way. Having too many burdensome tasks on your to-do list can drain energy and perpetuate stress.

✓ Plan to have short breaks in your day to give yourself a positive boost. A quick walk, listening to good music or reading a joke-a-day book can provide relief from monotonous tasks and the sense of overwhelm.

✓ Since part of what makes us feel stressed is the false belief that we are not capable of dealing with the situation, it is best to proactively prepare a few coping mechanisms so that you feel ready to face the challenge. Reminding myself of past success or asking for inner guidance helps. What works for you?

Make a list of 3-5 things you'll do when you are faced with the next stressful situation.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Practice mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness allows us to focus on and meditate on our thoughts and feelings without judgment or interpretation. This non-judgmental witnessing can lead to increased self-awareness and emotional intelligence. The process may include breathing methods and guided imagery that is aimed at relaxing the mind and body to reduce stress. Mindfulness also facilitates the recognition, acknowledgment, and reflection of personal emotions and those of others.

The Breath Awareness Guided Meditation included on the Resources page will help you develop the practice of mindfulness. In this meditation, we use the medium of the breath as an anchor into the present moment. Please sit in a quiet space and take 10 minutes to practice this very simple meditation, focusing on awareness of the breath. If you can try to incorporate this practice into your daily schedule. It could be 10 minutes right before breakfast, or before going to bed at night.

Request feedback from loved ones

When people choose to learn from criticism rather than avoiding it, –both self-awareness and emotional intelligence grow. Ask your

close friends and family members what their perception of you is. While you don't want to put too much belief in others's opinions, they can help you gain insight into your traits and talents.

Avoid stimulants and chill-pills for better sleep

Each of us reacts to sleep deprivation, dietary restrictions, uppers, and downers in different ways. So, respecting your human engine should also be part of your resilience regimen.

As it pertains to your fuel and energy sources, be mindful of how your body reacts to the amount of sleep you get each night. Most nights it is ideal to get between 7 and 9 hours. I have rarely been able to sleep more than 8 hours and I function like an energized bunny. That's just my nature. I rebound quickly after periods of stress and extreme activity. In fact, I never needed stimulants or caffeine until I went to medical school where I finally developed an affinity for coffee — but it always took lots of milk, sugar, and vanilla powder to make it palatable. When I changed to a plant-based lifestyle, I stopped drinking coffee altogether. I don't like feeling dependent on a substance and hated the withdrawal headaches. (Read on for my new energy boosting routine.)

Whether you drink a lot of coffee or caffeinated beverages, also take into account how easily you can relax and calm down. Do you use alcohol or some sort of downer to unwind? While many claim the health benefits of coffee and red wine, it's helpful to be honest about the downside of using them to rev up or wind down. Is the potential for abuse, dependence, or addiction worth it?

Consider using natural products to provide your energy boost when needed. I've replaced coffee with my daily cocktail of matcha, maca root, guarana powder mixed with turmeric, and vitamin C powder. I've also decided to take a personalized formula of amino acid supplements which are known to promote vitality, reduce inflammation and boost energy. The antioxidant, mental concentration and immune boosting properties of this new daily regimen keeps me going and helps my body rebound from stressful periods.

Make time for self-care

The most resilient people ensure that they take care of themselves by addressing stress and other emotions before they get out of control. Highly resilient people who are deeply committed to a life of service recognize that compassion fatigue and burnout can be avoided if they take care of themselves, establish clear boundaries, and make fun or lighthearted activities a regular part of their lifestyle. Here are more insightful ways to care for yourself.

Release, refuel, refocus

How do you release the stress and tension you experience every day? Letting go of the pressure to perform and deliver should be a regular part of your ~~day to day~~day-to-day existence. Just because we can take on the problems of the world doesn't mean we should. At least not all of the time.

My mother released stress through gardening, while reading her historical romance novels, and reveling in the pleasures of human life — such as ice cream, chocolate, and dancing. She got recharged by letting go of work when she handed over the patient list to her colleagues, not by taking it home and ruminating over it constantly.

I actually release stress through vigorous exercise. I love brisk walking with hip-hop music in my ears and when I personally experienced the mind-body benefits of hot yoga last year, I became a new fan. Exercise not only gives me a brain boost of feel-good endorphins, ~~it~~but it also allows me to leave the stress of the day behind me.

When we allow ourselves the space and time to release the worries, tension, and stress of our day we can refocus on what really matters. It is in the times that I've let go of the need to do, do and do that I have had epiphanies about how many things I've said yes to that were not even in alignment with my values and vision for my life! And this awareness allows us to take a bold step toward reclaiming our time, power, and our voice to express what we really want in life and what we will no longer tolerate. It also prevents us from using and abusing food, drugs, sex, alcohol, or mindless TV watching and Internet surfing to numb ourselves.

Self-care is not selfish

Self-care is about self-preservation.

Self-care is not a luxury, it's a necessity.

Make a commitment to prioritize the activities that allow you to release tension, recharge your batteries and refocus on the way you really want to live your life. Whether through meditation, yoga,

walking, gardening, journaling, or pampering with massage or spa treatments, you owe it to yourself. And while you get used to making yourself a priority, bear in mind that caring for yourself will allow you to care even more deeply and genuinely for those you love.

I'm grateful for the example I had in my fierce and feisty mother. She modeled for me the benefits and healthy normality of caring for, honoring and nurturing oneself, which allows us to be fully present and truly of benefit to those we care about. I'm certain that the way she personalized her own self-care routine allowed her to maintain her health and vitality in defiance of her genes, which enabled her to avoid Alzheimer's dementia for nearly 20 years longer than any of her siblings. ~~2.~~

Check your family beliefs

I was fortunate to have a positive role model when it comes to self-care and rest. But many of us have family habits and beliefs passed down to us that we aren't even aware of, which may compromise our resilience.

For that reason, it can be helpful to check to see which family beliefs you inherited so you can determine if they are really true for you.

To begin, write out the names and characteristics of as many family members as you can. Are there any common traits or beliefs that have

~~2 Explore how living a resilient lifestyle helped me and my mother cope with dementia by visiting www.andreapennington.com/category/caring-for-mom/~~

been passed down the family such as perfectionism, codependency, alcoholism, addiction, or illness?

Write down any labels you heard about you or others such as: the black sheep, the star, lost child, hero, scapegoat...

Write down any messages, phrases, or comments you heard about you or family members about your body, intelligence, education, love, etc.

Examples:

- "You have to work harder than everyone else to get ahead."
- "You can sleep when you're dead."
- "Why can't you be more like your brother/sister?"
- "I am so ashamed of you" or "I'm so disappointed in you."
- "She never listens."
- "He is dumb as a rock."
- "You're just like your father/mother."
- "You're so slow."

Keep working on your self-awareness and emotional intelligence

The journey to self-awareness and emotional intelligence is progressive and it does not happen overnight. However, with

effort, practice, and patience, self-awareness and emotional intelligence can be mastered. Keep an open mind and a willing attitude to discover your Authentic Self, you're worth it!

References

Duval, S., & Wicklund, R. A. (1972). A theory of objective self-awareness.

Eurich, T. (2018). What self-awareness is (and how to cultivate it). Harvard Business Review.

Goleman, D., & Boyatzis, R. (2017). Emotional intelligence has 12 elements. Which do you need to work on? Harvard Business Review, 84(2), 1-5.

Issah, M. (2018). Change Leadership: The role of emotional intelligence. SAGE Open, 8(3), 2158244018800910.

Kansky, J., & Diener, E. (2017). Benefits of well-being: Health, social relationships, work, and resilience. Journal of Positive School Psychology, 1(2), 129-169.

Nida-Rümelin, M. (2017). Self-awareness. Review of Philosophy and Psychology, 8(1), 55-82.

Pfefferbaum, B., & North, C. S. (2020). Mental health and the Covid-19 pandemic. New England Journal of Medicine, 383(6), 510-512.

Schwarz, S. (2018). Resilience in psychology: A critical analysis of the concept. Theory & Psychology, 28(4), 528-541.

Shahid, R., Stirling, J., & Adams, W. (2018). Promoting wellness and stress management in residents through emotional intelligence training. Advances in medical education and practice, 9, 681.

Top 10 Traits of Resilient People

RESILIENCE TRAIT #2
Flexibility and Adaptability

In the last chapter, we looked at the number one trait of highly resilient people — Insight. Having the self-awareness to recognize our own triggers empowers us to avoid the situations that will cause us undue stress, or at least to be better prepared for them.

Throughout the ages, wise people have been aware of the traits of resilience. Two and a half centuries ago, Socrates' only teaching was to 'know thyself', but Socrates also demonstrated the importance of the number two trait of highly resilient people — Flexibility.

In Plato's *Republic* (380 BC), we find Socrates getting stuck into deep discussions about what makes a good person, different types of government and the qualities of leadership. Time and again, as those around him try to answer these questions with carefully worded definitions, Socrates uses his own distinctive process of questioning to reveal the flaws in their arguments. At every turn, they are forced to recognize that what might be true in one circumstance cannot be generalized to all other possible scenarios. Every situation is different, and we need to be flexible in our approach.

Socrates' determination to seek truth rather than settling for a black and white perspective of the world eventually led to his death. We are

hardwired to generalize and to create default rules of thumb that we can apply to situations without too much thought. This is a great mechanism for allowing us to make quick decisions and conserve mental energy for more demanding tasks. Unfortunately, however, it can also lead to a rigid mindset that prevents us from seeing situations from other perspectives.

The more fixed our mindset is, the more we will struggle to cope with aspects of reality that we can neither accept nor change, and this leads to increased stress and eventually the possibility of burnout. We have to learn to strike a balance between our expectations of how the world should be and the way it is at any given moment. We can't force any person or situation to change to suit our needs, but we can change to adapt to our world.

Philosopher, and theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr captures this spirit of flexibility in his famous 'Serenity prayer':

'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.'

Accepting the things that we cannot change is the key to dealing with the challenges that life throws at us. It stops us falling into the trap of crying over spilt milk and allows us to focus our mental energy on seeking the best outcome for any given situation — adaptability. Acceptance leads to flexibility. Being flexible is the first step to figuring out how to deal with adversity.

The Taoist teaching of impermanence also steers us away from becoming attached to fixed ideas. Paradoxically, according to Taoism, the only certainty is change. This concept is captured in the Taoist symbol, the taijitu or 'yin-yang' sign, which illustrates the constant

interplay between light and dark. The presence of a small white circle in the black half of the symbol and a small black circle in the white half shows how the universe is in a constant state of flux between absolutes. We don't live in a black and white world. Reality is a constantly changing shade of grey, and the more we embrace it just as it is right now, the easier it is to adapt to it.

According to research carried out by Mohammed Al-Mosalwi and Tom Johnson and reported in their paper, *In an Absolute State: Elevated Use of Absolutist Words Is a Marker Specific to Anxiety, Depression, and Suicidal Ideation* (Clinical Psychological Science, January 2018), depressed people are significantly more likely to use 'absolutist' words such as 'always', 'nothing' and 'completely'. These words reflect a more fixed, rigid perspective on life, don't they? They suggest a world where everything follows a plan, but life's not like that. When was the last time life pitched you a curve ball?

Another notable finding from the Al-Mosalwi and Johnson study is that depressed people are more likely to use first-person pronouns such as 'me', 'myself' and 'I', which suggests that they are more self-preoccupied than people in general. If we only ever consider ourselves in any situation — focusing on how we feel about things, how we think the world should be, and what we want to happen — we become more entrenched in our own single-minded perspective. That makes us less flexible, which in turn will mean we are more unwilling to adapt and less capable of it.

Remember, truth can look different depending on our perspective. What can look like number nine to one person could be a six to another. Paying attention to others, finding out how others see the world, broadens our own perspective and makes us more open-

minded. Looking at things from more than one perspective is one of the magic ingredients of creativity, which is one of the keys to adaptability.

Being adaptable makes us more agile and better able to adjust our plans to meet changes in the world around us. Sometimes, the most unlikely plan is the one that gets us where we need to be. Sometimes, it's the plan that seems to break all the rules that delivers the best outcome. Thinking creatively lets us consider more options.

The personal story shared in this chapter by Elsa Regan, is deeply touching. Elsa has lived every parent's nightmare through her eldest son's incarceration. To survive, she tapped into inner resources and reconnected with her once-frozen heart. We can all learn from Elsa's actions, thoughts, and feelings that were key to her adaptability and total transformation.

My Healing Motherhood Journey
By Elsa Regan

Friday the 13th of March 2020

I never paid attention to Friday the 13th until this one in March 2020. On this day, Europe was declared the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic by the WHO. A few countries closed their borders, preparing to enter their first lockdown. On this day, my life pivoted and would never be the same again.

At 7.40 am, my oldest son called me from his upstairs bedroom. I knew this scenario all too well – him waking up too late for school, pretending to feel unwell, and ending up in bed for the rest of the day. But this time was different. I could hear an unusual heaviness in his voice. I went upstairs, opened the door, and found him in bed, very pale, looking at his telephone. I knew something was wrong. I sat next to him.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"I'm not going to school today. I'm not going to go to school for a long time." He said with serious finality.

"What do you mean you're not going to go to school for a long time?"

He handed me his telephone. On the screen, a video of a regional TV programme run by the Dutch Police started to play. I stared. My heart started to pound. The policeman presenting the TV show was describing a violent crime that had taken place three weeks earlier.

Images scrolled and there they were, four minors who'd been caught on CCTV cameras in the street before and after the offence they'd committed. Their faces had been blurred because they were minors. On the CCTV footage taken a few seconds after the four boys had left the crime scene, three boys were frantically running down the street and one boy was calmly walking, hands in his pockets as if everything was normal. I recognized my son, and I felt like I was going to vomit.

At this very moment, my body froze. I stopped breathing for a few seconds, and I started shivering. I was in total disbelief. I must have blanked out, because to this day I cannot properly remember what my first words were after seeing these images. I do remember though that deep within, below the disbelief, below the fear and the horror of what it all meant, I felt anger. Anger towards my oldest son, towards myself, towards this dysfunctional family wherein he had already taken the wrong path for nearly three years, and nothing seemed to be able to stop him.

The shattered dream of motherhood

Since the first drug dealing incident in the summer of 2017, at the age of thirteen, my son had committed so many various acts of delinquency that, to this day, I would not be able to recall an exhaustive list of all his delicts. As parents, we had received a lot of support from social services, the Justice Department, and the police, but nothing seemed to help. In 2018-2019, he increasingly spent time in the streets, breaking the law and often being arrested by the police. As the months went by, compassion and understanding for my son

became inaccessible to me, coming to a point where I could no longer recognize him as my son. I could not comprehend how I had given life to a son like him. I felt an increasing hatred towards him. At the time I was convinced it was hate. I later understood that it was love buried under an immense layer of unbearable despair.

I had always wanted to be a mother and had dreamt of having a big family, with four kids. I had always loved taking care of young children when I was a teenager and a young adult. From an early age, I'd always pictured myself later in life as a woman who would deeply enjoy motherhood. But the reality of motherhood hit me hard. Looking back at my first years of motherhood, with two boys born 20 months apart, -I can mostly recall painful memories of my oldest son's aggression towards his brother. His aggression may have been due to jealousy, but looking back, I think it was mainly due to his anxiety and difficulty dealing with his emotions. He was displaying hour-long meltdowns on a regular basis, during which he was unmanageable.

Motherhood had become an experience of exhaustion and despair. During those years, I'd felt totally helpless. I'd begun drowning in negative self-talk, convincing myself that I was an incompetent mother, that I hated being a mother, and that I regretted motherhood. Perhaps the most taboo of all thoughts was that I'd convinced myself that I didn't love my oldest son. I lived through my first two sons' childhood years in a sort of split state: successful and blooming professionally; self-deprecating and angry at home.

My husband and I sought help. Luckily, we found a great children's therapist who helped our son tremendously and enabled us to get through his school years without our marriage collapsing. On my side,

individual therapy helped me to keep hope and pursue my dream of a large family. We decided to have our third child. This was one of the best decisions of my life. The arrival of our third boy helped me to reconnect with a more positive experience of motherhood and regain some maternal self-confidence. Although the next few years were a little easier with my oldest son, his anxiety and aggression were still very difficult to witness and handle. Little did I know that these difficult childhood years would turn into nightmare teenage years.

The relief of imprisonment

And here I was on Friday 13th March 2020, with my oldest son telling me he would turn himself in to the police in the next few days. I lived through the following week as if I was watching myself being a character in a dark movie. I attended all of the police interrogations. There had been multiple crimes for which my son was the prime suspect. He admitted to all of them. He had premeditated his acts and operated each time with different accomplices. I was in a state of shock, wondering how he could have committed such serious crimes, and how this young criminal could be my son. Although I was deeply shocked and consumed by sadness and disbelief, I also felt profoundly relieved that he had finally been stopped in his unthinkable criminal evolution. He would finally be placed in a locked-down environment, no longer living an uncontrolled life as a danger to others. He would finally have boundaries that he could not overstep.

His trial took place in March 2021, after a year of preventive detention. The day before his sixteenth birthday, he was given the

most severe and longest sentence in Dutch juvenile law, which included mandatory therapy.

What is a mother supposed to feel when her child is sent to prison for a long period of time, at the age of 16, knowing that he will spend the rest of his teenage years in prison, and knowing that he will become an adult while behind prison walls? Instead of feeling immensely sad and compassionate for his fate in the coming years, I felt a calming sense of righteousness and relief. Somehow, and as unbelievable as this may sound, this closely resembled what I had so deeply hoped for. During the two years preceding his incarceration, I had hoped to have him taken away from us, to be helped by forensic social workers and psychologists, who were professionally qualified to educate a boy like him. I had painfully realised that I could no longer take care of him; that I didn't want to take care of him anymore.

It was intolerable for my husband to hear that I wanted our oldest son to leave home and be cared for by others, yet I was deeply convinced this would be the best for him and for us as a family. My husband could not understand, let alone accept what I was wishing for. We had many fights. I felt rejected; not recognized in my wounds as a mother; misunderstood. Like a broken record, my inner voice was regularly telling me that I was a failed mother and that the best thing for myself, my husband, and my children would be to abandon my family.

But I didn't quit. I worked a lot, often abroad. This was as much an escape strategy as a survival strategy. I needed to have distance from the family situation to save my sanity and to keep going. I continued to seek professional help, more help than ever before.

Therapy saved me. My son's long, severe sentence also saved me, saved us as a family, and saved our son. As part of his sentence, we received mandatory family therapy through prison services. We were lucky to meet a brilliant family therapist. She helped my son and me to reconnect, heal deep wounds in our relationship, learn to listen to each other, accept our differences, and accept that sometimes we could not understand each other. I visited my son every Saturday. We started to have long conversations on the phone which were his only authorised way of communicating with the outside world. Slowly, over time, we became closer.

From being consumed by fear to reconnecting to my heart

I was still struggling on a daily basis with the idea that my son may come back home from one day to another, should he win his appeal procedure. Although I was feeling much less angry and sad during the second year of his detention, I started to feel very anxious around Spring 2022, as his appeal trial was approaching. While there was very little chance for him to win his appeal and then return home, I was terrified at the idea of him coming home too soon. I still held some fear of him living with us at home deep in my heart. This fear turned into anxiety and with this anxiety, my joy and vital energy disappeared. I became depressed and very anxious. I didn't want to take any medication and accepted that I felt empty, hoping it would pass. But it didn't. My work helped me to not collapse and gave me a sense of meaning. I was good at supporting people in my executive coaching role, compensating for the guilt and pain of not feeling ready to support my child coming back home.

My therapist suggested that I should try alternative approaches to work through my fear and anxiety at a deeper, less conscious level. She suggested that I try transformational breathwork, which would help me go into an altered state of consciousness and face the traumas I had experienced in the last several years. I started to look for a retreat and came across a wonderful programme called The Heart & Brain HealCamp by Anouk Bindels, in the Netherlands. Although I was immediately attracted to the proposed programme and approach, I hesitated to register at first as the retreat entailed the use of psilocybin, or so-called 'magic truffles' (which are legal in the Netherlands). I had never taken any kind of drugs or plant medicine in my life and was reluctant to do so. Educating myself through videos, podcasts, and scientific articles, I realised that psilocybin was a safe and non-addictive psychedelic used in many therapeutic and clinical settings. So, I embraced this opportunity as a unique and different approach to my healing journey and pushed beyond my discomfort with the unknown.

At the end of July 2022, I attended this life-changing week-long healing retreat. Meditation, inner child healing, breathwork and psilocybin turned my life around. It was a very confronting inner journey, deep in the abyss of my darkest emotions. One of the most transformational experiences of that week was an intense cathartic breathwork session which helped me get in touch at the deepest level with my anger, fear, and sadness. I experienced what I would call an emotional purge, releasing so many of those painful emotions. A few days later, as we were preparing for the psilocybin ceremony, we were invited to formulate our intention beforehand. The previous few days had led me to understand that at the core of my despair was the inner

doubt about whether I was able to love. So, I went into the ceremony asking this simple question, "Can I love?".

What an answer I got! A few hours into the ceremony, after having experienced intense moments of sadness and loneliness, I started to feel my heart grow, and grow and grow, taking all the space in my rib cage, and then continue growing outside of my body to the point that I had to bend my head backwards. I told myself, "My heart has to stop growing, otherwise, my neck will break!" It felt absolutely real. And in the moment, it was real. Coming back from this altered state of consciousness and deeply embodied experience, I just knew it: I had a big heart! And with it, I could love!

During that intense week, I realised that I was meant to become a healing facilitator for others. I decided to pursue training so I could share the gift of these powerful healing modalities with the world around me. Over the following weeks, I shared my life-changing experience with my son. Bit by bit, at each prison visit, I explained what I had experienced. I shared my new goals to become a breathwork coach, and at a later stage, to work with psilocybin, helping people feel better, free themselves of old patterns and traumas, and live the life they are meant to live.

Last week, as the visit was about to end, my beloved son said, "Mum, one day we will facilitate mother-son retreats. We will have a lot to share from our own experience. You can work with the mothers, while I work with the sons, and then we can work together and tell them about what we went through." As the guards notified us that it was time to say goodbye, we stood up to give each other a big hug, heart to heart. As I closed my arms around him, feeling his heart

against mine, I whispered in his ear, "Let's breathe together." And so we did.

Key takeaways from my healing journey

These life events have challenged my dreams, my identity, and my -values. They have pushed me to tap into inner resources I didn't even know I had and have led me to transform into a better version of myself. I would like to share the ACTIONS, THOUGHTS and FEELINGS that I believe were key to my healing and transformational journey. They could also help you in your journey.

Actions:

I kept sharing my story with those around me, never being ashamed of what I was going through.

I kept seeking help, going beyond what I was familiar with, fully embracing the use of altered states of consciousness as a healing modality.

I never stopped working as it was a source of positive energy and self-confidence.

Thoughts:

Acceptance is the first step to healing.

Painful and unimaginable life events come our way to put us on a path of personal transformation, purpose, and love.

Feelings:

I sat through the pain of feeling deep sadness, anger and fear, without shame of feeling these painful emotions.

Above all, I finally reconnected with the greatest feeling of all: LOVE.

About the Author

Elsa Regan is an accomplished executive coach with extensive experience in coaching leaders and teams, from management to executive level. Prior to that, Elsa had a 15-year-long academic career in the field of cell biology, followed by a few years in the food industry.

Elsa's mission is to inspire people to follow their hearts with courage, so they become who they are meant to be.

As a mother of three sons, Elsa has faced family challenges that were traumatic and extremely painful. Elsa found support in therapy, breathwork and the use of psilocybin. She is now on a path of becoming a healing facilitator to help others grow, transform and heal, using these modalities.

Elsa plans to launch her breathwork and Gestalt therapy practice in 2024.

You can find more about Elsa on:

- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/elsa-regan-klapisz-phd-ba11899

- Executive coaching website: www.ici2learn.com (contact: elsa.regan@ici2learn.com)

- Breathwork & Therapy website: www.ici2breathe.com (contact: elsa@ici2breathe.com)

Exercises & Journal Prompts for Increasing Flexibility & Adaptability

Please use any or all of the questions below to enrich your contemplation. You can use journaling and simply write down your thoughts and feelings about these topics, which will help you deepen your understanding and assimilate them more rapidly. Be spontaneous and do not edit or censure yourself. There's no right or wrong!

If you prefer, you can also have a conversation with a friend and use the questions as starting points. Make sure there is plenty of time for silence and reflection, and agree in advance, with your partner, not to interrupt and to listen deeply.

1) According to Daoist philosophy, the only certainty is change. Buddhism also stressed impermanence as one of the marks of human existence. How do you adapt to the constant flux and groundlessness in your life, especially these days, with COVID and all the political, social and environmental uncertainty and instability?

2) Are you able to pay attention to your thoughts and self-talk? Do you notice recurrent themes or specific tone of voice when talking to yourself? (Statements like "This is so unfair" or "I can't believe I did this again" or "What's wrong with me?" or "This should not be happening" etc...)

3) Pick any hot topic currently.... vaccination, veganism, the me-too movement, and put yourself in the shoes of someone who thinks

radically differently from you. Describe and explain the issue from their perspective, being as eloquent as possible. Then, spend some time reflecting on what you might have learned about their point of view.

Journal Prompts

1- Think about the last 6 months and record in your journal any disappointment, frustration, anything that caused you grief. Then ask yourself: "Why?" "Was I stuck in a fixed mindset?" "What could I have done differently?" Writing about it will increase your insight and self-awareness.

2- Pay attention to any patterns or recurrent thinking or behaviors.

3- As you move forward, be aware of your mood, and use any feeling of unease or frustration as a sign you need to tune back into the present moment. Be inquisitive about what you are going through. Open up to it.

4- Remind yourself that nothing is absolute. Look for words like "Never, always, constantly, must, etc." These words are associated with absolutist thinking and linked to decreased resilience, anxiety, and depression. Be mindful of these and offer yourself understanding and self-compassion.

The Attunement Meditation

To help yourself work through challenging thoughts and emotions and build more beneficial, positive habits, listen to the Attunement

Meditation audio recording on the Resources Page of our website and read more about it in the Appendix of this book.

The five steps of Attunement Meditation practice will help you open to the present moment — becoming a non-judgmental witness of whatever is going on — and tune into ~~in to~~ a more positive energy state and greater resilience.

The first 3 steps are directly related to the cultivation of Flexibility and Adaptability:

1- Allowing what is there to be, non-judgmentally
2- Tuning in to your open loving heart or inviting in a compassionate figure
3- Aligning with a higher state of consciousness

The last 2 steps of the Attunement Meditation help open you up to wisdom, insight and positive emotion, as you'll see in later chapters.

4- Taking Inspired Action, or asking for the next right step in life

5 - Appreciating all of the good, positive aspects of your day, life or surroundings.

RESILIENCE TRAIT #3
Persistence

Persistence is an essential quality for resilience that can be cultivated by anybody, regardless of your situation, experiences or current approach to life's challenges. It does not mean the dogged pursuit of accolades or approval from others, but rather the inner quality of determination that means you keep putting one step in front of the other, even when times get tough.

The most resilient people have incredible tenacity. They believe in the exponential power of small steps and no matter how they feel, they find the energy, willpower, and courage to keep on taking them. Even when the outcome is not guaranteed and the destination is uncertain, having persistence is a key trait when it comes to not letting your circumstances dictate your destiny.

Without persistence you will give up too easily, let the opinions of others dictate your direction and let circumstances weigh you down. A lack of persistence can mean you stay stuck, you feel powerless, and you lack any sense of vitality. Far better to find a way to take the smallest step forward, so that you start aligning with your best self again.

Persistence can often be perceived negatively, as there are times when it is driven by the pursuit of an outcome that is more about proving

yourself and satisfying your ego. This type of persistence tends to be exhausting to maintain and it has little to do with resilience.

Scientists studying resilience have found that those who keep working towards overcoming their situation by maintaining constant focus and effort, are the ones who emerge most successfully from whatever it is they are dealing with. This is true whether the situation is a scary diagnosis, a mental health issue, loss of a loved one or any number of other life transitions. The motivating factor is generally stronger than any sense of fear that arises when looking at the big picture, and momentum is created by belief in the power of repeated small steps.

To do this requires a strong sense of trust in yourself and in the possibility of a different life. It requires cultivation of the inner belief that you have exactly what it takes to make it through challenging times, even when it feels as though you are trying to walk through treacle. The most resilient people use their challenges as fuel to help them move forwards, which means they become self-reliant when it comes to finding motivation.

Persistent people are motivated not only by the possibility of a more fulfilling future on the other side of their current circumstances, they also delight in the process required to get there — whether they realize it or not. With every small win and every shift forward, they gather more evidence that they have what it takes to shift their reality. This creates a powerful self-fulfilling prophecy, which boosts their confidence and conviction daily, giving them greater staying power.

To develop more persistence, we have to use our insight to identify what lies behind our desire to give up when we are trying to overcome challenges or make changes. Do we give up out of fear, lack of

conviction, self-pity or exhaustion? Do we feel as though we are powerless, a victim of circumstances or the only one in the world experiencing this? If these feel true, what contradictory evidence can we gather to boost our belief in our capacity to keep going when the going gets tough?

Our first story is a powerful example of how important it is to examine our inner beliefs, especially when it comes to transforming your future from one of victimhood to powerful creator. Susan Edwards completely rewrote her personal story in her ~~mid thirties~~mid-thirties, by taking ownership of her circumstances and using them to fuel her as she made up for lost time. Her wounds became her life's work and thanks to persistence, she has subsequently impacted the lives of thousands through her workshops and seminars.

The second story by Kenny Bey will inspire you to go within to tap into hidden resources of power. Kenny started his career young, motivated, and ready to tackle anything. However, when things didn't work out as planned, he became despondent, overworked, and underpaid. After stress pushed him to the edge physically and emotionally, he sought solace in nature, reconnected with his creator, and found the power within.

In our final story in this chapter, Ann Marie Wyrsch paints a very clear picture of what it's like to grow up in a family affected by addiction. Her childhood primed her for a life of missed connections, but she found her way to the 12-step recovery community which helped her make sense of her life. She offers her own 12 step process for the recovering/discovering adult who may have also experienced addiction or codependency.

Persistence to Peace
By Susan Edwards

Over 35 years ago, I was emotionally wounded and my inner life was a mess. I looked OK on the outside, but had no inner peace, only devastation on the inside. I decided at that time to be "well." Although I sensed it would take a long time for my hidden wounds to heal, I made an important decision:

"If I am prepared to wait forever, it won't take so long."

In the ensuing years, I never gave up on my Inner Healing Journey and I'm happy to say that I made it! This is my definition of RESILIENCE.

I once read: -"I've never met a strong person with an easy past." For me this rings true. My past looked "easy," but was difficult and always hidden. Everything, and I mean everything, looked good on the outside. I was a typical Baby Boomer, living in a Midwestern ranch home, two parents married for 60 years, three healthy children, a comfortable middle--class family. Dad, was a bank Vice President, mother a ~~full-time~~full-time homemaker. Brother became a dentist, sister, a dental hygienist. BUT, and this is a big but, I was miserable on the inside for most of my life. Deeply troubled, battling depression, having a wounded cognitive mindset, unsatisfied, and feeling like something was intrinsically wrong with me; something had been omitted; like there was a hole inside of me that was impossible to fill.

Commented [SL11]: I would change to dissatisfied.

Where it all began

When I was one year old, my dad and his two brothers were sent overseas to Europe during WWII. He did not return until I was four years old. During this time my mother lived with her mother-in-law and two sisters-in-law, in the city, in one house with three infants born 4 months apart. The three women were not acquaintances before this time, and as the story goes, did not get along.

Periodically, I was told that my mother couldn't take it anymore and took me, the first grandchild, to her parents in the country 50 miles away. Back and forth, back and forth every couple of months.

I have come to believe that the precious baby that my dad knew had disappeared in the three years he was gone. When he returned home at the war's end, what he found instead was a spoiled, bratty, precious child. I later learned that I had been sexually molested by my maternal grandfather, which continued for a number of years. One of the results is that I have very few memories of my dad through most of my life; it was as if he did not exist. I think we were scared of each other. He felt like a stranger.

Because of my strained relationship with my dad, I transferred the father role to God. My picture of God was this: A disapproving, mean, authority figure who was watching and judging me, ready to pounce and back me into a corner from which the one and only escape was to "kill myself". I had been taught and believed suicide was a sin, and I would be condemned to Hell for all eternity. I was trapped!!!! For years in my life as an adult, I would find myself sleep-walking and being awakened by my husband to realize I was in a

corner banging on the walls, crying and screaming, "Let me out!! Let me out!!!"

When I was 12 years old, my mother experienced a religious conversion and became a Pentecostal Fundamentalist while my father and his family were Roman Catholics. My father thought all Pentecostals were "crazy" and my mother thought all Catholics were "heathens." From this time on, I lived in a home of "Religious Addiction." My parents shuttled us back and forth between churches and fought constantly. Both thought they were trying to keep us from going to Hell. Their fights were verbally and emotionally brutal, not physical, but traumatic for me to witness. It got so horrible that when I was in 7th grade my mother delivered a full-term healthy, ~~10 pound~~10-pound, beautiful baby boy named Danny, who unexpectedly died in the hospital at three DAYS old! A few weeks later I heard my dad tell my mom that he "was glad the baby died so that she couldn't take it to her church."

I just wanted them to love each other.

Emotional and verbal cruelty were often on display. In my home I always felt like I was wading in thick black sludge, like evil swirling around up to my knees. This began a life filled with dread and a pervading sense of impending DOOM. There was no escape from it.

One Christmas, my mom got a new coat for a present and my dad hated her church so much that he went into her closet and ran chains up through the sleeves and padlocked it to the rod so she couldn't wear it to her church. One Easter as she was leaving for church, he grabbed her darling new pill-box hat off her head and cut off the

yellow rose on the top. She was so humiliated. My stomach still turns when I remember this.

I wanted our family to "look good," so I became an over-achiever. I had the 3 "B's" (Beauty, Brains and a Body), and I was even voted as the girl with the prettiest teeth and eyes. I was very popular in High School and very involved in extracurricular activities:

- Cheerleader for 4 years,
- Captain of the cheerleading squad for 2 years,
- Captain of the volleyball team,
- Star guard on the basketball team, I even beat out a senior as Basketball Queen in my junior year.
- President of the National Honor Society, Future Homemakers, and Future Teachers of America
- Played French horn in the band
- Majorette and Baton & Flag Twirler
- Vice-President of the Student Council
- Member of the Girls Athletic Association and, last but not least,
- Salutatorian

My coping strategies

I learned to use males. I used my feminine wiles to get what I wanted. I always dated older guys. My high school steady had already graduated and had a job. He bought a new convertible and I managed to convince him to take the bus to work so I could drive the convertible to school. For me, men were "toys" meant to obey me. Part of my game was to see how far I could push them with the promise of me giving them more, which I never delivered. I have forgiven myself for using them because I know now I was on survival mode and just trying to navigate with the inside turmoil.

In my Senior Year, I remember being miserable. At age 17 I was already burned out. I looked so good on the outside, but inside I looked like raw hamburger. This was going to get worse because I was to become a "Tiny Fish in a Gigantic Pond."

I went away to a large state university where I was overwhelmed. The first day there a photographer spotted me at registration and followed me for three days taking pictures for the Alumni Magazine. It was flattering, but I felt lost and so alone. The first night in the dorm I was invited to a "Purple Passion Party." A party in a cave with a bathtub filled with grape juice and every imaginable type of alcohol. This began a year of drinking. Remember, my mother was a Pentecostal and I had never touched alcohol.

I was really messed up during my Freshman, and only, year in College. I sneaked out of the dorm at night to go drinking. I skipped classes constantly. I did manage to keep my academic scholarship, but I felt lost. I was deeply troubled and unhappy.

I was only at this University for a year, where I met the "man of my dreams." I lost my virginity during this relationship. Because I was raised that this was sinful and shameful, I decided that we had to get married, this was even after he once date raped me in his fraternity house and someone walked in on us. This person did not know that he had torn through my underwear and spread the "news" through his frat house. The shame and humiliation I felt were devastating. But I was addicted to the relationship so we eloped a year later.

I had no idea that I actually picked someone who was more violent than I knew at the time. I found out he had previously been jailed for beating his mother and was involved in an incident on the East Coast with a homosexual being beaten with a chain. I was married for two years and being beaten frequently. I believed he would eventually kill me, but I could not leave.

Finally, I was so broken and desperate for a measure of peace that I went to the state mental hospital and saw a psychiatrist when I was 19 years old. I remember that he said: "You will never be well until you establish a relationship with your father." I said, "It will never happen." My dad scared me, not because I was ever physically abused, but for the way he treated my mom. He treated her with contempt and what looked like hatred to me.

But I did enter intensive psychotherapy for one and a half years and finally got the courage to get a divorce. What I now know is that the main reason for picking such a violent relationship was to manifest how I felt on the inside. I was deeply troubled, depressed, and desperate. I never attempted suicide, but prayed to die constantly.

Finding true love

After the divorce I was not well, but I had survived. It would take many more years of therapy to thrive. I dated many men for the next two years and then I found~~,~~ Robert Edwards, and I fell madly in love. Because by that time I had worked through my early trauma, I picked a kind, loving man who was 14 years older than me. He did fit the profile of a "father image" as he was very handsome, a model and was prematurely gray.

We were very happy for the first three years of our relationship, and then while on~~f~~ vacation he had a major heart attack while water skiing. I was 26 years old. I did not think I could LIVE without a man in my life. I was so angry at him for almost dying. I felt the same abandonment I previously felt with my dad.

He survived and was off work for six months. I went into a dark, deep depression. I did not leave my house for months. I did not bathe for months on end. I lived on cashews and Coca-Cola. Because he was so ill, no one was aware of the horrible condition I was in.

Eventually, months later as he recovered and got well, the depression lifted and three years later we had a daughter. I was diagnosed with postpartum depression two years after her birth, and this continued my journey of healing that lasted for decades. I was still determined to get well. Fortunately, I had picked the kind of man who stuck with me on the journey. He was kind, loving, faithful and compassionate.

There is no way to adequately synthesize a decades long marriage, but I had found a man who supported, loved and encouraged me through the years. We overcame many struggles and were married for 43 years until his death in 2008. My journey to health required his utmost

patience. He supported me through many therapists, bouts of depression, misunderstandings, and times of alienation.

During this time his financial support enabled me to build a career with my minuscule formal education. He delighted in my successes and ended up being my best friend. We also had another daughter five years later, who has given us four precious grandchildren. I am happier today than I have ever been in my entire life. I feel safe.

Healing in community

During my healing journey, I got involved with the Adult Children of Alcoholics Movement (ACofA). It was here that I discovered that even though there may not have been alcohol involved with my dad, the religious addiction had the same effect on me. I totally identified with the others in the program. It was like someone had been living my life, reading my mail. This was the real start of finding answers. I had all of the characteristics and felt like I belonged.

At the beginning of ACofA there were only two books written, but within a relatively short time book–store shelves were filled to overflowing.

This was followed by the inner child movement. This also resonated with me and to this day I believe it is a seminal work for emotional, psychological, physical, and psychic health. Thanks to this work, my life took a 180-–degree turn. I went from a depressed homemaker always asking, "Is this all there is?", t~~T~~o going back to college and finding my life-long passion.

I took the Miller Analogy Test, a standardized test used for graduate school admissions, then enrolled in a Graduate School Program with only one year of college. I completed an internship entitled "Ministry and Therapy to Adults Raised in Chemically Dependent and/or Dysfunctional Families."

I went on to develop workshops and seminars that I have presented for 35+ years to tens of thousands of people from ages 12 to 90. The subject was "Those Hidden Wounds": Their Effects on our Lives Personally and Professionally." I described the Survival Roles we assume and how to use these roles to serve us and not harm us.

I also was in private practice as a psychotherapist for 30+ years without an undergraduate degree. My healing opened up my world and I have devoted a great part of my life helping hurting adults do the same.

In my presentations, I teach that there are 5 Stages of Healing:

1. Information on the Survival Roles.
2. Insight/Awareness on how to —apply the information personally.
3. Behavioral Modification. I call this the Misery Stage where the outside has changed, but the inside is the same.
4. Deep emotional healing. Learning to feel the old feelings, not just talk about them is the hardest part of the journey, because this is where the hidden and old "Pain" is allowed to emerge. It is experiential, not intellectual.
5. Spiritual Maturation/Wholeness. When we have access to our ABC's.

- Affective: feelings
- Behavior: acting in our own best interests
- Cognitive: thinking that is clear, rational

Epilogue

With regard to my parents, I make no blame, judgements or criticism of them. I am over 70 years old now and I believe that they "gave me better than they got," as did my grandparents and great-grandparents before them. When we "know better" we hopefully "do better."

Fortunately, I have two adult daughters and because I did my own personal healing work, I believe I "gave better than I got." Still, I'm sure I made lots of mistakes, but they were different from the previous generations and I gave them permission to do their own healing work, something I had to do on my own. Over the years, I have forgiven everything, reconciled with my parents and the only thing left is my love and gratitude for the life they gave me.

Healing is a journey and a process. Every step helps us take the next one. I had scores of therapists, counselors, spiritual directors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists, etc., and each one helped me find another piece of the puzzle. Books also have answers. Trust the process. Happiness and emotional health are your birthright.

I wish you joy, hope, and peace on your journey,

Susan

About the Author

Susan Edwards, a native of St. Louis, moved to Waco, Texas, eight years after the death of her beloved husband, Robert, to be closer to her grandchildren. She holds a Master of Pastoral Studies from Loyola University New Orleans and was a Psychotherapist and Professional Presenter for 35 years.

Her expertise in Family Systems Therapy helps illuminate how the survival strategies we learned in our family of origin affect our lives today. These insights offer hope and a framework to help us approach our challenges and situations more consciously. Over the years, Susan has witnessed "miraculous" changes in her client's lives.

Susan's workshops have been enjoyed by thousands of people of all ages. She is known for her encouraging style and warm sense of humor.

She hopes to travel and present her Workshops to a wider audience and is developing a telephone coaching practice specializing in "Inner Child Healing."

Commented [SL12]: Is this supposed to be capitalized?

Visit Susan online at www.SusanEdwards.me

The Power Within
By Kenny Bey

After my divorce in 2010, it was time for a fresh start, a new beginning, and a time to heal. I moved to Silver Spring, Maryland from Lansing, Michigan. My outlook was promising, with job opportunities in the local school district and a budding relationship that was taking root.

With this new chapter in my life, I was ready to hit the ground running. My community was diverse and welcoming. My new circle of friends was full of caring, ambitious, and talented individuals. I was in a good place emotionally, as I prepared to make my mark by immersing myself in my career as an educator and getting involved in community service projects. That was my plan, but life had a different set of lessons in mind.

What do you do when your door of opportunities doesn't open after a ring at the doorbell, a knock at the door, or a shout from the outside? I asked myself these questions because I was doing everything right on the outside – networking, building key relationships, and applying to positions I was qualified for. Each morning, I would hit the ground running. My day was filled with calls, networking events, and submitting application after application. I had something to prove, at least to myself. Namely, that I could turn things around. I was persistent and would not allow this setback to define me. But in reality, it did.

The pain of disappointment

After several rounds of failed attempts, I slowly became someone else. Bitterness, anger, sadness, and blame were newly acquired attributes. As a young career-oriented person with dreams of possibilities, I did the unimaginable - I settled. I lowered my expectations and outlook on life. I did not create any new goals out of fear of disappointing myself. I accepted positions for which I was overqualified. This also meant that I was underpaid, overworked, and had to work multiple jobs to keep afloat. In fact, I was drowning.

At this point, it didn't matter anymore. I was in survival mode, running on an endless treadmill. Paying the bills was my focal point and I was doing a poor job at that. In my personal life, I became quarrelsome with my fiancée. I was no longer the man she'd said "yes" to, the man of her dreams. My relationship with my children was strained. From the hurt and pain, emotional walls were built that made it difficult to connect with them. I was a hot mess.

I looked to my mother's life for inspiration, especially when I was going through a tough time. My mom was my rock. She modeled persistence with elegance and grace. As a single mother, she did not allow her shortcomings to define who she was and what she could do. She knew the importance of education and was a voracious reader, despite only completing the 8th grade. As an entrepreneur, she knew the power of finance and ran a successful business without an MBA.

My mother passed away a few years prior and, in her wisdom, I can hear her say, "Son, you can do better than this." Sadly, I did not recognize that. I continued to wallow in my pain and misery. I was

blaming the system for not working for me. It was time to be honest with myself. What are you going to do Kenny? How are you going to pick up the pieces? What is your plan? These questions constantly swirled in my mind.

My solution was to plow through it, grind harder, and put the pedal to the metal. I doubled my efforts and exerted more force thinking this would change my situation. In my heart of hearts, I wanted off this roller coaster of madness. During this period, my body and mind experienced high levels of stress and anxiety. I ate too much, stayed in bed, and binge watched movies to numb the pain. With an increase in weight as a result of fast-food eating habits and no exercise, I was entering into a pre-hypertension zone. I began experiencing tension headaches and my energy was low. A potential heart attack, stroke, and diabetes was becoming a reality at this point. Is this how I want my final chapter to end? No way! I had to make a change, a radical one.

Time for change

I knew this new change would have to be sustainable over the long haul and give me measurable results. Since my external force could not open the door of opportunities, I decided it was time to go within – to reconnect with my source, to re-examine my life, and map out the inner workings that would allow me access to abundance, fulfillment, and peace of mind.

My journey took me to a place that I was unfamiliar with – the woods. I made a point of starting my day in silence. Brookside Gardens, a neighborhood park, provided me with the space to walk, time to

think, and a place to meditate. Here is where I talked to the creator and asked for help. I gave up control and allowed myself to be guided and realigned to my purpose, mission, and passion.

This process was empowering. It taught me to be fluid in my thinking and actions. When obstacles arise, don't resist, go with the flow. By asking self-empowering questions, I was able to gain a new perspective on my situation. Understanding that control is an illusion, and I could only influence situations in my life was liberating. Little did I know, the walks provided some needed exercise at the same time.

Through curiosity, I stumbled upon a gem. Off the beaten path, were trails in the woods – Pine Lake, Horse, and Deer trail are where I found myself by adopting a growth mindset. This area became my sanctuary, as I talked openly and expressed raw emotions. Over time and with consistency, I was able to lower my stress and shed a few pounds. This space also became my outdoor gym for aerobic workouts.

3 steps to transformation

To help you in your own process, I have listed my three steps to making the most transformative change of your life.

Tip #1: Find time outdoors for physical movement

This could be a brisk walk or a light jog. Connect with the environment to enhance your experience.

Being surrounded by nature and her beauty seemed to open channels of communication. This was also therapeutic, and it taught me to put things in perspective. I was able to connect with myself on a deeper level. I did not realize I had so much bottled up inside. Journaling was a healthy way for me to examine my emotions and reflect internally. As a result, I started to get answers to my questions, and they illuminated how life was working for me, not against me. When I took action on my goals, I became stronger mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

With my journal open and a blank page staring at me, I listened, and I wrote from the heart. If my time in the woods were my *asking*, then I mark my journal time as *receiving*. I found the pond and rose garden to be a natural place for me to write. These areas would also serve for my meditation.

Now, I have a written record to reference. Getting what's on my mind and heart onto paper was initially a challenge. Over time, this process provided clarity, purpose, and direction.

Tip#2: Find time to journal

This can be gratitude or free writing. Without judgement, allow your heart to speak and you might be surprised by what it has to say.

Journaling has been a part of my routine for years. I had always written at home, usually before work. Somehow, my journal accompanied me on a walk at Brookside. I found a spot and started writing. The experience was transformational. After a journaling exercise, I allowed myself for the first time to be totally free and present.

When my mind began to wonder or felt a barrage of thoughts, I focused on my breath. This was not easy in the beginning. I continued to trust the process and began seeing a difference in my attitude and outlook. Soon, I found myself meditating in the gardens. I could be spotted on a rock, crossed-legged on grass, or sitting upright on a bench overlooking a pond.

Each time I meditated, it felt that I was letting go of all the emotional baggage that I was carrying that day; such as worries about work, errands, meetings, and commitments. When stressed, I learned to simply breathe with intention. As I followed my breath, I was able to get centered. Each time I practiced, I felt a fog lift from my mind.

I also incorporated a powerful tool with my practice by using visualization. Designing my future was a fun process. My only limitation was my imagination. I allowed my inner child to play and be creative. Once, I got a clear picture as to what I wanted, I focused on that image and emotionalized it as if it was real.

By practicing meditation, I was becoming mindful in the process. I became more patient and understanding regarding my circumstance. Knowing each day was a gift, I began living life from the inside out. It became more about what I am willing to bring to the daily experience rather than waiting for things to happen for me.

Tip #3: Meditate daily

Honor your highest self with time in the silence. Find a practice that suits you.

Meditation has always fascinated me, ever since a friend introduced me to that ancient art eleven years prior. It is well- documented that

regular and consistent meditation has several benefits if practiced regularly and with consistency. It can lower stress hormones, improve emotional health, and increase our self-awareness along with many other benefits. Like my journaling, meditation has always been an indoor practice.

As I incorporated all three elements of physical movement, journaling, and meditation, my life began to take off in extraordinary ways. I began attracting opportunities that hadn't been attainable in the past. Was this a lucky moment, a hot streak, or a break I desperately needed? I would argue that if I stayed on the same path, I would have received the same results. The magic for me was understanding that my life needed clarity, internally and externally.

Before, I was heavily focused on the outside. By turning my intention inward, I tapped a reservoir of unlimited potential. This newfound level of persistence unlocked the door of opportunities that I had so often tried to open. I met key people that were instrumental in how I landed my career job in education.

As I continued to work on myself, my relationship with my fiancée blossomed again. The man of her dreams was back, and we eventually got married! My relationship with my children improved because I let go of the façade that I was the dad who could do it all. This allowed me to be transparent with my kids and healed years of pain and trauma. As a man, I was open and honest with my communication and allowed my vulnerability to show. Like my mother before me, I did not let external limitations define who I am and what I can become.

As you continue your journey, you will find how instrumental persistence is in your success. Regardless of where you are in life, you

have an amazing opportunity to make a radical change that will bring the peace and opportunities you desire. I offer these tips as a gateway to finding the clarity you need to take your life, work, and relationships to the next level. They worked for me, and they can work for you. Be kind to yourself and trust the process.

Tips for allowing *persistence* to flow in your life

Tip #1: Find time outdoors for **physical movement**. This could be a brisk walk or a light jog. Make a connection with the environment to enhance your experience.

Tip#2: Find time to **journal**. This can be gratitude or free writing. Without judgment, allow your heart to speak and you might be surprised by what it has to say.

Tip #3: Find time to **meditate**. Honor your highest self with time in silence. Find a practice that suits you.

About the Author

Kenny Bey was born and raised in the inner city of Chicago, Illinois, the youngest of three sons to a single mom. He was taught that education was his path to greater opportunities. Taking his mother's advice, he became the first college graduate in his family. With a heart to serve, Kenny pursued a career in education as a way of giving back and paying it forward.

He is a certified Special Education teacher at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. Kenny is currently pursuing a doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Hood College. Outside of teaching, Kenny can be found mentoring, volunteering, traveling, and spending quality time with his family. A proud husband and father of four, he is passionate about helping others unlock their potential to enjoy a fulfilling and EPIC life.

Kenny can be reached at kenny.kennybey@gmail.com.

On Instagram and Twitter @kennybey

And on Facebook.com/kennybey

Twelve Steps of a Recovering/Discovering Adult Child

~~B~~by Ann Marie Wyrsch

I would like to paint a scenario depicting what it means to be born and grow up "under the influence." You might ask, "Under the influence of what?" All children grow up under the influence of parents or persons who provide them with what they need to survive, or they would not survive. They would die. The influence I am talking about is the influence of unreality, of denial.

Many years ago, a little girl was born into a family with a normal need to experience basic rights as a human being. Her parents did the best they could to provide for her needs, often at great cost to themselves. However, they had not experienced their own basic rights as children. They could not give her what they did not have themselves. Her parents suffered from the diseases of Alcoholism and Codependency. The little girl grew up under the influence of these diseases. She needed to see her parents as perfect because she counted on them for her survival, and so she began to deny reality and mistrust her own experience.

This little girl developed much pain on the inside that she carried into adulthood. She explained the pain by believing that there was something very wrong with her. Denial made it possible for her to not see the truth. She learned early not to see real pictures, about herself or others. Feelings of fear, sadness, and anger would have

overwhelmed her if she had seen real pictures. It was not safe for her to let herself know the truth.

Denial kept her safe, but it limited her greatly. Webster says that denial is "a restriction on one's own activity or desires." So, although denial was helpful to protect her from reality then, denial later caused her to restrict her own activity and desires. She developed the disease of Codependency, which affected every area of her life.

These "Twelve Principles of Codependency" synthesize what growing up "under the influence" translated to in adult life for this little girl.

1. I need to control people and events to provide some predictability and to protect myself from what would feel like overwhelming fear, anger, and sadness. I need to see myself as a victim and focus on others always.

2. I am my own higher power and I need to try harder to achieve and succeed, or get others to achieve and succeed so they can take care of me.

3. I see God as judging and punishing and I better keep on His good side so He will do my will.

4. I create an idealized picture of myself as perfect to get love, and still do not feel good enough. I blame others and myself for whatever goes wrong.

5. I must keep my thoughts and feelings to myself lest others find out how inadequate and confused I feel sometimes, and how terminally unique I am.

6. What has happened to me up to now has no effect on me and I can handle it alone.

7. I have to maintain the status quo because change is terrifying. If I could change others then things would get better.

8. I feel responsible for all that has gone wrong in my family, my school, and the whole world. And I think everybody notices what I do or do not do.

9. I kept trying harder to make it up to others for all the pain I thought I had the power to cause them. At the same time, I blamed them for all the pain they caused me.

10. I continued to see what I wanted to see only and not real pictures because then I would never be "wrong," and I would rather be right than happy.

11. I sought to ignore my inner wisdom and look for answers in a relationship, a book, seminar, seeking to avoid personal responsibility whenever possible.

12. Maintaining rigid denial as a result of these steps, I tried to take care of everyone else.

What this little girl now knows is that her family was not perfect. Her parents did the best they could despite the reality that they suffered from the deep and pervasive diseases of Alcoholism and Codependency. They did not know there was a problem, and certainly not what the problem was. She also knows that there was nothing basically wrong with her. She is a normal human being who learned some non-constructive patterns. These patterns are

something she learned, and therefore something that she can unlearn and relearn!

Because of the unhealthy patterns, however, she does have the disease of Codependency. The disease of Codependency is now understood as a primary disease from which recovery is possible. I want to share the story of this little girl's recovery because I know it well. It is my story. I am the little girl.

I did not know for much of my life that there are always alternatives, because I saw life from only one perspective. I became a seeker when I first learned that life can be different and richer. As I sought, I learned to trust myself, my source of Life, and the Universe so that now I can use every experience as an opportunity for growth. I now believe recovery from Codependency can be as profound and comprehensive as the wounding is deep and pervasive. The sharing of other recovering adult children helped me start and continue this journey. My personal and professional lives have taken on new meaning and fullness. I want to share with others the hope that was shared with me.

I have some basic assumptions about people, and what I think being a whole human person includes. You may have different assumptions and use your assumptions as a basis for considering what I say. I am aware that even as I articulate my beliefs they continue to evolve. I outline for you here my assumptions:

Each of us has within us the source of life given us by our Creator, and we have a right to be.

Each of us has a right to be fully human, and to feel all our Feelings: including gladness, sadness, anger, and fear.

Each of us has the right to be a separate individual, and to be unconditionally accepted and loved as we are.

Each of us has the right to achieve our unique potential in all areas: spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially.

Along with every right there is a responsibility, and a task to achieve that responsibility. My childhood wounding included not accomplishing the tasks to live out my rights. I did not learn to use, or should not have surrendered, my personal power to connect with the source of life within me and to be responsible for myself. I did not accomplish the developmental tasks of growing up.

I was not aware of what my rights were, nor did I learn the skills to experience them. I made early decisions that limited my freedom to experience these rights. This included the right to be, to feel, to know who I am, and what I want. I learned to negate my own inner wisdom and look to the outside for answers. I have re-decided I want to be loved unconditionally, and to achieve my full potential.

It is not easy, but it is never too late to have another chance. I can still accomplish these tasks. One difference from the first time around is that it is now too late for parents or someone else to provide me with the nurturing I did not get in childhood. My parents tried to give what they had not received, and it did not work. This pattern repeats from generation to generation. The cycle is interrupted only when individuals choose to recover and do what it takes to do so.

I can begin the healing. I can learn to give this nurturing parenting to myself. I could not have done it for myself the first time around because I was too little. I can do it now because I have learned how

to give nurturing to others. The monumental challenge is to re-decide that I have not only a right, but a responsibility to give it to myself.

I can give myself permission to learn what I did not know and use the resources and help that are available. I no longer have to do it alone. I have people who can guide me to use tools and skills to accomplish skipped developmental tasks, and who can provide support for me. I can learn to trust the source of life and growth that is in me. I had learned to deny or negate it. I thought I should know something I had not yet learned.

I learned that the twelve steps of Co-dependence I outlined earlier are a ~~sure fire~~surefire way to a life of pain and misery. I relearned that Twelve Steps of a Recovering/Discovering Adult Child are a dependable path to a life lived to the full.

Twelve Steps of a Recovering/Discovering Adult Child

1. I admitted I am powerless over people and events outside myself, and I realized my past affected me but I need no longer be a victim.

2. I came to believe that a power greater than me lives within me and within others and can restore personal power.

3. I have decided to turn my life over to the care of God, asking for an ever-truer understanding.

4. I became able to see real pictures about me and to accept myself unconditionally.

5. I experienced the freedom that comes from sharing the truth about myself with God, other persons, and me.

6. I became ready to let God show me how past patterns are affecting me, and I accepted my unhealthy and healthy patterns of thinking and acting without judging myself.

7. I began to let God teach me more healthy patterns and I opened myself to what I am to learn in each of my experiences.

8. I made a list of the persons with whom I have unfinished business.

9. I finish this business in a manner constructive for me and for them.

10. I review each day for unfinished business so I can acknowledge it and complete it at the appropriate time.

11. I seek to increase my conscious contact with God by setting aside specific time to listen, alone and with others, and by always striving to listen to my inner wisdom.

12. I practice these principles as I live life ever more fully, co-creating my life with God to achieve my unique destiny spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially, ever willing to share what I have learned with others.

Regarding: personal power

Before recovering I believed that the church had all the rules. When I became a nun, I was told that if I followed the "rules" I would be

guaranteed Heaven. That was just what I wanted, a guarantee. I did not know what personal power was.

What I was looking for was safety and structure so I would not make a mistake. Responsibility terrified me and I wanted God to take care of me. However, I was still not able to be willing to let go of controlling how I wanted God to fix me. I did not trust that God loved me because I did not think people did. I stayed stuck for a long time because of my fear of what would happen if I trusted God to guide me.

In recovery, I have experienced the source of life within me, and still call that source God. I know now that God is not only "out there" but in me and in others.

I used to look in a book for the meaning of Jesus' words: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." Although I could always see meaning and purpose in my life, I felt as if life was a pain that I needed to survive rather than an experience to enjoy. I longed to feel loved and to be able to love. I was so wrapped up in myself that I could not do either.

Through growing physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, I believe I have been able to grow spiritually. As I live the above principles, I see my purpose as that of expanding my capacity to love, and to live life ever more fully as a human person. That brings me back to the rights that I shared earlier. As I accomplished the tasks of healing ever more, I have come to experience those rights. I live life ever more to the full, and feel confident that I will continue to grow in every area to achieve my unique destiny.

A major part of my healing was finding and claiming my own inner child and giving her what I had learned so well to give to others. That child has become very precious to me. I have, with the help of many others, provided her with what she needed to claim her right to be, to feel, to be separate and to give and receive unconditional love. I now accept, with her help, responsibility to co-create my life with God.

I learned I can take care of her and not every other person in my life. By sharing my story and my tools with others, I can help them to find and re-parent their own inner child and experience some of the same rewards. The little girl who needed to see her family as perfect can now see more perfectly, real pictures, as they are. She can appreciate herself and others in a whole new way. She can take risks to grow. She has been born again into awareness and freedom of choice, and no longer had to keep herself buried in denial.[3]

By the time that little girl turned fifty, she had come home to herself. She was able to see options and was open to what the next step would be. Two years later, wanting to share her recovery, she started an Al Anon meeting for Adult Children of Alcoholics. Through a series of serendipitous events, a man came to the second meeting. Turns out that they were meant to share their lives as husband and wife and fell deeply in love. She left the religious order in good standing to follow a new vocation. They married six months later and continued the journey of living and loving more fully. This wounded little girl

[3] This chapter was abstracted and slightly altered from a longer story, with the same title, for adults who grew up in a family with the disease of alcoholism or other dysfunction. It was written in 1986 and not previously published.

received the gift of living ever more fully, and was able to share it with another human being.

Using all of her professional education and lived experience, and now with the love and support that she experienced in this relationship, she developed an educational/experiential program for adult children of alcoholic and other dysfunctional families that she named the Recovery/Discovery Series. The program lasted twenty weeks, two hours a week. In a five-year period over three hundred adults recovered from dysfunctional patterns and discovered new skills to live life more fully.

After five years, there was yet another stage of growth to be shared for this couple. Her husband was diagnosed with End Stage Renal Disease. She accompanied him on a five-year journey that included dialysis and a kidney transplant. The transplant failed and dialysis was resumed. He died at home as he wanted to, and the love lives on. She continues to be grateful for all that this journey has unfolded including the depth of joy and sorrow that was, and is, a vital part of living fully.[4]

You may be one of the fortunate people who have already started the journey into recovery. If you are, I invite you to join me in gratitude for experiencing life ever more "to the full." If you are one of the people who is contemplating whether it can ever be different, I invite you warmly to take a risk and go for it. Although your story may be somewhat similar, or very different, recovering and discovering is possible and well-worth whatever effort it may entail to work on it.

[4] This section was added in 2019 as a brief epilogue.

About the Author

Ann Marie Wyrsch was an ANA Certified Clinical Nurse Specialist from 1981 until 1997. She retired in 1993 but continues to have a passion for raising awareness of the serious consequences of growing up in a family with alcoholism or other dysfunction, and above all, an awareness that it is possible to recover from codependency and to discover new ways to live.

Ann Marie met the selection criteria for inclusion in ***Who's Who in American Nursing***, 1990-1991 Edition for significant accomplishment and leadership and was ~~i~~Included in the ***National Distinguished Service Registry in Nursing***, 1988.

The highlight of her career was facilitating a twenty-week *Recovery/Discovery* Series for Adult Children of alcoholic or other dysfunctional families from 1986 to 1991. The series included education and experiential processes addressing the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social dimensions of Codependency Recovery. During this time more than 300 adults graduated with new skills for living life more fully.

Ann Marie is a lifelong learner and continues to recover and discover!

She can be reached at amwyrsch@gmail.com

Exercises & Journal Prompts for Practicing Your Persistence

Like many of the resilience traits, persistence is a quality we can cultivate, regardless of who we are and what has happened to us in our livesfe. You may not feel as though you are naturally wired to keep going when times are tough, but every human possesses the innate ability to persist. We are hard-wired to fight for our survival from the moment we are born, which is how we make it through any of life's transitions.

The only aspect of life we can control is ourselves in terms of how we respond to external stimuli. It becomes far easier to perfect your persistence when you become more aware of your habitual responses, thoughts and reactions, because then you can slowly start to improve them.

Persistence is strengthened by strengthening your belief in yourself and in your capacity to achieve what you want when it deeply matters to you. It doesn't matter how long it takes you, or how many times you stumble, when you review your past triumphs, it helps you believe in the possibility of future ones more strongly.

If you find it difficult to look back or remember specifics, you might find it useful to reflect on how you feel when you think about something you really want in your life instead. Identifying the feelings you want in your life can also strengthen your persistence because it helps you to keep moving forwards towards them whenever resistance arrives.

Use the following journalling prompts to help you identify times when you have overcome obstacles. Trust your immediate responses and try not to overthink the exercise.

This will help you to access your subconscious memory, which is what drives 95% of your behaviors.

Persistence Journalling Prompts

1. Think about a time when you defied your own expectations and achieved more than you expected to. What kept you going? How did you feel during this time? How did you feel afterwards? How does it feel to reflect back on this?

2. Think about a time when you managed to stay calm in the face of stress. Can you picture yourself in that moment? What were you telling yourself to help you stay calm? What did you learn about yourself that day? How has this ability shown~~ed~~ up at other times since then?

3. Write down at least one example where you strongly believed in yourself, even though others doubted you. What helped you to stick to your belief in the face of other people's opinions? How did you feel about yourself? What does this tell you about your inner resilience and trust?

It can be useful to store these reflections and revisit these prompts regularly to see how your answers change over time as your resilience and persistence increases.

Notice how you feel after completing the exercise and give yourself permission to feel proud of yourself for taking the time to reflect and cultivate your inner persistence power.

Top 10 Traits of Resilient People

RESILIENCE TRAIT #4
Tolerance + Compassion

Tolerance and compassion are your secret weapons when it comes to developing and strengthening your resilience. The more tolerant and compassionate you are, the less likely you are to be triggered by circumstances outside your control and the less regret you will have about behaving in a way you later berate yourself for.

These traits offer fast-track tools for becoming a kinder, more understanding and less frustrated human. When you start viewing life through the lens of compassion, you no longer fight with aspects of life you have no control over, and you stop creating your own inner world of resentment or anger. Realizing that the majority of people you encounter are dealing with their own problems and concerns helps you to create more genuine connections and develop greater emotional intelligence.

The more you develop qualities such as understanding and empathy, the more you free up your life force energy. This means you can focus on constructively creating your life in every moment, rather than reacting and getting dragged along for a ride by your emotions.

To improve our capacity for tolerance and compassion, we need to start by developing this quality with ourselves. The more we

understand, accept and forgive ourselves, the better equipped we are to understand, accept and forgive others.

According to the Laboratory of Neuro Imaging at the University of Southern California, the average person has around 49 thoughts per minute (approximately 70,000 thoughts a day!) and 70% of those thoughts are identical with the day before. If you stop to consider how many of your thoughts you are actually aware of, and how many of those are negative thoughts about yourself, you can imagine how powerful it is when you begin consciously developing more compassion for yourself.

When it comes to tolerance, we are generally far harder on ourselves than we are on others. The words we use to chastise ourselves can be incredibly harsh and we need to learn how to find the balance between letting ourselves off the hook and constantly reinforcing our inner belief that we are not good enough.

Can you imagine yourself as a child or as a baby and send yourself unconditional love and acceptance? Can you see how the mistakes we make in life can easily be tolerated and forgiven when we reconnect to our original innocence and imperfection? How much easier would life feel if you adopted this perspective in the future, when you notice that you are judging yourself and others?

Remembering that we all want to be loved and accepted can make it easier to be compassionate with others, as well as ourselves, when we see struggle, striving and anger. Rather than letting our ego react and rise up to defend ourselves, instead we can adopt practices that help us to be more present, notice when we are triggered and then pause before we respond.

Clinical studies show that regular practice of the popular Loving Kindness (Metta) Meditation can do wonders for mood problems and irritability. In this meditation you are invited to repeat silently the following 4 statements:

1- It is my sincere wish that you be truly happy.

2- May you be free from suffering.

3- May you be well in body, mind and heart.

4- May you live peacefully and with ease.

You can find this meditation and many more on the Resource Page.

Our first story of tolerance and compassion comes from Julia Farmer. Since her youth in England, Julia suffered from heart issues that culminated in heart surgery. Julia suffered further agony through the loss of her home and one of her children. The inner work she'd done stood her in good stead…

Our next story illustrating the huge power of compassion is from an inspiring teacher and health professional, who learned the hard way how to honor herself before giving all her energy away to others. Even when Helga "Gegga" Birgisdottir had created an instrument of happiness she could share with others, she still pushed through until she was forced to press pause. Like so many caregivers and health professionals, her burnout could have been predicted by seeing warning signs such as a lack of fulfillment from a once enjoyable job. What she shares is a moving portrayal of how her journey to meeting her inner self with greater compassion completely changed her life and gave her freedom.

Finally, I share my own personal story of recovering from caregiver burnout, updated from the 1st edition of the *Top 10 Traits* book. You'll discover why I believe everyone on the planet needs to learn about and practice self-compassion to transform, heal and thrive in the face of adversity and loss.

Always in My Heart
By Julia Farmer

Blessings come in many different forms. Sometimes even a health issue can be considered a blessing... It is all about perception.

Growing up with a heavy heart

During my teenage years in England, I suffered from blackouts during school assemblies and from bouts of heart palpitations in the middle of sports activities. I would reluctantly walk off the hockey field or tennis court with a heavy heart, both figuratively and literally. Although these incidents were quite scary, I was assured that this was all part of growing up and due to those unpredictable hormones!

As the years went by, the palpitation episodes continued and became steadily worse. They did not disappear once my hormones started behaving themselves as predicted. On one occasion, my heart fluttered the whole night leaving me utterly exhausted in the morning! Clearly, my heart was not functioning as it should, but it was only when I was in my early forties that the problem was fully understood.

In 1982, at the age of 24, I applied for a two-year teaching post in Botswana, Southern Africa, and 40 years later I am still here!

Things come to a head

After my first marriage, which did not last very long, I met Stuart, who had originally been my hairdresser. One evening we went out for supper at a well-known Indian restaurant. I loved the spices and flavour combinations found in Indian dishes, although I found some of them rather rich due to the high fat content. Around 2 am I had to rush to the bathroom and no sooner had I returned to the bedroom than I had to turn tail and go back again for another episode. If that was not bad enough, heart palpitations took the opportunity to jump into the fray.

I had avoided involving Stuart as I expected my stomach to settle down by itself, but after 2 hours of palpitations, it was another story. I was very weak and had tried all the tricks up my sleeve to bring the rapid heartbeat under control, but my heart refused to cooperate. I gently woke Stuart up and asked him to take me to the hospital. I had had enough. We arrived at the emergency room and the nurses quickly diagnosed my condition as a self-inflicted anxiety attack and tried their level best to convince me that all I needed to do was to calm down and relax. That was until they took my blood pressure and saw that it barely registered on the scale. A drip was then shuttled speedily to my side containing a solution designed to slow down my heart rate so that it could start pumping normally and send oxygen around my body. Well, that was the idea at least.

Near death

However, every time the nurse tried to insert the needle into a vein it collapsed. She tried my left arm first because I was left-handed, then

my right arm, my legs, my feet – all to no avail. At this point I started drifting out of consciousness into a state of sublime, painless peace. I could see my hands turning blue but I felt totally undisturbed by this phenomenon. Nothing mattered anymore, and the intense pain from my struggling heart no longer registered.

The medics began preparing the machine which is used to re-start hearts that have stopped. I had always thought that the use of a defibrillator looked very dramatic when I'd seen it on television but I was not at all concerned. That was until I saw the look of fear on Stuart's face and suddenly felt a strong pull to stay a while longer on earth. Simultaneously, after seven other attempts, as a last resort, a needle was stuck into the artery in my neck.

The life-giving liquid sped down its ~~race track~~racetrack directly to my heart and within seconds the pounding subsided to a normal pace and the blood began returning to my hands and the rest of my body. It was an amazing near-death experience, one that was going to help me immensely much later on in my life.

Taking charge of my heart

After a day or so in the intensive care unit, test results revealed that I had a faulty heart valve which did not always close properly when under stress. The valve needed repair by a heart specialist. Some weeks later I was booked into Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg for the operation and a day or two for recovery. Standard protocol required me to sign a document giving Dr Obel permission to insert a pacemaker into my chest in the unlikely event that the ablation was

not successful. This could be done while I was still under full anesthetic without scheduling another operation.

Waiting for Dr Obel to finally deliver the outcome of the 6-hour procedure was quite stressful. He only arrived at my bedside at 3 pm the next day, but somehow, I already knew what he was going to say. When the doctor gently broke the news that my operation was one of the two instances where it had not succeeded in dealing with the faulty valve I was not surprised. However, I was very fortunate that Dr Obel decided not to carry out the pacemaker implant, a decision that has made me eternally grateful to him. Dr Obel stated that I was rather young to receive an artificial mechanism to keep my heart regulated and that the alternative of using medication had not yet been tried.

Over to me – I take charge

What Dr Obel had done, whether he knew its significance or not, was to put the ball back into my court! At the time I did not understand how much influence we have over our own health and indeed that stress is the main cause of *dis-ease*. Up until then, I'd been a 'victim' of life and had merely dealt with the consequences of what happened to me. However, this life-changing event gave me a real need and urgency to build up the confidence to take control of my emotions. It was very clear that letting them get the better of me was no longer an option.

Over the next ten years of my life, I was committed to self-improvement and reducing the amount of medication that I was prescribed to help keep my heart stable. I read books by Brandon

Bays and underwent 'Journey' processes. I bought affirmation cards and self-healing books by Louise Hay. I attended the annual online Hay House World Summit religiously. I watched the movie *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne and read her books. I followed the work of Byron Katie, Deepak Chopra and Eckhart Tolle, to name a few. As I immersed myself in all this wonderful wisdom, the meek caterpillar slowly started to emerge as a butterfly warrior. I became determined to find something positive in everything and have gratitude for life no matter what it threw at me.

Out of the ashes, a new passion is born

In March 2010, I was put to the test. My house burned to the ground in a mere twenty minutes and I lost all my possessions, except for the clothes I was wearing and my car. What is worse is that I was not insured. The blessing was that no one was hurt, including my much-loved cats and dogs. My elder daughter, Sarah (nicknamed Fifi), and stepson, Devin, no longer lived at home and so were spared the trauma of watching our home and possessions burn to nothing. Stuart, who was now my husband, and my younger daughter, Zinzi, were with me as witnesses to the inferno.

After any type of loss, there is a grieving process. Fifi helped me with this process when she asked me to state the items in each room and then say goodbye to them. She was wise beyond her 22 years. The inner work I had been doing also helped tremendously and enabled me to see that the loss had cleared the way to having gratitude for the four hectares of land that I owned. My new passion for growing vegetables and herbs also steered me towards organic horticulture as

a possible way of making extra income in addition to being an administrator and teacher in the private school where I was employed.

Slowly but surely, I became more and more focused on the small-scale vegetable and herb farm that arose from the ashes of the fire. The farm played a big part in my healing from that disaster. My life got back to some sort of normality with lots of support from family, friends and well-wishers.

Zinzi went away to Holland and then the United Kingdom as it was her gap year before going to university. Fifi continued to do amazingly well in her degree course in aeronautical engineering at Pretoria University, South Africa. Indeed, the future was looking very bright for her.

Fifi was a vivacious and happy young lady. She made friends very easily due to her good-hearted and fun-loving nature. Fifi met Dumisani in Pretoria, although he was from Durban. They appeared to be a match made in heaven with similar interests and enjoying an active social life together. Soon, Dumisani proposed to my daughter and they became engaged.

For three years the couple were inseparable and they visited us regularly in Botswana, so it was quite a surprise when I found out that they had called off the engagement. And it was not my daughter who told me about this development but her fiancé. However, Dumisani assured me that it was a temporary setback and that one day Fifi would be his wife.

A day I will never forget

On Saturday, 22nd September 2012, I received the worst news any parent can receive. When I heard the words that Stuart uttered, I refused to believe them. All the evidence before me was that he was telling the truth, but I spontaneously replied in a defiant tone that I did not want to know as if somehow not hearing what he said would make it null and void.

'Don't tell me! Don't tell me!' I began to scream while tears streamed down my face. And after refusing to be told again I thought maybe I had heard him wrong, so I now needed to know exactly what was going on. 'Tell me! Tell me!' was now the demand I made of my distraught visitors. My ex-mother-in-law and her daughters had been the ones to deliver the terrible news. Sewella, the eldest of the two sisters, whispered as gently as she could, 'It's true Julia, Fifi is with us no more.'

My heart shattered into a million pieces as the devastating news could no longer be denied. Tears fell like a waterfall from my eyes as I sank to the ground. I was oblivious to the world outside my pain. I am sure the women all tried to comfort me, but I had no awareness of anything outside that big black hole of emptiness in my soul.

Stuart checked the time. It was 10.35 pm and the only border that was still open at that late hour was due to close at 12 am. There was no time to waste. Zinzi was alone in Pretoria. We had to get to her to break the awful news about her sister before she heard it from someone else. I heard Stuart tell the three visitors the plan and with the mention of Zinzi's name, I instantly came back to reality. Yes, we had to go; we had to get to my other daughter as fast as we could.

We arrived at the border post with just minutes to spare. It would take at least four hours to reach the commune where Zinzi lived in Hatfield, Pretoria. Stuart and I travelled mostly in silence as the Pajero sped towards its destination. I was still in shock and my mind had become locked on one thought only. I have lost my big, baby girl. Just when it seemed as if I had used up all my quota of tears some more drops escaped, trickling slowly down my face.

About forty kilometres outside of Pretoria, my faithful Pajero started losing power. We stopped on the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere, so that Stuart could investigate. He sighed in despair realizing that he would have to wait until the sun came up to get a proper look at the engine. He then adjusted our seats so that we could try and get some sleep in the meantime. Stuart succeeded in just a few minutes, but I remained fully awake despite being emotionally exhausted.

Practising the wisdom I'd learned

As I lay on the reclined car seat, I became conscious of my heart beginning to beat irregularly. 'Oh no, not palpitations!' I murmured to myself. The last thing I needed was to get a full-on attack and end up in the hospital. We had to get to Zinzi! I began to self-counsel, 'Keep calm, you are going to be fine'. Somehow, I convinced myself that all was well, and beat by beat my heart responded until it returned to a normal rhythm. My mission was now to relax and avoid the onset of an anxiety attack which would make the nightmare even more frightening. No, I was not going to get palpitations!

And you know what? It worked. Not just on that terrible day, but through finding out that my darling daughter had been strangled and her body dumped in the bush. Through waking up the next day and not wanting to go on with life without her. Through Fifi's funeral and two memorial services in Pretoria and Botswana. Through hearing that Dumisani had confessed and tried to kill himself twice in jail. Through the murder trial where I heard all the horrendous details of my daughter's death. I kept strong and resilient throughout all of it. I kept strong for my heart, for my family's hearts, for my friend's hearts and most of all for Fifi's heart.

Fifi will always be in my heart, and I know for sure she wants me to be happy. Despite having lost my home and all my possessions, and my beloved daughter, I have still managed to be happy and earn the nickname from friends of 'eternal sunshine'. Owning my innate resilience means I can handle whatever life throws at me with a smile. I even went through a third loss when my marriage of 18 years came to an erupt end just a few years ago. I believe that the inner work I did, and still do, on loving myself and letting go of what I can't control, coupled with my passion for organic farming have helped me to heal and heal quickly. And now I can help other people heal too.

About the Author

Julia Farmer is a teacher, writer, artist, home economist, environmentalist, farmer, and entrepreneurial businesswoman. She has written over 20 home economics and art textbooks and continues to write regular articles on organic gardening. She contributes to *Gardens Botswana*. Julia has recently published her first transformational book with Balboa Press called, *Growing Happiness*.

Despite having gone through three major losses in her life, plus cancer and a near-death experience as a result of her heart condition, Julia is one of the happiest people you can know. Her close friends call her 'Eternal Sunshine!' She is currently creating an online course that covers healing from loss using the inner tools of acceptance, forgiveness and gratitude, and gardening.

Julia's book *Growing Happiness* is written under the pen name of Lilibet Rain. For more information, or to purchase the book please visit her website: https://www.lilibetrain.com/

You can contact Julia via email: jellyfishfarmer@yahoo.com

and on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/julia.farmer.585/

The Silent Lion

Bby Helga Birgisdóttir

There I was, crying and sobbing in the Emergency Admissions ward, not as a patient, but as the on-duty Nurse. It was a cold day in the fall of 2017. The time was 2 p.m. and I was alone in the small pharmacy of the ward where I had been working for the past six years of my ~~thirty-five-year~~thirty-five-year career at the hospital. While I was picking out pills and putting them into vials, I tried to gain control of my feelings, mostly by looking out the window at the grey parking lot, watching the rain and the trees that swayed in the wind. It didn't help much. I simply was not a tree that moved gently and in harmony with life. I broke down. Fury and lack of power consumed me, I was burning inside and my body was shaking. God how I hated this place and my job, a job I had loved in the beginning.

The crying increased, which surprised me as I am not the type to cry a lot. I wanted to melt into the wax on the linoleum floor, to disappear. But because of the large windows I was visible to all. The mask had fallen.

I was scared, alone in an environment that did not understand me! Fog and confusion clouded my brain. I had just returned from the ICU of the Psychiatric Ward on the floor below where my daughter had been admitted unexpectedly. My colleagues had refused my request to visit her, following ridiculously stringent rules they refused to bend. I, the main supporter of my daughter 24/7, didn't get any information. I experienced my workplace as an inhumane and

colossal rulebook where human values were not at all important. How can a psychiatric system conduct itself like a cruel dictatorship? How can my colleagues not show compassion? I didn't trust this system to take care of my daughter.

My guilt was blooming. If I had only been around more when she was little, the situation might be different. I felt like a lion in a cage that wants to roar but is afraid to do so for fear of punishment, a lion in a strange and difficult world that has lost all hope for freedom. The silent roar stretched every nerve of my body. I kept crying and was sent home.

Deep inside of me I heard a low whisper of my soul, "Trust and let go". Was this precisely what needed to happen?

Let me save you

The precursor to my crash was cunning. I had unsuspectingly lost control of my own life. I was drowning in the role of the savior that carried responsibility for the whole world on sore shoulders. I was a fixer, and as such, I got a 'kick' from rescuing people — whether they needed it or not. But when I was unsuccessful in my rescue missions, I turned into a victim. I was stuck in a triangle of codependency — a savior, a victim, an aggressor — often all three at the same time. My nerves were shaky, and the body was not amused.

One day my colleagues measured my blood pressure at 190/120. Wow! The head nurse wanted to take me in a wheelchair over to the Cardiac Ward. Oh, no! Not me. I preferred to walk even though I might drop dead on the way. In the Cardiac Ward the situation

improved after a few hours of rest and some medicine. Two days later I reported back to work, in good shape, I thought. Pain in the musculoskeletal system, irregular heartbeat, unexplainable fatigue, foggy mind, forgetfulness, heaps of crying, irritation, anger, hopelessness, had all been simmering for years and I the chef, continued to stir until everything boiled over. My solution, to work some more in order to feel better, had failed badly.

Sixteen-hour shifts with little sleep in between had become the norm. I, the workaholic, couldn't say no when called upon. I did try though, promising myself to say a firm 'no', if the phone would ring unexpectedly on a Sunday morning and I had gone to bed late the night before. Did I stand up to it? No. In the few instances I did say no, I strolled around the floor like an alcoholic who needs her next drink. Then I called them back and said I would show up. At the same time, I was thinking "only this time", something that would repeat itself time and again.

I felt odd pride over my work ethic and importance. At the same time, I wondered what was really wrong with me. I had a Bachelor's degree from the College of Arts, I loved to paint and had a nice studio waiting for me. I was also an innovator and lecturer. My greatest passion was SMILER, the Instrument of Joy. I created it to remind me and others that we are Powerful Creators in our own lives and that the most important thing to do is to listen to one's heart and follow one's dreams, exactly what I myself was not doing.

It had not always been like this. In the beginning I enjoyed my work. The ward I worked on was the Emergency Admissions ward and we received new patients every day, often in a suicidal state. I understood them all too well, being codependent and having experienced

emotional suffering personally. Something that came from living in an alcoholic environment most of my life. I was good at my job, however, and it was easy for me to liven people up and spark hope in them. I used unusual methods such as starting discussions on faith, God (the word I use for the loving creativity of life), and the meaning of life, a hot topic that only the hospital priest was supposed to discuss. Most patients longed for such discussions and my grayish humor worked on them like a ~~well designed~~well-designed joy pill. My motto was not to end a conversation until I had seen a smile. I admit I felt good when people thanked me for saving their lives. I mattered.

From good to bad, a gradual decline

Art was my favorite way to bond, and for the first few years there was an art room in the ward where I had my best treatment interviews. Oh my God, how I enjoyed those days! The art room was then shut down because of budgetary reasons. Recession and a lack of interest in any treatment options other than medicine became the norm. I had given weekly talks for the patients, but cutbacks shut them down as well.

I also used the NADA acupuncture protocol with good results with people with drug withdrawal symptoms and anxiety. As a certified NLP Practitioner Coach, I also guided people towards meditation with good results, but that is hard to do when called upon from many directions. Every minute was used, and lunchtime and coffee breaks were restricted. Pressure and passion to save as many as possible resulted in me, not even having time to go to the bathroom.

The job lost the joy it had given me. I had betrayed my values and disregarded my heart. No wonder my heart~~it~~ flew into screaming disorder when going to bed in the evening, pounding like crazy, then stopping, then beating again. I always had the telephone ready on the bedside table in case I needed an ambulance. I remembered my grandmother's good advice, which I always followed: "Always wear clean underwear in case you end up in a hospital."

Commented [SL13]: Is this correct?

I sometimes felt like a traitor and even felt abused as a nurse, when I gave patients habit-forming drugs which I believed did more harm than good. My style was to strike up a conversation and provide a kind, compassionate presence instead of an extra dose of drugs. I was starting to give up and I felt I was fighting a losing battle, against ghosts from a distant past.

It was not well-~~-~~regarded to have opinions that were not in line with hospital policy and the staff almost never spoke about the important feelings, the disappointments and the sorrow from traumatic experiences. Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen warns of the dangers of this when she says: "People who care for others are vulnerable to burn out – psychopaths don't burn out! We burn out because we allowed our heart to become so filled with loss that we have no space left for care."

As part of the process to become a fully certified NLP practitioner and coach, I worked with a coach who regularly advised me to take a vacation. I realized that even though I knew she was correct I simply couldn't take time off. What would people think of me, the great savior? The fear of losing this (distorted) image of ~~my self~~myself became stronger than anything else. Nobody would trust me. Everybody would think I was fake!

But God did not abandon me, and following the scenario in the pharmacy it was decided that I would take a vacation and get some rest. Now finally everything went haywire because the shame and my inferiority complex drove me crazy. Me on vacation! Over my dead body! I bent over in shame.

Please God, take my painful shame away

Oh my God – it huuurts! I was on my back not able to move, following a backward fall off a breakwater and ending on a rocky beach. My right elbow was broken (I didn't know it then), some ribs were fractured, and my head hit a rock and hurt a lot. Thank God for my thick sealskin cap. As I laid there on my back looking up into the grey sky, I felt deep gratitude. My "prayers" had been answered. How often had I not thought I would need to be injured in order to be able to relax? Sounds crazy but what could be better than that to deal with the shame that said I wasn't doing well enough.

The cold was biting, minus 11 degrees Celsius, and I had my insulated overalls on my heels as I had been taking a pee just before the fall. It was getting dark and I was all by myself, without a phone. I couldn't move because of the pain and tried twice to scream for help, somewhat sure that nobody would hear me (it was however a small first step in the direction of asking for help.) My friends were in a summerhouse more than a kilometer away. I managed to stand up holding under my right arm with the left one which I also used to hold my overalls close to my side, as I could not get fully dressed. I had to be careful not to falter on the slippery rocks. I remember my

mantra which I repeated on my way back to the house: "I am not my body – I am a spirit."

Following old habits, I denied my physical situation and didn't go to the hospital until two days later. I needed an operation as my elbow was badly broken. It was pieced together with wires and my whole arm encased in plaster cast.

I couldn't do much;, I couldn't drive or wash my hair, so I had to ask for assistance for various daily tasks. Too bad I wasn't left-handed. But God always finds a way to teach. Who would have believed that I would ask my ex-husband to wash my hair! This he did with a big smile.

Yes meant 'no' to me. The day after my surgery I got an email from "The Light" (an organization of people with cancer), asking me to replace someone with a lecture two days later. My own talk was originally scheduled a month later. "Yes, of course."

I remembered I couldn't drive, but no problem, I would be picked up. When the driver arrived, I opened the door — topless. "Please, can you help me get dressed?" It would have been more fun if it had been a man, but hey, you can't get everything.

My lecture was supposed to be about stress. I'm not kidding.

The elbow healed but I wasn't in much better shape than before the accident. The hospital's staff doctor insisted that I attend recovery sessions at Virk, a recovery centre run jointly by the union and the state. I felt like a loser, this was the bottom. Me who had been planning to offer Virk my workshops for their clients. Shame and fear were overwhelming, but big thanks to my soul that could reach an

agreement with my ego to try new ways, and to stop this nonsensical hubris.

My little one is my savior

I, who originally had the intention to heal myself, all by myself, found out that this was not possible. I now gratefully received all kinds of support that did me good. I asked my body what it needed to heal, and I made some changes in my way of life. Now I go swimming in the cold ocean, have a reasonably healthy diet, meditate, keep up my physical fitness, etc.

The anger was the worst. How could I see myself as a good person with all this anger towards the healthcare system? Part of me hated my anger and the accompanying feeling of being a victim. I realized that if I wanted to lower my stress hormones, I would need to show this angry part of me some understanding and compassion, as anger is a part of the grieving process and it needs its space. I established the goal to love 'all of me,' knowing there were wounds that craved love and acceptance.

Finally, I met my greatest master, myself as a child. Little Helga, nicknamed Gegga, showed a lot of courage when she appeared in unusual circumstances about one year after the accident. Having retreated into a small room to be by myself at a San Pedro medical plant session, little Helga appeared, roaring like thunder and expressing her truth with fierce feelings of anger, fear, loneliness and love. Nothing could stop her voice or the crying that shook my body. I tried to step in with reason and logic, but the little one took the stage. One could feel the power in the childlike innocence and her

demands to give and receive love. It was like a sword that cut through my heart and let in the light of truth.

This little master showed me I have the inalienable right to unconditional love and I felt an indescribable feeling of freedom. Freedom to love ME — all of me, freedom to be WHO I AM — all the time.

Two days later as I sat meditating with a picture of myself as a little girl, I asked her what I could do for her. The answer was clear: "I want you to never talk badly about me, I want you to love me, I want you to take care of me."

"You are seen – you are heard- you are loved for who you are." A song with Karen Drucker comes off my CD player just now as I am writing these words. Yes, God is always talking to us. ~~,~~ W~~w~~e just have to listen.

I am a gift, so are you

My story is exceptional, but then it isn't. People have different stories of their path to finding ~~self-love~~self-love, and you would probably not be reading mine unless you had one of your own. We are always a gift to the world – even though we sometimes feel like garbage. Our lives are never wasted – not for a single moment! We are holy beings, and we deserve the best.

God will not let you run forever from your True Self. He might give you a soft kick in your ass now and then, and if you don't listen, even break your arm (if that's what you ask for~~.~~). I know now that being confused is part of being human.

I'm deeply grateful for my journey and if I had the choice to dismiss any of my past experiences I would say, "no thanks.–" I have emphasized to people to listen to their hearts and ~~to~~ follow their dreams, even if I haven't always done so. "Betrayal of yourself in order not to betray another is betrayal nonetheless. It is the Highest Betrayal," as author Neale Donald Walsch says. I said, "My soul is not for sale," and WOW! The feeling of freedom was stunning.

I still have the same passion as before my crash, a passion to support others in experiencing happiness and love. The difference now is that I trust others can care for themselves and thus I do not need to "save" anyone. It gives me immense joy to share in a creative way my knowledge and experience. I do that with SMILER, by lecturing, teaching, and with private therapy. I also use my art, which nourishes both me and those who appreciate it. I have humane demands on myself, and I don't need to feel completely whole to shine. Have you ever heard the moon say "Sorry, I can't do any good now, I'm just half full"? Accepting myself in every moment is freedom and that's how I connect to the love and joy in my essence.

FREEDOM is God's greatest gift. To be able to create, to keep trying, to find out what works and what doesn't in order to realize true happiness. Thank God life goes on, and when there are 'downs' the 'ups' will soon follow.

As SMILER says:~~;~~ "You're a Powerful Creator with your thoughts, words and actions!"

Be gentle with yourself.

About the Author

Helga Birgisdóttir (Gegga) is the CEO and Creator of SMILER the Instrument of Joy.

Gegga's overall message is that You are a Powerful Creator. Her book, Smiler Can Change It All, includes inspiring messages of how each of us can access our inner power to create more joy, love and happiness in life.

Gegga has a broad spectrum of education and experience within health care, personal development, and art. She has worked at the National University Hospital of Iceland, both as a nurse and a midwife for 35 years. Gegga is a certified Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioner and coach, and she is trained in the NADA acupuncture protocol for drug and alcohol detox. She is also a facilitator of The Work of Byron Katie.

Gegga has a Bachelor of Arts degree from The Iceland University of the Arts.

Gegga is a popular lecturer who offers a variety of workshops and private sessions to coach people to get in touch with their inner love, joy, and creativity. She combines spirituality, faith and science in a way people find easy to understand. Within the art world she has been active in private and collective exhibitions both in Iceland and internationally.

Gegga is also a contributing author in Time to Rise, published by Dr. Andrea Pennington.

Connect with Gegga online: gegga@smiler.is - www.smiler.is - www.gegga.is

Recovering from Caregiver Burnout
By DaeEss 1Dreah

The calm before the storm

I had the pleasure and luxury of creating a deep meditation practice for several years in response to following my heart and moving to France in 2010. Sitting on the beach, meditating in the countryside, and becoming grateful for life's beauty became my soul nurturing rituals long before I really needed them. Becoming more mindful and compassionate helped me deal with frequent minor life frustrations — such as dealing with the French administration, traveling to multiple countries with a small child, and running a global media company from Europe.

Meditation, QiGong, aerobic exercise and being in nature with lots of sea and sun have helped me stay upbeat and optimistic. I believe they keep the ugly monster of depression at bay, something I experienced for most of my life.

I'll offer my advice to you right up front here — rather than waiting until your life is falling apart, your mental outlook is down the drain or you lose a loved one, I suggest you make meditation a regular part of your healthy lifestyle, so that over time you build up resources to cope with life's many challenges. And if you're in need of an emergency rescue, meditation may be just what the doctor ordered.

Mom's Diagnosis: Alzheimer's Dementia

Over the years my siblings and I all expressed how obvious it was that Mom was becoming more forgetful and easily confused. Each of us saw a dramatic and rapid decline in both her short term memory and daily functioning. It was tough for us to come to terms with the fact that our mother, who had been a sought-after, brilliant physician, was then at the age of 83, asking us the same basic questions every five minutes. To make matters more challenging, Mom was also nearly blind now due to a long history of glaucoma and she was often in physical pain due to arthritis.

In the early stages of her dementia, she experienced frequent mood swings. Mom has always been feisty, but soon we watched her go from snappy and irritable to weepy and blue in a matter of minutes. Needless to say, this became quite a challenge for my sister and brother who were Mom's primary caretakers.

A visit to the Cleveland Clinic Center for the Brain led to the inevitable diagnosis of dementia, most likely the Alzheimer's type 5. Like so many people with a family member diagnosed with dementia, my initial reaction was to jump into rescue mode. As a physician who specialized in longevity medicine, I suggested we bring an arsenal of 'smart drugs' into play. These are the nootropics today's savvy bio hackers take starting in their 20s, whereas my wealthy executive clients began taking in their 40s to maintain sharp focus and to enhance brain function.

[5] I say most likely because you cannot officially diagnose Alzheimer's disease without looking at brain tissue under the microscope. Short of a brain biopsy, which nobody living wants to do, the only way to know for sure requires a brain analysis after death.

We tried a few of the medications approved for dementia which, unfortunately, had a host of side effects that were just unbearable for Mom. One pill got her too amped up. She would stay up all night long talking, and sometimes dancing! Another medication sharpened her thinking but sent her back in time to a period in her life where she owned a medical clinic. She would angrily yell that she was being mistreated and prevented from getting to work where she insisted that patients were waiting to see her. If she was particularly wound up, she could be heard talking to herself, counseling the imaginary patients who she 'saw' in front of her.

My sister and brother alternated caring for Mom for a few years before their own signs of stress and overwhelm became so obvious that I was compelled to step in. It wasn't easy though. Over time my sister had become fiercely protective of Mom and often interpreted any help from me as a sign that she wasn't being trusted to care for her properly. For example, when I offered to fly from my home in the South of France to help them move into a new house, or to take mom on holiday for a few weeks, my sister defiantly said, 'No!' However, things became even stickier when I visited during the sSummer of 2015, as it was clear that both my sister and my mother needed a break.

The rescue

I've connected with other caregivers of aging family members or spouses, and I now have a greater understanding of how easily our lifestyle and household can crumble around us. Simple things that could easily be fixed are neglected while we care for someone who

needs near constant attention. So many of us caregivers put our own needs last on the list — if they get on the list at all!

Though my sister rejected any physical help from me over the last two years, I began to doubt my decision to stay away. When I arrived to visit, I was beside myself. "I should have insisted," I agonized. I saw the full impact that assuming full responsibility for everything had on my sister. As a single working woman with no husband or other relatives nearby, the caretaking role had become too much for my sister. And she rejected the idea of hiring an assistant to help out, fearing that they might abuse Mom while my sister was at work. So Mom, who had always been so proud of her beautiful home, was now literally blind to the shabby conditions she lived in. This is when my guilt set in.

My mother was so happy to hug me and her granddaughter when we arrived, and she pleaded for us to take her away. I felt so ashamed for not insisting on a visit sooner to unburden my sister from the full-time caretaking responsibilities, and I couldn't bear to see my mother so confined. So, my daughter and I swooped in and agreed to take Mom on a jaunt half-way across the map to my home on the French Riviera.

While waiting for Mom's passport to be renewed we spent a month together in the US and treated Mom to several outings and fun excursions. During that month I saw firsthand how fast Mom's memory and physical capacity was deteriorating. She was blind, immobile, and confused. I felt sorry for her being now wheelchair-bound due to achy, stiff joints. In my mind it seemed like such a terrible state to be in. I was filled with compassion and felt compelled to do all that I could to both alleviate her suffering as well as provide

as many enjoyable, love-filled moments as possible. Plus, I wanted my daughter to have positive memories and happy moments with her grandma. So, I went into overdrive — dinners, movies, miniature golf, and ice cream.

Mom always loved Baskin & Robbins ice cream, in particular the flavor Pralines and Cream. Having left the US nine years ago my daughter had never been to B&R, so while in Los Angeles I decided we'd have an ice cream bonding experience. After going through the drama of dressing Mom and putting on her wig and makeup (she was always a proud lady wanting to be seen looking good!) we descended the long flight of stairs to reach the car. I drove with such joy and anticipation as the sun was shining down on Mom's face in the passenger seat.

At the ice cream shop my daughter was filled with wonder at the vast numbers of ice cream flavors — 31 to be exact. As we sat down to enjoy our tasty treats Mom was in Heaven! I felt so pleased with myself. It felt like a positive accomplishment.

After gobbling down the delicious treats, we piled back into the car to head home, which was only about a 15 minute car ride. I pulled up, parked the car and just as Mom opened the door she says, "You know, I'd really love to have some ice cream."

She had completely forgotten the dreamy, ice-creamy bonding experience we just shared!

Undaunted, I comforted myself and reminded my daughter that even if her mind didn't store the memory, at least her soul could recognize the effort that her daughter and granddaughter made to be fully present and loving.

The descent

Mom was so delighted that she was going to be visiting France again, a country she loved and hadn't seen in over 25 years. Optimistic that the trip to Europe would bring Mom's spirits high, we packed up the wheelchair, her walking stick, medications and boarded our flight. If you think traveling with a small child is difficult, let me tell you, flying with someone who is confused, blind and forgetful is much harder! Needless to say, the plane ride was a horrendous nightmare and only a precursor of things to come. Mom did not believe that she was on an airplane. She insisted that she was in her home as she called out to everyone who passed by her seat. Suspicious that the passengers might be thieves, she tried to climb out of her seat and would reach across the aisle to touch the person sitting there to see who they were.

When we landed in France, Mom was so disoriented that she refused to leave the plane, so the attendants had to carry her off as she resisted and yelled at them. The taxi ride home from the airport was equally embarrassing. She tried to climb into the front seat and begged the driver to let her out. She banged on the windows and called for the police to help her. Little did I know that my attempt to bring her joy and relief was only going to bring her — and me — sadness and misery.

With the time zone difference and Mom being totally disoriented, we stepped into a period of catering to her every need 24/7. Mom's anger and frustration for being out of her comfort zone led her to descend into a child-like tantrum on a daily basis. It's not hard to imagine the consequences: sleep deprivation, physical and emotional exhaustion, depression and yes, resentment.

Drawing on compassion and tolerance, my daughter and I persevered to keep Mom comfortable and entertained. But to no avail. I was worn down by her angry outbursts and nightly conversations with medical patients who didn't exist. Ultimately the fatigue and jabs at my wellbeing were too great. In my mind, I had given everything. My time, home, sleep, money, attention, and care had been used and abused, not appreciated nor cherished, by the woman who gave me life. I was hurt by her lack of appreciation for what we sacrificed in having her in our home. Which made me feel ashamed for being so selfish! I was deflated and dejected.

Yet, what did I expect? Wasn't I the one who stepped in, posing as the heroic (codependent) savior, sacrificing everything for her? Was it realistic to think all would be rosy and well? After all, she is the one with a brain that is seemingly disintegrating before our very eyes. She is the one facing the last years of her life totally dependent on others, in pain and confused. Where did the unrealistic expectation that she would or could recognize how much we cared come from? And how could I be so damned selfish?

My refuge — Meditating on compassion

Realizing how bratty my internal dialogue had become, while hiding in the bathroom in shame and guilt, I broke down crying. My refuge and return to sanity came through my practice of meditation, specifically the Metta, or loving-kindness meditation. Metta is a Pali word that involves the desire that all living beings be well. It is more than just a feeling, it is an attitude of friendliness. From a Buddhist psychology perspective, if loving-kindness is directed towards our

own suffering then self-compassion can arise, while if it is directed towards the suffering of others then compassion for them can develop.

To practice this meditation, we begin by taking a few deep breaths to get centered and quiet. Then we begin with directing loving kindness toward ourselves. Sitting quietly, we mentally repeat, slowly and steadily, the following or similar phrases:

"May I be happy.
May I be well.
May I be safe.
May I be peaceful and at ease."

After directing loving-kindness toward ourselves, the practice involves holding the same kind intention toward people close to us, our loved ones and family. Next, we extend the circle of compassionate wishes to people who are neutral, such as the grocery clerk, delivery guy or a random person we stand next to at the post office. Finally, we sit and direct compassion and the wish to ease suffering to difficult people, the ones in our life or in the world who seem particularly difficult to love.

I can tell you from personal experience this practice is profound. Beside the inner transformation that comes from finally being kind toward myself, I have recognized a clear shift in all of the relationships in my life. The loving-kindness meditation has grown in popularity among psychologists and therapists. Clinical research is finding the same results in a variety of different settings. In clinical studies this meditation practice leads to an increase in positive emotions over time, which leads to an increase in resilience resources,

including mindfulness, self-acceptance, received social support, and positive relations with others.

Becoming more tolerant and compassionate to myself, allowed my heart and mind to reopen to offering true compassionate care to my mother. Through meditation we remember simple advice: just be present; that's the gift. As I eased my grip on internal expectations and released the tension of resisting what was happening, I found greater peace, and so did Mom. Her mood lightened significantly. I stopped telling her that her imaginary patients weren't there. I allowed her to enjoy the idea of being a helpful, caring physician, a role that had given her life tremendous significance. And the tension in the household was magically lifted.

As I relaxed into a solemn acceptance of Mom's condition, I could watch with wonder how she selectively relived certain memories from her early adult life in England. She recounted stories of her time in nursing school in London, the countries she visited, the men she dated (despite her family's disapproval), and the adventure she embarked on with her immigration to the United States. She expressed great pride and satisfaction while recounting stories of her time at medical school when I was just a baby. She beamed with joy and satisfaction at a life lived with no regrets.

Mom often told me how happy she was with her life. Yes, she said she wished there was a man to romance her — even at age 83! And yes, she wished she had more to give to her children and granddaughter as an inheritance. But she told us, on more than one occasion, that she felt a deep sense of satisfaction and pride that during her illustrious lifetime, she had done "her Master's work" to the best of her ability. She often said, "when I cock up my toes and

go to the great Beyond, I shall hear 'Job well done!' And that's all that matters to me now."

The resilient rebound

Through meditation and becoming fully present and accepting of the current circumstances, I came to terms with my own attachment to a desire for her to be 'well' again. I had to let go of my clinging to the vision of the Mom I grew up with and looked up to. A newfound acceptance and appreciation of the frailty of life emerged.

I renewed my personal boundaries and recommitted myself to my own compassionate self-care routines including lots of meditation breaks, hot baths, movies on the couch with my daughter and long walks in nature. Rather than sleeping with one eye open and jumping up every time Mom started chatting, I decided to give in to peaceful sleep and allow her to talk to imaginary people through the night. Instead of rushing home to supervise her every meal and movement, I hired a caretaker to come in during the day so that I could continue my outdoor exercise routine.

Allowing myself time in nature to breathe and reconnect with Life, I slowly let go of the need to 'fix' Mom. And I allowed myself to become mindfully aware and grateful for life.

The resolution

The resolution arrived only a few months later as I returned Mom to my sister's open arms back in America. I was relieved and sad at the

same time. I feared that this might be the last time Mom recognized me. She seemed happy to be reunited with my sister, though she didn't realize that she hadn't been away from her for long.

On my last day I pulled out my laptop and we listened to my first TEDx presentation, the one I gave in Monaco about becoming who you really are. She listened with great attention and wonder. After hearing my 18-minute talk she told me that she could tell that I was 'doing my Master's work.' She expressed a sense of pride that was so gratifying to me, especially after so many years of yearning for acceptance and approval.

As I left for the airport the following day and hugged Mom and my sister goodbye, I was at peace. I had fully accepted that I had done my best, in the eyes of myself and my soul, as well as in the eyes of Mom and my daughter.

I, of course, clearly saw the many errors of my ways. But I did not have any regrets. The choices I made felt right at the time. Given my own level of awareness and understanding I gave my all, with the best of intentions, though I would certainly do things differently with what I know now.

The experience allowed me to connect with my sister on a deeper level as well. And now she knows that she can call on me, even just to vent her feelings. And we both recognize the value in taking time for ourselves and how to laugh or shrug off the sometimes nutty things that happen with Mom. And we know that no matter what, ~~we know that~~ we can get through turbulent times and family crises with true grace and ease.

The update

Over the 4 years since that tumultuous and traumatic summer, my daughter and I returned to visit my mother and sister and we were fully equipped with compassion, patience, and a willingness to be present with Mom in whatever state she was in. We did not carry expectations or regrets, which allowed us to visit with her in a joyful and peaceful way.

Armed with lots of her favorite music we danced, we talked, introduced M~~m~~om to vegan ice cream and we let her share what was on her mind. I was particularly struck by her acceptance of her condition. As she entered an advanced stage of dementia she was, thankfully, more peaceful, grateful, and focused on happy things. It was strange to see her turn down multiple offers to leave the house, have her pillow fluffed or her drinks re-heated. She told us that she was quite comfortable and so very appreciative of our presence.

I was deeply touched that after just a short while she pulled me close to say that she was doing so well that she wanted me to go. I was kind of shocked to hear her say, "You are young, you have your life to live now. You should be out there!" She gestured toward the door. She continued, "I'm doing well, I'm happy you came to visit, but I've lived my life, now it's time for you to go out and live yours."

Once again, I felt her giving me permission to live fully and continue my life in France and it brought tears to my eyes. By being present with her without expectation, she returned to the caring mother who wants the best for me.

Even in her fragile state my daughter and I received such precious love and attention, which is what we had intended to give to her. These are moments that have left such a strong impression on me.

My mother transitioned in September of 2021 after a stroke. Her life was celebrated with family and friends sharing stories of her life, great Guyanese food prepared by my daughter, and lots of love.

There are many other aspects of the relationship between me and my mother that I processed with the help of ceremonies with ayahuasca and psilocybin mushrooms that you can find in the book *Sacred Medicine.*

The lessons

To summarize but a few of the lessons that summer with Mom in France taught me.

- Life is precious. This human life is truly a gift to be cherished. We will be wise to live each day authentically, with purpose and always with the intention to give this life deep meaning.
- Life, as we know it, will end. So do not take youth for granted! Everything in this life is temporary and subject to change. We cannot escape pain, sickness, loss or death, so while you're here, nurture your body and brain. Enliven your heart and soul with adventure, love and fun. Savor the pleasurable experiences without clinging, knowing that all good things must come to an end. And resist the temptation to push away or fix every 'bad' thing. They, too, shall pass.

- Our behaviors determine the quality of our lives. The actions we take and choices we make are what bring forth the fruit of our lives, so be sure to generously choose love and compassion. Practice kindness and forgiveness to yourself as well as others. Cherish your ability to love freely, and often. Mom remembered her greatest loves, travels and triumphs — not the failures. She was able to say she lived with no regrets. Could you do the same?

- None of your possessions, jobs or accomplishments provide lasting comfort or fulfillment in themselves. And at the end of your life, none of them will go with you. So, develop an open curious mind and heart while walking without attachment or resistance. Your determined focus on awakened living, serving others and evolving your mind and soul is paramount.

Exercises & Journal Prompts for Building Tolerance and Compassion

The more understanding you have of your own reasons for doing what you do, the more understanding you will have of others. We are all motivated by similar desires and most humans are genuinely doing their best. The more we understand that and learn to celebrate our individual qualities and value, the greater our tolerance levels.

Developing more compassion will benefit your mental wellbeing, as well as make your life run more smoothly. Below is instruction on how to practice the Mettā (compassion) meditation I refer to in my story. It can also be found on the Resources Page.

Loving-Kindness Practice (Metta)

Sit comfortably and begin the session with five deep breaths and a few minutes of mindfulness practice.

Then, starting with yourself as the object of your meditation, repeat silently the following 4 statements (or create your own). You could close your eyes, and put your hand on your heart, if you wish, and try to really feel the meaning of each sentence.

1- May I be free from suffering

2- May I be peaceful and truly happy

3- May I be truly well, in body, mind and heart

4- May I live with ease.

After a while, you can include more people in the contemplation, and direct these 4 phrases to other people, starting with someone you care about, ("May you be free from suffering…") and then someone you feel neutral towards, and eventually, you could even include someone you find challenging. Toward the end of the practice, you can choose to widen your circle of practice and include all beings!

It can also be quite helpful to include a self-forgiveness practice as you develop more tolerance and compassion. Below is a simple forgiveness practice, which you can do as a journaling exercise, or a contemplation meditation.

As a journaling exercise, consider writing a letter of forgiveness to your younger self using these steps to guide you:

- Identify a part of yourself that has led you to develop unhealthy behaviors or strategies as a response to challenging circumstances. (These could be perfectionism tendencies, over-eating, procrastinating, various addictions, etc...)
- Tell your younger self that you understand that these were well-intended attempts to keep you safe, and then express appreciation.
- Explain that these behaviors no longer serve you (and might even be harmful) and that you would like to let them go.
- Reiterate your appreciation, understanding and love for your younger self, telling them you forgive them for any unintended harmful consequences, and invite a fresh start.

Below, you will find other tools to help you strengthen your tolerance and compassion. Over time, you'll find that you are less triggered by others and more in control of your physiological responses.

Journaling prompts

Your journaling practice can help you develop more insight and compassion. You could also use these prompts as topics of conversation with a friend or family member.

- Why do we need to practice tolerance and compassion towards ourselves as much as towards others? Is self-compassion challenging for you?
- Can you recall a time in your childhood when you were completely innocent and open, and ended up hurt by a situation, or by people in your life? What would you say to this child if you could comfort and hold them today?
- How do you work with the need to find the balance between letting yourself off the hook (-being too indulgent) and the tendency to constantly reinforce some inner belief that you are not good enough and pushing yourself too hard (being too harsh on yourself)?
- How would increased compassion and tolerance help strengthen resilience?

Tune into the power of your breath

Take the time to breathe, and say a safe, calming interrupt word — like "peace" or "calm." This can help you reconnect to the compassionate side of you that recognizes we are all connected, and we can all use a break sometimes!

To strengthen this, when you say the calming word, press the tip of the thumb of your dominant hand into the centre of the palm of your other hand. This is a calming acupuncture point that helps you to calm your system and_ ~~also~~ anchor your intention for more compassion towards others.

Rise above your resentments

When you store resentment in your mind, you are giving energy to situations or people that you cannot control or change. This uses up your energy and hurts you far more than it hurts anyone else. Use the following prompts to start letting these feelings go, so that you take your power back by being more forgiving and tolerant of others and yourself.

✓ Are you willing to offer a mental pardon to someone who did you wrong or made you mad?

✓ Can you look at the bullies in your life through the eyes of compassion, recognizing that it is their pain, anger or confusion that causes them to behave badly?

If you find this difficult, can you write them a letter of understanding that acknowledges how much inner pain they must be carrying? You

don't ever have to show this to anyone else and you can burn it once you've written it, but this can be an incredibly powerful exercise.

We carry so many self-judgements in our heads and we forget that this is harmful and limits our growth.

✓ Can you give yourself permission to forgive yourself, too?

✓ How would your younger self feel if he or she was forgiven?

Write at least one example of a time when compassion for yourself or another was relevant or appropriate. What can you learn from reflecting on this?

RESILIENCE TRAIT #5
Optimism

Did you ever see the film Pollyanna when you were younger? If so, you already have a clear image of the ultimate optimist — at the beginning of the film anyway!

Pollyanna's approach to life was to find the good in everything that came her way. She was depicted as an eternal optimist, who lived in a town full of embittered people and eventually her approach to life rubbed off on everyone around her.

It is hard to imagine a resilient person without also seeing them as an optimist, because generally speaking, those who have the ability to bounce back from adversity tend to view life positively. Rather than let circumstances dictate their outlook, optimists believe that they can control their own experiences, and this becomes the lens through which they view their world.

The word Pollyanna is used in modern culture in a more disparaging way, describing someone who is blindly optimistic and delusional. The truth is however, that an optimist has learned the art of reframing, whether knowingly or not. It is merely a matter of perspective, choosing to see situations in a way that boosts you, rather than depletes you.

When we are overcome with doubt, it's easy to imagine that the whole world is against us. To rise above pessimism we can learn to adopt a more hopeful perspective. The good news is that reframing can be mastered by anyone and it is one of the best gifts you can ever give yourself, because it elevates your experience of ~~every day~~everyday life.

Martin Seligman is a world-renowned psychologist and leading researcher into the field of positive psychology and optimism. His work has contributed to the understanding that we can all learn to become more optimistic, even if we are brought up in an environment that taught us to view life as a long battle you can never win.

Being optimistic is not about wearing rose-tinted spectacles or glossing over difficult feelings. It is a learned skill that means you not only extract more joy from your day, you are also ~~-~~more likely to have more days to extract joy from. Researchers have studied pessimists and optimists for years and have found that adopting an optimistic perspective helps you become more mentally and physically resilient.

Optimism is about viewing the world from the perspective that everything that happens to you offers you an opportunity to learn more about yourself and grow as an individual. The deciding factor between an optimist and a pessimist is that the former interprets an event positively, whereas the latter will find a negative spin.

Adopting a more optimistic mindset is a proactive act of self-care that will not only increase your resilience, it will also help you to be more open and less stressed. Consequently, according to the findings of Seligman, you are healthier and far less prone to heart disease, cancer, and auto-immune disorders.

Developing optimism does not necessarily need you to work with cognitive therapists. It is a habitual quality you can cultivate yourself through regular ~~self-inquiry~~self-inquiry, presence and reflection. Drawing on your own experiences, your strengths and areas you would like to improve on, you can use the art of awareness to create more empowering stories and start changing your inner dialogue over time. This chapter will show you how an optimistic perspective shapes your world from the inside out, no matter what your personal circumstances.

The first story proves that even with challenging physical limitations one can still have hope and hold onto optimism. Being a patient was not something that Jeff Sutherland, himself a doctor, was used to. However, at the age of 41, his life changed dramatically and forever when he was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Today, from his wheelchair, Jeff touches the hearts and lives of people all over the world with hope.

The next story by Ruth Owen has many twists and turns. Ruth became a resilience ninja by learning a few coping strategies the hard way – through experiencing life's knocks. She relates a few examples of scary things that happened to her where she had the opportunity to practice these principles. You too can learn Ruth's Resilience Package and go from victim to victor, misery to mastery.

Hope for the Hopeless
Jeff Sutherland, MD

Sitting in a physician's waiting room was a situation that I was not used to. Yet, here I sat in October of 2007 during my lunch break. The waiting room was like my own in all but color. Instead of the azure blue that donned my waiting room walls, these walls were a nondescript yellowing beige color, as if they were ill. Fortunately, I didn't have to sit long as my neurologist colleague was quick to call me in. I told him the symptoms that I had been having for the past six months. Twitching in my arms and on my chest wall. In the gym, I had also noticed that I was not able to "curl" the same number of pounds with my left arm.

I took off my shirt and lay down on his examination table. He began the chore of putting little needles into my upper arms and wrists. I hardly noticed the electrical current that jolted down my arms. When he'd finished, we talked about the results. "Jeff, there is a 90% likelihood that you have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis." In these few minutes, my life changed from that of a fit, athletic 41-year-old father, husband, and physician to that of a person living with an untreatable terminal illness.

One never knows when tragedy or trauma will enter one's life. In the 41 years of my life, I had been immune to it. I'd had a fortunate start to my life with supportive and loving parents. I had been able to fulfill my aspiration of becoming a physician. My wife, Darlene, and I had

found each other early in our lives. The love that Darlene and I shared multiplied with the addition of our three healthy and active sons.

Losing my abilities and my calling

Medicine can be a job to some, and it can be a calling to others. For me, it was a calling. It was a privilege to care for my patients as they experienced the good and bad times in their lives. I was proud to be a full-spectrum family physician. I had a busy office practice and a hospital practice where I delivered babies, worked in the emergency department, and took care of hospitalized patients. I was "on call" for most of my career, but I wouldn't have had it any other way.

After receiving my diagnosis, my family and I were instantly torn from our "normal lives" and sent spiraling headfirst into lives of uncertainty and continuous loss.

During the next year, my physical losses progressed slowly. I was started on lithium, which had shown promise to slow the progression of ALS. I thought to myself that maybe I would be lucky enough to get this disease at a time when a cure was possible. Just over a year later, I accepted that a cure would not be in the cards for me. By the spring of 2009, I was using a walker during my last hospital rounds. I recognized that my probable life expectancy was less than that of most of the patients in my care. Two years after my diagnosis, I had to retire from my calling in medicine. I had lost the ability to walk and was now in a wheelchair. My arms no longer had the strength to lift my stethoscope.

I didn't like being forced into retirement at 43 years of age, but it was a reality that I had to accept.

Severed belonging

The losses continued. Just imagine, in two and a half years, going from the pinnacle of a life that many would envy, to a life that all would pity. I could no longer speak, eat, drink, or consciously move. Buddhists talk about a phenomenon called "severed belonging." I believe that whenever a profound, life-altering event occurs, severed belonging follows. Without the ability to be physical, all aspects of my life changed, and many were forever lost.

Every relationship shifted in some way. Darlene became my caregiver and our three young teenage sons had to grow up quickly with the roles of the father and son obscured by the blurred line of who was caring for whom.

From the beginning of ALS, Darlene and I vowed to try to keep life as normal as we could for our boys. I vowed to delay my passing, if possible, so that our boys and Darlene would not have to deal with losing me early in life. As the physical losses occurred, I was proactive and quick to adapt to the technologies and medical interventions that would keep me healthy and connected with my family and friends. The feeding tube came first, followed by eye gaze technology and non-invasive breathing support at night. I had the patience and persistence to make my eyes my communication pathway to the world. My eyes became my superpower!

I remember reading in the Tao Te Ching that "timing is everything." I have had some good timing and some horrible timing in my life. With ALS, it was good timing. I got this disease at a time in my life when I had disability insurance and health insurance firmly in place. I could financially support my family and pay for the costly modifications that are necessary to live with this disease. I recognize that most people with ALS don't have the luxury of these resources. Timing also was in my favor because I had the technology to communicate with my eyes and interact with the world through the internet. If I had been diagnosed with this illness ten years earlier, this would not have been possible. Finally, the most fortunate timing of this illness was that I'd had the opportunity to build the most important resources in my life, the loving connections of Darlene, our sons, and other family and friends.

Knowing that I was one of the fortunate ones, in 2009, I helped establish a local walk to help support families living with ALS, and fund research into finding treatments for this illness. Fundraising gave me purpose.

Accepting the breath of Life

By 2014, the cumulative effects of ALS had greatly reduced my quality of life. The years before this had not been a picnic for Darlene and me. Living with ALS and caring for your loved one with this illness is physically and emotionally draining. I needed to be turned regularly while sleeping, which made a good night's sleep impossible for us. Gastrointestinal problems occurred as is typical for someone who can't independently use the washroom. Worse were the times when a

mucus plug would find its way into my airway and Darlene would hold my life in her hands, suctioning me for hours to help me breathe. Yet in 2014, these problems increased, and I was exhausted frequently.

My body was literally fighting itself, system by system, for the limited supply of oxygen in my blood. We knew that my time for breathing on my own would soon end. Despite my extreme limitations and the havoc that my needs were playing on Darlene's health, we both decided for me to have a tracheostomy and mechanical ventilation. I know how odd this decision might appear to others. Most people associate ALS with making the decision to end life, yet we were proactively trying to prolong my life through artificial methods. Was I a glutton for punishment? Was Darlene an angel in human form? Were we both crazy? Or, did we have more purposes to fulfill before I passed?

In the spring of 2014, we saw a surgeon about an elective tracheostomy. We decided that it was too early to make that decision. We would put up with the current situation until it became more dire. By early August, I was becoming shorter of breath, especially when being transferred into and out of bed. It was a blocked feeding tube and elevated blood work that got me admitted to the hospital a few days later. I intuitively knew that something was going to happen, and I emailed Darlene my funeral preferences that evening.

I can remember everything that occurred the next morning as if it was yesterday. Darlene arrived at the hospital and was transferring me to the commode from the hospital bed. In the middle of the transfer, my tongue rolled back, and I couldn't breathe. The last voice I heard was Darlene's anguished cry, “You can't die now!” My last thought

was, "How ironic that I am dying in a room where I spent my career caring for people."

Then all went black.

I had a respiratory arrest, was intubated, put on a ventilator, transferred to a regional hospital ICU and eventually had a tracheostomy.

I was in the ICU for five weeks. I adapted to accepting breath from a ventilator, and Darlene was taught how to take care of my new needs. I returned home with a tracheostomy and a home ventilator. This was scary at first, but I was feeling a lot better than I had in the past year.

My arrest had more of a psychological effect on me than a physical. I could not understand why my near-death experience hadn't had the bright lights that others have described. The heaven that I'd been brought up to believe in was something that I could no longer hold onto as my consciousness appeared to just turn off as if someone turned off my "life switch."

Now that I had made the decision to extend my life using a ventilator, instead of dying while living, my frame of mind switched to making the most of the rest of my life. We made the decision to move after Zach, our eldest son, and Darlene visited a smaller house that was for sale. This house was surrounded by nature and only a few minutes away from our current home. After this visit, Zach excitedly told his mom, "You and Dad have to buy that house!"

We leapt into the excitement of this new beginning for our family. I was given a new life purpose as I helped design this new space nestled among a canopy of old trees and abutting against a small river. Five

months after purchasing our new home, with the great help of our now college-aged three sons and friends, we moved into our partially renovated new home in mid-November 2015.

We loved our new home and the boys loved taking short kayak trips in the small river.

Peace and tragedy

On February 21st, 2016, after a cold spell the week before, southern Ontario was given a reprieve from winter. After I was readied by Darlene, I was greeted by a glimpse of Zach and his long-time girlfriend Kaya exchanging a kiss on our deck, basking in the warmth of sunshine in their T-shirts. I captured this loving moment in my mind, and it made me joyful! Life seemed perfect at that moment. Zach and Kaya were a few months from graduating from university, our middle son, Ben, was home on spring break and our youngest son, Nathaniel, was backpacking in New Zealand during a gap year with his girlfriend. It seemed perfect because it was perfect.

All our boys were happy, and Darlene and I were happy. After we'd enjoyed breakfast with Zach and Kaya, they decided to enjoy the beautiful weather and take a short kayak trip which eventually would end at our new home. Ben and Zach had done the same trip the evening before, and Zach wanted to share the tranquility of this experience with the love of his life. With smiles on their faces, Zach and Kaya said, "See you soon!" This was the last moment that we shared with them. The accident occurred a few minutes' walk from our home.

Grief upon the passing of your child is the worst experience in a parent's life. We were broken open and our souls shattered. Our losses from ALS had nothing on the suffering we experienced from losing Zach and Kaya. It was like suddenly being thrown into a deep dark pit with no chance of escape. Hope was extinguished. This loss changed the direction of our lives.

The path towards resilience

Joining the healing path takes a lot of work. "Time heals" is not a passive thing. Five weeks after the accident, we discovered through the help of an evidentiary medium that Zach still exists in a spiritual form. This has been the foundation for our healing and post-traumatic growth. Being scientifically minded, I had a skeptical view of spiritual mediums but after experiencing it for myself and looking into the science of theoretical physics and quantum mechanics, I now realize that science makes everything possible. Even consciousness existing after physical death. The darkness that I once experienced during my respiratory arrest has been filled in with the light of hope! Death is no longer a finality to me. It is a change in relationship. A "see you soon" instead of a "goodbye." This gives me peace.

Spirituality has brought us to mindfulness and the practice of meditation. "Spiritual Zach" helps calm the negative thoughts that if left unchecked would bring chaos to my mind. To show others who have had profound loss and trauma that the ability to heal is open to all (even those of us who have a terminal illness), I wrote my bestselling memoir, *Still Life* and I did a TEDx talk entitled, "Redefining your life with meaning following profound adversity."

Formatted: Font: Italic

The writing of both enabled me to continue my healing. Writing narrative stories has been shown to help our resilience.

I would like to say that resilience has been a return to a previous state of well-being. For us, like many, a return is not possible. I can say that the tools that we have discovered have kept us from falling as deep into the pit of hopelessness and suffering. Some days are easier than others. Resilience is fragile. Like a newborn, it needs to be nurtured as challenges come and go in one's life. We have learned that self-compassion is important on the days when we are not able to reach a higher vibrational plane. Even though challenges are part of our daily lives, we continue to be kind, compassionate, and grateful for the everyday glories that exist in each moment when we are present.

Love, both giving and receiving, has kept me living a resilient life.

I often think of what I would have achieved in a physical body. The truth is that I will never know. But I do know that because I have chosen to live my life with meaning and purpose, I have helped raise over 2 million dollars in our community for ALS. I have co-founded a scholarship for youth who have shown their resilience after the passing of their beloved. I have given hope to others that they can join a healing path after the profound losses of a physical body or their loved ones.

Most importantly, I have modeled in my life that hope is possible in what many would judge as a hopeless life.

About the Author

Jeff Sutherland is a person who has had to reinvent himself. He was once a physician recognized by his peers for excellence in clinical work, medical teaching, and medical leadership. This life came to a screeching halt when Jeff was diagnosed with ALS.

Jeff didn't stop "doing.”; —iInstead, he adapted to his new circumstances, raising money for ALS, and writing with his eyes.

In 2016, Jeff's family had tragedy strike again when their son Zach and Zach’s girlfriend Kaya, passed suddenly. This tragedy was the impetus for the Zach Sutherland and Kaya Firth Resiliency Foundation. Through the website www.choose2beresilient.com, this charity provides post-secondary scholarships to youth following the profound loss of a loved one.

To heal, Jeff wrote his best-selling memoir, *Still Life* (Sutherland House Books, 2019).

Formatted: Font: Italic

In 2021, Jeff was a TEDx speaker. His talk entitled 'Redefine your life with meaning following profound adversity' was enthusiastically received.

Jeff and Darlene reside near Toronto, Ontario.

Every Challenge Is Worth It
By Ruth Owen

Becoming a Resilience Ninja requires adopting five strategies – accept the facts, acknowledge your feelings and emotions, think differently to your normal pattern of thought, make a conscious choice, and then let go of any expectation regarding the solution or outcome.

Simple to say, but not so easy to do. Most of us are inclined to want to control situations or people around us to get the outcome we desire. It often, paradoxically, has the inverse effect, because desperately holding onto the 'how' of what we want to achieve, prevents any other options from appearing. When we learn to let go of our own prescription for the remedy, we allow other solutions to appear with ease and grace.

I haven't always been adept at dealing with roadblocks, but as with anything that requires developing a skill, the person who practises enough will attain a certain level of competence. It has taken me years of going through various challenges, obstacles and difficulties to distill what I have picked up along the way to hone my resilience skills and come up with this simple – but not easy – recipe that you can apply to your situation.

Losing my home

Let me give you an example. A few years ago, I was aggressively pursued by the bank for the repayment of a large loan. I had made

what I believed (based on past experience and results) to be a good property investment. Unfortunately, Brexit happened subsequently in the UK and the housing market in London took a tumble amid great uncertainty. None of that was my fault, per se, but I accepted the reality of the situation.

Plan A to sell to my tenant had failed and Plan B to sell the property on the open market had also failed miserably. Prices were plummeting and to make matters worse, the market at the time was flooded with similar, swanky ~~newly-built~~newly built apartments. The bank was increasingly agitated that I was not in a position to pay back what I had borrowed and after months of weekly check-ins with them, Plan C offered no respite either, which was to just hand over the property to the bank directly. They wanted their pound of flesh. And who could blame them?

I was home alone one day when I received a hand-delivered letter. I opened it in my kitchen…and had to re-read the letter several times for it to make sense.

You see, this letter was informing me that I had less than two weeks to vacate my home, find somewhere else to go and simply take two suitcases with me. Nothing else. No memories or mementos of my six children, even. I would have to surrender my house keys and just walk away.

Imagine receiving this letter! Alone in your kitchen, you feel the icy grip of fear and terror at the prospect of having everything taken from you. Your heart is pounding so hard that the letter shakes in your hand at the horrific realisation of what's about to happen. Your mouth goes completely dry, beads of sweat break out on your

forehead as your mind races to come up with a solution and you just want to scream, 'No!!!!'

Human beings tend to instinctively go into denial when faced with facts they don't want to accept.

After what seemed an eternity staring at this letter, I made a choice.

A change of perspective

'This is a great story!' I announced to the empty room, waving the letter in the air with a huge smile on my face. It was a conscious choice to see this potential disaster for the opportunity it presented, because I saw an image in my head of me standing on a stage, telling this very story to you.

At that moment, I had no idea how it was going to unfold and what the outcome would be, but in that split second, I concluded that I was not going to die as a result of this and that everything would somehow work out for the best. It sounds counter-intuitive because my initial reaction was to contain and control this situation and to try and come up with damage-limitation measures born of desperation. But when you make a decision to let something go that you have zero control over, you'll find a huge weight is immediately lifted from you and the worry and the stress diminishes massively.

Picture yourself in the same situation. How would you respond? Would your mind go into a feeding frenzy of panic and anxiety?

That is, of course, the natural response. It's the egoic mind's way, ironically, of 'keeping you safe', by prompting the fight, flight or freeze mentality.

The way to override Nature's inbuilt mechanism designed for survival in prehistoric times is to build your resilience muscle – just like going to the gym builds our physical muscles. No matter who you are or what your circumstance is, you can bet your bottom dollar that challenges will come your way. Your ego's job in a moment of crisis is to make sure you 'survive'. Fortunately, in our sophisticated society, that rarely means facing down a fierce animal that wants to eat you for lunch, but the limbic system that rules the ego is still stuck in prehistoric times. That means for example, most people, according to a study published in *The Times* in 2013, would rather die than speak in public, because it's perceived by the subconscious mind as a threat to survival. However, the real challenge nowadays is to find the lesson behind the challenge.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Look at it this way; obstacles are there for a reason. Each one is a learning opportunity. If you take an event and analyse it, you'll find pearls of wisdom and an understanding that you might otherwise have missed.

A terrifying experience in a foreign country

Like the time I was on my way to the airport after a skiing holiday in Colorado. Picture the scene: it's early January, it's freezing and it's snowing. I'm standing beside the freeway without a coat and the slush from the passing cars is almost splashing over my boots. I'm in a foreign country and I don't understand the rules. I've just been pulled

over by a Highway Patrol Car, so naturally (being English) I get out of my car and walk towards the officer.

'Do you speak English?' he barks. 'Yes!' I reply.

'Turn around, ma'am' he orders, 'and put your hands behind your back'.

And before I realise what's happening, he's handcuffed both my hands behind my back. He marches me to his patrol car like a criminal and stuffs me inside.

He has an entire office set up in there: ~~;~~ phones, cameras, computers, and card machine. I don't know if you can relate to this, but if you've ever found yourself in a foreign country and in trouble with the law, it is terrifying.

Especially when you've no idea what's going on and you are at the complete mercy of a person, a system and a country that has little regard for you and no tolerance for excuses. This officer was determined to put me in jail for the entire weekend because he told me that as it was Friday afternoon, the judge had already gone home, so I would have to remain in jail until Monday morning.

I admitted my guilt for driving over the speed limit right away. I had actually just been trying to keep up with my husband and our four older children on our way to catch a flight home. However, when he asked me who was in my car, parked a few yards away and I told him that my two youngest children were in that car (three and one at the time), what he said next devastated me.

'Well, ma'am, I'm also gonna have to charge you with child abuse.'

At that point, I broke down completely. If you have children yourself, I'm sure you can imagine my horror at what he was saying! Tears of frustration and disbelief streamed down my face, I blubbed uncontrollably and there was snot dribbling from my nose but I could do nothing about any of it – my hands were still in handcuffs behind my back.

'What's going to happen to my children?' I stammered.

'They'll be taken care of', he replied in a curt and matter-of-fact tone, which sent me even more over the edge into total fear. I felt like I was in a nightmare scene from a movie and I had no control over the script.

It took me almost an hour to negotiate my release, on condition that I plead guilty as charged and pay a fine. I had never been so happy in all my life to pay a fine!

But that wasn't the most traumatic event of the day. Keeping to the 65-mile-an-hour speed limit, I eventually made it to Denver airport with minutes to spare before the plane took off.

My eyes are opened

My family was waiting for me on the curbside. My husband had checked us all in, but made it clear that had I not gotten myself out of that situation in time, he and the four older children would have flown home without us.

There was no sympathy, support, empathy or consolation for what had happened. The one person I expected to be there for me after

such a stressful event, turned around and said to me: 'How can you be so stupid as to get yourself caught?', as if it was my fault for trying to keep up with him. Not only that, but he also refused to speak to me for a month afterwards.

I learned two things through that incident. First, I was in that marriage on my own. It was earth shattering, but as plain as day and was a truly eye-opening realisation. This was not an isolated occurrence but merely the latest in a long list of almost daily challenges from my husband at the time.

Second of all, I realised, on reflection, that this lack of support, this disregard for my feelings and the blame being laid at my feet for nearly two decades, was simply not sustainable if I was going to come out alive. In fact, what that day represented for me, was the beginning of the end.

After several more equally defining moments – and three years of legal battles – the marriage ended.

And yet, the same person who hadn't been there for me when I'd narrowly escaped jail in Colorado, was the very person who stepped in at the eleventh hour to save my house from being claimed by the bank – even though I had never even mentioned it to him and he found out by accident through one of our children.

I never imagined or expected that the person at whose hands I had suffered so much, would step into the breach and save the day. I believe that because I had decided to let go of the 'how', a solution to the problem would be found and I let go of that sense of desperation I'd initially felt when reading that letter. It had allowed other possibilities I had not even considered, to present themselves.

Maybe there is such a thing as karma, but my belief is that the art of coping with the rollercoaster of life is found through assuming personal responsibility. In essence, it means accepting the uncomfortable truth of whatever is coming up for you and accepting that you are, in some form or other, the architect of the event. It's a game-changer when it comes to being resilient.

All things hold a certain vibration

The law of vibration, which governs the entire universe and everything in it, states that what you are – the frequency you emit – you attract. If you are in the frequency of anxiety, you attract more things to be anxious about.

Lessons come generally through learning the hard way via many challenges until you get the message – as in my case. Or you can bypass the tried and trusted route to understanding the game of life through a radical and deliberate change of perspective.

Three years after the Colorado episode, my mother lay in an intensive care unit. It was clear she wasn't going to make it. I prepared to journey across the sea to say my goodbyes but was persuaded to delay my departure for an extra day to discuss the upcoming divorce proceedings. By the time I reached the hospital, my mother had slipped into a coma. She never came out of it.

I sat with her for 72 hours and even though she was not able to speak or respond, I knew she knew I was with her, and I felt so privileged to be by her side when she finally passed away peacefully.

I mention this, because a couple of weeks later, a friend of mine remarked on how calm I appeared, in spite of the enormous and recent loss of my wonderful mother and the impending High Court appearance, where I would have to give testimony in open court. A terrifying prospect indeed, but I chose to look at it from another angle.

Instead of railing at the soon-to-be ex-husband for persuading me to delay departure and so miss the opportunity of speaking to my dying mother, and instead of panicking at the prospect of having to be on the stand, I chose to be grateful for all of it. My conclusion was that I was learning and growing through every one of these experiences and becoming a better person in spite of, or maybe as a result of, these major curveballs.

Personal responsibility in all areas

Assuming personal responsibility is no easy feat whichever way you go about it, but the upshot is that you no longer expect to be 'rescued' by someone else, which is where most of us go wrong a lot of the time. 'Expectation' can be a dangerous thing because it encourages you to believe it's other people's job to fix the problem. It leaves you feeling powerless and robs you of the chance to rely on the only person who will always be with you, no matter what. That person is of course yourself and the only person you have control over, ever, is yourself.

Yes, it's wonderful to have a loving partner, a close friend or a family member you have absolute trust in and know that they will be there

for you in times of real need; it's the mark of all significant relationships and an essential part of the human experience.

Imagine, though, that that person cannot, for some reason, comfort or rescue you one day. What is your Plan B? Have you developed your 'get out of jail' card to pull out of your back pocket in an emergency?

The Resilience Rescue Package is not an easy process to adopt, but it helps get you out of your own way. To recap, there are five steps to becoming a worthy opponent of challenges you may face:

Accept an uncomfortable truth or fact.

Acknowledge your feelings and emotions.

Radically shift your perspective and normal pattern of thought.

Make a conscious choice.

Let go of expectations.

This process will allow you to go from victim to victor, from misery to mastery and to

feeling fully in control of yourself. It's why difficulties and challenges are your biggest assets – if you know how to use them.

Commented [SL14]: Formatting issue. Tried to fix but couldn't.

About the Author

Ruth Owen says she's lived 'about nine lives so far'; adopted at birth, she found her birth parents in her 30~~'~~s, before having six of her own children in just 8 years. She began her career as a broadcast journalist in the UK, but left for adventure in the Caribbean where she produced videos and guides for tourists and worked briefly as a pirate on a Spanish galleon.

She's dined with royalty, explored the Arctic and Antarctic and is the only person in the UK to qualify as a trainer for Mindvalley.

She now combines her personal experience of an abusive marriage with her training as a coach and Emotional Change Therapist to help other women recover from trauma, rediscover who they are and design a life they love.

You can find her on Facebook and~~or~~ LinkedIn.

Email: info@divorce-diva.com Tel: +44 7949 444871

Exercises and journal prompts to optimize your optimism

Resilient people are optimists! They have positive expectations about the future and generally trust the goodness of situations and their own abilities to manage and achieve their goals.

For people who tend to doubt and experience negativity, optimism can be developed over time. One strategy is to reframe the situation that is challenging and, instead of perceiving it as an obstacle, recognize it as an opportunity for growth and even success.

We can make a point of boosting our self-confidence by looking back and acknowledging our past achievements and how we've grown and developed. This sense of having a big view and being able to put our various challenges into perspective, by recognizing their contribution to our growth, is also very helpful.

No one but you will fully recognize your own abilities. Think about all the times you overcame obstacles without telling anyone, or you mastered your inner critic even though it was working hard to trip you up. How would it feel to start more consciously noticing these things, so that you can inwardly celebrate yourself?

The more you celebrate your wins, the more optimistic you will feel about your ability to overcome challenging circumstances in your life. Start telling yourself about all the times you succeeded when you least expected it so that you build your optimism from within.

Remind yourself regularly of the times when you were able to calm yourself down or control your mind in some way. This will help you to be more optimistic about your ability to repeat this another time. Remember no one will champion you the way you can, so become your own champion!

When you are optimistic about life and your ability to create your future, remember that your mind starts looking for evidence to substantiate your beliefs, which builds your resilience.

Cast your mind to a time when you emerged triumphant from a situation that you found fearful. What positive lessons about yourself can you take away from this? How will you remember these? Could you find three words that encapsulate this?

The clearer you become on your unique~~s~~ strengths and qualities, the easier you will find it to adopt an optimistic viewpoint rather than a pessimistic one.

In order to protect and nurture a positive outlook on the future, it is suggested that we monitor our news consumption and intentionally look for more positive and uplifting sources of information. To boost your sense of optimism from a worldview perspective, seek out positive news stories and websites that~~who~~ focus~~are focussed~~ on making the world a better place. Examples are The Good News Network (www.goodnewsnetwork.org) and T~~t~~he Happy News by Emily Coxhead (www.thehappynewspaper.com).

Formatted: No underline

Formatted: No underline

Limit your intake of negative news and get better at noticing what inputs make you feel negative or send you into a downward spiral of worrying about the future. You can still stay in touch with what is happening in the world without watching the news every day, reading

newspapers or scrolling on social media, so feed your brain in a conscious way and look after your happy hormones!

To end your day, it is well worth setting aside a few minutes to write down three wins for the day and reflect on what aspects of your character contributed to them going well. Make these wins as small or large as you like and when you write them down using pen and paper, it stimulates your Reticular Activating System, the portal that filters important information going into your brain.

This may seem like a very small gesture, but when you repeat it often enough, you will be surprised by how this improves your quality of life.

Your life does not change in big sweeping gestures, or dramatic interludes. It is the small intentional actions you take regularly that create change and momentum, and ultimately improve each day.

Journaling Prompts

Here are 3 contemplation exercises you can do by journaling or in conversation with a friend.

1) Think about past successes you experienced in your life. Look for situations that seemed really challenging and for which you were feeling pessimistic about the outcome, but in which you achieved success, despite the difficulties.

For each of those events, what were the strengths, talents and specific traits you have that made success possible? How did you manage?

By clearly identifying how resourceful and resilient you have been in the past, you can increase your sense of confidence and positivity for the future, based on what actually happened!

2) Think about a situation that is currently challenging and very demanding, and where you feel insecure and doubtful about your ability to cope and navigate it successfully.

How could you reframe the situation to view it as a learning experience, embracing potential failure as a gift and opportunity to learn and grow?

3) The Three Blessings exercise is also helpful. Each evening, write down three things for which you feel blessed, grateful or happy. These could be things that went right in your day, people whose presence you truly appreciate or things about yourself of which you are proud. Expressing gratitude each day, in writing, creates new brain networks that will help you recognize and value the positive aspects of life, however small they may be.

While it is a natural human tendency to neurotically focus on negative things in life, we have the beautiful capacity to build up positive brain networks and joyful energy just by focusing our attention on the good that happens every day.

Don't neglect this deceptively simple ritual that can lead to joyful serenity day after day. Write about three things in your day that went well. And what role you played in making them happen. When you can see that you actually played a part, even just as a witness or a non-active participant, you recognize that you have a place in the world that matters. This will help you focus on your strengths and capabilities, and build up self-efficacy and optimism.

RESILIENCE TRAIT #6
Confidence & Self-efficacy

The word confidence comes from the Latin word 'fidere', which means to trust. Confidencere literally translates as 'with trust'; therefore, having self-confidence means you have trust in yourself.

Those who are confident have trust in their ability to emerge intact from life's challenges, which gives them a sense of self-assurance, grounding, and inner calm. Confident people show up more authentically, are self-reliant, and are more likely to keep going when others might give up. As a result, their confidence often acts like a self-fulfilling prophecy as they succeed in areas where less confident people fail as a result of giving up sooner.

Like every resilience trait, confidence is not an innate or fixed characteristic. It can be cultivated by anyone and improved upon over time. Confidence is all about believing in yourself, so the starting point is to start believing you can build confidence, no matter what evidence you feel you have to the contrary!

When building confidence, it can be helpful to address anxiety first, as this is often the dominant emotion that arises in any situation where you currently lack confidence. Resilient people do not suddenly become fearless or immune to nervousness or anxiety. They

learn how to manage themselves better when these feelings arise, so that they stay calm in challenging circumstances and develop greater trust in themselves.

Anxiety and worry arise from the part of our nervous system that wants to keep us safe, which means that they are often accompanied by physiological symptoms such as shakiness, upset stomach, insomnia and low mood. Add to this chaotic thinking and unhealthy compensation methods, and it is easy to see how this can drain your sense of self-trust and confidence.

Learning how to create calm for yourself addresses the physiological responses in your system so that you can breathe more fully, think more clearly, and open your mind up to receive new insights. Studies show that regular practice of meditation, whether focusing on the breath, a mantra or an object of visualization can help dissipate anxious energy.

This physiological shift increases your ability to problem-solve effectively, giving you a stronger sense of security and belief in your own capabilities. In addition to this, developing the skill of focused concentration can help you block out habitual negative self-talk, restoring harmony to your body and brain.

The more adept you become at managing your state, the easier it becomes to start imagining yourself handling challenging situations in a more positive way. The practice of regularly visualizing yourself acting with more confidence in specific settings, is a valuable tool to adopt when it comes to building your confidence. It may seem like make-believe, but neuroscientists have proven through brain-imaging studies that subconscious pathways in your brain activate when you

visualize specific outcomes. This means you can retrain your brain to believe you are more confident and you can open your mind to new positive possibilities.

Building confidence is yet another self-fulfilling prophecy, as the more you prove to yourself that you can handle new situations, the more confident in yourself you become. Understanding that feelings of anxiety are physiological responses very similar to excitement also means that you can train yourself to reframe the feelings, so that when they arise, you can let go of the automatic anxiety that drains you and instead tell yourself you feel excited.

To increase your ability to trust in yourself, you can access several free guided meditations on the Resources Page that will help train you to be calm and confident when you need to be.

You can also learn to calm yourself with deep breathing, practicing yoga, exercising, or meditation. Shifting your state by getting out in nature, listening to music, doing something creative and connecting with others can also help.

The first story in this chapter by Ginseng G demonstrates a unique path toward more spirituality and confidence. Ginseng experienced the intense trauma of abandonment at age 5 and rejection at 8 by her father. After a teenage visit to Sedona, her life turned around from rebellion to spirituality. Today, Ginseng has discovered peace and meaning mainly through her practice of Tai Chi.

Another poignant example of finding a sense of self-efficacy comes when you read the story by Catie Callahan. After waking up in a mental health facility, terrified Catherine tried to escape. However, by

the time she was finally discharged, she's found community, healing, and a desire to share her gift of language to help others.

The last story in this chapter by Amy Davis illustrates that when you lose all your material possessions, you can still focus on what can't be taken away: your determination to survive. After being scammed in a property investment Ponzi scheme, Amy was diagnosed with severe stress that at times left her unable to function. The realization that her health was too important to let someone steal was her turning point.

Alchemy of Courage
By Ginseng

There are over 2,000 people seated in the arena with cold stone floors, and the air is filled with pomp and circumstance, music, and gowns. There are at least 500 graduates seated before Ginseng wearing various types of graduation caps. Bachelor's degrees have square edges, doctoral hats have puffy edges and she, an undergraduate, is wearing a square-edged hat. She's receiving one of the highest awards for leadership and academic achievement and is seated on the stage with the dDeans of all the university's colleges. Ginseng is graduating with a B.S. in Allied Health Sciences and being inducted into the University's Honor Society. She will be giving her address tonight, after thoughtfully answering the Award Committee's questions. Ginseng is only 24 years old, and this type of public speaking makes her nervous, but she hased done her homework and hased already overcome so much in her young life. She iswas ready to start the speech and inspire her fellow graduates with high-minded ideas, one of which iswas courage. Courage iswas a wisdom that Ginseng hased gained from the abandonment and rejection she_'d experienced before she was eight years old.

Commented [SL15]: I changed to present tense to keep consistent with the story so far.

Little, mighty Ginseng

Viewing her life from the earliest memory, Ginseng was uncomfortable. It was not physical discomfort, unless Quaker school as a 7-year-old vegetarian, with messy short braids, later to be covered

by a hijab, counted as physical discomfort. Imagine opening your 2nd-grade lunch to find the smell of soft, rich, dark brown pumpernickel bread, alfalfa sprouts, and BologNO! This in comparison to the Wonder r bBread and salami with a Twinkie for dessert that her classmates often enjoyed. She'd felt embarrassed, ashamed, and those beautiful sandwiches often landed in the trash.

Little Ginseng wore short braids, and was small in stature , but mighty in her mind. She learned fast and was often excused from class due to her boredom, which took the form of obnoxious talking and disrupting class. She was brave, taking Karate classes and was often the only girl who fought with boys and won. She was a leader,; never afraid to be first.

One hot summer day, Ginseng was angry and told her mother, "Take me to my dad…I am going to live with him now"! Her bags were packed and loaded into the car. It is hard to imagine what her mother was thinking then, knowing that no physical or financial support had come from this man to raise little Ginseng. His irregular visits had stopped about three years previously. Ginseng was sure she would be welcomed into her father's life, and she was not afraid.

The two-door red Ford Tempo had manual windows that Ginseng rolled down so that she could feel the wind on her face. The 5-mile car ride was quiet, and there had been no yelling or overheard phone calls. How did her mother know where to go? The car pulled over right in front of a recreation center. Ginseng's mother told her, "Go on in and ask at the desk where the class is located." Yes, she sent an eight-year-old alone into a public place she had never been, before this day. .

Commented [SL16]: As I've mentioned before, most style guides prefer using the number word (so, "five") instead of the number ("5") for numbers under 10. I'm not sure if you want to do this, though, so I've refrained from making that change.

-Little Ginseng, walked through the front double doors into a large open unfurnished atrium area with dark tiled floors. The place was dimly lit and cool inside, and the faint smell of gym shoes and sweat was in the air. Her father's judo classroom was located just a few feet from the desk. Ginseng's father was a Grandmaster in Judo and he was doing what he did best when she found him – teaching Judo. She entered the room which had large windows and mats on the floor. She saw a medium-sized man whom she recognized from pictures and his few visits, dressed in the typical Martial Arts white uniform, wrapped with a Black Belt around the waist. Ginseng sat on a hard wooden bench and waited until the class was over. What goes on in the naive mind of a child, while waiting for a response from an adult?

Her father, three times her size, sat down next to her, and with a kind voice and strong demeanor asked, "What do you want to talk to me about?" In her little but mighty voice, Ginseng immediately answered, "I want to come and visit." Despite her youth, she knew to spare the details of her anger and shame of having no father, and even to leave out the question, "Do you love me?". His response was crushing. He said, "No, you can't come over…", and the words that followed became muffled and unintelligible to Ginseng. She walked out of the rec center alone and got into her mother's getaway car. As far as Ginseng can remember, she didn't cry. The car ride home was silent except for one question from her mother, "What did he say?" to which Ginseng replied, "He said no."

The crushing emotion of being unwanted by her male parent left a deep pain and lifelong wound. Research now has objectified the outcomes of this kind of event and those much worse, in the life of children, in a study called the ACES – Adverse Childhood Events

Study. Adverse events in a child's life have correlations to depression, drug use, and other self-destructive behaviors.

For Ginseng, this life-altering event would indeed lead to some of those adverse events, but when she walked out of that rec center, a seed of light had been planted in her consciousness as well. The alchemy of courage was activated for her. Its substance was equal to the words, "THERE WILL NEVER BE, NO ROOM FOR ME", meaning she began approaching every situation looking for the Yes. Unbeknownst to her at the time, there would be many occasions including tests, jobs, and classes where it may have been obvious to others that she would be a "No!", but Ginseng became doggedly determined to find the Yes. On a subconscious level, she'd walked out of that rec center having just asked her dad to be her father, and because her 8-year-old self survived the worst No a child could ever hear, being unwanted by a parent, she interpreted a cellular response equal to "Yes to Myself". Unfortunately, this cellular response's meaning was hidden from her conscious understanding at the age of eight.

However, a hindsight view reveals that as we travel through experiences, there is a common thread of wisdom being knitted into our energy and higher self.

The intervention trip

We all have guides, some seen and others hidden. I believe there is an energy greater than anything we can prove with our five senses or the brain.

Places like Sedona, Arizona in the USA, inspire knowledge beyond our conscious minds. I believe the soul or spirit can hear when we are surrounded by pure awesome beauty from nature. A place that puts humans in our places as small vulnerable vessels.

By the age of 17, Ginseng was using her courage to move towards destruction. She was unaware of her spiritual self. She was an angry, belligerent, risk-taking rule-breaker. After she was discovered smoking and hadn't returned home on more than one occasion, Ginseng's mother planned an intervention hiking trip to Sedona.

Sedona is well known for its red rock canyons and inspirational scenery. It is sacred to Native Americans who continue to hold spiritual ceremonies there. Many others believe and report feeling energy vortexes present in the various canyons.

Ginseng and her beautiful mother rented a cabin with a fireplace, and a kitchen overlooking the red rocks. On the second day of hiking at Cathedral Rock, Ginseng was sitting on a cliff overlooking a gorgeous red rock canyon. While sitting on the red rock in the dry 70-degree air with the sun pouring through the clouds as if God was highlighting something really important, her first feeling of the beyond occurred. It was the thought, "I could leave my body here." Not in the idea of taking her life, but in the idea of "if my life was over and this could be my last sight all is well." This realization was a "real eyes situation," and a turning point.

Ginseng returned home and made a 180-degree change. She took the brave step of choosing to leave all her teenage friends who'd been associated with her destructive behaviors. No more hanging out, no more smoking, drinking, or other dangerous activities. She rekindled

a friendship with a young man who'd been -her first boyfriend and joined his group of friends who were learning the lessons of awakening the spiritual consciousness with meditation, clean vegetarian eating, and much more.

The group's teacher is best understood as an urban Guru, but more appropriately he would describe himself as a Sufi, and the lessons were called the 22 Lessons. They were handwritten by the teacher himself, and photocopied by all the students, none over age 21. During this time, Ginseng was introduced to the 108-long form of Yang Tai Chi, totally unaware that this practice would become the light of her adult professional life. It foreshadowed the energy that would help heal her deepest wounds.

Commented [SL17]: Not sure of meaning here? Is there a missing word?

The new relationship

Meditation and journaling were now a part of Ginseng's life, thanks to the training from the 22 Lessons, and soon exercise in the form of becoming a certified personal trainer during the summer, while on break from the PT graduate program. This recipe of exercises, meditation, and journaling was powerful. The 22 spiritual lessons were now a part of Ginseng's belief system, even though she no longer joined any of the group's meetings. The boyfriend was out of her life, and his place was now occupied by a new guy who would soon require Ginseng to summon her courage to live.

It was upon returning home from a celebration trip to Cancun, Mexico, with her mom, that Ginseng had to end abruptly. During the trip, signs of discomfort had been apparent to Ginseng. In her real eyes, the Caribbean Sea was angry; the beach was being beaten by

Commented [SL18]: Had to end what? Seems like a word is missing.

upset waves as if sharing an urgent ominous message, and the scene was not peaceful. Her journaling signaled the ongoing unrest. She drew large circles, unintelligible writing, and strange angry words filled the pages. She knew she had to leave Florida to return home to Detroit. Her mother was confused as to why she would stay so few days but, Ginseng could not explain. The day after returning home to the house that the new boyfriend had bought, a house too small for two adults, she got the message.

It was a message on the answering machine telling her that her soul friend was dead from a tubal pregnancy missed under the care of a free medical clinic. And Ginseng landed on the floor as if magnetized there, unable to work, eat, or stand up. She pondered bleeding on the floor to let the boyfriend know that she was in emotional pain from depression. She never got the knife, though she thought a knife to the arm would be the best way. How sad!

A cousin called and Ginseng's courageous words poured out, "I have to leave because I am so sad." Her cousin said, "Whatever you need; don't hurt yourself." So, she packed a bag and a milk crate of books and headed out.

This decision to leave the tiny house and her boyfriend was a pivotal act of courage, necessary to the discovery of guidance and hearing the voice of her higher self and maybe even God. Ginseng was guided out of her depression. She opened a book called *Your Aura, Your Chakras: An Owner's Manual*, and heard a clear voice from beyond. The gentle voice said, "I am here with you now." She was not afraid, and in the next years, went on a whirlwind of miraculous healing that included meeting her counselor of 9 years who would guide her to her higher self's "radical forgiveness" of her father's abandonment.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Alchemy is an ancient branch of natural philosophy, historically practiced in India, China, and the Muslim world. Alchemy is defined as a seemingly magical process of transformation, creation, or combination. Courage is defined as the ability to do something that frightens one. It is the intent of sharing Ginseng's young life experiences, to illuminate the alchemy of courage in action. At the heart of all things is only love or fear. In this life, love can often seem so far away and out of reach, so fear fills the empty spaces. Even without knowing or naming the fear that lives in and around us, courage is a catalyst to overcome fear beyond conscious awareness and it feels like forgiveness. Ginseng has had the alchemy of courage working in her life, connecting her to the soul's guidance, turning her away from destruction. Her hope is that we all live to forgive, creating joy and peace everywhere.

About the Author

Dr. Ginseng Gray-Tilmon learned Okinawan Karate in her early youth from Master Willie Adams. She later learned Tai Chi as a part of her spiritual training over 25 years ago, in Detroit, Michigan. Ginseng~~She~~ is a Clinical Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) and has practiced for over 20 years. She has enhanced her practice with Tai Chi for Health founded by Dr. Paul Lam. She also has a Health Coach certification from the National Society of Health Coaches and is a certified Tai Chi Instructor from the Tai Chi for Health Institute.

Formatted: English (Canada)

Ginseng has come full circle through literature review findings that support Tai Chi as an evidenced-based exercise to improve balance, relaxation, breathing, leg strength, and fall prevention. Beyond the Western medical research supporting the benefits of Tai Chi, Ginseng is exploring its potential for body-mind healing. She has experienced the effects of mental, emotional, and physical healing, using Tai Chi. Her passion is to facilitate holistic healing.

Connect with Ginseng:

Website: www.taichiwithginseng.com

+1 313-992-4087

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube: @Taichiwithginseng

Found in Translation
By Catherine Callahan

Exit signs are strange. We pass under them all the time, and no one bats an eyelid. You try to run through an exit one time in a hospital gown and everyone seems to have something to say about it. It was January, and I would love to say that I was crushing a New Year's resolution of running every day, but I suppose fleeing from the hospital doesn't count. I'd found myself in the ER because of a mental breakdown brought on by a perfect storm of stressors. I was thirty-one and for the past few years, I had been optimistically trying to maintain a sense of control while navigating infertility, my husband's health issues, a global pandemic, and my own inner battle with anxiety.

I arrived in an ambulance and had been promptly wheeled into the ER on a stretcher. I was drifting in and out of consciousness, and being wheeled around only added to the sensation that I was floating through time and space. Everything was a bit of a blur. One minute I was tightly strapped into a CT machine, the next I was in a bathroom being told to change into a hospital gown and provide a urine sample. I was poked, prodded, scanned, and processed. When all the tests had been done, I felt as though I had been ejected out of a tumbling washing machine.

When everything stopped spinning, ~~and~~ I began to feel like I was waking up from a strange dream as I regained full consciousness and control of my body. I was now parked, on display, in the hallway

outside the patient room they were preparing for me. I was back from wherever I had gone, but my mind was still fragile. It was as if the system for organizing my thoughts had taken a night off. All the information I had consumed throughout my lifetime was now swirling around unchecked in a chaotic frenzy and feeding delusions that I was not able to debunk in my current state.

Do not pass "go" and do not collect $200

I sat up on the stretcher and peered into the room where two male nurses were preparing the bed. One of them had orange hair, was wearing baby blue smocks, and appeared fresh out of school. He caught my eye as he gestured to his colleague on the other side of the bed. He had his arms straight out like a zombie and was moving them up and down convulsively. I recognized those movements because moments earlier my body had been doing the same thing, only I hadn't had a say in the matter. He was mocking me, as if I were not even there. He turned, and as our eyes met, something in him seemed to question if there was a flicker of lucidity within me, but it was quickly dismissed. In his mind, I was nothing but crazy. To be fair, I had started speaking Spanish during the CT scan, and a white woman speaking tongues in the ER does not paint the greatest picture of sanity. My frail physique wasn't helping either. I had become dangerously underweight over the years. Deep-seated anxieties about my health and a desire to maintain control in a chaotic world, had driven me to restrict my diet, until, evidently, I'd reached a breaking point. I was in the ER because I needed help.

Regardless of my mental delusions, at a basic level my brain was assessing threats, and as the very people paid to care for me were making light of my vulnerable state, I collected overwhelming evidence that this was not a safe place. When I saw the exit sign just steps away, I took it as my cue to run.

I was caught just as I reached the exit door. I gently complied as they ushered me back in and told me to wait in the patient room. I was isolated, scared, and stressed. I knew that to get out of the hospital, I would need to be more centered. I began to do Tai Chi, and as my hands glided in a delicate, yet determined fashion, I heard the orange-haired nurse remark to his colleague, "You're in for a show," as if I were a source of entertainment. I truly hope, someday, someone tells him about senior living facilities. If gentle exercise is his idea of a show, he is going to love it there. His colleague replied, "She's doing Tai Chi. That's the best thing she could be doing." They saw me through two different lenses. One saw a human in need of help, and the other, a helpless lunatic.

Imprisoned

Because I had run, they wheeled me to a small, tiny closet of a room, and locked me in. My mind had unraveled, I had no family there to speak for me due to COVID protocol, and I had suddenly been stripped of all my liberties. I began to spiral into a pit of fear, and the hospital staff seemed to be plagued by a lack of compassion. Their only solution was to take more power away from me, heightening my fear and creating the "monster" they already believed I was. As they came to deliver water, I attempted to run again. The third and final

time I ran, I was forcibly lifted back onto my bed by four staff members, and as they lorded over me, a woman with a white lab coat forced a needle into my thigh, like it was a punishment. The next thing I knew, I was being taken somewhere in an ambulance. I was filled with fear that this unknown place might somehow be worse.

I know now that I arrived at the mental hospital in the evening, but at the time I thought the darkness I could faintly see from within the ambulance was an early morning sky before the sun rises. In a way, dawn was breaking for me; I just didn't know it yet. I had been in a drug-induced sleep for almost an entire day but had no concept of how much time had passed. When we arrived, the paramedics wheeled the stretcher into the elevator and up to the fifteenth floor. I was deposited outside my room with no orientation, welcome, or explanation of any sort. The floor was quiet, and the halls were vacant. There was an outdated community phone just a few steps from my room that looked like a payphone. Shortly after my legs had taken their rightful place as my mode of transportation, I heard the phone ring. I knew it was for me. I confidently marched up to the ringing telephone as if its sound were a gravitational force. I picked up to find my husband on the other line. His voice was like a safety blanket for my brain. I had a way to connect with my family. I was going to be okay. He asked me how I was doing and all I could say, as if I had just won the lottery, was, "I have a window! My room has a window!" I had explored my new room with all the wonder of a kid on Christmas morning. There was a bed, a bathroom, and a large south-facing window. The room they'd locked me in at the ER had narrow, rectangular windows that had only afforded me a view of the hallway, but now I would be able to see the sky and feel the sun in the afternoon. You never realize how glorious windows are until you

don't have one. My room also had a big heavy door, and it was open, open to possibilities.

Although this new place granted me a few more liberties, I was isolated from everything I knew and still didn't feel safe. It simply felt like a more lenient prison. My experience in the ER had taught me that I would have to work within the system to get out. For the next couple of days, I operated in survival mode. I oriented myself with the floor layout. I noticed that the hallway wrapped around in a big rectangle. I was in another box. I showered and cleaned up my appearance. I tamed my hair into a nice, neat braid that I secured with the only hair accessory available to me, a rubber band. I learned all the staff members' names and asked them about their lives. Soon they were offering me double the treats at snack time. I was on an all-female floor, and I quickly made friends with the other patients. These women were on my level. They did not have power over me; they wanted to share their power with me. When the doctors came to visit, I was attentive and submissive. It was clear that compliance was synonymous with sanity, so when they gave me a diagnosis that didn't quite fit, I did not contest. I said everything they wanted to hear so that I could go home. It wasn't difficult, I was used to suppressing my opinions.

Beginning to see the dawn

A few days into my stay, as I exited the tiny closet of a doctor's office, I noticed a big board that listed all the scheduled activities. It had been right there all along, but I hadn't seen it before. I suddenly realized that I wasn't imprisoned in a hospital; I was in an all-inclusive

resort. How could I have missed it? Delicious hot meals and snacks were delivered to my room, and there was laundry service, recreational group activities, workshops, and even drugs on demand. The prison was in my mind, and I didn't have to live there anymore. For so long, I had let my fears control me, prioritizing longevity over daily happiness. That activity board was my cue to stop surviving and start living, and I didn't have to wait a second longer.

Dancing my way to freedom

I had been fortunate enough to discover my passions early on, so I was well aware that speaking Spanish and dancing filled me with great joy. Luckily for me, among our group activities, was music therapy. Now, I had recently unraveled to my most primitive self, so there wasn't any room left for caring what others thought. I requested all my favorite Spanish songs and as the other women sat quietly listening to the music, I could no longer suppress my soul's call to freedom. I got up and danced, fueled by the pure joy of a realization that I have a power no one can ever take away.

As the melody of Cielito Lindo reached my heart, I twirled the ends of my hospital gown as if it were a traditional Mexican dress. The joy beaming all around me was contagious. I encouraged the other women to join in and just like that, life was infused in what moments ago had been a dreary hospital activity room. I saw the medication-induced cloud of despair lifted and replaced by vibrant smiles. From then on, our music therapy sessions were transformed into a place of authentic sharing and creativity. We tried to remember the choreography to Thriller, which I'm sure looked quite ridiculous

through the crazy lens, but none of that mattered in this space. A woman with Native American heritage came alive as she taught us a pow-wow dance. With every spontaneous movement we made, we were releasing all the beautiful parts of us we had tried to keep hidden. We encouraged one another to create new moves, to be our wildest, wackiest selves, and that was more powerful than any medicine could hope to be. All it took was the spark of a few women stepping into their own light to make the whole room glow.

We women became a community. We shared our stories, walked the halls together for exercise, and provided newcomers with the orientation we had never received. We had proven that even in our lowest moments, we could grow and thrive. One of my dancing buddies wanted to learn more Spanish, so, with no materials except our amazing minds that by professionals had been deemed unfit in some way, we began lessons. I told my sister about this, and that night she got some children's books in Spanish and dropped them off at the hospital so I could read them to my new friend. Just like that, the books were in my hands. The outside world was closer and more tangible than I thought. I had found purpose in a mental hospital, and as I shared my passion with this remarkable woman whose language abilities were improving before my eyes, I could sense she was starting to believe in herself. Belief in our strength and our ability to sprout from this dark place was essential. With the transformation of this strange, sterile hospital floor into my paradise, came the news of my discharge. The doctor told me I was "lucky" to be leaving so soon. If only he truly understood the power we have within us to find a path forward and the strength that comes from sharing our gifts to lift one another up.

One last test

My last night in the hospital felt like a cruel test that called for the deepest inner strength I could muster. They moved me to another room without explanation, and it was right outside a fire exit. The fire alarms had been going off sporadically all week, and the staff kept assuring us it was a malfunction. That final night, the frequency of the alarms increased, and hallway doors were closing around us. My warrior women walked the hallway with me. We distracted one another with stories as the noise grew louder and the space grew smaller. I knew with every fiber of my being that, despite the panic welling up in me, I could not walk out of that exit. Even a rational attempt to seek safety would be misconstrued as the flight of a mad woman. The Ambien they gave me that night was powerless against the fear that something would keep me from going home.

My eyes did not close, but the sun came up. Tomorrow was today. I ate my final hospital breakfast and changed into civilian clothes. I held my breath as two nurses escorted me into the elevator and down to the lobby. My sister and friend were waiting to receive me. They took my hands and we scurried to the exit without looking back. This time no one would stop me. I wasn't just exiting the hospital; I was leaving behind the labels and systems that tried to define me. I was closing the door to victimhood and stepping into a world where my voice has power, where I can create and share my gifts.

Healing is never a straight path, but I have found that writing, dancing, singing, playing sports, volunteering, spending time with life-giving people, and of course, speaking Spanish light the path for me. From someone who's been to the dark side and back, don't be afraid

to be CRAZY: Courageous Rediscovering Authentic Zesty You. It is the most daring thing you can do to bring peace into this world.

About the Author
Catherine (Catie) Callahan

Catie resides in the Chicagoland area and holds an M.A. in Spanish Literature from Loyola University. Her passion for language has taken her on many journeys as a professor, translator, traveler, and volunteer. Currently, she joyfully employs Spanish in her career as a content translator to help improve patient health outcomes and in her community to help those facing food insecurity. She believes that learning another language can set you free and strives to create fun and innovative ways to make the world more empathetic one Spanish lesson at a time.

Catie plans to publish a memoir further detailing her colorful experience as a mental health patient and raise awareness about the great need for compassion in our healthcare system. Her hope is to help others who may find themselves in a similar situation to be reminded of their inner strength.

Connect with Catie here: https://www.linkedin.com/in/catie-callahan

Your Mmoney or Yyour Llife

By Amy Davis

"The closest you will come to being raped without anyone physically touching you," said the High Court judge.

I woke up with a jolt, my heart pounding in my ears. It felt as if someone was standing on my chest. I turned on the light. There was no one in my room. It was early sSummer in 2017, the horrific moment when I realized that the Welsh investment project, which had been so close to my heart, and to my family roots, was a scam. It was a Ponzi Scheme, as I now know them to be called.

How could I have been so naïve to have believed the smooth-talking "never even had a parking ticket", oh so British, gray-haired bespectacled gentleman from Monaco and his partner in crime, the rogue from Wigan. Despite having visited the Welsh land with my family, consulted with both men and read documents and "reports" about the project for a year before investing, nothing had rung any alarm bells. At worst, they had just seemed to be a strange business duo, and looked a bit like the Laurel and Hardy of property investment. How far from the sinister truth could one get?

My somewhat clouded psychological state at the time, following the sudden death of my mother, had masked the red flags which would otherwise have been popping up on my mental screen. I was mortgaged to the hilt, had just lost my key client, and had two young children to raise and feed.

Now, I had added to the loss of my mother and my main client, the loss of the inheritance from my father's house that he had grafted to rebuild, after losing his family house in Yugoslavia during the war because his family was German. Not only that, he had also been forcibly removed from our family home by my mother during my teenage years. I'll always remember that dark day when she had, God only knows how, obtained a court order demanding that he walk out on his girls and the home he had worked so hard to create, to go and live in a pokey room in someone else's house.

My rear view mirror

Life was pretty sweet. It was 2015 and I was living in the South of France with my partner, two kids, two cats, good friends, a social life, and beach parties on the Med.

Then one night at the end of May, all that changed. The phone rang. It was my stepfather calling from Central France.

"Hello, it's me," he said shakingly. "Um, your mother fell ill earlier today. They took her off in an ambulance. I don't know where she is. From what I understood, it doesn't look good."

My stepdad is a chatty, jovial person, but this was the anguished voice of someone in the middle of a country whose language he didn't speak, not knowing where his wife was, or whether she was even still alive.

"Leave it with me," I said and started calling hospitals in the area. I quickly found the right one. The surgeon was very clear. It was a stroke, and the outlook was poor.

"A few days?" I asked, hoping we'd get to see Mum one last time, although, once again, she wasn't speaking to us. "A few hours." he said.

We "homed" the kids, and hastily drove 7 hours north. Too late though, to see my mum again, alive. After a grueling week dealing with French authorities and the morgue, my stepdad and I headed towards the UK in his RV. He'd gone on vacation with his beloved wife and was now returning to the UK alone, with only her daughter as co-pilot. After what seemed like an endless day of driving, he dropped me at an airport to fly home.

With the shock of my mother's death hanging over me, I tried to resume some semblance of normal life. Unable to focus on anything but her, the invitation to a property investment presentation only days after her passing was just what the doctor ordered to distract me.

"Respite" on the French Riviera

On a bright afternoon in early summer 2015, I walked into the plush bar of the four-star hotel in a small French town known as "the door to Monaco," having just wiped away a few tears from thinking about Mum. I needed the distraction this presentation promised to provide.

It was an intimate affair. The presenter, a 70-something British man, started outlining his property purchase project. Investors would provide a loan for multiple house purchases in Northern England. We would loan money and in return, receive expertly renovated houses already tenanted. Easy – a turnkey investment. The level of investment required, however, was staggering. On leaving, I thanked

him, declined, adding that if he had a more affordable investment project, to get in touch.

I was surprised, a few days later, to get a call. By chance, an opportunity had come up to invest in another of his projects. His nephew, a potential investor, was slow to decide. The opportunity was mine if I wanted it.

For a while now, I had indeed been looking for a meaningful placement for the inheritance from my father's house. This opportunity would be a loan for a construction project in the beautiful Welsh hills, close to where my mother's family came from. A maximum 6-month investment period. I asked Mr Monaco for a scenario in which I could potentially not be reimbursed. He replied emphatically that it would only happen "if extremists invaded Wales." Otherwise, all would go as planned. He already had a big corporate investor on board. What could there possibly be to lose? As I knew one of my major clients had just gone with one of the "Big Four," this would provide a buffer if another client didn't immediately present. After a year of discussions with Mr. Monaco and his Wigan-based man in the UK, much due diligence, and a 12-page contract, I decided to provide the loan with reimbursement in a maximum of six months. It was perfect timing, so I confirmed my intention.

Days after the money hit his "business" account, Mr. Monaco announced that for the next two weeks, he would be difficult to reach by phone, as he and his family were holidaying in the tropics. He'd contact me upon his return to update me on the project. All appeared to be well.

And "just like that…"

So, having spoken of a partial early repayment, I was shocked to say the least when, at a meeting in December 2016, Mr. Monaco announced his inability to return my loan. Three months later, another delay, and a total change in attitude towards me, I started doubting the genuine nature of him or his project, although my rational mind refused to agree.

Unwittingly, I had just taken my first step into the largest hornet's nest I was ever likely to walk into. I was just about to learn about the underworld of property investment, which I could never have imagined existed. This man had started to entangle me in one of his "investment schemes" like a spider traps a fly into its web.

On that morning when I had woken up with a jolt, after the horrific realization that my money had not been invested in a construction project, I spent the next few years in court, at mediation, hearing one story after another, potential "solutions", to 'definite' reimbursement schedules... You've probably got the idea.

A recommendation led me to a UK lawyer who had recouped money from such schemes for others. Might be worth a try, or so I erroneously believed. I was desperate and prepared to try anything legal (contrary to most of what I was discovering in this new world, which was far from legal). We won our court case fair and square – the County Court judgement was ignored, so we ended up at mediation, which I later came to recognize as another delaying tactic. The mediator's statement, –"It's not the winning on paper that is important, but actually getting the money back," showed me that he

recognised and understood this scenario. I was still living in the naïve belief that things would be resolved.

My lawyer called me. He, too, understood where this was going. "I expect to be paid, you know. We won," he stated in no uncertain terms. I knew he had indeed achieved, at least on paper, what he had set out to do. "I will only have won when the money is back in my bank account," I replied desperately.

The next morning, I woke worried sick about how I would pay the lawyer's fees. Should we sell up and move? Suicidal thoughts and desperation clouded my mind. Bills from the authorities, the mortgage, school items, food shopping… It was never ending. I wondered how much more stress my body could take.

The answer came only a few weeks later.

Falling apart — literally

It was June 2018. As I got out of bed one morning, something was amiss. There was a disconnect between my feet and my brain. Wherever I intended to place my feet, they went somewhere else. Stairs were the worst. My feet banged into the edges. I couldn't control them. Was it my brain? My feet? I was terrified. During the next two weeks, I was in and out of hospital for brain scans and tests for diseases, some of which would likely confine me to a wheelchair.

Suddenly, perspective and objectivity hit. The money was important, especially as I no longer had any, but my health was worth a million times more. Without it, I had nothing. I was about to receive a diagnosis which could turn out to be a life sentence. Visions of my

children talking to me in a wheelchair flashed through my mind. I would no longer be able to care for them. The roles would be reversed. They were still so young... My mind went into overdrive.

A month later, I walked into my doctor's practice. "Do take a seat," he said. "I have your results." I was trembling. It felt like he was about to deliver a prison sentence. I was convinced I knew what I had.

"All the results were negative," he stated. Negative? I couldn't believe my ears. So, what was wrong with me? The diagnosis was severe STRESS — my body could no longer take the stress of the court case, of not knowing how I would meet my bills each month, of trying to hold life together with a smile for the children, burning the candle at both ends, working all hours to keep a roof over our head, while someone else was using our family's inheritance to live the life of Riley in Monaco and jet off on fancy holidays with his family.

"The closest you'll come to being raped without anyone physically touching you," said the high court judge, describing how it feels when this happens to you. I felt as if I had been manipulated and taunted like a cat toys a mouse before it kills it. I'd always found it so cruel to watch. This was psychological rape. Five years of it. The years of strain from the court documents, calls with my lawyer, mediation, trying to hold it together for our family — something I had done quite badly — had all compounded, causing my body to implode. Relief washed over me. "All negative." I had a new perspective on life. My life! Our future!

I had probably just taken the most expensive course on the planet on Ponzi Schemes, but I still had my health intact. Try to put a price on that. We would get through this.

This whole episode took me back to a moment in my childhood when my mother carried out her psychological torture on us. One episode stuck in my mind.

It was my 14th birthday and I was doing the family's ironing in my grandmother's room, watching the Wimbledon final, something I loved to do on my birthday weekend. The door opened and my mother walked into the room. She looked angry, and didn't use kid gloves to announce that she was divorcing my father. "It's your fault," she had said.

Time seemed to stand still as I looked around the room, taking in the royal-blue patterned carpet and the old wooden carved Welsh dresser, a family heirloom. The austere white walls seemed soulless, as did the picture frame that matched the dresser, which was staring down at me populated by an artist's impression of the cold, foggy Welsh hills. In seconds, my grandmother's room had transformed from a safe haven into a spot I would subsequently try to avoid. At that moment, I couldn't get my 14-year-old head around how my parents' divorce was "my fault."

Turning the corner

I had survived the violent soap opera that was our home life and my parents' marriage, the arguments my mother continually started out of thin air. I would survive this, too. I now had my own two children to support and educate. Part of me even felt that my mother had put this man in my path – that she couldn't even let me be happy from her grave.

Stop. No more! No more suicidal thoughts! No more time for the man from Monaco. Life would go onward and upward from this day forward. I would not waste another day of my life. This sad individual would not steal my dignity and health in addition to our inheritance and all the family time of which he had already robbed us. If some psychologically disturbed man had to steal other people's money to give his family a royal life in Monaco, that was his problem, NOT MINE.

Bit by bit, other "investors", including a bank, started coming forward from Monaco, and the UK. They all had one thing in common: they had invested large sums of money or bought "shares" in this man's company. The investments had all become permanent. Same excuses each time, his wife's shoulder, his ailments. It was unbelievable! While it didn't return our investment, knowing I was not the only one, was consolation that I wasn't naïve or stupid, just that I had been dealing with a very seasoned practitioner. These people apparently find it normal to be living the life of Riley off other people's money?

Don't do this at home!

Several years later, I look back on the very costly lesson I have learned. Some might call it a hands-on, alternative course in "finance and investment." However, I don't recommend it!

As they say, "If it sounds too good to be true, it is!" And, if you come across an "oh, so honest" nearly 80-something British man from Monaco trying to get you to loan him money or buy shares in his projects or companies, or a man of around 50 from Wigan doing the same, RUN away fast!

About the Author

Amy Davis is a polyglot, who has lived in France for 20 years now. Originally from the UK, but with foreign roots, she has always felt more at home in sunny climes. Watching the pouring rain, she one day took the decision to leave her birth country and try out life in the sun, a decision she has never looked back on. An international businesswoman, she has lived in the UK, Germany, and France and traveled to many countries across the world. Her favorites are Cuba and Israel.

Amy is a musician at heart and has spent many years playing in orchestras and singing in choirs in different countries and languages. She also helps musicians and orchestras publicize their events to ensure that they, too, are a success. A proud survivor of a Ponzi Scheme, her mission is to educate others about these commonplace schemes by sharing her own experience.

Exercises and journal prompts to cultivate calm confidence

Confidence is a quality we can all develop in small steps, and practices that help us to get calm and centered are well worth exploring. When we can manage our own physiology, it gives us more belief in ourselves and it also helps us to manage anxiety, worry and panic.

Start by recalling a time when you felt really resilient, confident and in charge of your own emotions. What gave you this sense of confidence? What helped you to manage your emotions? How did embodying resilience help you feel? What led to this situation?

See if you can find nuggets of information that help you identify qualities you may have forgotten you possess. This will help to boost your confidence and self-belief without too much effort.

Scenario rehearsal

Some people find scenario rehearsal useful to help them feel more confidently about a situation.

If you can't help but think the worst, get calm with deep breathing or a short meditation focused on your breath and then allow yourself to imagine the worst possible scenario. Remember as you do this, that you are safe and make sure you keep breathing slowly whilst you let your mind conjure up images.

Bring to mind everything that could go wrong, then imagine yourself handling every tough moment with grace. In other words, imagine how the best version of you would confidently work through the problem without failing.

Based on this, make a list of at least three ways you could handle negative situations in future, to bring about a positive outcome whilst maintaining your cool.

Identify your personal strengths: the Peak Experience LifeWriting Exercise

(Adapted from The Real Self Love Handbook by Dr. Andrea Pennington, Copyright 2020)

American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, studied how peak performers (the so-called self-actualized people at the height of their personality development) will often experience moments of profound love, insight, happiness, or rapture. These peak experiences are times when we feel more alive, whole, and connected to the world. Maslow described how during peak experiences we become tuned into the goodness, harmony, truth, justice, and beauty that exists in life. And we sense that life is about more than our limited sense of self.

As you move beyond the impression of being small or limited, you are invited to explore how, during a peak experience, you can gain access to your greater potential for self-expression. This opens you up to higher states of consciousness, which permit more and more of the authentic you to emerge, and increases your personal resilience.

Re-living or describing these peak experiences allows you to document how you utilized your inborn strengths, your developed talents, and your personal drive to deepen your resilience and joy. These are hints to the existence of your superpowers.

Take thirty minutes or so to get in touch with the memory of a few peak experiences you've had. Write one or several down in your journal.

What are the strengths, talents, or abilities that made those peak experiences possible? These are hints to the existence of your superpowers.

This exercise will help you create your own Personal Success Mantra in Chapter 7 on Positive Self Talk.

LifeWriting to resolve limiting beliefs

I have developed a LifeWriting process based on my experience with narrative therapy that can help to resolve long-standing emotional problems, relationship dysfunction and challenges in achieving success. Narrative therapy, when combined with an emotional approach, aims to create new positive life narratives that focus on affirmative stories instead of negative stories. An in-depth review of the scientific literature on narrative therapy has shown that this form of therapy may be as effective as antidepressants or cognitive behavioral therapy[6].

6 Narrative therapy with an emotional approach for people with depression: Improved symptom and cognitive-emotional outcomes
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25753316

Because we are shaped by our personal narratives, it makes sense that we should become more aware of them. There is always a story we tell ourselves about ourselves, but we are not always conscious of it. And, for many of us, we feel we may be stuck or limited by our stories with no hope of changing them.

1. Your Life Chapters

Start the process by identifying the significant chapters of your life, such as early childhood, middle childhood, teenage years, early adulthood, and so on. You can also categorize your life chapters based on the significant experiences that lasted for extended periods of time, such as: the years spent in treatment for a particular illness or disease, the years before your parents divorced, the period of time at university, the period you spent working at your first major job, etc.

2. Your Timeline of Life Events

Once you've identified the chapters of your life, you will now create a timeline of life events for each chapter. The timeline should include entries of general and specific events that stand out in your memory, which had an impact on you in some way ---> the approximate dates, locations, any other people or characters that were involved, and the outcomes of the event.

You don't have to list every little detail of your life, only the most important.

You can download and use this document for this part of the exercise.

3. Write About a Low Point

Select one low point in your life, a situation that has had a negative impact on you. Over the next 4 days, write down your deepest emotions and thoughts about that low point. Write about how it has affected your body, mind and emotions, including the symptoms, sensations and reactions. You could use an experience from your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now. Write continuously for 20 minutes a day.

4. Summarize the Lessons

On day 5, write down a list of the assumptions and beliefs that you made as a result of that low point experience in your life.

Can you see the ways that your power was diminished, taken or given away?

What beliefs about yourself did you take on?

What beliefs about your place in the world did you adopt?

Did you create an inner critic or judge?

Have there been other events or times in your life when these same feelings, experiences or beliefs showed up in another situation?

5. Healing

If you could go back now, and tell that younger version of yourself the lessons you learned, with the mature awareness you have

now, what would you say so that you could move forward in life whole, intact and powerful?

Get grounded

Sometimes, the simple act of getting out of your own head by grounding your energy, can be enough to give you a sense of calm confidence.

The easiest way to do this is to drop your attention down to your feet, noticing the surface underneath them and the feel of socks and shoes if you're wearing them. Wriggle your toes to help you sense into your feet. Notice that whilst you do this, your head tends to get quieter. It can also be helpful to picture a wide beam of light or a wide tree trunk going down into the earth underneath your feet. Imagine that with each inhalation, you are drawing nourishment and strength into your body from the earth.

Use your breath

Our lungs are our interchange between the outer and inner worlds. They help us to process toxins, energize our system and keep us healthy. There is a reason that the practice of Pranayama, or yoga breathing, has survived for centuries, and that is because it offers an intentional way to invigorate and recharge you.

When you practice slow breathing for a few moments daily, you regain a sense of calm control over yourself. Intentional breaths are much fuller than our default breathing pattern and when you

consciously breathe for a few moments, you will feel calmer, more grounded and much more present.

Try the practice of Square Breathing for a few minutes when you wake up, ensuring you are sitting upright to give your lungs more space to expand.

Place your hands on your belly to help you breathe in more fully and then repeat four simple breath sections through your nose, to a count of four as below. When you pause, stay as relaxed in your shoulders and upper chest as you can and repeat as many times as you like. Use this breath whenever you want to feel calmer and more confident.

1. Inhale 2 3 4

2. Hold 2 3 4

3. Exhale 2 3 4

4. Hold 2 3 4

This is a great technique to use when you feel nervous or fearful — keep breathing through the nerves and it will change your mental state.

References

Narrative therapy with an emotional approach for people with depression: Improved symptom and cognitive-emotional outcomes https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25753316

Maintaining Mental Health Through Positive Writing: Effects of a Resource Diary on Depression and Emotion Regulation https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28186634

Empirical foundations for writing in prevention and psychotherapy: mental and physical health outcomes https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9987585

Research on Expressive Writing in Psychology: A Forty-year Bibliometric Analysis and Visualization of Current Status and Research Trends https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36312123

Confronting a traumatic event: toward an understanding of inhibition and disease https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3745650

RESILIENCE TRAIT # 7
Positive Self-talk

Have you ever noticed the running commentary in your head? If you pay attention, you will become increasingly aware of this natural, human tendency to label, comment, judge, and criticize. Many of these stories we continuously tell ourselves are often rather negative, dismissive, and pessimistic.

Dr. Rick Hanson calls this the "negativity bias" and compares it to a kind of Velcro quality of our mind towards negative experiences and memories. By contrast, ~~Whereas,~~ the mind is like Teflon with the positive circumstance in our lives. They ~~, the positive experiences~~ somehow slip away and do not stick as well in the long-term memory...we often barely notice them or forget them right away.

You may be an extremely positive person, but your brain will still constantly look out for potential threats to your survival, registering negatives much more quickly than positives. This makes you predisposed to feel the pain of loss far more acutely than you ever experience the joy of having the same thing. Your brain has evolved to react and learn quickly from negative experiences, whereas happy ones barely register, so you have to work harder to overcome your negative beliefs.

Generally speaking, we are not brought up to see ourselves as the incredible individuals we are, because growing up, we are taught to focus more on the areas where we are lacking. As children, most of us were told to 'knuckle down', 'pull up our bootstraps' and work harder. As adults, this means many of us subconsciously believe we are not good enough, a belief which is reinforced by our inner negative voice telling us stories.

Positive self-talk helps counteract this tendency and can be an effective tool when it comes to becoming more resilient, because it acts as an antidote to your inbuilt negativity bias.

World leading psychiatrist and neuroscientist Dr. Daniel Amen created a wonderful approach to help his patients retrain their brain to notice more positives than negatives. Recognizing that his patients unknowingly let their Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) run rampant in their head, he created ANT therapy to help them eradicate their ANTs with positivity spray.

To stop the nasty little gremlin in our head from littering our brain with ANTs and robbing us of our confidence, we have to learn to disempower our thoughts. They have only as much power as we give them, so we need to remember this and learn to catch them before they deplete us of our joy.

Reframing and recognizing that the negative thoughts are assumptions and stories is a powerful way to start disentangling from them. The wiser part of you that knows how capable you are will support you as you start to identify and question each thought. As you do this, remember that you are like every other human. We all run stories in our heads without realizing it and this doesn't make us

failures or weak people. It is how we are wired to make sense of the world.

The types of stories you are likely to have running habitually in your head are likely to include things like:

"I'll never be good enough for my partner."

"I'm such a mess. I'll never be good at anything."

"I'm always late."

"I'm lazy and unmotivated and there's no point starting anything."

None of these stories is helpful or encouraging and when a story reinforces negative feelings about yourself that are not necessarily true, they deplete your life force energy and demotivate you. These kinds of thoughts also rewrite reality because they automatically add assumptions to your experiences. Without realizing it, you may judge others based on your own erroneous thoughts, fall into rumination because you feel inferior, or create non-existent scenarios in your head.

No matter what your inner voice says, you have not failed, you are enough, and you do have what it takes to build your resilience and thrive, rather than just survive. When you learn to identify, challenge, and disprove your negative thoughts, you will be able to replace the voice in your head with positive, supportive, and compassionate thoughts instead.

The first story presented in this chapter by Joana Soares provides wonderful insights on how to replace the negative voice in the head, along with the doubtful and pessimistic thoughts, with positive self-

talk and an empowering mindset. Despite being the youngest author in this book, Joana possesses a level-headed wisdom that will inspire you to look at your life with fresh eyes and stay positive on your life journey.

As a nurse and part of the U.K. military, Lizzy had been deployed to many scary places. However, nothing matched the scariness of speaking out against workplace toxicity for the first time. Today, she's made it her mission to help others find their courage as she did. Her story demonstrates how our inner voice can motivate us to use our speaking voice to stand up for ourselves and live in alignment with our values.

Seeing My Future
By Joana Soares

I've heard the call, "It's time to change".

In my bed at night, I asked myself, "If everything was possible, if you changed your current place of work, where would you go?" And then I got my answer in a magazine~~:~~ a renowned veterinary hospital in my hometown, Porto, Portugal. I managed the how and made the change. Yet here I am on a bright and sunny day, feeling miserable, broken, full of despair, and filled with doubt about my work and my value as a veterinarian. A feeling that hurt so deeply that I was experiencing heart palpitations and started questioning if, what at another time had~~s~~ been my dream career, being able to save animals and to be with animals every day, should even be my profession.

I'd~~ve~~ lost my previous home in the south of Portugal, Algarve, where I'd~~ve~~ lived for three years, and I had come back to my parents' house. My boyfriend, Luís, had lost his job because of me. I was not feeling welcomed or supported at work, I had no friends there, and I was feeling like a machine, seeing animal after animal like I was in an assembly line, so quickly that I haven't even learned their names. That was killing me inside. I knew I had to do something.

I remember asking for the universe's help. I heard, "Now you know more, Joana". Then I started to see my personal sign, which is the color blue turquoise in some of my patients' collars, which told me, "You are on the right path". I also saw some dogs who were very

similar to and had the same name as my beloved first dog, Lucky. She was the reason why I chose veterinary school in the first place.

I started to do some guided meditations, to listen to some inspiring audios and videos, and to search for inspiring quotes. I repeated a five- minute audio program of affirmations right before work, which was very helpful with my anxiety. I also made an effort to focus on all the positive things in my life. For example, I was able to be with my grandmother every day and enjoy her food, I had my family with me again, I had a roof over my head and a comfortable bed, an income, a loving partner, etc. I started to exercise with a personal trainer and that ~~has~~ improved my energy and health.

During that shifting moment I remember I received a message from my previous receptionist telling me that my clients from my previous job were asking for me and telling her how loved I was by them and their pets, and that all my coworkers and friends missed me. That message gave me a lot of strength. To support my self-worth and the knowledge I was doing my best, working with pets and their families, I created a list of my "success" cases, including every animal I've saved. That gave me a lot of motivation and courage to face my current situation.

Then magic started to happen. I was offered a ticket to go to a congress in Lisbon, and guess who was there? My previous boss and one of my best friends and colleagues from the south. I discovered there was a spot available in that hospital, my spot. Something inside of me was telling me, *you have to go back*. And so, I did. All of my family members supported me, and my beloved Luís turned his life upside down for me again.~~,~~ F~~f~~or that, I am forever grateful.

Coming back was amazing; all my friends were there, my clients, my support system, my work family, and I loved Algarve's climate and landscapes so much. Luís found a better job that he likeds and we were having a splendid spring and summer.

In September 2018 came one of my biggest challenges in life, I had my first panic attack after a discussion with some colleagues because I was trying to protect an animal. That part was really tough for me. I contacted my beloved psychologist, and she also said, "Joana, you know more now".

How could I have almost burned myself out? How could I forget myself again? Why can't I defend my clients, the animals, and what I believe in without being aggressive and misunderstood? I started to meditate again, every day, taking care of myself. I took some vacation time afterwards and I was feeling better. But sometimes a little voice was whispering: "*You are supposed to do more, outside of the hospital, besides being a veterinary doctor doing consultations. You're made to help in another dimension, on a bigger stage. You have to do more, to help more".*

I ignored that voice as I didn't know how to do it, where to start… I continued to distract myself with my "everyday life", stressing out with little problems, stressful shifts, almost forcing Luís to marry me because I felt we were supposed to do that since we are near thirty, and a lot of other negative things. Sometimes when the little voice whispered, *"maybe you could start by doing some YouTube videos, by teaching what you know about animals"* quickly I answered, "when I have time", "maybe when I have a baby and I'll be at home".

But I guess the Universe knows what it is doing. In April 2019, I was working on a night-shift at the hospital and boom! Suddenly, I was

blind in my left eye. I had discovered in 2011 that I have a rare congenital problem in my left eye, but back then I was seeing 10/10 so I could live perfectly well with that condition. My doctor had prepared me by telling me that if one day I stopped seeing I had to go immediately to the emergency room because it could be a displaced retina. And so it was.

Because I know how to react in emergency situations (actually, it is one of my gifts) I sat down and started to breathe deeply, again and again. When I felt calmer, I asked for help and began to draw up a plan. We were calling all hospitals to know which ones took ophthalmology emergencies, but none did.

So, I left the veterinary hospital with Luís and we went to the biggest hospital in Algarve, but still no one knew what to do. I kept on breathing and as soon as I could, I took the next train to Porto to see my doctor. I had a retina displacement, but not "the normal kind". This problem happens because there is liquid inside of the layers of the retina, which is much more complicated to solve.

Because I got better from one day to another (with less liquid) I escaped surgery, and I was at home in bed for two to three weeks. During that period, I had a lot of time to think. *What am I not seeing? Is it the way I'm leading my relationship with Luis? My deep mission in life? I have to love myself more? I'm not seeing my superpowers?*

The doctor said I was better, so I came back to the south. During that week, my mother and grandmother were with me. I was at home, I rested and some friends came to visit me but I was feeling sad, nervous and anxious. I started to think about work problems again.

I didn't know how to come back and deal with some situations that were happening. I even had two job proposals, which confused me.

Another doctor's appointment and my eye relapsed. And you know what? I was invited to go to an event in Alicante, Spain called ETTG (The European Transformational Teachers Gathering). There, I would meet my lovely mentor Dr. Andrea Pennington[1], with whom I previously had the opportunity to write a book called *Time to Rise*. I also met Charlotte Banff,[2] an animal healer and communicator, the founder of the "Animal Healer Academy", with whom I had the opportunity to start my learning on her foundation course. I met a lot of other beautiful colleagues from our magical tribe.

I wasn't sure I should travel to Spain with this eye problem. But surprisingly my doctor said, "yes, you can go." In fact, three doctors did. And now, I'm so glad and grateful I had the courage to make that trip. In Spain I had some of the best days of my life. I opened my heart while going through suffering, longing, and reflection[3]. I learnt beautiful things, I heard amazing stories, had a lot of insights, and meet wonderful people. I felt so loved, so protected, so inspired. I came out with a lot of awareness. I am where I am supposed to be, and everything happens for a reason.

During that magical event I meet a special soul brother named Javier[4] who offered me two crystals; one for protection and another one which I meditate with and that brought me an unlocking moment. I also meet a musician named Paul Luftnegger,[5] whose music will change the world because it is profound, healing and beautiful. I left Spain with my cup running over, my heart full of love, and feeling prepared for what would come next.

Commented [SL19]: I'm assuming this is what the writer meant?

I had to go to surgery. The day of the operation I felt so peaceful, so protected, and everything went well. After surgery I had to be in a very uncomfortable position with my head down for two weeks, using a special chair. This made it very difficult to sleep. Music helped a lot, as did meditation and the nursing care of my grandmother. I listened to a lot of inspirational podcasts and heard a lot of YouTube videos. My creativity was on fire; I even managed to feel little moments of bliss and happiness while listening to music, holding hands with my grandmother, and writing down my ideas to help animals and people. I planned to create videos, workshops, and to start spreading my knowledge with a higher purpose and mission.

In this tough period of my life, I discovered how resilient I am, and how you can be too:

1. Be truthful to yourself, get to know yourself
2. Do affirmations, meditate, listen to music
3. Get help, focus on a good outcome
4. FORGIVE
5. Believe it's possible, become ready
6. Go back to nature, be with your animals and loved ones
7. Be passionate about what you love, be grateful
8. Be strong, feel love, be love
9. Take action, be light, be your own healer
10. Never give up!

Although after the first surgery the eye problem was unsolved (I still had some liquid, the retina was detached, and I was seeing very badly), the doctor said I could go back to my normal life. Only time would return my eye to normal. And so, I returned to my life. I was so happy to see my boyfriend and my four--pawed family members again (my cat named Mia and my dog, Sasha). I was enjoying nature, seeing trees (and new colors) I never paid attention to before. Sometimes it felt like an "after-trauma" reaction, reliving some memories about the last time I was home, but I was able to control my mind and be in~~at~~ a state of peace and gratitude again. I was planning to go back to work as a new Joana, focu~~s~~sing on what matters, the wellbeing of my patients, the reason I do what I do (a deep will to help and save animals) and I was planning to act on my own ideas for a business. I've worked with David Dorotea[6], my Portuguese coach and we've found a big goal to pursue.

One late afternoon, I started to see "flies" with my left eye. Deep inside I knew something was going wrong, so I called my doctor and was advised to go to the emergency room, again. My retina had ruptured from the top. Oh no!

There I reached my rock bottom. A place of sadness, despair, and grief. A special friend told me to look inside my eyes, to search for divine help. Crying on the ground, looking in the mirror, I prayed for help, and nothing. *Let's face reality; I have to go to Porto again*, seven hours by train. Because it was not the first time, I knew what to do to make myself (and my family) calm. During the trip I felt a strong will to write a poem, and so I did. The message of strength, peace, and faith was there. It felt like a message from God.

The next day I was going to my second surgery. All that positioning again. At least I had~~ve~~ my music, my audios, my friends praying for me and sending me healing vibes and love, and my family supporting me. The day before surgery, another special friend named Gitte[7] told me about my third eye and guided me to look beyond. This time, on the night of the surgery, in a meditative state, I received a message from the angels and from my grandparents who had passed away. I finally saw my "woo-woo superpowers".

The recovery period after my second surgery was very different, much more of an inner work, a battle with myself. How did I do it? I was blessed and helped in a lot of different ways. I got in contact with my higher-self and learned to love myself deeply, from inside-out[8]. I opened my heart. I began to repeat "I am enough" everyday[9].

I held on to my resilience and previous lessons. I've followed my intuition every day. I've listened to what I felt was right at the moment (a lot of Paul's music) and I learned about unconditional love[10]. I've forgiven all the people that hurt me with a special healing help[11]. I've practised Louise Hay's[12] affirmations and saw her movie. I've followed her advice to "Rise like a Phoenix". I've heard my mentors and friends (thank God for you, Andrea[1]). I've practised gratitude and acceptance.

I was ready to receive love, light and a cure from above. I believed. I've moved forward despite my fears, and I've released them. I took my power back, since I began to believe that **I am my own healer**. Finally, I saw what it is really being a LovePair of God, living a human experience.

On June 11th I reached the point of no return; I'm not the same Joana anymore.; I'm a medium, I am a rider of the blessed possessions and the animal kingdom, and my mission is to help animals and people around the world honoring and serving our planet earth with divine help. I also received purple orchids that day to celebrate. The next day the doctor said my eye was substantially better.

I'm healed now and I see clearly. I see a world of possibilities. I see love, joy, truth, peace, light, magic, hope, beauty, goodness, tenderness, dreams, health, prosperity, and abundance. I see the sky, the sea, nature, animals, our planet earth needing help and unconditional love. I see all the Lightworkers coming together.

Would you like to come with us?

With love,

Joana

This is a list of the beautiful souls who have supported me on this healing journey. I am deeply grateful for their presence in my life.

[1] Andrea Pennington

[2] Charlotte Banf

[3] Anja Holmbäck

[4] Javier Martinez

[5] Paul Luftnegger

[6] David Dorotea

[7] Gitte Winter Graugaard

[8] Kevin Froystad

[9] Marisa Peer

[10] Sólveig Þórarinddóttir

[11] Elspeth Kerr

[12] Louise Hay

About the Author

Whether people see it or not, the reality is a lot of animals around the world are deeply suffering because they are being mistreated, or simply misunderstood. Veterinarian Joana Soares is on a mission to help change that reality.

Joana is a passionate, dedicated, intuitive doctor of animals, first inspired by her own dog, Lucky, and her special interest is in helping pets and their owners to form a deeply connected bond. With a strong connection they can intuitively communicate or "tune in together" to support each other on their mutual healing journey.

She accepted this pioneering calling when she started noticing a strong correlation between the health of pets, their owners and their families during her clinical observations. This became the foundational idea behind Joana's innovative concept of the LovePair, which focuses on the love, compassion and communication between pets and owners as an important contributor to their respective wellbeing.

To connect with Dr. Joana Soares write to joanarsoares12@gmail.com or join her facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/2065145523728670/

Stepping off the Tarmac: Choice and Courage

By Lizzy Bernthal PhD

It was a blustery cold day as I stood in the queue on the tarmac waiting to board my flight. This was not an airport with a cosy walkway to board via duty-free with my bikini in my hand luggage. No hand luggage was allowed, only the essentials that I could fit in my pocket, such as my passport.

I could smell the engine fuel; finally, we were really off this time! I was shivering both with the cold and emotion as I stood on the military runway looking up at the military aircraft that I was about to enter. I would soon step off UK soil, maybe for the last time, to go to Afghanistan for a military deployment of several months duration. I could not guarantee when or if I would return to see my husband and ten-year-old daughter again. I'd had a sleepless night the night before due to my flight being delayed numerous times, a reprieve from the inevitable.

Although I'd flown abroad numerous times before on deployments, assignments, and holidays, this time felt different. The aeroplane seemed unusually massive for all it embodied – I'd seen the same plane on TV many times on the news that week. It had been bringing home military heroes in their coffins with Union Jacks draped over them.

Commented [SL20]: I would change this to "airplane"

I stood in eerie silence ready to board the aircraft, deep in thought. No one was talking. Was I up to all that would be required of me as Head of Clinical Effectiveness? Was I an irresponsible mother for going? Would my daughter need to read the letter I'd left for her in my bedside locker at home if I did not return? How would my husband cope as a single parent if 'it' happened? At least I knew my will was up to date – phew!

Choices

A conflict of emotions engulfed me. Choice is **'the act of deciding between two or more possibilities'**. I felt guilty that I had 'decided' to deploy because it caused anxiety in my family, yet for me, a great sense of pride and privilege with a compelling need to do my duty. I had a job to fulfil, and a team to lead. If not then, when? If not me, who? I was following generations of my family before me. I was aware of the potential sacrifice; my two uncles had been Killed in Action and both my parents had been to war before I'd been born.

At the time, I had not realised I had made a choice to deploy. However, we always have a choice; even if we decide that there is no choice, we have chosen! I would never risk a colleague being in one of those coffins by having to go in my place. What sort of leader would that make me? Leadership is all about helping others improve because of our presence and making sure that impact lasts in our absence. The teams I was to serve would be relying on me.

I touched the little silver angel and card that I had sneaked into my pocket. My daughter had given them to me before I'd left. She had handwritten on the back, 'Dear Mummy, Stay Safe, Love Rodena x'.

All the years of IVF we had been through to have her made me love her even more than I could have imagined at that moment. As I stood there in a sea of uniforms, I noticed I was the only female officer in the queue which created an even greater sense of responsibility. Touching the little angel gave me a sense of calm that my guardian angel had a plan and all I needed to do was to carry it out. I trusted all would be well, whatever 'well' was to be!

Getting there

As I sat in my seat, I noticed a sea of green camouflage. Statistics at the time suggested that a high number of us would suffer life-changing injuries. Yet I knew that was not going to be me! I had a job to do as a nursing officer and it was to ensure those injured had the greatest chance of survival. I was a survivor after all. I'd been born at 28 weeks gestation with a 5% chance of making it out of the neonatal ICU. I'd been determined to survive and make a difference from the moment I'd been born!

Mixed emotions

I reassured myself that this would not be any different from my previous experiences where I had survived an avalanche in Nepal, 2 military coups in the Far East, other war zones, as well as managing conflict at work. I had even escaped from being killed by a coconut falling from a great height on a holiday! Somehow though, this felt much bigger than any of those experiences.

I doubted myself. 'Am I good enough? Will I cope with the levels of adversity and be able to make a difference?' I didn't feel like a survivor. Looking back now I felt more like a victim!

We arrive

20 hours later it was midnight and we were about to land.

Flying in and out of Afghanistan was notoriously one of the most dangerous parts of the tour because all aircraft were targeted at the time. We had to land in darkness in the depth of night to be less visible. The pilot warned us that the plane would go completely dark prior to landing and we were to put our helmets and body armour back on and get into the brace position in case we were hit by incoming enemy fire.

I shall never forget the silence in the pitch-black darkness, the sound of the engine, the smell of the aircon and fuel, the odd cough breaking the silence, and the atmosphere of enforced calm inevitability as I, and what felt like everyone else, was deep in our own thoughts. I thought, 'This really is for real, not just training now!' At that moment I felt what seemed like turbulence as if we were being struck by thunder and lightning. The pilot spoke calmly over the Ttannoy and advised us not to worry. He told us that our landing would be delayed since we were under fire, which he reassured us was quite 'routine'. We were to stay in the brace position, ready for a few bumps.

I have never been so relieved to land. We had made it through Stage 1 of the tour after what had seemed like a lifetime in turbulence,

thanks to the skill and courage of the pilot whose expertise I trusted implicitly.

Courage

Courage is defined as '***the ability to control fear and to be willing to deal with something that is dangerous, difficult, or unpleasant***'. I see courage as being able to act even when there's no guarantee of the outcome. What really hit me that night was what true courage means. I only had to go through landing in Afghanistan once on this tour. The pilot did this several times a week for months on end to get us all in and out safely while knowing that every flight could be his last. He was the true epitome of a courageous hero who just saw it as part of the job, not a courageous act. To me, that is the true mark of courage.

For me, courage is also the little choices you make even despite feeling vulnerable. Things like asking colleagues how they are, not knowing what the answer will be. The courage to say when it's tough, be honest and not sugarcoat your responses gives others permission to be vulnerable too.

It was a huge privilege to lead a team of such courageous healthcare professionals in Afghanistan treating all casualties with the same compassion whether they were UK troops or enemy combatants.

I learnt a lot about myself during that tour. When I'd commissioned into the army, it had been lots of fun, working and playing hard, travelling, and living in fun, sunny places around the world. I had never expected to go to a war zone even if I was in the

army! When I was commissioned, the greatest fear was the Russians coming over the border in Germany at the end of the Cold War!

Questioning my ability

As a collective team, we saved thousands of lives during that tour. The Care Quality Commission acknowledged the medical teams as an exemplar for healthcare globally. Yet I had found dealing with my two bosses a challenge. I made up the story that I was not up to it, I did not trust myself like I did the pilot. The harder I worked, which was 14 hours per day on most days (there are no days off on tour), the more overwhelmed I felt in their presence. Yet they had not asked me to work these hours. I'd done it because I did not feel good enough as a leader or as a human being, so I just worked harder and harder day after day to compensate. which I thought was the best thing to do at the time.

Supporting my team, doing daily exercise, and eating healthily were my saviours to boost my resilience. I survived the tour and was privileged to be rewarded with another medal from Her Majesty the Queen to add to my collection, yet I did not feel I had shown the courage I expected of myself and felt a little broken.

Having a 'tricky' boss was a theme throughout my career. I realised after this deployment that it had to be me who was attracting this; I could no longer claim this as bad luck! While others called me 'inspiring', I felt anything but in my daily interactions with my various bosses.

I find my voice

Three years on we had a monthly board meeting scheduled with around ten other senior nurses scheduled for the next day. It was a meeting that I normally dreaded. That day I had been undermined one time too many. The last straw had been a phone call that instilled in me levels of anger and frustration I had never felt before.

I made a choice just before the meeting the next day to allow anger to bubble up internally for the first time in my life. No more pushing it down as the good girl without a voice to please others out of a fear of rejection. I had stayed small all my life, which had started with being rewarded by my mother for being quiet as a child. This time ENOUGH WAS ENOUGH! I felt a sense of empowerment and enlightened energy that I had never felt before.

I made another important choice…I got to my feet. I said my piece, calmly, confidently, and assertively with more velocity than I had ever spoken with in my life. The room went silent, everyone awkwardly looked down at the conference table or at their notepads. My boss looked pale and stunned. I could have heard a pin drop. This was my turning point which drove me to speak with even more energy. My boss was shocked that little Lizzy, while in a senior role who was outwardly successful and making a difference supporting nurses globally, was no longer a victim. I continued and a sense of calm came over me, as I'd never felt before. Words came out of me as if I had been taken over by an empowering light that was speaking for me, yet it was me.

From that moment everything changed for me! I found my voice, I felt whole for the first time. I owned ALL of me. I felt I had grown a

few feet taller as a leader who had been put on the planet to make a massive difference. Making a difference was so much bigger than me. I found my authenticity and stopped feeling like an imposter.

The birth of a new mission

Before this, I had strived to be the best leader I could be. I realised that up to that point, I had felt I was just playing the part of a leader who I felt broken inside and questioned whether I deserved the title. No wonder I felt small and never fitted in. No more! I found a coach and made a breakthrough discovery. I had never been broken even though I'd played the victim! The weeds of self-doubt and the stories I'd made up in childhood that had become my blueprint were plucked out. Every aspect of my life transformed. Something clicked. I had it all within me already, nothing within me needed to be fixed, I was okay with no way back!

I found my mission that day – to end workplace toxicity. It was suddenly clear how all the challenges I had faced in my life had brought me to that moment.

A few months later I was promoted, something I'd dreamed of for many years. I started to soar, to feel free! I became Chair of Nursing to support nurses globally in their empowerment and I spoke around the world.

A new chapter

I left the Army to fulfil my mission to end workplace toxicity. I trained to be a leadership resilience coach. I set up my own business

'Release Your Potential Ltd' as the boss of my own life to help leaders and business owners to thrive in business and life by overcoming workplace toxicity through confident, resilient leadership.

It is such a privilege to serve my mission every day. Now I share tools and techniques with leaders both in person and globally online through individual and group coaching and training programmes to help them find their confidence and the resilience that I know are already within them. Then they can own their awesomeness and genius within themselves too. My passion for self-development enables me to share what I have learnt and continue to do so to help leaders overcome the issues that they are facing. No one is alone!

You are courageous

Life is too precious to experience that self-doubt as I experienced for 40 years. Every aspect of your life can be transformed once you quieten your ego and let your inner genius and intuition shine through as your cheerleader. Then you own your resilient confident leadership in all aspects of life to thrive. Then there is no place for toxicity in the workplace as you no longer tolerate it – a win-win situation for all as you:

- Acknowledge that your success is a certainty through the choices you make.
- Identify your values, vision, and purpose so you have a compass to follow.
- Get the joy back in your life that you deserve.

- Improve your self-care as you realise you deserve it and it is essential before you can support others.
- Silence your inner gremlins and saboteurs.
- Boost the wise sage and cheerleader already within you.

Then you can make the world a better place if you wish to do so while loving your best life in the process.

I have felt fear, and vulnerability and witnessed courage when leading teams in the world's most austere environments and contexts such as Afghanistan. You don't need to go to this extreme. Often the choices that you made which previously you may not have even seen as a choice are the ones that demonstrate your courage.

Be proud of what you have achieved. Take a moment to acknowledge your courage and really celebrate all you have achieved so far as you SOAR into your future.

There is no time to waste. SOAR as you stand tall, no longer small, to OWN the awesomeness and resilience already within you!

About the Author

Dr Lizzy Bernthal - a resilience specialist, confidence, leadership coach, international speaker and author. She is on a mission to end workplace toxicity by supporting business owners and leaders to thrive in business and life through confident resilient leadership. In November 2022 she was awarded 'Sustainable You Business Leader of the Year 2022', finalist 'Business Owner of the Year 2022' for North Worcestershire Business Leaders and Leadership Coach for Worcestershire 2022/3. She designs and delivers Masterclasses, keynotes, 121 and group coaching programmes delivered globally online and face to face.

She served 25 years in the Army as a nurse to Lt Col and has a PhD in resilience. She led teams globally in the most extreme environments including Afghanistan. She was awarded Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in 2017 for her contribution globally and was Chair of the International Committee of Military Medicine supporting the empowerment of military nurses worldwide.

Visit her website https://rypotential.co.uk, contact her on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lizzybernthal-resilience-specialist/
Or her E-mail: lizzy@rypotential.co.uk

Exercises and Journal Prompts to Knock Out Negative Self-Talk and Bring Out Your Inner Cheerleader

The negative voice in our head is a nasty little gremlin that robs us of our confidence, but luckily, we also have an inner cheerleader.

As you discovered in the introduction to this chapter, the most effective way to take our power back from our inner gremlin is to identify, challenge and disprove our negative thoughts. You can then replace them with positive, supportive, compassionate thoughts so that you shift the balance in favor of your inner cheerleader.

This is a practice that gets easier and more habitual over time and is well worth persisting with. Use your breath to breathe through any discomfort or challenging emotions.

1**. Become aware of the mental script in the background of your life.**

Identify the predominant self-narrative (or the inner critic).

Which phrases do you hear often?

Do you engage in any self name calling, like "dummy or idiot?"

How about the tone of the voice in your head? Is the voice nasty and mean?

Are the words familiar to you from your childhood?

What are the habitual storylines you tell yourself?

2**. Question and challenge the negative voices**

Ask yourself, "Is it true?" And be honest with yourself!

If you feel it is true, ask yourself how you know this to be true. Sometimes our self-judgments seem to be true based on our past actions. So, you can also ask yourself, "Is it true today?"

3**. Disprove the inner commentary**

Expose the lies by finding evidence to the contrary. If this is challenging, ask yourself what evidence there is to prove it is true - because there won't be any.

For example, if you hear an inner voice saying, "I always mess up!"

Look for evidence in your life where you did not mess up. You may have messed up sometimes, but think of all the times when you didn't, that your inner voice has conveniently chosen to ignore.

4. **Replace the lies with truth**

Remind yourself that you are competent, smart, helpful and worthy of success.

Remind yourself of all your wins and successes. Gather physical evidence if this helps, such as thank you notes, testimonials, messages of support and gratitude.

Create a personal success mantra, a positive affirmation of truth about you. It can be useful to base this around quotes and phrases that inspire you and elevate your mood.

5. **Take positive action to affirm your power**

Go out and prove your case. Use your talents and abilities in a new, different or challenging way.

Extra Tips:

To help you identify your thoughts, it can be helpful to carry a journal or notebook with you, so that you can make a note of any negative thoughts you notice during the day. Creating a regular journaling practice is also an extremely good way to make friends with your own mind and allow it to offload any concerns. There is no right or wrong way to do this, just make sure ~~sure~~ that you don't get dragged into rumination or get caught in the trap of chastising yourself.

Another useful practice is to short-circuit negative thoughts as soon as you notice them arising. Choosing a phrase as simple as "Stop" is an effective way to get better at noticing these insidious thoughts.

Finally, do something small every day to honor yourself. This could be adopting a new positive daily habit, making sure you smile at a

stranger every day, having a more mindful shower or cooking yourself healthy food.

Create your Personal Success Mantra

When you look over the list of your strengths, values, and character traits from the Peak Experience writing exercise form Chapter 6 on Confidence and Self-efficacy, can you see how they've helped you, guided you, and motivated you on your life journey so far?

To make it even more obvious, write down three or four accomplishments you've had in the last few years. List anything positive you achieved--from getting a new job or promotion, to successfully organizing a bake sale, to consistently preparing healthy meals for your family, to quitting smoking, or saving $500.

Now consider what made these achievements possible. Certain values, virtues, capabilities and talents mixed with determination and perseverance created a field of possibility. It's a good practice to explicitly list them.

Let's say that one accomplishment was baking an amazing new bread for a family event that everyone enjoyed. If someone asked, "How did you do that?" You may respond at first with the details such as, "I bought a cookbook and followed a recipe." But if you were replying to someone from another planet who knew nothing of the operating rules of planet Earth, how might you explain it more clearly? What underlying principles made it possible?

You might say something like this: "There's this thing called yeast which causes bread to rise. With the right ingredients, tools, and recipes I can make delicious bread for my family."

Now explain what about YOU enables this to happen? What factors in **you** made it possible? This could be your talents, values or passions. Maybe one of these statements fits: "I love feeding my family tasty, healthy meals." Or, "I demonstrate my love through action."

You could summarize it this way: "I use my love for my family, my creativity, and my ability to follow directions to prepare delicious food. In short, I am creative and capable of amazing things, especially when doing them for the people I love."

For most people, the ingredients for personal success seem obvious to them, especially if they come naturally. But it's important to really see and feel the power of the assumptions or underlying beliefs at play that empower your actions, decisions, and outcomes. This opens you up to unseen potential for advancing your life on every level.

As you explain how you achieved each of your accomplishments, no matter how trivial, write down a single statement about the underlying belief or paradigm that allowed you to achieve that success. That single statement will serve as your own personal success mantra.

Here's another example:

What I achieved: I lost ten pounds and kept it off.

How I made it happen: I exercised five times per week and ate fewer sweets.

Why I did it: I value my health and my body.

My underlying paradigm: I am disciplined to be active to maintain my health and energy. I follow good eating principles to stay fit. I appreciate my healthy body.

Use this format to investigate several accomplishments and the underlying principles for your success.

Recent Accomplishment:

_____

How I made it happen:

_____

Why I did it, what motivated me to do it:

_____

My underlying paradigm:

_____

After you've written down how you achieved a few things over the last year, now do the same thing to explain how one or more of your peak experiences were possible. Write down which strengths or talents were engaged. List which values or desires provided the fuel to see you through to the completion of your goals.

Here's an example from one of my experiences I shared earlier:

Peak Experience: Singing at a club in St. Tropez

How I made it happen, which strengths were active: I combined my love of music with bravery.

Why I did it, what motivated me to do it: I used my desire for creative self-expression to sing from my heart.

My underlying paradigm: I am boldly following my heart and living my dreams to share from the heart and inspire others.

Peak Experience

_____

How I made it happen, which strengths were active:

_____

Why I did it, what motivated me to do it:

_____

My underlying paradigm:

_____

Since most of us are really good at focusing on the things that *don't* go right, such as the failure to reach goals or the mistakes we make, it can also be helpful to examine our disappointments to turn them into fuel for more excellence.

It can be tempting to look at specific mistakes and pronounce judgment on your overall value or worth. But that's as silly as looking at a six-month-old baby and labeling her a loser because she falls down while learning to walk. We know that unless she has some

major physical or neurological problem, the baby will pick herself up and one day she will not only walk, she will skip, jump, and run.

Based on your innate strengths and determination to be your best self, I invite you to consider that hidden in your spiritual DNA is the ability to rise up from challenges and move forward.

Instead of judging, let's proactively learn from our failures and mistakes and embrace our true nature — which is to fall, and then get back up!

Make a list of three or more disappointments from last year. Explain why each happened. Consider what really led to those disappointments. Where did you fall short? What excuses did you make for why you weren't successful?

Next, considering what you know today, what could you have done to make them be successes instead? What would you do differently if facing similar circumstances? Write your new paradigm of possibility as an affirmation that is consistent with the results you'd like to have.

Here's an example:

Disappointment: I didn't save as much money as I wanted.

Why it happened: I made too many impulsive purchases online. I didn't make regular deposits from my paycheck into my savings account.

My new paradigm: I am committed to saving for my future. I will consciously follow a budget and appreciate my growing savings account.

Past disappointment

_____

Why it happened

_____

What explanation or excuse did I use to justify it

_____

My new paradigm

_____

Write Your Personal Success Mantra

The explanations you wrote down for all of your accomplishments, peak experiences, and even your disappointments represent the **paradigms of possibility** for you. Now let's summarize them into powerful, positive, personal belief statements that will serve as your guiding principles for living an awakened life. When you're motivated to reach a goal or to make a move to overcome an obstacle, returning to these statements of possibility will remind you of your source of power, and provide you with the mental outlook necessary for achievement, which is in line with your highest sense of self.

Look at the reasons you wrote down which explain why you were able to achieve your accomplishments and what made your peak experience possible. Look at the explanations of why your disappointments happened and what you would do differently to avoid those disappointments.

Now summarize your capabilities and underlying philosophy into a single powerful, positive statement about who you are, this is your Personal Success Mantra. To write yours, remember to include the baseline assumptions that were in place to make each of your achievements happen. It's also a good idea to include the values or attitudes you possess along with any relevant character strengths and talents.

For example, to explain why and how I moved myself and my daughter to the French Riviera I reply:

"I am committed to a life of vitality, joy and peace. I am brave.

I value freedom. I boldly follow my heart and I live my dreams with passion."

This positive possibility statement includes two of my values and character strengths, freedom and bravery, and it states in a positive way how I choose to live my life. This statement is what I return to any time I feel a hint of doubt or fear when embarking on a new project.

By repeating my Success Mantra from time to time during periods of stress or worry, I remind myself that as a courageous, freedom-loving person I can choose to trust my heart and live on my terms. This is especially useful since *this statement is based on evidence in my life where it held true*. It is based on real past experiences. It's not a flimsy affirmation of who I wish I could be. Even if I'm faced with a situation that is not exactly like the ones I used to get to my Personal Success Mantra, I know that the characteristics underneath the statement are real and true.

Your Success Mantra should be stated in the present tense and as a positive statement. In other words, it should contain phrases like "I am…" instead of "I don't…" or "I can't…"

Bring your mantra to mind anytime you need to be reminded of your power, your focus, and your belief in your abilities. Your Personal Success Mantra can lift your spirits dramatically the more you repeat it, read it, or see it. (They make great inspirational posts for social media, too!) You could even write several Success Mantras, one for each area of your life that you're consciously working to improve or transform.

Over time you'll find that your Success Mantras won't need to be repeated very often; you'll simply live your life in accordance with your deepest truth.

RESILIENCE TRAIT # 8
Connection to Positive People

It can be tempting to withdraw from the world when we are stressed, but prolonged isolation can keep us stuck in negativity. The most resilient people make sure that they find like-minded, positive people for social support, because this helps them to maintain a positive outlook and enjoy life.

When you cannot see the wood for the trees, you need a helping hand to shift your focus back onto the steps you can take — even if they are small ones. Any action is better than no action if you want to move forwards, so leaning on your positive friends for ideas will help boost your resilience.

In a positive relationship, the other person may provide safety, support your sense of autonomy, and be available and emotionally engaged. Positive relationships increase resilience in 2 ways: 1) providing healthy coping strategies and 2) fostering positive behaviors and habits.

And since the quality of relationships is dependent on how we interact, I encourage you to proactively engage and foster good relationships by expressing appreciation, care and support for others in your life.

Positive people lift you up and reinforce your belief in the power of hope and possibility and when you face challenges, these are qualities you want to be reminded of. Whilst many people, including me, like to be alone when they're stressed, over time this reduces the likelihood of you bouncing back. Resilient people lean on and into positive relationships and this helps you to stay healthier and cope better with stressful situations.

When you surround yourself with positive people, they have the emotional intelligence to give you space when you need it, as well as listen and gently challenge you when it will serve you better. Because positive people choose to live in a more empowered way, they are unlikely to try and solve your problems for you, minimize them or add fuel to any dramas you experience. Positive people respect other people, and they honor your innate intelligence rather than try to offer you advice.

When you feel stuck and lost for any reason, you need support from people who can help you shift your state and change your perspective. There is nothing worse than getting so caught up in your own emotions and problems that you feel powerless to make changes. Studies show that a sense of belonging is extremely important for emotional health and well-being; for example, those who have social support but don't feel they truly belong, are much more likely to suffer from depression. (Cohen, S. Social Relationships and Health. American Psychologist. 2004)

You have probably heard the phrase 'you are the average of the five people you spend most time with', attributed to motivational speaker Jim Rohn. It references the fact that humans are wired to emulate behaviors in social groups to help them integrate, so we unknowingly

adapt to fit in with others around us. When we realize that the people we spend most time with influence us, we can shift our focus to spending more time with those we most strongly resonate with.

Make a conscious effort to find the people who love and accept you for who you are, share your values, elevate you, give you a sense of accountability and positively influence the choices you make.

If you struggle to find those people in the real world, see if you can find them online. If this fails, shift your perspective to focus on what you can control and influence — make the decision to be the positive person in the room, smile and shine your light so brightly that those seeking positive people will find you.

Our first story by Julia Munro powerfully shows us the possibility of trusting again after betrayal and exploitation. Julia is Jewish and was abused for her ethnicity right through her school years. On top of that, she was molested by a family friend. Her life after school was no better. Thankfully, Julia's story has a happy ending…

Our second story by Romanian author, Gelu Truta offers a different sort of positive connection — to people or angels in another realm. Gelu firmly believes that angels helped him quit a sixty-cigarettes-a-day smoking habit and who are we to disagree? Marvel as he relates his experiences with angelic beings who helped him not only to quit but also to find forgiveness and love when he needed it most.

Our final story illustrating the importance of forging positive connections so that we can build resilience, is from an inspirational mentor who went from having it all to his entire life crumbling. This captivating story shares how Rob Goddard almost dramatically let everything go, after falling into deep depression and failing to turn his

life around. With help from a man he calls his "angel", the author was given the opportunity to view his life from a different perspective so that he could start visualizing and creating a more positive and fulfilling future.

To Survive and Thrive

B~~b~~y Julia Munro

Commented [SL21]: I capitalized to keep it consistent with the other stories. The "Bys" at the top of the stories in the first part of the book were capitalized, so I've made that changes to any that weren't further on.

You have probably heard the old expression: "That which does not kill you makes you stronger." I think that expression is bullshit. There's this little word you hear a lot these days. The word is "trauma." Everyone has suffered trauma in some way at some point in their lives, and some of us do not survive it. Some people develop serious, deadly diseases as a result of it. Some die by suicide. Our mental and physical health professionals are just starting to crack the code on the connection between trauma and its physical and emotional impacts.

Those of us who survive are the fortunate ones. Somewhere, from deep within, we find resilience. We are just strong enough to hold onto hope and just fortunate enough to cross paths with very kind and compassionate people who walk the journey with us for a little while. We're fortunate enough to connect with individuals who can point us to help or share their stories, so we know we're not alone. We make friendships with people who see the best in us and love us no matter what.

I am one of the fortunate ones, but you wouldn't believe it if you knew my story.

Bullied for my ethnicity

From about the age of five all the way through high school, I was harassed, teased, and physically attacked for being Jewish. My family was the only Jews in our hometown, and we were oddities. The kids at school would call me, "Dumb Jew," all day long, in front of the teacher, and no one would stop it. I tried to talk to my parents about it, but they didn't believe me. By middle school, the high school kids from my neighborhood who got home about 45 minutes before I did would wait to nab me after the school bus had pulled away from my bus stop. They liked to take my things or hit me or tear my clothes.

Abuse at the hands of family friends

When I was eight years old, we had dinner one night at the home of my parents' friends. During dinner, my younger brother ate something with nuts in it and went into anaphylactic shock. My parents rushed him to the emergency room, leaving me in the care of their friends. That was the first night the husband molested me. He did it off and on until I was twelve. I tried telling my parents about it, but they didn't believe me. The final time he molested me, he was visiting our house and was feeling me up and trying to make me kiss him when no one was around. I got away from him and told my mom, who (can you guess?), didn't believe me. I told her that if she didn't believe me then she should ask him. I did not find out until I was out of college that my parents had confronted him, and he'd admitted what he had done.

I was molested a second time when I was fourteen during a youth group overnight event at my synagogue by a different married man. I

woke in the night to being jostled around. I realized that he was pressed up against me from behind, pulling me towards him, and feeling up my chest. I was terrified. I managed to pull away and ran to the women's bathroom believing he would not follow me there. I squatted in the furthest corner with my back to the wall, facing the door, and rocked all night until another one of the girls came in to use the bathroom. I ran out to find a phone and called my parents. My father came to get me, but he berated me all the way home asking what I had done to make that man do that to me. When I got home, my mother chimed in, reluctantly fed me breakfast, then both parents sent me back to the synagogue for Sunday school. That's when I began to believe that I did not matter. What happened to my body didn't matter. My feelings didn't matter. My well-being didn't matter. Somehow I was bad, and I deserved bad things.

I tried to make friends in high school, but those relationships were short-lived. I never knew who I could trust. I learned to live very much in my imagination, dreaming about what life could be like. But deep inside, I had hope that I would get out of that town and start a new life where no one knew me.

Horrific experiences in college

I thought that my freshman year in college would be that chance. Sadly, one of my roommates and two male friends of hers liked to wake me up at 2:00 am to tell me that I, a Jew, did not belong there. I should go home because something might happen to me. I tried to report the harassment to the school, but nobody cared. One night, I was at a party with some people I thought were my friends. We were

staying the night at one of their friend's houses, and I became tired, so I went to one of the bedrooms to go to sleep. A man came into the bedroom and raped me, and he invited an audience. It's amazing how many times you can say, "No!" or, "Stop!" and it just falls on deaf ears. I learned what it was really like to get punched in the face. I can never watch movie fight scenes without incredulity over the number of times the hero gets hit without falling down…in a coma. *Unreal* is the word that comes to mind.

A few months before my twentieth birthday, I got up one morning to use the bathroom and felt a sharp pop in my abdomen. It brought me to my knees. I told myself that it was just bad gas, but after crawling to the bathroom and back to my bed, the pain intensified. I ended up in the emergency room, and the doctor assigned to me kept me in the hospital for observation. On the fourth day, I went in for an exploratory procedure. The doctor found a cyst that had encapsulated my right ovary and ruptured. When I came out of surgery, the doctor told me that I'd lost the ovary because it had disintegrated inside the cyst. I learned I had polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) and endometriosis and was facing infertility. Over the next ten years and after multiple surgeries, I lost most of my left ovary, my right Fallopian tube, and my appendix due to cysts and endometriosis. I also had surgeries just to remove adhesions. Looking back at the events leading up to the PCOS diagnosis, it all makes sense. Somehow, my sexual and emotional trauma manifested in my sex organs. I felt unworthy of a loving relationship or a healthy, satisfying sex life.

That was also evident in retrospect when I subsequently married a man who physically assaulted me. I believe he tried to kill me. During that altercation, there was a moment when I knew, without a shadow

of a doubt, that it was him or me. It all happened in seconds. Somehow, my self-defense instincts took over and I pulled strength from somewhere so deep that I didn't even know it was there. I fought back. Hard. When the police finally arrived, they managed to re-victimize me before eventually hauling him off to jail. I filed for divorce before he got out of jail, but my parents told him where I was hiding.

Is it me?

At thirty, I had to ask myself some serious questions. What had I done to deserve these terrible experiences? Was I really that bad? What was my part in it? How could I make it stop? What was I willing to do for a better life?

There is help and hope

In my early twenties, I had been blessed to meet my best friend, Lynne. Miracle number one was when Lynne recommended a therapist to help me through the abusive marriage and the resulting divorce. This therapist and I connected immediately. He made me feel safe to share all the things that had happened. He didn't judge me. He helped me to reframe events. He helped me to make the connection between the sexual abuse and my female reproductive diseases. He taught me how to cope.

Early in my therapy, my doctor gave me a homework assignment. He instructed me to take a 5x7 notecard and write on it: I am Julia. I am beautiful. I am capable. I am worthwhile. He told me to tape it to my

bathroom mirror and say it out loud five times first thing in the morning and before I did anything else. He said to repeat the process before going to bed.

It was hard. The first morning I said the words out loud five times, and I just cried. I wondered if anyone else thought that was true. I wondered if I would ever meet those people.

I learned over time that I had to be very picky about who I let into my inner circle. I was grateful to have Lynne as my example. Anyone new to the fold had to accept me for me and I, them. I had to be brutally honest about whether any of those people were in my family of origin or non-relatives who would become my new family. I didn't always get it right, but I just kept my eyes, my mind, and my heart open for new family members.

There is love, too

As I strengthened my inner circle, I felt relief that things were going to be okay. I had hope for the future. One day at work, I met my soulmate, Rick. He was miracle number two. I didn't know he was my soulmate then, but over time, we became best friends, fell in love, and eloped. We had a good life. It wasn't perfect, but overall, we had a very real, deep, connected love. And I had a very clear picture of our future – retired, living in our log cabin by the lake in the mountains, rocking in chairs on our front porch, watching the world just be. We had been together for just 10 years when I got a call at work from a sheriff's deputy. The deputy met me at work to deliver the "official business" that my husband was dead. The pet sitter had found him when she went for our dogs' mid-day visit and called 911.

-Losing Rick was soul-crushing. At first, I was completely grief-stricken. He'd taught me so many things about unconditional love, and I was grateful to have felt that love in my lifetime. I learned a lot about what is ***truly important***, too. At Rick's life celebration, I remember looking at his urn and thinking, "The house is still here, his clothes are still here, and his things are still here. All that mattered was that he knew how much I loved him, and I know how much he loved me." It was something to hold onto forever.

-I also learned a valuable lesson about how vulnerable I was. About eleven days after Rick died, a man who I believed to be like family conned me into giving him $540,000 of the insurance money Rick left for me. He told me he was in the CIA, and he had a team in Afghanistan that was trapped there. He said they were in danger, and he needed to get them out. I couldn't bear the thought of good men dying if that money would bring them home. He assured me he would pay me back. I later learned that he was such a superb fraudster, he had also successfully deceived very experienced members of the military and law enforcement. Thankfully, many of those people had the courage to support me when I sued him and won.

-As time passed, I came to accept my new normal of loving someone on the other side. I was lonely and afraid that I would never know that kind of love again, but I stuffed those feelings into a box. I had a business to run, a home to manage, dogs to care for, and I had a rental property that needed attention, so I focused on my responsibilities and just put one foot in front of the other every morning. It wasn't easy. Lynne and my therapist were there through it all along with a few new, really close friends.

One day, I went to check on a long-standing client's project where I had a consultant named Andy working. Andy and I had worked together for a few years and had great professional respect for one another. When I got to the office, Andy didn't look too good. I could tell something was wrong, but the client's office was not the place to discuss it. I told him to be at my house on Saturday. We were going to talk.

When Andy came to my house that following Saturday, I was honored that he opened up right away about some traumatic and stressful things he was experiencing. I asked some questions and shared some opinions. I even shared some similar experiences. We realized that we had a lot in common. Over the next two years, we became the best of friends and eventually fell in love. The greatest gift Rick had given me was to show me what true, unconditional love felt like, so I would recognize Andy when he came along. Miracle three. Andy and I are married now and living a real-life fairy tale. Sometimes, I have to pinch myself.

Why do I share this story with you?

People say that you must love yourself before you can love others, but I think that expression is bullshit, too. We learn to love from our family of origin. If your parents fight constantly and do not protect you, then that's what you learn, and that is the type of relationship you will create because that is what you know - even if you know you don't like it.

But ***you can break the cycle*** and learn a better way to live. Just don't try to do it alone.

Spend time with one person in your world who loves you and knows you're amazing. Maybe that is a friend or a grandparent. You don't need a thousand friends on social media. You need one real, huggable person on this Earth who loves you, so you can learn to love yourself. Ask them why they love you. Listen. Take it in. And tell them about any challenges you're going through. Let them help.

Lynne, my therapist, Rick, and Andy helped me to learn that I am worthy of love. I also realized that I am very loving and project that love energy out to the world. I had been diminishing myself to make other people comfortable around me, but that is not my job. I am a giver of love. What people choose to do with that is for them to decide.

I'm sending you my love!

About the Author

Julia Munro is a force for good (FFG), the CEO of MUNRO Enterprises, a presentation guru, and the author of To Survive and Thrive. She is passionate about lifting people up and breaking the cycle of shame for not being able to do everything by oneself. She shares her story to bring hope for a better future through loving connections to others. Her own life experiences of trauma, tragedy, and love are not unique, but she brings a rare perspective that she hopes everyone will seriously contemplate. She is a budding author and dreams of being a great storyteller. Her ultimate dream is to travel to children's hospitals to tell stories to children of laughter and hope. Julia lives in Michigan with her husband, Andy, and her standard poodle, Lacey.

How Angels Helped Me Quit Smoking
By Gelu Truta

For my mother, who always believed in me.
Thank you!

Hello. My name is Gelu (pronounced like *jelly*, but the ending sounds likes *to*) and I am a quitter. I quit smoking eighteen years ago.

I am not encouraging anyone to keep smoking, nor condoning it, nor am I condemning it, because I've been there, too. I know that it is an entirely personal choice, and until one truly wants to quit smoking, he/she won't, not in a million years. For years before, I was asked by many people, 'Why do you smoke?' and someone even said to me, 'Your body is your temple. Why do you keep poisoning it?' However, until I said, 'Enough!' and meant it, I couldn't stop.

In my family, everyone smoked. To carry on the family tradition, I decided at the prom that it was time for me to start smoking, so I asked for a cigarette, lit it and started puffing. The smoke wasn't getting down to my lungs – that was something I would learn all by myself months later. That was the moment the real addiction began.

Our parents always told us, 'It is alright with us if you smoke, we would even give you cigarettes if you want them, just don't hide, do it openly, there is no need to be afraid.' Both of our parents, being teachers, made it easy to sometimes forget that inside our home, they were just *parents*.

At that time, there was a strict 'No smoking in school' rule for students. One could even be expelled for breaking it.

I was smoking everything money could officially buy and had an acceptable taste. Mostly the cheapest, for the masses, mainly without a filter. From time to time I smoked some of the most trafficked cigarettes that came from Bulgaria and Albania. They weren't quite luxury items – but still, they were better than what we could find back then. In communist Romania, stuff from the 'decadent-imperialistic occident' was nowhere to be found!

For a very long time, smoking in public spaces was permitted. As a smoker, I really had no respect for the health of non-smoking people. Inside, I was even laughing at people who said that my body was my temple and I should take better care of it, and not put poison in it.

(Now, I see that, as a human, I have a sparkle of God in me and whatever I put into my body is actually my offering to God.)

Eighteen years later, when I was almost thirty-six and having about one pack of cigarettes per day, a strange idea came to me. 'Let's see how much I can smoke in one day'. So, I bought another pack. And the next day I bought three, instead of two. I wanted to buy a fourth one, the same day, but there was something in me stopping me from doing that.

After several weeks of smoking sixty cigarettes a day, I decided, that was it. I decided to go back to just one pack per day, by slowly skipping one 'treat' at a time. But it was impossible! There was something stopping me from doing that. I remember seeing a triangular-shaped face, sulphury yellow, with some kind of sulphury green garment, grinning at me, as if to say, "You are mine now, and

I won't let go of you![7] I was a little scared, but at the same time I could also see some beautiful coppery angels on my right side, a little above my shoulder, and I addressed them. 'I cannot do it all by myself, please help', and went on with my day.

My last cigarette

The next day was Monday – a new morning, a new week, a new beginning? I started my day, as usual, with a smoke immediately after waking up, which I struggled to finish. Then I ate breakfast. The second cigarette I had to throw away, half-smoked. So, I said to myself, 'If it doesn't feel good anymore to smoke, why torture myself?'

Once the decision to quit had been made, I went to work, leaving the pack and the lighter at home. In the office, there were only smokers.[8]

[7] *Little did I know how true that was… Years later, talking to a good friend of mine who sees 'things that aren't there', as she put it, she said:*

'I know you don't smoke anymore, but I still see around you three entities of low vibration. You don't have to worry about them, they are still hoping that you'll start smoking again. Like that they will be rewarded by their boss. Their mission is to pour venom in your ear: one of them was bringing to memory the feelings of your first smoke filling your lungs, the next one is guiding your thoughts toward the pack of cigarettes, and the third one encourages you to light the cigarette and with the first inhale, you're all theirs. And the green character you saw could be their boss.' 'This type of entities are around other kinds of addicted people, too, and their modus operandi is pretty much the same.'

[8] Now, looking at it retrospectively, I think the fact that there was smoke in the room had at least two purposes: first, to see if I was really committed to it, and the second to make it easier to overlook the side effects of suddenly stopping smoking.

During the lunch break, I felt a sudden urge for a cigarette. In Romania, we have a saying: 'My lips are burning' for something, mainly for an object of addiction. This was exactly how I felt – as if I would explode if I couldn't get one. I started looking for someone, anyone, to ask for a smoke. But there was not a soul anywhere, not in the offices, not in the cafeteria. Once again, I saw the coppery angels next to me and, in an instant, I realized that the help was real, and I was being helped to quit. How else could I explain this? I calmed down immediately; the craving was gone, and a state of peace filled me completely.

That was the only time I craved a cigarette and never again, since.

I also had to give up coffee, as its bitterness would remind me of the taste of cigarettes.

This was before I'd ever heard about 'Let go and let God', or 'Trust in the process', or 'What you resist persists, what you allow dissipates'. But that is exactly what I did. I knew the outcome – quitting smoking completely – and I knew I'd been helped. So, if the whole Universe was 'conspiring' with me and for me, what was there to resist? I simply stepped aside and allowed it to happen.

That night I had my first dream about smoking. I woke up with a deep sensation of pleasure and I was even smiling. Then I remembered: wait a moment, I quit smoking! [9]

[9] I kept dreaming now and then about smoking, less and less frequently, the distance between my last one and the previous one being 2-3 years. I stopped and analyzed that last dream. How does it make me feel? Guilty, ashamed. If it does not help me, that means that there must be something else feeding me these sensations.

On the morning of the third day, my mother pushed her pack of cigarettes towards me to take one, and I refused calmly and politely, 'No thanks, I'm not smoking anymore'. I guess she thought it was a whim or something, and sooner or later I would start again. However, I can be really stubborn sometimes; I think I inherited this trait from her!

The following week, one of my colleagues asked me, looking somewhat embarrassed, 'I've noticed that you're not smoking anymore. Did you quit?'

'Yes', I said, as simply as that. He immediately felt guilty. 'Oh… And I was smoking in here…' There was nothing to feel guilty about, and now I wish I could have told him that there was really no reason for that.

I am sure that, if I had asked them to stop, it would have been worse. 'What you resist persists'.

How stopping smoking affected my health and mood

Around one month after my last cigarette, the same colleague asked me to buy him a pack, which I did, as I was going to shop for some juices. I wanted ones that were as natural as possible, mainly mixes of carrots, oranges and apples for my 'detox program'. After handing him the smokes, I realized that it hadn't even occurred to me to buy some for myself, too! I felt like I was on top of the world, and I even said to myself, 'If I could quit smoking, I will be able to do anything'. With the faith I had within me, and in myself, I felt I could literally move mountains.

There were also immediate physical benefits to quitting smoking. For example, I could climb stairs more easily; it seemed that the sun was shining brighter and the air was clearer. I could notice a certain connection between my thoughts and my bodily reactions: when I had bad thoughts towards someone, I would have immediate headaches and abnormal heartbeats. I would choke on food when I wanted to say something inappropriate.

I could feel better the presence of the angels around me, even some tingling around my temples or as if they were pinching my ears. One of the nicest things was the way the angels interfered with technology. When I was supposed to print a file that contained errors, either as a pdf or on paper, it wouldn't print. After proofreading the document and correcting the errors, the document would print. I understood that this was no accident, so I started to ask the angels to look with me for the mistakes. I am still asking for their help.

The same year my girlfriend broke up with me. 'What do I do now?' I asked myself. I even thought that if I lit a cigarette, I would feel better. I continued pondering: 'Should I begin smoking once again? Yes, I'll feel better. But would it be worth it?' And I remembered everything I had been through until that moment. No, I would definitely not start 'burning money' again!

This summer, it will be eighteen years since I quit smoking, and since that last 'smoky treat' I haven't taken a single puff. Usually, tobacco smoke bothers me. Most of the time the smell makes me cover my nose and mouth, and sometimes I even get a strong choking sensation. On rare occasions, I do not feel anything, and on others, I even like the smell of them.

A strong angelic experience

A few weeks after quitting smoking, on a beautiful Thursday summer evening, I was in the bathroom preparing to end the day and my spirits were high. As I raised my eyes and looked in the mirror, I felt two hands taking me by the shoulders from behind, and a voice in an imperative tone said, 'Look!' I could only obey. Immediately I saw appearing on the mirror, 'FORGIVE ME' written in dark red capital letters. (At first, I thought it was blood, but I guess it was just lipstick).

Then, on my left side, I saw a figure dressed in white, floating close to the ceiling. On my right, next to me, there were some angels, trying to comfort me, because I was scared, almost terrified. As they cannot interfere with our free will, they stepped back and allowed me to be sad. All they could do at that time was to observe and send me love.

For three days I was in a bad mood, and everyone could see that there was something going on. I thought I was suicidal, but maybe I was just grieving for someone I didn't know.

On Saturday I was alone and I said, 'I want to know what all this is about', and, as I usually did, I looked for the answer in a book. This time, it was a book of aphorisms by a Romanian writer, Lucian Blaga. On the page where the book opened the following was written: 'The wife is saying to her husband, "My dearest, I love you so much that I wish I could die first because I couldn't live without you" [10].

'What about the husband?', I shouted in my mind. 'Doesn't he love her? Won't *he* miss her? And what about me?'

10 This quote was translated in English by me, GT

I saw angels in my mind, and one of them said to me, 'Pick up the Bible'. I refused, 'No', because at the time I was not very religious, and my relationship with God was almost nonexistent. But the angel repeated, 'Pick up the Bible'. This time I obeyed. I went to another room, picked up the Bible, sat on a chair and, with both my hands resting on my knees and my palms supporting the book, which opened randomly, I started reading.

Soon after I felt a soft translucent ring around my forehead, I could see it as if I was looking at it from outside my body. As I continued reading, I felt more and more emotional, and a teardrop fell on the bottom of one page. The mark is still there.

Then, I saw a beautiful white angel kneeling in front of me. At first, I was shocked. Who was I that an angel would kneel before me? Then, I denied it. 'It is impossible, it is not real' and of course, the angel hid herself from my view. But I felt her palms over mine, through the physical book and under it. Which was impossible, too, right? And the palms also disappeared. I said, 'This is impossible. But still, if it's real, do it again'. The hands came back, and we sat like that for a while. I was in a state of quiet sadness with no thoughts at all, just peace.

In time, I realized that the silhouette in the bathroom had been the woman who, in ideal conditions, would have been my wife. However, because we didn't meet, and she couldn't wait for me any longer, she chose to die rather than live without me.

Sometime later, while I was following a card-divination site, one card came recurrently, saying, 'Someone in Heaven says hello'. Also, as a result of some special prayers and procedures with the purpose of

bringing me and my other half together, I could sense a loving presence on my right shoulder, who stayed there for many years, touching me gently, and lovingly. She was there, too, when I fell madly in love with a woman. I told this girlfriend about her, and she made it very clear that she didn't want her around. So, I said to her, 'Look, I would like you to stay here with me, but you heard her. But it is up to you'. She went away for a second or so, and then she came back, looking at me. Smiling, she put two big golden orbs inside me, of different shades and vibration, one in my heart and one in my abdomen. Then she glided backwards, still looking at me smiling. We looked each other in the eyes until she disappeared in the golden sunlight.

Seven days later I sensed the soul of a boy hovering above us, encouraging me to tell my girlfriend that a child was ready to come and had accepted us both as his parents. However, as soon as I opened my mouth, she said, 'I don't want to know anything about it!' (I guess she was scared or wasn't ready). Because our free will is extremely esteemed – angels, unborn souls, or any other entity cannot intervene except in extreme cases – he immediately turned around, took the appearance of a young adult of around thirty, and left.

My interpretation of the orbs was that I was loved and protected, but they could also mean that she loved me so much that she would gladly come back to Earth as my child. For some years, she came back to me, knocking at the front door, or at my bedroom door, sometimes so loudly that it would wake me up from my sleep. Once she even rang the doorbell. It makes me smile… Thank you, my darling. I found out from YouTube and in some books that it was a sign from a dear one who has passed away that they are okay and there is no

need to worry about them. After I realized that, the knockings stopped.

Even if she is not physically present here, with me, I still can give her flowers in my mind, and talk with her. She told me that her favourite flower colour is violet-purple, or lilac. So, from time to time, I give her a huge bouquet of flowers.

About the Author

Gelu Truta was born in 1968 in communist Romania.

After changing many employers and careers, from school teacher to copywriter and help desk, and after a period of unemployment and very limited resources, he decided to start his own business, in the field of desktop publishing and word processing.

At present, Gelu is working on his first book, a fiction novel about a utopia inspired mainly by his experiences and some of the connections he made during his voyage with this spaceship called Earth.

He is also currently giving angel card readings as a hobby.

You can contact him via e-mail at 1968gelu@gmail.com.

From Suicide to Success
By Robert Goddard

In 2010, I was on the 125th floor of the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai, preparing for my death. For months I had searched the internet looking for painless ways to kill myself. I decided on jumping from a great height. I calculated that it would only take me 13 seconds to fall nearly 3,000 feet. Then it would all be over. It could be even sooner than that as I had read that I was likely to have a heart attack on the way down. No more pain, nor struggling, just nothing.

Just two years earlier, I was in the top 1% of earners in the UK. I was 45 years old and in the prime of my life. I had a lovely home, wife and twin boys, and I was highly successful in business. I felt invincible in life, like I was made of granite rock.

However, in a 3-month period in the summer of 2008, my life crumbled. I lost my marriage, my children and my job. I went into an emotional tailspin. I fell out of the sky like an eagle that had been shot by an unknown sniper from the ground. I had never been out of work in my life and as a result I felt like a complete failure in life because I couldn't provide for my family. The centre of my world had been my career and the materialism that surrounded it. I was in a complete state of shock and bewilderment.

Extreme anxiety set in which led me to stop sleeping or eating at all, for days. My mind was in perpetual turmoil trying to process what had happened and how I could sort the whole mess out. I would stare

at the TV screen for long periods and not remember what I had just watched. The only thing that filled my waking and non-waking hours was the constant, torturous churn of my disastrous situation.

The day I lost my job I went to see my doctor to get some medication to help me get through this shock. In her office, I broke down. In floods of tears and broken sentences I managed to get out that I had come to the end of my life and didn't know where to turn. She was empathetic and promised that a counselling service would contact me. Then she handed me a bewildering and colourful array of pills. I thought to myself, "Once the drugs take effect, I'll be back to my normal self within a couple of weeks and then I can start to rebuild my life again."

I didn't know that what lay ahead of me was a 5-year battle with depression and me repeatedly feeling that suicide was the only way out. Fortunately, I did meet an "angel" and I'd like to introduce you to him later.

My situational depression was like a black menacing cloud. It came and went as it wanted for many years, affecting my emotions and my mind. I didn't talk to anyone about it, I was too ashamed of feeling the way I did. So, I just put on a brave face, a mask, to the outside world. Contrary to what you may think, it's not suicide that kills, it's the loneliness and isolation. Here's the dichotomy, in a highly connected modern world, we can isolate ourselves so easily. Most depressed people don't want to be a burden on others. Instead, they just suffer in silence and some, sadly, in desperation take their life.

Did you know that 2,200 people a day commit suicide every year on this planet? That's up 40% over the past two decades! Of those, 75%

are men. Many men are far worse at expressing their feelings than women. We often lock things away, don't speak up and sometimes the dam breaks. We have a global crisis on our hands. Suicide is the biggest killer of people aged under 45 in the UK. I would have been one of those statistics had events not gone a different route.

By 2010 my life hadn't bounced back, I was still being prescribed drugs by the doctor, but by then I had started to self-medicate with alcohol. Vodka was a quick way of making my mind go fuzzy for a few hours so that I could forget my depression, albeit temporarily. Eventually I stopped taking the prescribed drugs and started stockpiling them instead. In the end I had over 700 pills tucked away in my wardrobe, a secret stash. I thought that if I couldn't control what happened in my life anymore, at least I could determine when and how my life ended. At least I had that control remaining in my life.

Because of regular anxiety attacks, I had numerous restless nights, tossing and turning like a ship caught at sea in an unforgiving storm. I started waking up later, I would keep my dressing gown on throughout the day. I didn't eat properly, didn't shave, and rarely washed. I must have stunk! I had become a functioning alcoholic.

Self-employment was forced upon me, I had no choice. I did manage to slowly build a small business, but it was very tough. I remember travelling to sales pitch meetings with music blaring out of the car's speakers, crying my eyes out en-route, only to discreetly park around the corner from the offices, wipe my eyes and my nose, then put on a mask. I also had a stash of mints in the car to mask the smell of vodka, which I popped before entering the building. I became an "actor" for a couple of hours.

But life just bumped along the bottom, I was just surviving and definitely not thriving. Then, out of the blue my main client terminated our contract and my life again spun immediately out of control. Once again, I looked at the dark abyss opening up in front of me.

A fresh start

So, in March 2010, I decided to run away to the bright and alluring lights of Dubai to become a Financial Adviser, with the invitation to a job that would provide untold riches for me, or so they promised. In reality, it was a commission only job, working in a part of the world I have never been to and in a culture which I had never encountered previously. It was an opportunity to prove to myself once again that I could bounce back. I had worked in Financial Services for three decades, and I believed I could really do it, again.

Initially, I was so full of energy, enthusiasm and renewed hope when I went to see my new Regional Director, at the glitzy Dubai Marina. He was half my age but had been in the country for 4 years and was the top salesman in the company., He had a boat in the Marina and a Porsche 911. At last, a blank canvas, a fresh start where nobody knew me. It may have been commission only and living in one of the most expensive cities in the world, but I was up for the challenge.

I started my new job with no data, no client base, no website, no marketing budget, just me and a bunch of business cards and a winning smile! I figured that my target market included expatriates, high net worth individuals who paid no tax and were dripping with surplus cash. So, I decided to go where they tend to hang out, meet

them, chat and make myself visible. Places like the Yacht Marina, the Irish pub Fibber's McGee, The Polo Club and the prestigious car dealerships like Ferrari, Lamborghini, Porsche, even the Harley Davidson dealership. I also used LinkedIn, creating a stream of articles on "hot topics" of interest to some of the worlds' richest people, positioning myself as a "thought leader" in all matters financial. Leads started to flood in, new clients were signing up and at last I was making some serious money again.

However, I had completely underestimated trying to fit in with an immensely fast-moving society and, what seemed to me at least, was a superficial and uncaring environment. A ~~micro climate~~microclimate where people rarely had the time or inclination to build real friendships. At the same time, I had also cut myself off from my family and my close friends, working in a country 3,500 miles away.

The blazing summer sun was like an inferno and coupled with the stifling humidity of Dubai, it was like working in my own hell. I felt like a prisoner condemned to a life of hard labour, paying for my heinous crimes. The money wasn't bringing happiness at all, I was gradually feeling alone in the metropolis. Isolated from family and close friends. It was a prison of my own making, albeit a golden one.

I gradually s~~a~~nk into what felt like quicksand. The more I struggled against it, the more I got sucked into it. So, I kept what I called a "death diary." It was me journaling about my innermost thoughts, fears and anxieties. It helped to write things down, but the main aim was to leave something behind for my children, so that they would know why their Dad had killed himself. I didn't want them to blame themselves or think they could have done something to change the situation.

After months of battling on my own, I eventually gave up the fight. I was emotionally exhausted and battle weary, so I decided to go to the daunting and imposing tower of the Burj Khalifa, to find my way outside to jump. Thirteen seconds away from ending the pain and private hell that had become my life.

I woke up one morning and decided that today would be the day this torment would end. I showered and shaved like any normal day. I then phoned a work colleague and said that I wanted to visit the Burj Khalifa and take some pictures from the top of the tower, because despite working in Dubai, I never had time to do the tourist thing. I never disclosed to him my plan because I didn't want him to talk me out of it.

I met him at the front entrance, bought the tickets and joined the snaking queue of sightseers making their way to the lifts. As we travelled the 90 seconds to the top, I recall having this macabre thought that it would only take me 13 seconds to come back down. I was calm, not stressing about what I was about to do. It was a surreal frame of mind to be in, having made the decision to end my pain. I felt empowered somehow to be taking control of my life.

We got to the 125th floor and wandered around the viewing platform with a multitude of tourists. I asked my friend to take some pictures of me looking out at the Dubai scenery and then excused myself to the bathroom. I told him I wouldn't be long. Instead, I went around the tower looking for a way to the outside of the building. The viewing platforms are floor to ceiling thick glass, so I had to find an exit that workers use to gain access to the outside of the tower.

I quickly found a fire exit and tentatively tried the handle. It was locked! Who on earth locks a fire exit door? This one was and so my attempt at suicide that day had been thwarted. I went back to my apartment, dejected, miserable and angry with myself. The ~~stock pile~~stockpile of 700+ tablets looked more appealing.

A call for help

I'm not sure why, but I decided to call a friend of mine back in the UK. Alex and I had met at a business networking event just at the time I had first gone self-employed. There was an immediate connection between us and over a couple of years we became good friends. He was and still is a Business Coach and crucially, he was the only person who kept in regular contact with me after I left for Dubai. He contacted me on a regular basis to see how things were going. I looked forward to our chats. Although, I didn't really share the full picture, I just tried to be upbeat.

But, following my thwarted suicide attempt earlier that day, I offered to fly him out to Dubai for a few days, so that we could speak in person and at length. To my surprise he jumped on a plane, and we sat poolside at my apartment for hours on end. We also laughed incessantly. It was fun sharing time together. He also told me off when he peered in my fridge and challenged me with *"I can't see anything green, only meat and alcohol!*"

Alex asked me one question that changed the direction of my life. He asked, *"What do you **really** want to do with your life, Rob?"* Immediately, I said that I didn't know. But not put off by that, he persisted with, *"but if you did know, what would it look like?"*

What a great question. I then began to describe what I saw and said that I wanted to go back to my first love of Mergers and Acquisitions. With more prodding, visualizing and planning a potentially happy future, I subsequently made the decision to return back to the UK to start again.

I went on to envisage that by 2020 I would create a business worth £5m+, move somewhere in the Southern Mediterranean and I would teach English to children from a double-decker bus, and with the woman of my dreams.

With renewed hope and a clearer vision, I managed to pitch and secure 14 investors for my new business venture. I was then able to afford to pay myself a salary for the first time in 3 years. It's not been easy building a business from nothing, but with unwavering determination, that fledgling business has now grown into a multi-million-pound company across two continents, employing 25 people.

Nevertheless, I still had to kill a few ghosts from the past, so 3 years ago I set up a sister company in Dubai. The first time round in Dubai I was a beaten man, now when I come out of the airport terminal, I have a smile back on my face in a country that so nearly became my last resting place. Initially, I was apprehensive and unsure if I could make a business work out there, having failed previously. However, I felt much stronger than before. Because the UK business had some success, I used that as my confidence platform for the new Dubai business.

Over the years I have learnt from my mistakes of the past and have surrounded myself with trusted people that I can share myself with,

people who act as sounding board, both in business and on a personal level. I've also set out to employ people better than me at things. There is a freedom in having others run the business day to day. That enabled me to have precious time back and I now own 4 businesses and don't work full time in any of them!

Retirement has allowed me to do the things I want with the people that I want to work with. I've broken the walls of that golden prison and have been teaching clients to do the same for the past 10 years. I now help business owners find an exit strategy, closing one chapter in their life and starting a new one. That's been my journey and I want to share with others how liberating that is. I also invest in other people's businesses and take on a few private clients for mentoring assignments. I have the privilege of being asked to speak at a wide range of other people's events, both in the UK and in the Gulf.

The road forward

Looking back, my resilience, the strength I found to fight back and triumph over adversity, came from speaking and sharing with others. Today I know there's no point in running away. Even in the darkest hour, it's healthier to just face-up and reach out in dark times.

My relationship with money has changed, too. In fact, I'm in the process of setting up a charity in order to embark on a 10-year plan to create a "living legacy." An altruistic journey to make a difference into other people's lives, through a multitude of charitable causes forto those in need.

My family has expanded, I now have 6 children ranging from the ages of 25 down to 6, with two sets of twins in that beautiful tribe! Had I been successful in my suicide attempt, I would have robbed all of them of a future with their Father.

I would also never have gotten together with Kristina, the woman of my dreams, either. She is originally from Albania, and we have a second ~~2~~2nd home there on the beach overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. We've bought a boat too and still plan to buy that Double Decker bus soon.

Retirement to me is being able to do the things I choose to do, with the people that I want to be with. I can't wait for the next 10-year vision to unfold, building a charitable foundation, with the woman of my dreams, and experiencing the joy of making a difference in life.

One final thought. If you are struggling right now and if you are in a dark, cold place, I urge you to find an "Alex".

Specifically,:

- Speak up and ask for help. You will **not** be a burden on anyone. Don't let isolation win. Make that call now to a trusted person. They will be honoured that you have shared something so personal with them and that you trust them.

- Don't believe the lie in your head that the world would be a better place without you in it. Dozens of people will be devastated by you taking your own life and that will affect them for the rest of their lives. Suicide is a long-term solution to a short-term problem.

Alternatively, if life is ok for you, consider becoming an "Alex" to someone that you suspect is going through a hard time. Go for a coffee or lunch, and give them time and space to open up. Let them know you are there for them, any time, any place. Give them your listening ear, not instant fixes. You could be that one person they need to help turn things around. There is no better feeling than to know that you have been instrumental in saving someone's life, just ask my friend, Alex.

About the Author

Rob Goddard now owns 4 businesses and has transitioned from an operator to investor - a journey many entrepreneurs struggle to make. He has trained over 5,000 business leaders and brings over 35 years of experience of helping business owners finish one chapter in their lives and start a new one.

His original and largest business, EvolutionCBS Ltd, is a highly successful multi-million pound advisory firm in the UK and UAE. Since 2002, Rob has been responsible for the sale of nearly 400 privately-owned UK businesses, totalling over £2 billion in transaction values.

Rob also works on more philanthropic and altruistic projects and causes, especially in the area of depression and suicide. His signature talk, "Suicide to Success," is a very personal story of his own battle with depression, leading to a suicide attempt, then fighting back to win and triumph over adversity, to lead a fulfilling life, filled with fun!

Connect with Rob online and on social media:
www.robgoddard.co.uk
www.evolutioncbs.co.uk
www.evolutioncbs.co.uk/ae
www.kingmakergroup.co.uk
email: rob.goddard@robgoddard.co.uk
LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/robgoddard
Twitter: EvolutionCBS

Exercises and Journal Prompts to Create Positive Connections

During the stressful times of your life, resist the temptation to withdraw into a cave. Instead, give yourself 'permission' or a 'prescription' to connect with positive people at least once per week, if not more. This can act like a lifeline for you when times are tough, and when things are going well, it can be lifeline for your friends.

You don't want to waste time, but staying connected to either discuss your problems or to at least get a break from your own drama can help you. It is incredible how much better we often feel by a change of environment and an opportunity to talk about normal things as well as what is troubling us.

If you don't feel like talking, going for a walk in nature with a friend is a wonderful way to walk off tension and connect without feeling the need to talk about your problems. Being outside will also ground you, shift your stagnant energy, fill your lungs with fresh air and energize you and your friend.

When you can connect with people who are uplifting or supportive of you, you will bounce back faster. Positive people have the ability to make you feel as though a load has been lifted from your shoulders, because they believe anything is possible and they will champion you too.

List at least 3 people you can count on for uplifting conversation and nonjudgmental support.

What is it you love about them?

How do you feel when you spend time with them?

How can you show them how much you appreciate them?

If you are seeking more positive people in your life, the following tips will help you to be the lighthouse that brings positive people towards you:

Keep it real — show up as yourself and don't worry about people who don't like you or 'get you'. Friendships built on authenticity are the most precious gifts we can give each other.

Give as much as you get — what can you offer others, how can you brighten their day or make them smile?

Shine a light on them — take time to notice others and really see them. Tell them when they look amazing, or comment on how bright their eyes are.

Be interested, not just interesting — ask people questions about themselves and really listen to what they have to share. People are fascinating when you peek under the surface.

Transmit positive vibes — learn to see the lighter side of life and share this liberally with others. There is enough toxicity in the world, so send out positive vibes to offset them.

Respect your differences — we all resonate with different things. You can have delightful friendships with people from all walks of life when you celebrate and respect the differences between you.

Smile at strangers — have you noticed how often you receive a smile back when you smile at someone? Smiling at others from a genuine place of connection opens your heart and draws people to you. You can enhance someone else's day with a simple smile.

Phone a friend — call up a friend or family member, and just randomly tell them you are thinking about them and miss spending time with them.

Pick up the pen — take 5 minutes to write a letter or card and mail it to someone who isn't expecting it.

Share a book — after finishing a book you love, mail it to a friend you think might enjoy it too.

Send digital support — if you notice a co-worker struggling one day, send a text asking them how they are doing and offering support.

Perform a random act of kindness — You can be a positive force in the life of a total stranger. Many 12-step recovery programs emphasize being of service to support our own recovery. It can boost your mood and your resilience if you consider doing one of the following:

- leave a big tip and smile at your waiter
- offer to help someone who does not expect it, like a neighbor cleaning their home windows
- compliment someone at the grocery store or tell them how much you appreciate their work

- send a holiday card or birthday present to someone at work who is usually a bit lonely
- buy a sandwich and a warm coffee for a homeless person
- wipe the snow from your neighbor's car after a snowstorm
- leave a little card or some chocolate in your mailbox for the mail person

Journaling Prompts

Use the prompts below to get you started in your journaling practice or as topics of conversation with a friend or family member.

- What do you consider to be a healthy and enriching relationship for you? Think of meaningful relationships you've had throughout your life. Not just love relationships but any relationship that was important to you. Can you identify specific aspects that were particularly rewarding? For some, it could be a sense of closeness and intimacy, the ability to laugh together, ease in communication, shared values, a feeling of continual growth through that relationship, etc... What do you look for in relationships?
- With time and with age, we tend to let go of the relationships that are not really serving us and focus on smaller quantities, but higher quality. Are you currently holding on to some relationships that feel slightly toxic, stale, unhealthy, or unfulfilling? Why?

- Are there relationships in your life that you have neglected, but that are precious to you? Can you think of ways to mend and repair these relationships?

RESILIENCE TRAIT #9
Positive Emotion

Experiencing joy, gratitude, amusement and awe have been proven to help us build resources to deal with life's many challenges and negative emotional experiences. According to positive psychology researcher Jennifer Stellar, awe-inspiring experiences profoundly impact our physical and mental health.

Experiencing positive emotions opens our hearts, elevates our state, makes us feel inspired and helps us to bounce back from difficult circumstances. Even the simple act of smiling positively impacts our system, because it signals the body to release neurotransmitters such as endorphins, and this elevates our mood.

Positive emotions shift your nervous system from the sympathetic (fight or flight) state, to the parasympathetic (rest and digest) state. When you are relaxed, you slow down, take more in and your peripheral vision expands. Research shows that because of this, positive emotions literally expand your awareness of the wider world. This helps you to be more accepting and more in tune with the needs of other people, which explains why shared joyful experiences transcend boundaries and make us feel deeply connected with each other.

Have you noticed that when you feel joyful, you are better at pivoting and adjusting when life doesn't go as planned? This is because when you feel stressed, you have less tolerance for unexpected changes and reduced capacity for solution-focussed thinking.

The practice of gratitude is scientifically proven to boost positive emotions and help you to process difficult emotions more easily[11]. Gratitude also helps you to sleep better and live longer, as well as boosting your sense of self-worth. Dr. Martin Seligman, the forefather of the Positive Psychology movement, studied almost 600 people after they adopted one of five activities designed to boost happiness for a period of one week. He discovered that the most impactful practices were writing down great things that happened that day and expressing gratitude in the form of a gratitude letter.

The most staggering aspect of this study was that when participants who were followed up six months later, they were still much happier than before they started the study, even though they only did one week of daily gratitude practice. This is because starting a gratitude practice sends a message to our brain to start looking for the positive aspects of life, so even when you are in potentially stressful situations, you respond in a more positive way.

If you want to develop your resilience, perhaps by starting a gratitude practice, there are several suggestions in the tips section to help you boost your mood and celebrate life rather than fight with it. If you do start your own regular positive practice, you will also experience the

11 Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients? Evidence from a randomized controlled trial https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27139595
Feeling Thanks and Saying Thanks: A Randomized Controlled Trial Examining If and How Socially Oriented Gratitude Journals Work https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28263399

side effects of being more likable, more considerate of others and more appreciative of the relationships in your life.

If this seems like too much of a stretch, picture people in the public eye who have overcome adversity and emerged with a smile on their face. The people you picture will generally be the ones that already inspire you, so ask yourself what it is about them you like, and see how you can embody more of that quality too.

The story shared in this chapter by Sarah K Brandis, provides insight into how escaping the pattern of negative thinking and unconsciously driven 'doing' can lead to positive emotions. This is no trivial pursuit, as Sarah's story shows us. Once we start savoring the good things in life and deliberately generating positive emotions, we transform who we are. If you've had a stretch of many years — or decades — of being numb to your feelings, or only having bad feelings, this story will show you a gradual path to more resilience through tuning into positive emotion.

The 'Doing' Trap and Learning to Feel

Bby Sarah K Brandis

People like to introduce themselves with a title, something that sums up what they do and gives a first impression without too much explanation. Here are a couple I use:

"I'm a marketer."

"I'm an author."

Now there's another one I sometimes use, particularly when asked about my family:

"I'm an elective orphan."

I chose this title for myself because, as us Brits love to say, "It does what it says on the tin."

It explains where my family is – and the honest answer is, "who knows," followed by a shrug and a change of subject. It explains my situation in a heartbeat, without things getting too complicated, and without too much of that social awkwardness.

At the time of writing, I have been an elective orphan for 21 years, and to put your mind at rest, I've never doubted my decision once.

My family situation was toxic from a very young age – and for my parents, too. I'm sure that their relationship was toxic from long before I joined them. My father was the angry, intimidating type, but

often he could get his way just by being in the room – he rarely had to use physical force.

On the other hand, my mother was hands-on violent with me constantly. I always felt that she was afraid of my father, and was kicking downward, venting her frustration at me, the eldest child.

I spent most of my teenage years plotting my escape, then a few months before turning 17 I finally executed my plan and made a break for freedom. It was the bravest, most terrifying and biggest leap ever, and I couldn't have made a better call for myself. The thing about toxic relationships is that when we stay in them, we are the victim forever.

There comes a point where you have to claim your power, focus on what you can control rather than what you can't, and do what's right for you.

The thing about doing what's right for you is that the *'doing'* part can become a negative pattern too. Just like when I was stuck in a victim pattern, controlled by my parents, I later controlled myself with my 'doing' pattern.

Freedom, meet responsibility

I will explain what I mean soon, but let's start where my life truly began. No, not the day I was born, but almost 17 years later, the day that I left the family home for good.

I think for any teenager, suddenly being one hundred percent responsible for yourself would be overwhelming. Personally, I didn't

have a clue how to look after myself. I had been so controlled, I didn't even know how to use a can opener as in my mother's house, I wasn't supposed to touch things in the kitchen.

The first few years of my new life were purely about learning to survive. I focused on my life just one week at a time; keeping a roof over my head, finding ways to feed myself on my tiny budget from the low-paid jobs I worked, and trying not to be located by my parents.

Although my father had taken my running away as a huge insult and returned the sentiment by declaring me ex-communicated from the family, it was a different story for my mother. She would keep turning up at my accommodation or at my places of work, trying to convince me to come back to her house of horrors.

Just in case you are wondering if putting my story out into the world puts me at any risk of her turning up in my life again, then don't worry, it doesn't. Brandis isn't my family name. I changed my name by deed poll when I was 21. This seemed to solve the problem of her looking me up, and it also meant I got a cool name. I chose Brandis because it means 'fire sword'.

Who wouldn't want to be named after a flaming weapon? I got the documents through the post, and immediately felt like more of a badass.

So, it took me a few years to find my feet and even to find a real sense of self. As I had been controlled for so long, it really felt like I was starting from scratch, creating a whole new me.

But once I was ready, the *'doing'* began.

Coming from such a rocky start in life, I was really keen on making something big of my life. I wanted to prove that not only could I live without my parents, but also that I could thrive, do better without them – even prove that I WAS better than them. It would be fair to say I had a bit of a chip on my shoulder.

But you know, back then I wasn't very spiritually enlightened. I thought only the end result mattered – not my motivation for why I was pushing for growth and achievement.

My 'doing' list so far…

So, do you want to hear what I got up to over the next 15 or so years of my doing campaign? Okay, but just to warn you, it is a bit of a brag list.

In the years since I left home, I have:

- Changed my legal name by deed poll
- Had cosmetic surgery
- Moved across the country many times and briefly worked abroad
- Pole danced at some high-end Gentlemen's clubs
- Managed a central London live music venue and met a lot of famous bands
- Got a tattoo down the entire length of my spine
- Got married, and then swiftly divorced

- Ran the New York Marathon, without coaching or any help
- Ran several more full marathons
- Studied Neuroscience at University of Westminster, while holding down another very cool job and writing my first book for self-publication
- Made the leap to self-employment as a content marketer and writer

I could go on a bit more, but I'm already sounding like a huge bragger. In all honesty I didn't do all this stuff to brag about it to others. I promise I don't stand in my local pub telling everyone I meet that I run marathons or worked with rock stars. I did all these things to try and feel good about myself, to feel like I was somebody worthwhile, and to prove that I could do better without my parents.

Spoiler alert - it never really worked.

After all this stuff on the list, I still didn't feel good. To be honest, I only ever felt negative emotions, such as the feeling I hadn't done the things well enough.

When I crossed the finish line of the New York Marathon, I felt really disappointed in myself. Sure, I had finished the course, but I hadn't done it in the ludicrously naïve time goal I had set myself. So, I felt bad for a while, and then I went numb. This felt like unfinished business, and that has a lot to do with why I went on to run more marathons. I just couldn't scratch that itch and do things 'well enough' to feel happy or proud.

I wondered if I ever would get there.

It turned out that yes I would, but not in the way I expected. I would feel happy, satisfied, and proud of myself. And even better than that, I would stop overachieving to prove something to myself about being better than where I came from. I would start doing things because I felt passion for them.

Hold tight, I'm getting to that part of the story…

What goes up must come down

Of course, like with any good story, I had to hit rock bottom before I could fully learn my lesson and gain the level of understanding I needed to break my old pattern of doing.

It turns out I'm a classic example of somebody who burns out. In my old pattern I had two speeds;; stop and go. In a 'stop' period I was depressed. I first experienced this at the age of 22 when burning the midnight oil in a bar job combined with working dayshifts in a fast food restaurant led to me crawling into bed and not coming out for months.

After a few bumbled attempts at recovery and an adverse reaction to Fluoxetine, a particularly tricky antidepressant, I bounced back, determined never to crash like that again.

But it wasn't the things that had caused me to get into bed for months to begin with that I was determined not to repeat – I had pretty much forgotten I'd even worked myself that hard. It was the depression I intended never to repeat.

So, knowing that my 'stop' speed took me to the land of nothingness, feeling hopeless and living under a duvet, I focused on my other speed. Go.

Go mode

Going through life in go mode was crazy. It's how I got through that list of achievements above – but it was also what kept me from feeling.

So far in life I had done negative emotions, depression and dark thoughts under the duvet. I had done hopelessness and resentment back at my parent's home. I had done fear when I first stepped out into the world alone and claimed my freedom.

Now I was doing numb.

The amount of work I took on kept me out of the danger zone for depression, but it also kept me from smelling the flowers, feeling the sun on my face, and all of that good stuff.

It was only a few years ago that I crashed and burned my way out of this pattern. I stopped because I had to, but I'm really glad that happened to me.

Of course, there was a big, pivotal moment of awakening. *You didn't think I was going to leave you without one, did you?* Mine came at a work event, which was a little inconvenient. I mean, you don't ever want to cry uncontrollably at a work event, right?

Three years ago, when I had only just started working at Make Your Mark Global with Dr. Andrea, I was attending my first Speak From

The Heart workshop as a fairly new part-time team member. Sitting at my desk in the back corner of the room, trying to hide behind my laptop, I couldn't stop the tears running down my face.

I had been listening to one of our speakers, Deri Llewellyn-Davies, talking about his passion for adventuring, among the other aspects of his life, such as business and family. I was really struck by how 'wrong' I suddenly realized I had things. I became aware all at once that I had been numbly ploughing through and pursuing endless work goals for so long that I had forgotten to enjoy anything that I was doing.

I looked at my work schedule, a multi-colored spreadsheet of names and jobs. I had 14 clients on the go, every week on a regular basis. It was no wonder I had stopped feeling, it was the only way to keep going. As I sat there with tears rolling down my face, and really undoing the professional look I had dressed for that day, I started drafting an apology letter to the clients I now knew that I had to let go of.

I was burnt out and miserable — I just hadn't felt it until now.

A whole new world

Now that I can feel joy, and happiness, and all those good things, I am in a much better place mentally. I have to look back and think about what I was meant to learn from this experience. For me, it seems that it all had a lot to do with fear.

When I paused long enough to listen to what the world wanted to teach me – I started to finally understand. All the achievements in

the world are nothing if you can't feel them. I needed to learn to feel positive emotions. I had to stop being scared to let them in, in case they made me soft or less ambitious. I had to stop being afraid of resting, standing still and listening. I had to trust that feeling good wouldn't leave me vulnerable to a toxic person like my mother swooping in and stealing my happiness.

As I listened to my thoughts unravel, I realised that I had been so tightly clenched all this time because I was afraid. The 'lesson' or 'truth' I had learned in my house of horrors family home was that joy was there to be stolen, snatched away, and all that I deserved was misery. I had to unlearn this.

Although it's now been 21 years since I physically set foot over my mother's threshold, I had been mentally trapped there for most of my 'free' adult life.

Isn't that funny? How someone can be physically uncaged but mentally still stuck in their prison… But this is what I had to understand before I could change. I had to know that it is safe to feel positive emotions.

Not only is it safe, but it is essential if you want to be a happy, resilient, present person. Please take it from me – nobody can rob you of happiness like you can yourself.

Take a moment to let that sink in.

At the age of 38 I have spent more years out in the world, in charge of myself than those 16 years and 9 months I spent living in a controlling, toxic environment. Yet I've only been truly happy for the last few years or so.

Let that sink in too.

At the end of the day, it's not really about how much you do or don't do. Obviously, there are extremes to watch out for. Do too much and you will burn out. Don't do anything and the lack of purpose will lead to depression. But within the standard range of 'doing', it's not about what you do, but about what you feel.

I started by finding a coach that I trusted to help me talk my way to understanding what I was beginning to realise about my fear of feeling. From there, it was an exercise in~~s~~ feeling one small thing at a time. I still practice this today – pausing for a moment to feel the small, everyday good things, like my cats greeting me at the door, or the smell of ~~a~~ fresh coffee.

Does what you are doing make you feel good? Does it light you up with passion and feel like you are in flow? Great, ~~that 's~~that's what you want. That's what writing does for me – and not what my old jobs ever did – not that hanging out with bands wasn't cool, but it didn't make me feel those positive emotions in the same way that writing does. When you start feeling, you will soon know what you are here on planet earth to do.

I know what I'm here to do now, and I know what brings me joy. I absolutely love writing, and I know I'm here to share the lessons from my life through this very medium.

I love running – even more so now that I am able to enjoy my runs without scrutinizing my speed or always making it about a specific goal. It's okay to just run and to enjoy it, and when I am in a timed race, I know that my time doesn't define my worth.

I've also discovered a huge love for cats that I didn't know was in me until recent years. Sure, I've always liked them since I was a child, but I didn't really bond with a cat until I was over my 'doing' phase enough to sit still with a cat and appreciate all the wisdom they have to share with us. Seriously, if you need help slowing down or taking better care of yourself, just go talk to a cat. They know what it's all about.

So that's my story of going from doing to feeling – but it's just the end of a chapter, not the end of my learning and growing. Life isn't something you figure out once and then that's the end. We need to wake up and keep learning every day. The journey is the destination, and the destination is the journey.

About the Author

Sarah K Brandis is a Rehab Assistant for Stroke and Trauma survivors, based in London, U.K. Growing up as an 'Elective Orphan' she writes about her experiences of entering the adult world without a family for support. This year she is training for her first 100 kilometre Ultra Marathon.

Follow Sarah on Instagram: @run_ride_rehab_write

Exercises & Journal Prompts for Beating The Blues by Increasing Positive Emotions

As you have discovered in this chapter, experiencing joy, gratitude, amusement and awe help you to build your resources, so that you can deal with life's challenges and negative emotional experiences.

The following tips are all wonderful methods for accessing more positive emotions and shifting negative ones. It is beneficial to let yourself feel your emotions, good and bad, so that you build your resilience by learning how to process them. Sometimes giving yourself permission to cry makes you feel a lot lighter and less overwhelmed. Remember that emotions are just energy in motion, so let them move through you to increase your emotional capacity to feel positive emotions more often.

Many studies conclude that the daily practice of writing in a journal about 3 things that went right in your day, can help you create more gratitude and happiness. As you reflect on these, take time to really feel the good feelings that arise. This opens your heart and increases your sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

My family and I enjoy watching inspiring TED talks to remind ourselves that our problems are small and that there are many ways to overcome the blues. Some of the speakers make you feel incredibly lucky, and it is humbling to watch them and hear about their work and passions.

Some people enjoy watching videos of baby animals doing funny or heroic things to bring a sense of wonder, delight and awe back to their day. Even watching nature documentaries can be awe-inspiring, as you take in phenomenal scenery and marvel at our incredible planet.

Watching comedy films, listening to funny podcasts, or reading a joke a day makes you smile and helps you forget any worries for a while. This boosts your mood and floods your system with happy hormones like serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin.

Hugging someone for at least 10 seconds can provide a feeling of comfort, safety and connection plus gives you a brain boost of oxytocin to help you stay upbeat. Touch is a powerful way of connecting to other humans and also helps you to get out of your head!

Move your body. Go for a walk or a run, or do some yoga. Put on a mood-boosting playlist and dance like no one is watching. This releases feel-good endorphins into your system, shifting stress, boosting your energy and elevating your sense of 'joie de vivre'.

Celebrate small wins. We overlook so many of the small steps we take, focussing only on the ones we didn't take. Sometimes even getting out of bed is a win. Other days you feel like you can climb a mountain. Celebrate it all and remind yourself how incredible you are to show up daily.

Use your tech to support you. We always have our smart phones these days, so use this to serve you. Set a couple of alarms to go off at intervals during the day and change the text to something positive. Use a phrase such as 'time to smile at yourself' or choose words that resonate, such as 'grateful, present, joyful'.

One of my favorites mood boosters comes from wearing a SMILER — a magical instrument of joy created by a beautiful Icelandic artist and author named Gegga whose story is presented in Chapter 4. Inspired by a quote by Thich Nhat Hanh she created a little helper that when put into your mouth makes you smile.

"If you smile five times per day for NO REASON, you can change your life in 90 days."

So whatever tool you use, find a reason to smile or experience awe and wonder several times each day.

RESILIENCE TRAIT #10
Purpose + Meaning in Life

Why do you get up in the morning? What is it that gives your life meaning? Do you feel a sense of purpose in what you are doing?

Having a purpose to live for, or what the Japanese call "Ikigai" has been clinically shown to correlate with less stress-related disease and longer life. In Okinawa in Japan, home to some of the longest-living people in the world, there is no word for retirement. The Okinawans honor their Ikigai daily and it is their reason to get up each morning.

Part of the reason purpose is helpful for our health is that it causes changes in the brain that allow us to adapt to stress. Purpose in life is linked to improved prefrontal brain function and better adaptability to changing situations. Studies show that connecting with a purpose beyond mundane life can help you reduce anxiety and aggression following stressful events.

Cultivating a sense of purpose comes naturally to some people and seems like an indulgence to others, but without it, we tend to wither and lose interest in life as it ceases to have meaning.

Humans are teleological, which means we're naturally wired to move towards targets. It keeps our brains engaged, expands our thinking and gives us a sense of how our daily activities contribute to the bigger picture. Without purpose it can be hard to fight the urge to stay in bed every morning. What gets us up is the inner knowing we have to contribute in some way.

Our teleological drive also points to our capacity to find more fulfillment when we focus on contributing to something far bigger than ourselves. This capacity is a key factor to developing resilience, as when we are dedicated to service rather than satisfaction, we are strongly incentivized to keep going, even when we want to give up.

Your sense of meaning may come from a tangible, measurable activity or aim, or it may arise from a deeper sense of connection to your more esoteric spiritual side. Studies have shown that those who are more spiritual tend to be more resilient as well. This may be because people with a strong sense of spirituality feel supported by an energy bigger than themselves, or it could be due to the connections this fosters in their lives.

Spiritual meaning does not have to be esoteric. It can also come from regular excursions in nature, a dedicated yoga practice, love of surfing, women's circles or other meaningful pursuits. The whole point of finding meaning and purpose is to find something that fills you up, because when you have inner fulfillment and intrinsic happiness, you no longer rely on external circumstance to dictate your state.

Think about what brings you the biggest sense of fulfillment in your life. What brings a smile to your face when you remember it? Is there an activity you do regularly that you would happily do for the rest of

your life? What or who lights you up and can you identify the reason why?

Our first step in this final chapter is a truly epic and incredible story about how being connected to a deep sense of purpose helped the author dig deep and find the resilience he needed, when all the odds were stacked against him on Mount Everest. Prior to developing his sense of adventure and purpose, Deri Llewellyn-Davies was working hard in a job he liked, but he felt trapped on the hamster wheel of life. Following two huge life blows, he shares how he started extricating himself from this life and embarking on a more meaningful path. This powerful story consolidates each chapter in this book in a relatable way, giving you the context for how each one interweaves with the others to make you hugely resilient.

For our second story by Homani, poetry and connecting to the stars gave her a sense of purpose. Homani's beautiful poem "The Star Money" gives an insight into her heart and life. She and her students tap into ancient star wisdom while drawing on Homani's knowledge of yoga, Vedic astrology, and Ayurveda.

The next story in this chapter is by a Dutch author, JOYce Petra Melendez, who traveled a twisting and winding path towards her life mission. After a terrible cycling accident in her native Netherlands and a near-death experience, JOYce found herself wondering who she really was. Later, as an adult, she developed a life-transforming therapy called Connected Listening which she has made her mission to share with anyone who needs it.

Our final story, by Busie Dhlodo, highlights how aligning with a spiritual purpose can lead to resilience and inspiration. Busie grew up

and lived in poverty in Zimbabwe but through sheer hard work and determination managed to put herself through university there, excelling all along the way. She had high aspirations though and was determined to go to London Business School. Be inspired by how Busie overcame all odds with her grit, tenacity, and amazing work ethic.

Purpose-led Resilience
By Deri Llewellyn-Davies

Resilience, I believe is built, crafted, and shaped moment by moment, over many years. And it's powered by purpose.

I also believe that "life is a great adventure". Adventure itself just so happens to be one of the core elements of my life, and is the title of my first book. However, when I talk about adventure from here on in please substitute YOUR greatest calling whether that is art, yoga, sports or gardening (I like that one, too).

I think deep down a lot of us desire to live a great life. We have a desire to do more, to have more, to be more, and to truly find our purpose. But life isn't filled with magic fairy dust. There is a common delusion many buy into that says when everything is in place, one day, all will be rosy. People think they can seek "happiness" or "joy" or "fulfillment" and upon finding it, somehow it will be the permanent emotion from that point on.

I don't buy that. I once did. But I don't now.

Don't get me wrong, by building that kind of life you should experience way more positive feelings than negative.~~,~~ H~~h~~owever, what most people aren't preparing you for is what happens when adversity strikes, when those bad moments come. It's how you deal with the crappy times that will define the good times. That's resilience and it needs to be built.

A great life needs to be architected. A full, rich and complex life does anyway. If you seek a simple life, I honor you. I sometimes think of what a beautiful existence it would be as a monk, tribesman, or nomad. However, I have chosen a different life, I seek depth in my life, I seek travel, I seek adventures, deep relationships with those closest to me. I love properties and architecture and my homes and gardens, I love nature and I love business. I don't want to give it up and be a monk, yet. I seek it all, all life's great experiences, all life's rich tapestry. And if I want it all I have found I need to architect it.

I cover this concept of architecture within a body of my work called Diamond Life Design, so I won't go deeper here on it. Visit www.DiamondLifeDesign.com for more.

I can say categorically I haven't met anyone who appears to have it all that hasn't consciously designed it, though appearances can be deceiving. I also haven't met anyone who found it all rainbows and fairy dust on that journey. No one finds only experiences of beautiful emotions, feelings of love, joy and happiness.

Now don't misunderstand me here, there have been tonnes of amazing emotions, and feelings along the way, and we can absolutely architect many, many more, and we can get a massively high percentage of ours lives in the amazing zones of high energy, high feeling. However, if we don't learn to manage ourselves when the shit storms come, when the destructive feelings kick in, when you're on your knees, that's when we will quit. That's when we settle. That's when we don't drive forward to the dream, but rather when we retreat to safety and mediocrity. And to get through the storms of life, you need courage, you need to master your emotions, master your mind, and develop resilience.

I always like to get to the basics and to the essence of things quickly, so what is resilience? According to the dictionary it is "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness."

So, is it a trait we are born with? Or do we learn this? Well by definition if we never put ourselves in tough situations, if we never stretch or don't face difficulties then, no, we won't develop resilience. Now life has a funny way of throwing some stuff at you that you didn't ask for, but if it's only once in a while you are more likely to break than develop resilience.

So, resilience is like a muscle built over time by consistent use. The more I push, the more I strive, the more failure I face, and the more tough times I ride through the more resilient I become. Becoming resilient in one area of life can bleed into all areas of life, but again this is best done consciously and architected.

I was on stage in Stockholm, Sweden, and during the Q&A portion at the end of my presentation a lady asked, "what do you define as mastery?" It was one of those "success" audiences who are usually hyped by positive thinking and not mentioning any dark side. And I responded quite flippantly and unprepared: ;

-"It's being in the middle of a shit storm in life, having no idea what to do, having no way out, and not able to see how this can possibly benefit you, and being able to remain centered and calm, with strong inner hope and faith, that all will be ok."

But what trait drives someone to have that kind of mastery, that kind of resilience? I propose that it's living from a strong sense of purpose.

Commented [SL22]: Did they mean "with"?

Let's be honest, living life fully in all areas is not an easy thing to do. So many people say to me, "Yes, but I don't have discipline, or money or time" or some other excuse. And I always respond the same way, the only thing you're lacking is a burning desire and a massive purpose. When you have those, nothing can stop you!

I really do get that we are all under pressure from different commitments whether they may be from work, family, financial constraints or the many stressors of life. As such, the things we would REALLY love to do with our lives go to the bottom of the list, and remain a fantasy. For you to step up and prioritise, your WHY needs to be massive. With-out that, it will be a fad and it won't last. Like the way diets and the use of gym memberships don't stick.

Nearly 15 years ago, when I began this great adventure that I am now playing full out, I was on the hamster wheel, the rat race, the corporate ladder. I was working hard in a career and whilst it wasn't a big bad career and I wasn't miserable in my job, I had become trapped. I kind of liked what I did; there was no disillusion with what I was doing, I was good at business and was going up the ranks quite rapidly. But that is how things can become a one-track journey.

I was working ridiculous hours, commuting a long distance, working in the city and living to social excess. I had always played rugby but had suffered an injury and had lost a lot of my fitness. I was overweight, my health had gone, my relationship was volatile and my soul was on burnout – there was something massively missing, there was something I was yearning for, something deep.

To find purpose you have to start by going deep and looking inside to find out what the piece is that is missing for you. I think most of

us are yearning for something, searching and pondering the inevitable questions such as, "what are we here for?" and "what is it all about?" Ultimately we want to know, "what is our purpose in life?" I believe it's not just one thing, our life purpose shows up in multiple dimensions. And it begins inside, not outside.

I had come to the point where I didn't recognise myself and didn't know who I was. Shortly after I was hit by two intense blows, the end of my rugby career and the death of my father. I think a lot of us don't make tough life decisions when we could or should; it takes something catastrophic in our lives to nudge us in the right direction. For me that was certainly the case, and the death of my father was ultimately what made me think and led me to live purposefully.

My father was a great man and a great influence in my life. Like many of us that have lost someone to cancer, it happened really fast. In the weeks that followed his death, what struck me the hardest was that my father had died without fulfilling his dreams.

This sticks with me, and I think it will continue to stick with me until the day I die.

My father confided in me during the last days of his life that he had been a fool and that he regretted not going out there and doing what he wanted in life. He always said he was going to do this, he was going to that, he was going to travel, he was going to do this with my mum – and he never did, it was always tomorrow, someday or whenever. And Someday isn't in the calendar.

When your father admits he thinks that he has been a fool, had massive regrets and that he was dying with his dream intact, it makes you sit up, shut up and get shit done. That was the point where I

decided 'I'm going to live a life of great adventure, with no regrets'. But this meant that I had to be prepared to make tough decisions along the way because living a life with no regrets is not the easy path. I was resilient in business, no doubt, as I had pushed and risked there, but I hadn't translated that muscle into other areas of my life.

I started by exploring myself. "Know thyself," was good enough for the Oracle of Delphi so I figured it was a good place to start. After much personal exploration and evolution with great teachers such as Tony Robbins, John De Martini and Brendon Burchard, I realized something was missing. It was a visualisation of a future me, an older me, with my grandchildren sitting on my knee (at this point I didn't even have kids) and I realised I had nothing to say. I imagined saying how Granddad did these big business deals but talking them through business acquisitions didn't really fit. That's when I saw part of my bigger purpose, my BIG WHY, Adventure…

I always wanted to be an adventurer, but figured that was for some other super breed of a person, not an average guy like me. What BS and what crappy excuses!? Then suddenly I saw life for what it was, a great adventure, nothing less.

When I say adventure, at that point in my life I had decided to say 'screw it', if I'm going to go for adventure I was going to go big. I wanted to experience the best the world has to offer and really explore this wonderful world we live in.

This lead to my Bucket List which I have dubbed "The Global Adventurer's Grand Slam" which included the 7 Summits (The Highest mountain on each of the 7 continents), the 2 poles, the Marathon Des Sables (6 marathons back to back across the Sahara

carrying everything you need to survive on your back), the jungle Marathon (6 Marathons across the Amazon jungle) and an IronMan thrown in to the mix! No one had done it before in that context, so I was going for a bit of a world first and that's where the journey began. It started with just a mere dream, as all things do, and then I went to work.

The thing you~~r~~ have to be prepared for when you step into your purpose is that not everyone will feel like you do about what you want to do, and you might not get the support you imagined getting. Not everyone dear to me supported me., M~~m~~y mother, God bless her, who supported and was an inspiration to me throughout my childhood was positively anti--everything I did (and still is), because they're such dangerous feats. You will need resilience here.

Also before you think I am some super human, then nope, I played rugby in the forwards, was 17 stone and could run well over 20 yards, usually into someone. I am asthmatic, and flat--footed. So, I needed a lot of resilience mentally to step forward from this decision.

As I write this I am very proud to say I have now completed the Marathon Des Sables, The IronMan and 6 of the world's highest mountains, cumulating in an epic attempt on -Everest.

But along this journey things will hit you, things won't go your way, you will face your fears, and this is when you need resilience the most. But purpose is what holds you steady. I think my epic on Everest probably is the greatest metaphor for this.

So, imaging you're on Everest, you are fully prepared. Over 10,000 hours of work has gone into that mountain, you have scaled 5 of the

7 summits already, you are ready, you are prepared, you are fit. Everything in your control. That's where I was in 2015.

I was on the final route to advanced base camp (ABC) on the north side of the mountain. It was the bBiggest day so far, this was THE PUSH. We were starting the day at 5900m, already at the dizzying heights of Kilimanjaro, where people end their journey, and pushing to 6500m and advance base camp. Each step now was a labour, and we were all sucking in the oxygen hard up there.

We soon got onto a main Rongbuk glacier, and the slog began proper.

We were all just getting on with our own mental activity. As soon as we got on the glacier, we split a little. The front party went ahead, comprisedosing of former British Special Air Service and the elite parachute regiment. The back party lingered a bit, with the videographer taking advantage of the beauty and the amazing day and I kinda pitched in the middle on my own. I needed thinking time alone.

The valley was immense, awe inspiring… and was framed each side by magnificent penitentes, the massive 100-200 foot high ice pinnacles. Such awe, such wonder.

The Rongbuk glacier is like the biggest ice sculpture in the world. Designed and built by mother nature,; the views of the glacier and the Himalayan peaks are some of the most dramatic in Tibet. And right along the middle moraine of the glacier is a rough trail that weaves across the back of the beautiful beast.

It was a beautiful day and the skies were blue... Then the world moved.

I was on my own, immersed in my own thoughts and my own mental battle. I stopped for a drink and some food. I swung my pack off my back and as I was about to place it on the ground, but the ground moved from under me so violently it knocked me from my feet.

Suddenly I was riding a bucking bronco and to lose would mean I would be thrown from the face of the earth. I laid down spread eagle on the ground. And grabbed the rocks to hold on. I gripped and held on for dear life.

My mind was racing now, what was going on? Am I having a dizzy fit, has my mind succumbed to altitude and is this HAPE? (High Altitude Pulmonary Edema plus swelling of the brain)?

No. It felt too extreme, too real. Perhaps the whole glacier is moving. Shit, the glacier is on the move! No, this is too violent.

Just hold on Deri – hold on.

Then after about a minute the movement eased and then stopped.

I still hung onto the ground for dear life, drawing blood.

And then there was nothing but total silence. A void in the very fabric of the atmosphere.

Then it began.

For any mountaineer the biggest fear above any is an avalanche. And now just seconds after the greatest mountain on earth had been shaken like a rag doll, the avalanches began. It began like a thunder,

a deep rumble like the very bowels of the earth are~~is~~ moving. But in this case there wasn't just one, there were avalanches happening all around.

The entire Rongbuk valley avalanched.

Then the cracking and splintering sounds as the ice penitentes started to crack and smash, 200 ft high. Each side of the glacier. Armageddon was happening all around. And yet there I was, sat upon the glacier, raised above it all, on the only safe part of the mountain, witness to it all. In the palm of God. Witnessing the raw power of mother earth.

I stayed where I was, witness to the continuing rumblings, thunder all around and cracking. Until many minutes later the sounds subsided and there was an eerie silence again. There I sat, stunned, confused and shockingly present.

I felt dizzy, slightly sea sick after riding the wave, slightly unsteady on my feet. So I sat, I drank and I ate, and I waited.

I was waiting for my colleagues to catch up to see if they had any more insight than me. And to reaffirm that what just happened wasn't in my mind, I was still questioning if high altitude had taken its toll and I had gone mental. 15 minutes must have passed until they came over the ridge in front. And they were soon approaching, saying "s***! What was that??!! That was mental…." And yet still none~~t~~ of us had registered what indeed it was.

So after some chat and swapping of war stories on how wild the ride was we needed to crack on, we still had a long way to go. We couldn't sit there and cry and mope; we had to carry on. We were there for a purpose. We had to move and we did.

Resilience

The next part of the day was brutal, and over 4 hours later we finally got to ABC.

I have never been so happy to get to camp. We had done it and there, right in front of us was the mother goddess herself, Everest, and the Nnorth Ceol. A place of legend and of my dreams for years. A euphoric moment as I breathed in the crisp cold air of the Ceol.

Then the euphoria was to be shattered.

We had no idea quite what we were in. But after a satellite phone call back to the real world, it became apparent that we were in the epicenter of what was turning out to be one of the biggest earthquakes to hit the Himalayas infor over 100 years. Already many had died in Nepal, and some of our comrades had died on the south side of the mountain. We would subsequently find out that over 9000 people died that day, includingand 19 climbers, making it the worst death toll on Everest ever and one of the worst and most devastating natural disasters in human history. And we were in the epicentre of the earthquake.; Nno wonder it was so brutal.

So, what do we do?

We were now 6500m up on the north face of Everest. Putting that in context helicopters can't fly that high so there is no rescue. This is where two decades of resilience kicks in.

So now all the points of resilience come into play. Everything you have learnt in this book.

Top 10 Traits of Resilient People

1. Time to take a breath, realize who I am, what I stand for and why I'm here. Work I had done for years in meditation.

2. Time for flexibility, all plans as we knew them meticulously worked out are now out of the window. Rigidity won't help us now. Time for plan B.

3. Time to be adaptable, really adaptable. As there was no precedent, no one in history had faced this before.

4. Compassion is now critical for all those who died, for our sherpas and their families, and for ourselves. Time to dig in deep, really deep.

5. Still hold the faith, there is hope and optimism in the face of darkest moment. Now is where positivity is key.

6. Confidence built over 10,000 hours of prep and facing so many adversities on previous mountains.

7. "I can do this, this is my time". Positive self-talk, built over a decade so the voice is clear and my friend.

8. Team, I have the best in world hand selected.

9. Remember the wonder and the awe at the rawness of Everest. And the blessings of being witness to something so magnificent.

10. Finally purpose.

So, I spent 3 days and 3 nights on the north face., A~~a~~ number of my comrades retreated, leaving~~ft~~ 4 of us. We were in, we were ready., D~~d~~espite a massive set back, this can still be done is what we told ourselves. Despite the odds, despite the circumstance, fueled by purpose, with a fabric of resilience.

We were eventually forced to retreat by the Chinese authorities, and had to self-rescue to get ourselves back to base camp, but that's a longer story. What's important here, is that in that darkest moment, I saw light. I was able to bounce back, was able to clearly make a call to still be fully in, to regroup and confidently and purposefully push on. That mountain was so engrained in my deepest purpose.

That ability was crafted over a decade and continues to build every day. Resilience is built in the small moments, in every set back we face. How we face every little thing is how we face everything. So face each set back, each fall, each knock, using all the tools in this book. Build day by day, moment by moment, and when the big tests come you'll be ready. Resilience is your birthright, but like any skill you need to develop it and you can only do so by pushing the boundaries of life, or in my words by living life as a great adventure and being true to your purpose.

About the Author

Deri Llewellyn-Davies is an internationally acclaimed speaker, author, adventurer and entrepreneur who is transforming lives around the world with his core focus on Business, Life Architecture, and High Pperformance. Deri shares his love of adventure in his first book, Life's Great Adventure, which includes the hidden emotions he experienced as he climbed six of the highest mountains in the world, run the Marathon des Sables, and completed an IronMan. Deri also lived to tell his tale of "No Regrets" after surviving the devastating earthquake while climbing Everest in the spring of 2015 as shared in his hugely popular TEDx presentation.

In a career spanning two decades, Deri's business expertise has included roles on elite corporate boards, including through four-billion--dollar companies up to European executive board level. Having run several of his own businesses, advising over 300 boards and speaking to thousands of business owners he brings his audiences deep insights with both a global and local perspective on business and life.

Deri's signature methodologies, outlined in his business book, *Strategy on a Page*, and his life architecture model Diamond Life Design, demystify strategic and complex concepts and enable people to gain valuable, practical and actionable principles they can apply immediately.

Commented [SL23]: I'm assuming he wanted this to be capitalized in the context.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Visit Deri online at www.Deri.live and check out Diamond Life Design at www.DiamondLifeDesign.com

Tips to Banish Aimlessness and Find Meaning In Life

It is entirely possible for us all to find a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Purpose and meaning can come from the smallest of things — indulging our hobbies, taking pleasure in walking, enjoying conversations and looking after others.

You can bring a sense of purpose to your existing daily activities just by showing up more authentically and being fully present. Sometimes the meaning we seek is right there under our nose — like learning optimism, it is all about reframing your idea about what meaning has to look like.

A wonderful proactive way to create more meaning and fulfillment in your life is by dedicating some time to a pursuit that gets you out meeting new people and serving a bigger cause.

This opens your heart and makes you feel better about yourself. There is something incredibly powerful about contributing to something far bigger than ourselves and we underestimate how this can improve not only the lives of those we are serving, but also our own.

Explore this by connecting with likeminded people or volunteer for a cause in line with your values. If you can contribute in a way that enables you to fully express yourself, or uses your strengths and

talents in service to others, you will increase your sense of meaning and feel a sense of freedom.

The Random Acts of Kindness practice from positive psychology includes doing something nice for someone - ideally a complete stranger - without seeking any recognition or reward. For example, you can put coins into the parking meter of a car you notice has an expired meter, or you can 'pay it forward' to the next customer when you next treat yourself to a coffee.

As an extension of this idea, find a way that you can boost someone else's day by offering them a helping hand, supporting them in some way or maybe sending them a card with a positive message. There are wonderful examples on social media of people leaving random love notes in public places for people to find and even though they will never know who finds them, it is easy to imagine the delight they must feel from doing this each day!

If you feel as though you need more time to be still, so that you can connect with your sense of purpose more often, find a way that you can commit to this by taking one small step. Perhaps you could start a 3--minute meditation practice, or give yourself permission to go for a ten minute walk each day, during which you don't look at your phone and you notice your surroundings. By taking time to yourself on a regular basis, you will nourish yourself and boost your sense of fulfillment.

Having read through these ideas, notice which ones make you feel a sense of hope and possibility. List one thing you could do today inspired by something you have read, that would make this day worth living.

The Star Money, A Sequel
By Homani

The Star-Money is all gone.
The riches that rained from the sky
Collected by an unnamed orphan
White linen girl
Deep in the forest back then.

The Star-Money has run out.
Drowned in indigenous blood
Star-Money crushed under
The hammer of Adam Smith
Blown out as toxic winds
From the intestines of the industrial revolution.

Star-Money the Nazis could not confiscate
Reinvested in the New Economy
Pointless reparations
For lullabies never sung.

Here she stands, orphaned woman.
Haggard basins of her hips
Exclamation marks,
eked out towards the sky.
Searching for that great
great,-great-great-great
grandmother

Among the stars.

Closing her tired eyes,
She hears a voice from within.
Sound of rough fabric & rust
'The wealth of the stars lies in
Feeding Old Mother Earth.'
Broke, she stands
Empty handed.

What shall she give?

There's a tingling deep down in her belly
Juicy fruit of emotion
Abundance of her moon.
Squatting she opens
Harvest of a month flowing
Liquid ruby
Feeding the earth.

In humming vibrations
The earth dawns chanting
The Nagaraj dispatches his envoys
Snake beings of magical grace
Alchemical gemstone eyes'
mystical dance.
Earth & blood bathing in starlight
Shining tears stream down her cheeks
Mother-of-pearl
all around on the ground.

Soma
From source.
Black velvet womb.

~ Homani

The resilience of the star gazer

Growing up in the Black Forest, Germany, 'The Star-Money' used to be Homani's most beloved fairy tale of the Grimms Brothers collection.

As a little girl, she used to climb on a table at night that had been placed under the roof-window of her bedroom. Reaching up to the window frame on her tiptoes, she'd inhaled the aromatic scent of the forest and conversed with her beloved stars glittering in the night sky.

Under the gravitational pull of earthly life, the dreamy love for the stars went underground.

From the depth of the forest, Homani carried her heart's flame into the churning mills of international environmental activism, based in Holland and South Africa.

The amalgam of pain and passion she lived through in professional activism taught her that fighting for a better world would just increase the density of suffering. How can people who burn themselves out save the world? She decided to reconnect with her mother's legacy of Ayurveda and yoga, shifting from fighting to healing.

Homani emigrated to Israel, facing her family's holocaust trauma. Slowly, she moved from pain-sourced struggle for a better world to joyfully living the world she dreams of into being. She works as an Ayurveda therapist and does fieldwork in an NGO for psychological rehabilitation. Slowly, steadily she walks on the path of yoga, giving it shape as it passes through her.

For the last eight years, Homani has been living in a small, picturesque community village in the hills of Galilee. Between rocks and wildflowers, sunrises above the lake of Galilee, sacred music circles, and native American sweat lodges, she finally found the space for listening to the stars again. Her forever family had been there all the time, when she'd been racing through the world. Stars as living beings, descending from a young girl's imaginary heights to join our embodied dance of creation on earth...

About the Author

Inspired by Jyotisha, Vedic Astrology, Homani founded the Creative Nakshatra Center. Via Zoom, she accompanies students, most of whom are based in India, in getting to know Indian moon signs and their symbols, mythology and archetypes through art work. In small intimate groups, Homani and her students meet the wisdom of the stars, tapping into their own intuitive knowing while painting, singing, cooking, carving, or whatever creative medium they connect to.

The group members then support one another in the process of manifesting their starlight in down-to-earth practical projects in service to the world.

The above poem "The Star-Money, A Sequel" is Homani's auto-biographical attempt to express her "Rahu", one of the shadow planets of Indian astrology. She perceives him as representing her soul's craving for being of service to the world during embodied work with the stars.

You can learn more about Homani's study programs at the Creative Nakshatra Center and have a look at her creative online student galleries at:

www.vedic-healingarts.com

You are the Key to Set Yourself Free

By JOYce Petra Melendez

It's the summer of 1972, I am 12 years old and living with my family in the Netherlands in my birthplace of Arnhem. It's a beautiful August day, where the birds twitter joyfully and I can feel the warm sunshine on my skin while the wind plays gently with my hair.

I am riding home on my bike after swimming with my two best friends in the big city swimming pool. I am on the Apeldoornseweg, one of the very busy main roads of the city, where the traffic circulates with high speed, up and downhill. I am racing home on my bike full speed downhill on the bicycle path between the street and the sandy sidewalk, dressed in a red striped shirt and a short gray skirt. Fully enJOYing this moment! Feeling totally free and liberated.

Several hours later, I am in a coma laying in a hospital bed floating above my own body.

Having a near death experience

I capture everything that is happening around me while a busy crowd of doctors and nurses talk loudly about how seriously I am injured. The nurses try to remove my red striped shirt from around my injured head and bleeding body while I deeply long for them to wash away the sand from all my open wounds. Sand from the sidewalk I landed on after being hit by a car that apparently lost control and swerved into the bicycle path.

Doctors and nurses are all totally unaware that they are only causing me more pain, until they finally decided to simply cut off my favorite red-striped shirt. Looking down at my body, feeling total impotence and thinking, "How stupid they all are! They really don't see or hear me, or even sense that I can feel, hear and see everything." I feel very lonely and helpless, not wanting to be in my body at all! These are feelings that I already know very well, a longing for inner peace.

Suddenly I hear a voice from above say, "I am sorry, Joyce Petra. You really have to go back to remember who you truly are."

"But I don't want to go back to my life. I really don't. Please let me go to the Light. It is really too much for me. Please, please".

"I am sorry, Joyce Petra, I do see and hear you, really. But I cannot let you go further into the Light. I know you have everything you need inside to fulfill your life's mission by remembering who you truly are."

From surviving to awakening

And so, my life continues for 20 years or so.

Deep down feeling empty and different, longing to feel "normal" instead of still resonating with the nickname "UFO" that my big brother gave me in our childhood. He gave me that name because of me talking about things that I really couldn't know and for the wise words that simply came out of my mouth at such a young age. Words that clearly helped my mother when she herself felt lost, while in the meantime I was feeling very alone deep down.

By my early thirties I was a wise, people-pleasing "UFO," living an ongoing struggle with myself without understanding why I wasn't able to shift things. I constantly tried to suppress, deny, and ignore my unpleasant feelings and negative thoughts.

Simply going on surviving and making the best out of my life, I ignored the dark inside and only focused on the positive. But deep down I was longing for more. Feeling insecure and unworthy, ignoring my own needs and desires I unconsciously believed that it was my task to make others happy. Until that day in my thirties that I'll never forget.

It was just an ordinary day in my life where I was doing some shopping in the center of the city. And suddenly, I saw a woman in the reflection of a shop window. She looked quite friendly and even good-looking, but what hit me were her eyes. Looking directly from that window into my eyes, mirroring a deep--stored emptiness.

I watched her image as if she were a stranger. I really didn't feel connected to her. But she was me! A sudden shocking and even overwhelming conscious awareness hit me in my soul. I realized that I was living as a distant outsider in my own body and heart and not feeling connected to myself. As if I were living in a body that wasn't mine.

This left me with a new feeling of conscious emptiness and loneliness. And the following questions came to mind:

Who am I truly and totally? Who is that woman inside that nice-looking outer picture?

Something had truly shifted inside of me. I understood in my soul that I didn't have a clue who I truly am. And that I was not living MY life, but just trying to make others happy. And that I had to start to hold space for myself and find out who I truly am!

Connecting with the wholeness of my total True Self

A time of intense and ongoing self-development started. Books, courses, writing. And especially a new compassionate, conscious, deep, inner felt -sense, listening to what I felt and thought. Instead of my earlier indifference to what passed through my heart, soul, body, and mind, I was discovering myself.

I reconnected with my always curious, questioning mind that tried to find the Why behind and below the surface of life events. I reconnected with another characteristic part of myself that always looks for the Light and how to turn the negative into the positive. Until that moment I was unconscious that denying or suppressing the darkness wouldn't transform it.

A decade started where I began to reconnect with that little, shy, modest, silent, wise, loving, serious girl inside, who had named her favorite doll "Little Joyce," who she, "Big Joyce," had to take care of.

I was a lovely child, who, according to my family, was always the sunshine in our home. But on the inside she longed for the Light and sunshine so much and only wanted to hide under the blankets, to not come out or not even exist.

Opening myself up to fully listen to my emotions and my inner guidance brought me finally home into my precious body, with a felt

sense that I had waited all these years for. With a newfound grounding embodiment, my understanding and treating myself with the respect and love I deserved, I created a higher frequency, which was needed for healing my health issues. Previously I tried to cure myself from a state of frustration and disconnection.

Still with wet armpits and my frequent disturbing, disempowering "Who am I?" thoughts, I started to hold space for myself and speak up for myself!

You are the key to set yourself free

So, I continued my self-knowledge journey into growth and well-being. I read as many books on self-development, neuroscience, quantum physics and epigenetics as I could. I started to study Chinese Medicine and all kinds of other BodyMind studies, and I left behind my old profession.

And in order to help me connect with a part of myself that I now sensed, but didn't manage to connect with myself, I started to visit my beloved mentor, a craniosacral therapist named Sanno Visser. After my first fully resonating visit with my mentor, I immediately decided to become a craniosacral therapist myself.

Learning that we are not meant to do everything alone

Sanno asked me, " Do you think you know yourself, Joyce?" "Yes, I really think so," I answered." With his warm wise smile, he answered, "Yes, in the amount that you know yourself, you are right."

"And has anybody ever told you that you don't have to do everything alone?" "No Sanno", I answered, "but I can manage very well on my own". "Yes, that I can see, but that isn't my question. And how would you feel about not doing everything alone, Joyce?" After a minute of reflection I respond, "That would be very nice, Sanno."

I kept visiting my mentor regularly. He helped me discover, digest and transform many unconscious, unprocessed, dissociated emotions, like loneliness from being seen as an UFO or being bullied at school, heaviness for being the "mother" of my mother, responsibility for being the support of my beloved big brother, and the horror for being the abused daughter of my father and his war buddies.

The grace of developing "Connected Listening"

In the meanwhile, I started to work as a cCraniosacral trauma therapist. I began working with clients of all ages and with very different issues and life questions that often also had to do with ancestral trauma, which inspired me to study also with Bert Hellinger, the Founder of Systemic Family Constellations, and other great teachers.

I then developed and refined, "Connected Listening", my unique life transforming method. I promised myself and others to share it with the whole world.

And besides doing one-–to-–one consultations, I began to give workshops and courses in the Netherlands and Spain as a facilitator of Systemic Family Constellations and Transformational

Consciousness Teacher. ThisWhich gave me great fulfillment. provided me full fulfillment.

Commented [SL24]: I re-wrote this sentence as the original didn't seem to make sense.

The magic of "Connected Listening"

Still longing for full inner peace, I then decoded our negative thoughts as the sSubtitles of our unprocessed emotions. I found the key to connect us directly with our unconscious, unconnected, waiting younger self parts, and bring us home into full alignment, flow and inner peace, and even transform Imposter Syndrome.

So, I started to teach how to use our disturbing negative thoughts and feelings as useful Signposts, showing step by step how to transform them forever! Instead of fighting them or stepping over them, as many teachers tell us to do.

Commented [SL25]: Did they deliberately capitalize this?

I teach how to process the old unprocessed emotions stored like 'emotional airbags' in our body at an unconscious cell level. These airbags are created by our nervous system in situations that- were too difficult or overwhelming to digest by our younger selvesf. The emotions were automatically separated into our unconsciousness in order to help us survive and go on. But over time, they suffocate our well-being and growth!

Our negative thoughts and emotions are like little babies crying out for our caring attention and adult help. Until they are consciously, compassionately welcomed and processed by our adult, much more powerful selvesf in the present, these emotions will remain in the body and mind.

These old emotions wait to be transformed into unconditional, true self freedom and soul--connected action power by becoming truthful

to our total True Self. We must learn to be like an apple tree, which first has to take care of its own roots, if it wants to provide healthy nutritious apples for others.

Fulfilling my life's mission

I am intensely grateful that my lifelong desire for inner peace and growth has really pushed me to find and fulfill my life's mission: t~~T~~o help as many people as I can to raise their frequency into a conscious, coherent embodied state of safety, love and understanding.

I aim to help transform both personal and ancestral trauma, supporting people to come home in their bodies, find their own appropriate healthy place in life and connect with their unique, total True Self.

I do this by teaching "Connected Listening", which creates a safe foundation to welcoming and releasing the undigested impacts of our life story in a titrated and guided way.

My relationship with the great Source of all Life

I fully believe that no matter what we went through, with love, persistence and some help, we are able to transform our life challenges and grow from them in alignment and consciousness. Life never gives us more than we are capable of processing and it's on each of us to find the waiting gold in our challenges, just like I had the grace to experience, bit by bit.

I am proud to say that I now am celebrating life and fulfilling my life's mission as the grounded, JOYful rock that Life has always meant for

me with my birth name JOYce Petra. I came from struggle into synchronicity, confident and fulfilled, by knowing WHO I TRULY AM.

I have stepped into my birthright and my place on earth to share and teach with love and JOY worldwide to as many people as I can about the magic of Connected Listening and that YOU are the Key to set Yourself FREE.

And become the Unique Valuable True Self You are Meant to Be! I am happy to say that I now spend winters, full of gratitude, inner peace and Joy with my husband in sunny Spain.

Coming to the end of my story, I will empower you with all my heart to:

1. Never give up! Always be truthful to yourself first and to the people that already love you or are waiting to find in you the role model they need with your special, unique vibe. Trust that life will bring you to your unique soul family and tribe. I myself felt like giving up a million times in my life - even in the writing process of this story sharing very intimate things in a language that, as you may have noticed, I am still learning!

2. Remember, we are not meant to do everything alone, So please, breathe out, open your heart, and reach out for help until you find the person that is able to hear and see you and is willing to help you.

3. What you are longing for is what your soul wants you to reach, live and enJOY! So please go for it. Simply start by putting one foot after the other, step by step, and you will get

there! Probably like ~~myself~~me, after falling down and standing up again and again until you will reach your goal and shine your special unique Light.

And if one day, you may long for more inspiration, insights or guidance, please reach out to me! Because only TOGETHER we can make this world the more beautiful and peaceful world we all long for, for ourselves and our children.

Whether we like it or not, we are the living past and the past of our ancestors because the present always contains the past. So please, in order to not pass on your unprocessed past to your children and future generations, and to create your soul and heart's desired present and future, heal your past, grow and get aligned with your True Self.

Let's create together outer peace, from inner peace. Sparkle JOY from knowing and aligning with who we are designed and meant to be in our own valuable uniqueness. Transforming from feeling alone, to feeling All one!

Together We CAN!

With all my love, JOY, and gratitude,

JOYce Petra

About the Author

JOYce Petra Melendez is the creator of the life-transforming method "Connected Listening" and the founder of the Open Heart-Open Mind organization.

It's her life's mission to help transform challenges and trauma into embodied growth and consciousness, and to uplift the frequency of people.

She has dedicated the last 25 years to working as a therapist, coach, facilitator, and teacher with international clients with very different life questions. Characteristice of her sometimes surprising work is her capacity for deep listening and the ability to surrender to her not knowing, and connecting her clients with the Source of all knowing and healing. She draws from her rich toolbox of body-mind studies, experience, and especially from what Life teaches her about our total interconnectedness.

JOYce heartily invites you to visit her website www.JoycePetra.com for free resources or email her at Welcome@joycepetra.com with any resilience-related questions you may have.

Purpose-driven Goals
By Busie Dhlodhlo

Having just started university a month late because of financial difficulties, I felt trapped in poverty. My capacity to dream had been thwarted for years. Dropping out of school at 14, I had watched other kids go to school, wondering if I would ever be in school again. My dad lost his job before we could recover from the fatal blow of the 2008 financial crisis. He had been a director at an elite institution of higher learning. We had gone to the best schools in the country, and lived in a huge farmhouse; life had been great. However, all of a sudden we were out of money, out of school and out of food.

The future looked bleak and the only breakthrough I could envision was shelving my career aspirations for an untrained teaching job that would pay me enough to send my siblings to school. Being the first of six children, I'd had a sense of responsibility instilled in me quite early in life, thus my plan reflected exactly that. I had to pass five high school subjects to 'qualify' to teach but had one year of high school remaining, except, I wasn't actually in school. I opted to take odd jobs such as cleaning homes and doing laundry to earn money to send my siblings to school. I would qualify to be a teacher in three years instead of one, but this was the best I could do. Fortunately, we had a breakthrough and were back in school earlier than imagined, but life was never the same again.

The road to transformation

Four years later, I was admitted to Solusi University in Zimbabwe. Unable to pay the deposit, I went to work in a rural school. I was running out of hope when my dad sent half the amount required to register a month after the semester had begun. Late registration had closed, but he had done his best. I rushed to the university and ten minutes later, I was a registered student. After copying a classmate's notes, and studying overnight, I sat for a calculus test the following morning and passed despite not having attended any class.

I had sat with myself the previous night, grateful that I was finally at university but terrified at the prospect of leaving empty-handed after four years. I thought about my home situation that had made me want to hide from myself, the walks up and down the street selling random things after school, rural life with no electricity or water and the nights I'd slept on an empty stomach, and I was desperate to secure a better life. With no connections to help me get a job once I finished school and unemployment levels high, a first-class degree could help me stand out. So that night, I resolved to exhaust every fibre of my being to study and get first-class grades right from the start. Having believed I wasn't the studying type my whole life, this was a definitive moment. When you have no way to change your circumstances, changing your beliefs about yourself becomes the only plausible strategy. I realised that what had brought me here would be insufficient to take me where I needed to go.

My roommate Denise, who was in her third year, shared tips on how to get a first-class degree. I was fortunate to not have to run on fleeting motivation for too long. Soon, I was accused and grounded for walking out of church to talk to my 'boyfriend'. I didn't even have

a boyfriend.~~,~~ I~~i~~t had been my six-year-old sister on the line. Being grounded meant that I had to report to university officials at 6 am, 11 am, 4 pm and 10 pm every day for a month and so I did. But here lay a life-changing moment for me.

Sitting in a classroom, alone, waiting for the day to begin after presenting myself at the main gate at 6 am, I semi-consciously opened my Bible to fill the emptiness. It had been ages since I had read it. Reading from the beginning, I came across the line, 'So God made man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female'. I couldn't make sense of it. It was a study Bible and contained maps, charts, biographies and cross-references. I turned to a cross-reference from the book True Education and written in the first chapter it said:

Commented [SL26]: Is this "He" supposed to be here? Doesn't seem right.

'When Adam and Eve came from the Creator's hand, they bore, in their physical, mental, and spiritual natures, a likeness to their Maker…All their faculties (physical, mental, spiritual) were capable of development; their capacity and vigour were continually to increase.'

I was happy to hold onto such an identity, and after reading more of the writings of this ~~this~~ nineteenth-century author, ~~authour's writings,~~ Ellen White, the point was clear – if we love God, we will develop to the highest mental, physical and spiritual power we have. In adoration of this God, I began to relate with myself as one created to succeed.

Commented [SL27]: I re-phrased this for clarity. I hope that's ok! 😊

I had been born to staunch Christian parents and in retrospect, had become Christian by association. 6 am in my parents' house was worship time. We would gather as a family, sing hymns softly and read the Bible. My parents would say gentle but tiringly long prayers

while we dozed off. In response to the length of their prayers, my siblings and I would overcompensate with shorter prayers.

Here I was now, annoyed in the quiet of the morning, turning to the 6 am drug I was most familiar with. As I drank from this well of wisdom, I began to find answers to questions I couldn't put into words. Learning about the character of God and his purpose for humanity produced an effect that expanded and strengthened my mind. In turn, the habit that had begun as a coping mechanism for grounding became a self-development tool. What began as a pursuit of a first-class degree turned into a burning desire for the highest development possible. I still wanted the first-class degree, but it was no longer an end in and of itself, just a small part of something bigger than me. I was humbled, yet elevated.

My interests in study began to spread beyond finance like wildfire. I was suddenly interested in astronomy, health, psychology, philosophy, loved just about anything tied to biblical scripture that had meaning; everything of substance. An increase in the knowledge of heavenly quality drenches the heart in peace beyond understanding, also known as healing. It reduces the unwanted cognitive load, freeing the brain's faculties to absorb as much and as fast the concepts as it should. If following it in its entirety, one would adopt proper habits of diet, exercise, study, rest, meditation, speech, dress, etc, and maintain relational integrity with all including oneself. Had I followed the guide even only half the time, I would likely have achieved a perfect GPA each semester but even with the transformation and renewal wrought thus far, it gave me the power to act and to think rather than be merely a reflector of other people's thoughts.

The unconventional path

When I couldn't return to university in my final year because we didn't have enough money, I worked an eight to five job, technically a seven to six, rush to a 5 pm to 9 pm class and then go home to take care, my 14-year-old brothers with whom I lived in the city.

My Chief Financial Officer had extended my placement contract so I could work to raise tuition money. While I wished I could enjoy normal university life like other kids, my focus would shift to gratitude for the privilege to still be in school. Most children at schools I had taught in would likely not complete high school. My childhood classmates, including my best friend, had not made it to university. Both of my best friends had died a year earlier, after decades of suffering terminal illnesses. Buried with hopes and dreams. Here I was, still in college, and in perfect health. I had to be content, and this contentment freed up my mental energy which enabled me to take action knowing that every essential provision had already been made for me. My aim evolved to having God say to me, 'Well done, good and faithful servant' at the end of my life's work, and well knowing that tomorrow is never promised, I got up each day to do my work diligently.

I graduated a year late and I got first in class and the highest GPA among business students across five campuses. I had not aspired to outperform anyone; it had never crossed my mind. If anything, half the time I'd been helping others to understand concepts we'd learned in class. I only wanted to reflect the mind and excellence of God more and more. I happened to also be 'Best Graduate'. Knowing that I was still falling short of the standard regardless of these achievements, I

continued to explore God more and more, some days more than others, in an attempt to reach the highest development.

As Victor Frankl said, '...deep down a lot of us desire to live a great life. We have a desire to do more, to have more, to be more, and to truly find our purpose... The whole point of finding meaning and purpose is to find something that fills you up…'

Soon, I was sacrificing my nights studying for the CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst) exam in an attempt to write it in four months instead of 12, and after passing, I went into private equity in Harare. I had already started exploring ~~Masters~~master's programs. On the back of these borrowed wings in the form of skills and achievements, I had a duty to soar higher yet still. This mindset carried me through my work as a cleaner, launderer and catering warehouse assistant where I often sliced onions, while being a degree holder. I worked with all my strength and learnt valuable lessons I took with me to the private equity interview and postgrad application.

Aiming even higher

On applying to London Business School (LBS), I would have had to pay the application fee which was almost my month's salary at that time. In addition, there was no full scholarship I was eligible for and I'd –had more than enough loan application rejections to know I would likely not get credit. But I began to move forward in faith. Faith in the unknown, rather than what is known. In tapping into the history of this world, the unfolding of life in the universe, and the story of Jesus – the most powerful being in the universe who

volunteered to be publicly humiliated and hung on a piece of wood to secure victory, my entire perspective was redefined.

With refreshed convictions of self, and a timeless vision for our world, I had a framework to reason from cause to effect. Mapping out my life, I began to see the end from the beginning which brought me peace and expanded my capacity to look within without being anxious to look away. I wanted to move to a different country and grew courageous to apply to LBS despite the financial obstacle I would face. My idea of self had broadened and my worldview had elevated. I had just exhausted my savings in applying for a foreign work permit with no news of success after a year of not eating out, paying for hair, cab rides, or buying clothes. Months earlier in 2020, I had applied for a birth certificate and national ID to apply for a travel passport. Each document required me to be queued by 4 am to stand a chance at success. Some days I was successful, some days, I wasn't. Some days it rained heavily, and I became soaked in the 3 am rain on my way to wait at the hiking spot.

One day, the final day, towards midnight, I met a stranger who would share her room with me for the night. I had traveled halfway across the country to Gwanda. So now I walked alone to the passport office through thick bushes in the 2 am darkness of a neighbourhood I had never known. My future was on the edge. I could suffer now at the prospect of a better future or risk regretting steps untaken forever. Either way was death. Relating to Jesus carrying his cross on his shoulders, I could face my current struggles without feeling like it was the end of my life, but the beginning of a new era. Besides, the loss from rejection would be far less than the regret of not trying. Every waking moment had been consumed by the application, jotting notes down on paper when we had no electric power. However, on being

pickpocketed just before the deadline, I lost the application fee. So, I applied to business school using borrowed funds. Two months and an interview later, I was admitted to LBS and now the real work began – financing the study program. The admission had come with a 30% scholarship and I would exhaust every fibre of my being to get the rest. I sent emails to hundreds of foundations and charities and set up a GoFundMe campaign. I would not leave any stone unturned – I had suffered too much to let it go to waste now. Reaching out to the school to present my case, my scholarship award was increased three times until it was fully covered.

I badly wanted to study at LBS, hence I went for it regardless of how rough a ride it would be. Nobody in my circles had been to a top school and seeing the struggles that came with having no relatable reference point, someone had to do it – I could become the relatable figure they could look to for inspiration. Many had lived and died with unfulfilled potential, and if history served as a guide, I could end up in the same place. However, I was zealous to bend history in a different direction. I knew I had the power to write how my story ends and owed a duty to the universe to write a good story, getting it right the first time. I sent out compelling emails, one after the other. In the end, I had a full scholarship that hadn't previously existed and in gratitude and duty, tried to conduct myself in ways that would make it easy for them to do for others what they'd done for me.

Had I backed down, I would have short-changed myself of growth, and others of the inspiration I had gathered from other characters. I would have disappointed Heaven by failing to live up to my potential. I had a burning desire to live up to my full potential and now I had the privilege of being an image bearer of the author of excellence.

About the Author

Busie (her full name Sibusisiwe Dhlodhlo) is a London-based finance professional from Zimbabwe. She holds a Master's in Financial Analysis degree from London Business School where she was a Merit Scholar and a Rayner Miller Scholar. Busie won the 'Best Student' awards from both the Finance department and Business Faculty on graduating from Solusi University in Zimbabwe. She has received other scholarships and certifications as well as worked in private equity, investment management, education and various finance roles.

Busie developed a deep interest in philosophy and has sought to share an awakened sense of meaning in the lives of those she rubs shoulders with, often taking stances with both spiritual and natural law bases.

Learn more about Busie here:

www.linkedin.com/in/busie-dhlodhlo

CONCLUSION

The stories in this book have probably opened your eyes to new possibilities. They certainly have done that for me. I hope that expanding your mind and exploring new ways to enhance your resilience will become a way of life for you now.

I sincerely wish you an inspired journey in building resilience. If our paths should cross, I hope you will open up and share stories about your own experiences of resilience. Or perhaps you'll do so in one of my upcoming books or a live event?

Feel free to contact the brilliant, brave authors in this book. They are so heart-centered and precious, I know they will inspire you as they have me. Besides, being in the company of amazing people allows their special sauce to rub off on us, and if we let it, their magical qualities can also linger.

Please watch the #AskTheAuthor interview series by visiting and sign up to receive special gifts from the authors.

Commented [SL28]: Visting what? I think you meant to add your website? 😊

Many blessings to you,

1Dreah and all of the authors of *The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People* 2nd edition.

Formatted: Font: Italic

Commented [SL29]: Book titles are usually italicized, so I did that here.

Appendix

The Attunement Meditation™

This is an adapted excerpt from The Real Self Love Handbook by Dr. Andrea Pennington, reprinted with permission from the author and publisher.

Over 18 years years ago, I developed a five-part mindfulness practice called the Attunement Meditation™. I have since taught it all over the world to thousands of people -online and at retreats, and I taught it to my students at the International University of Monaco. This meditation has proven to be a simple way for people to reap the benefits of the various meditation types, including breath awareness, non-judgmental awareness, describing with words, loving-kindness, compassion, and gratitude.

The process is especially useful in times of stress or anxiety to bring you instant calm and peace. With regular and repeated practice, you can use it to build up positive emotions, compassion, and gratitude, as well become better attuned to your intuition and creativity. The five steps will impact your overall physiology and help to even enhance your intimate relationships.

The Attunement Meditation™ will help you bring balance to head, heart and chakras (energy centers in the body) and it will enable you to release resistance and remove energy blockages. What people love about The Attunement Meditation™ is that it helps them align with

the field of universal love and compassion while focusing their attention on the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations they want to experience. Miracles become everyday occurrences. This magical force can be drawn upon and channeled to propel you toward your goals for a life full of joy, good health, and prosperity. It can also provide you with psychological insight on past traumas that allows you to clear their negative influences more easily.

Here I present each of the five steps and how they help build resilience.

1. Allow

Your initial step toward peace and authentic power in any situation is to ALLOW, to drop resistance, stop struggling, and cease fighting. It sounds counterintuitive, but when you stop fighting your emotions, disease, or circumstances, you open yourself up to greater power for transformation.

What if releasing the need to control your situation could increase your sense of personal power? Could it be that letting go of resistance to what is happening could ease your suffering? Could you let this moment be exactly as it is without fighting, struggling, or pushing toward a new direction? What would happen if you stopped trying to "fix" things?

I'm inviting you to allow the present moment to be exactly as it is — without judgment. This doesn't mean accepting it FOREVER, for all things are temporary. It helps to recite the mantra, "This too shall pass," and remember that there's no reason to resist this moment.

When you give a circumstance permission to be *as it is*, without making it wrong or bad, you'll be more open to the message of why and how you got there in the first place. You'll also be more open to innovative solutions. Have you heard the phrase, "what you resist, persists?" In this context, it's so true.

By surrendering to this moment, we allow all thoughts, judgments, and beliefs to rise and then fall away. God Consciousness, Divine Light or something not of this world shines through with wisdom, a plan, a perfect solution to all that troubles you.

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."
~Victor Frankl

WHEN YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE SITUATION, CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Since the only thing you can change is you, ask yourself; "What if this situation stays the same and I change instead?" Consider this fully.

What could you change in yourself (or about yourself) that would make it easier for you to accept what's going on? You could change your attitude, opinion, or judgment that the situation is bad. What if you looked for what is good or right about it? What if you said, "This is good, and it can stay just as it is," and see what comes up for you. Just try it, to see what happens.

Of course, you could just continue along the path of resistance, thinking that you're right and the situation is just plain wrong! But where will that path lead you? Living in stress — and in denial — can

lead to increased blood pressure, chronic fatigue, immune system collapse, lost libido and more. So, recognize that holding onto a perspective, attitude, or opinion about a situation or person only hurts you. You always have a choice in how you respond. And you always have the choice to leave a bad situation. This frees you up from the often foolish or heroic attempt to change others.

This is a key aspect of developing the resilience traits of Flexibility and Adaptability.

ALLOW FOR SPONTANEOUS RESOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

Often when we give a situation or person the space to be as they are, the change we desire may come spontaneously. When we stop judging others harshly and adopt a more accepting mental posture, it's easier for others to find harmony and compromise.

The stressful situations we're so busy fighting often resolve completely all by themselves when we let go of our need to control them.

But whether that change comes or not is irrelevant. Your peaceful state of mind is of the greatest importance. When you are at peace, life has the opportunity to flow and unfold with natural ease and grace. So, instead of stubbornly holding onto a position with dogged determination, imagine that you decide to change your reaction to what's going on.

What if you said, "This has a right to be happening and I don't have to get upset"? Can you start to see where the power lies? You have

the power to change your mind, the story, the interpretation, and your response. The mere act of saying "I can get upset or not" shifts the energy, ever so slightly, from dis-empowered frustration to mildly empowered strength. You still have the choice to get upset, if you desire. You're not taking away your right to respond; you're simply minimizing the negative effect of assuming that only one solution is best.

By simply shifting into a more allowing and accepting posture and mental attitude you may feel your tension decrease. The more you let go of the position of "me" against the situation, the more you feel negative energy decrease. When negativity can be replaced by neutrality, things settle down to a happy medium. Then you may have new insights on how to resolve the situation in a way you didn't even consider before.

PERSONAL PEACE IS ONE DECISION AWAY

Can you at least glimpse the possibility of allowing your life situations to be, without trying to fight or change them? This doesn't mean that you must tolerate it further. To the contrary, once you accept that what's happening is just happening, you recognize that you can choose to exit of your own accord. You may choose to remove yourself — not because you were forced to leave, change, or move — but because you decided to take care of yourself and move to another state of being or a new physical position.

Often when we give up the fight or attempt to change things to suit our desires, things become clearer to us. Solutions seem to appear out of nowhere. You'll gain greater insight for problem solving when you stop assuming that things must change according to your plan. By

simply allowing a situation to be without labeling it as wrong or bad, you free up your energy to move your life in a direction that's more aligned with your beliefs and values.

Besides situations, relationships, and circumstance, many people resist their emotions as well. This is a mistake we've all made, and it's one that holds us hostage the most.

SEE YOUR EMOTIONS AS MESSENGERS

Emotion is simply energy in motion. After practicing integrative medicine and acupuncture for nearly two decades, I truly believe that emotions are messengers, too. We're not meant to stuff our emotions and feelings away or deny them the space to be. We are driven and motivated by our emotions, so paying attention to and consciously directing them can give us incredible power.

As you learned in Chapter 4, one of the keys to self-compassion and mindfulness is to allow ourselves to see, feel, and be with our emotions without judgment. So, I invite you to open your mind and become the nonjudgmental witness to see emotions for what they are: messengers. Rather than forcing your emotions into the shadows, medicating them, or numbing them away with food, shopping, or drugs, bring them to the forefront of your attention to gently see the message they've come to communicate.

Practicing mindfulness offers you the opportunity to be present with your feelings and emotions in a nonjudgmental, non-shaming manner. This grants you a bit of safe distance to learn from the emotions and transmute their destructive energy into healing or

productive energy, when possible. By becoming mindful of the energy in your emotions, you'll come to realize that you are not your emotions, and you need not be trapped by them. And you need not resist them either. Mindfulness invites you to stop collapsing your identity within the emotion. When you stop judging your emotions, you realize that having the so-called "negative" emotions of anger, fear, or sadness doesn't make you a bad person. You can allow them to bring you insight and move on.

In my clinical practice, I have noticed that when we block the flow of emotion and prevent their message from being received, the energy can be directed inward with destructive consequences. This can lead to physical pain, emotional distress, and even dis-ease. When our emotional energy is blocked inside us and not expressed, we'll often see a blockage in other areas of our lives, presenting us with health challenges or emotional upsets that disrupt our relationships.

The antidote to blocking our emotions is to be present with them with an attitude of mindful acceptance and self-compassion.

As a nonjudgmental witness, you watch the emotions rise and disappear, without being trapped inside them. Studies show that mindfulness training can even prevent depression by encouraging individuals to accept and tolerate their painful thoughts and emotions rather than trying to change them, while simultaneously placing these thoughts and emotions in a larger context so their significance is seen with greater perspective.

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

Resisting your "negative" feelings and telling them to shut up or go away is like ignoring a tour guide who's standing by with a map and navigation directions pointing to the life of your dreams. Your feelings could be that helpful guide you brush off dismissively. You could foolishly continue bumbling along looking for a street that's behind you or in a completely different direction.

Instead of pushing feelings away, allow the situation and feelings to be. Stop yourself in your tracks and just watch life happening. Stop the mental labeling and observe. Allow your feelings and emotions to have a voice. You might ask yourself, "What am I resisting?" Or ask, "What am I grasping and clinging to?" Then wait for an answer to emerge. Your goal is ultimately to return to a flexible stance that allows you to be in flow.

So many of us hide our true feelings, especially the ones we consider negative or embarrassing. But what if instead of judging them as "bad" and banishing them to the nether regions of our minds, we allowed our emotions to be felt and expressed? What if we looked at every feeling as right instead of wrong? I'm not suggesting they be given permission to overtake your life, just that they be acknowledged and heard. So, ask yourself, "What is right and appropriate about this feeling, in this moment?"

Based on your aspiration or intention, when it comes time to start goal setting or planning your future, you should be in the most positive state possible. And certainly, if you're in problem-solving mode, having anxious or nervous energy bubbling within you could cause a major distraction. The key is to make sure that you're

receptive to wisdom, insight, or healing by putting your mind, body, brain, and heart into a calm, open state. If you're in a negative state or resisting what's going on, it will be harder to experience peace or productivity.

PRACTICE MAKES THE MASTER

Right now, imagine that you're in a challenged state of fear or anxiety where you just don't feel good. Remember a time when you felt stressed, overwhelmed, or unable to handle the pressures of life. How did your head feel in those situations? For me, it is in those times that I feel my head swimming or pounding like it could explode.

What about your stomach or the solar plexus area? What do you feel there? Is it butterflies in your stomach, a deep gnawing pain, or nausea?

What about your back and shoulders? When you're stressed, do you feel tension in the muscles in your neck and upper back?

What about your legs or feet? Do they feel restless and spastic when you're anxious?

The first step to getting into a more positive state is to first acknowledge and allow yourself to be in that state without resistance. You could try putting it into words, like this:

"I am really feeling anxious now. My thoughts are racing and I feel a twinge in my stomach. I feel so nervous like I'm juggling daggers and I'm about to drop them on my head. I feel like I can't deal with this!

I feel tension between my shoulder blades and my muscles are tight and aching."

You know the expressions "getting something off your chest" or "get that monkey off your back"? This is when we feel weighed down, like we're carrying something heavy on our back and life feels like a burden. Or it's the sensation of something weighing so heavily on our chests and our hearts, that we almost can't breathe and we feel constricted. By expressing what you're feeling, you open up the possibility of releasing the negative tension in your body and energy field.

Once you're in touch with these tense feelings, it's a good time to breathe or sigh. To express what you're feeling without judgment can allow you to exhale tension as you give yourself permission, freedom, and space to be honest and vulnerable. And you really are breathing a sigh of relief as you get your emotions off your chest and mind. Many times, when you just say what you're experiencing, you feel a sense of lightness.

So, if you can, take a deep breath and say what you're feeling and let that be. You may feel the feelings rise up and by becoming the witness of them, you may notice that they just slightly separate from your body. That tension in your neck, the pang in your stomach will rise up and separate, as if it's hanging around your body like a puff of smoke.

Bringing your attention to what you're feeling allows you to see from the perspective of the Authentic Self, which is your consciousness — not your body. Take another deep breath and recognize that those feelings are there for a reason. Your emotions are energy in motion,

bringing you a message. If you stuff them away and don't allow them to speak to you, they may go deeper and cause you pain, either now or later.

If you can allow the emotions to be there and give them a voice, you can take heart that you are on the first step toward freedom. The trick is to watch yourself if you stray into judging yourself or the feelings. For example, have you ever heard yourself say:

"Gosh, you face this problem every day! You should be able to deal with this by now!"

Or

"For heaven's sake, it's just email! You shouldn't be so overwhelmed by writing a few messages! Just crank them out and get it over with."

Or

"I'm so angry at myself! Why do I always do that?"

These mental assaults are filled with judgment that is counterproductive and self-defeating. If you can give yourself a break by letting the emotions bring you the lesson, you can move onto solutions.

Consider saying:

"Whoa! There I go judging myself again. It's kind of habit, huh?"

Then exhale.

ACCEPTANCE OPENS THE DOOR TO TRANSCENDENCE

This small shift of perspective has allowed me to rid myself of decades of pain and guilt. I became an expert at stuffing my painful emotions down into the basement of my mind. I would simply force any remorse or upset away, usually with the thought that a healer or spiritual person shouldn't feel those negative emotions. Over time, I realized that those painful feelings were poised to drag me into a dark depression. As I allowed the shame and remorse I felt for past mistakes to bubble up to the surface of my mind, I faced them with tolerance and compassion. Then, almost miraculously, my heart began to feel lighter. Waves of relief and release move through body and mind when we stop denying painful emotions. That's when true healing begins and peace flourishes in our lives.

Frustration with parenting is another example I'm quite familiar with. I often work with mothers who are ashamed that they feel overwhelmed with parenting as they sheepishly admit to seriously disliking the mundane tasks of mommy-hood. I definitely felt this way when my daughter was little and still in diapers. Most clients are surprised when I tell them NOT to fight the thoughts or feelings of disgust. I encourage them to stop labeling the feelings as "bad." They fear that admitting to feeling burdened by parenting or not liking certain aspects of care-taking will make them a "bad parent."

Please know that the more you fight these thoughts, the more you make yourself out to be a bad person for thinking them in the first place. Internally you label yourself as bad, imperfect and wrong for thinking thoughts and having feelings you "shouldn't" have. You end up labeling yourself when you harshly judge the thoughts and feelings

that you're so strongly attached to. This sort of self-criticism and self-judgment only leads to inner turmoil and unrest.

Finding displeasure in cleaning up the kitchen for the fifth time in a day, for example, doesn't mean you're a bad parent. It doesn't mean you love your children or spouse any less. We often give hidden meanings to these types of feelings, which stresses us out even more. We drive these feelings underground without any regard to the toll they take on us over time. Look at the feelings for the real message they bring, without judgment.

EMOTIONS CAN BE LOCKED IN THE BODY

What are the consequences of trapped emotion? As explained earlier, all of our life experiences — from the ecstatic to the traumatic — form memories that are held in the body and mind. They get locked into our aura. When emotions are not allowed to flow freely, they don't get released for processing or recycling and the energy they carry can get lodged in our tissues, organs, muscles, etc. Toxic emotions can therefore have toxic effects on the cells of our body, destroying them, increasing chances of cancer, and accelerating the aging process.

By stuffing the emotions away with food or alcohol we perpetuate their ill effects. But like a small child wanting her mommy's attention, emotions will simply continue screaming and nagging until they're heard and given what they desire — which in most cases, is just loving attention.

Here is a sSummary of practical tips for becoming peaceful in the ALLOW phase.

WHEN DRIVEN BY NEGATIVITY, SHIFT INTO NEUTRAL

Relinquish the need to control what is happening, including your feelings. There's no need to resist your feelings or emotions. Our feelings are messengers, and our emotions are "energy in motion." Allow the charge of these energetic messengers to be transformed into a neutral charge and a positive state will soon follow.

DISCHARGE TENSION — CRY, SCREAM, SHAKE, EXERCISE

For the rest of the day (or all week long, if you dare!) resist the temptation to judge your feelings for yourself. Allow them to just be, and let yourself fully experience them. - Move yourself to a safe place and cry, scream, shake or do whatever you need to in order to discharge some of the negative energy without harming yourself or others.

DESCRIBE THE EMOTION

Breathe deeply and allow the emotion to just be there. Allow yourself to feel what you feel. Name the feeling or emotion.

Out loud you could say, "Right now I am feeling _____ (ex: anger, frustration, sadness)." Allow yourself to freely express exactly what you're feeling without censoring yourself. For example, you might say "Wow, I am feeling really angry and pissed off! Being around that person made my blood boil."

Your feelings are not you, so there is no reason to become defensive just because you feel an unpleasant emotion. As much as you consider yourself spiritual or evolved, you're also human. The ego is alive and has a long-held habit of reacting.

FIND THE FEELING IN THE BODY

Can you locate the feelings in your body? Try to notice where in your body your emotions lie. Then describe the feeling out loud. For example, you may say, "I feel tension in my neck and now my stomach is doing flips!"

ASK FOR INSIGHT

Ask yourself what message that emotion is bringing to you. Is it insecurity, fear, embarrassment? Next, go directly to the source of your discomfort and ask the feeling, "What message do you have for me?" Asking what it wants or what the lesson is may help you see yourself with more compassion and understanding.

You may not hear the response from your body or mind right away. Just know that the truth is ever present, and when your heart and

mind are open, the wisdom will come to you. You'll learn more about this in Step 4 of the Attunement Meditation.

There's no need to censor the answers that come to you either. Often, when we ask ourselves why we are angry, for example, we get self-entitled snotty comments in return. "Well duh! I'm angry because my boss is an idiot who can't explain projects properly and expects the world to respond to his every whim!"

Or, "Obviously I'm ticked off because my spouse simply doesn't do his/her fair share around the house! What am I, a maid?"

Allow the feelings to bring the messages — the thoughts or beliefs — that are holding them up. Often when you really get down to the underlying message you realize that it, too, may be upheld by beliefs or biases that YOU can change, if necessary.

For example, imagine you've asked yourself "Why am I feeling so upset at my kid for cheating on his math test?" Your first response may seem obvious: "I'm mad because cheating is wrong. He could get expelled!" But when you dig deeper perhaps there's yet another thought underlying the angry feeling. Something like, "His cheating reminds me of when I was caught looking at someone's paper in school and my father called me stupid." In this example, projecting a strong fear of humiliation or condemnation is what really underlies the upset.

By just allowing the message to come up you can look at the situation again, with slightly less toxic energy. NOTE: At this stage you are still not trying to go into problem solving mode. This step is just about allowing the emotions and feelings to be seen, heard, felt, and named. Your goal here is to ease the tension and get to neutral. It's rarely

effective or productive to problem solve when you're in a low energy state.

In later stages of the Attunement MeditationTM, when you're really aligned with a higher state of consciousness and vibrating to the rhythm of love and compassion, you'll find that solutions become clear. You'll find it becomes easy and gentle to let go of hurts, prejudices, and painful emotions.

Commented [SL30]: I assume this should be superscript?

FEELING TOO OVERWHELMED? WALK AWAY!

If you find yourself in the midst of a tense situation and you can't clear your head enough to hear anything other than negativity, you'll need to get yourself into a neutral or positive energy state before trying to allow and accept things as they are. When you're feeling threatened or angry the primitive parts of your brain are active and the "survival" solutions that come to you will often be selfish or destructive.

If you're feeling unstable, supercharged, or hostile, walk away — renew your positive energy. During this time try to avoid replaying the events in your mind. Re-living negative experiences creates a trigger for more stress hormones and contributes to a depressed mood, weakened immune system, and clouded judgment. Stabilize the situation if it's critical, then walk away and do something you enjoy that will renew your energy. Or try to distract yourself with exercise, housework, or by listening to music.

When under pressure or stress, men are generally great at moving into another energy state by engaging in physical activity while women

tend to stew in their emotional upsets, drowning in negativity. If you feel that you're too distressed to even think straight, I find that meridian tapping processes like Thought Field Therapy and the Emotional Freedom technique work wonders. These techniques, described briefly here, are helpful for bringing calm to the body and mind and are quite useful in helping us get into a more resourceful and peaceful state.

THOUGHT FIELD THERAPY

Thought Field Therapy (TFT) is the body tapping procedure discovered by Dr. Roger Callahan over thirty years ago to alleviate phobias, anxiety, and stress. With TFT you "tap" on specific points on the body in a sequence along the same energy meridians that acupuncture follows. This sort of self-acu-tapping helps to balance the body's energy system. The specific tapping sequences are considered healing codes, which allow you to eliminate most negative emotions within minutes while promoting the body's own healing ability.

TFT is a unique form of meridian therapy that is a natural, drug-free, needle-free system to eliminate the cause of negative emotions. TFT has been shown to be extraordinarily effective in treating several psychological problems.

TFT also includes a diagnostic process where a practitioner helps to determine the cause of the emotional upset to prescribe the appropriate tapping algorithm. Sometimes muscle testing, or kinesiology is used here. You can learn more about TFT in a beautiful book called The Book on Quantum Leaps for Leaders written by my

friend and colleague, Bitta Wiese. She has successfully used this modality to heal herself of debilitating pain after a parachute accident and later to rebuild her self-esteem.

Bitta explains how TFT was first used with spoken affirmations to treat and reverse severe traumatic reactions. TFT has since been used for weight loss and to stop smoking, and in overcoming painful losses, phobias, physical ailments, sexual trauma, and much more.

The reason it works is because when we think of a particular problem (such as a specific fear), we generate an individual thought field in much the same way as an electrical field is generated around electrical equipment. According to Dr. Callahan's theory, emotional problems are generated by specific interference patterns in these thought fields, which he describes as "perturbations." These perturbations have been found to be the generating power behind the emotional (and occasionally, physical) signs and symptoms recognized by conventional medicine.

Most existing therapies simply attempt to subdue those symptoms with varying degrees of success, or teach the patient coping skills. Whatever the outcome of such treatments, the perturbations in the Thought Field (the cause of the problem in the first place) remain. In order to remove the perturbations completely, and therefore the problem itself, one must apply a code that nature has provided. Dr. Callahan outlined several specific tapping sequences to treat emotional conditions and he believes that tapping in sequence does make a big difference.

Dr. Callahan found that some people believed it was the affirmation that helped and not the tapping, or some resisted the therapy because

the affirmation seemed too simple. So, after proving that TFT tapping sequences could be equally effective without the affirmation, he eliminated them from the standard protocol that's taught today.

The difference between TFT and EFT

An American named Gary Craig studied TFT with Dr. Callahan and began using it with clients in the United States. He found that one tapping algorithm or "basic recipe" could replace the multitude of algorithms for specific conditions, which he now affirms works in over 80% of cases. That basic recipe, derived from TFT algorithms, is what is now known as EFT — the Emotional Freedom Technique. EFT also eliminates the broad use of muscle testing that often accompanies TFT diagnosis.

The combination of tapping the energy meridians and voicing positive affirmations works to clear the "short-circuit" — the emotional block — from your body's bioenergy system, thus restoring your mind and body's balance, which is essential for optimal health and the healing of physical disease.

You can use TFT or EFT to discharge the tension and negativity you feel and to break the neurological connections between the negative thoughts and emotions. I've found both are great ways to allow the stressful emotions to be there while you access a better energy state.

You can see an interview I did with Bitta where she outlines the basic TFT protocol. You can also download a couple of chapters of her book by visiting www.RealSelf.love.

IMAGINE THE ALTERNATIVE

Before moving to the next part of The Attunement Meditation™, consider these final questions: can you let life FLOW without attachment to any predefined outcomes? Even your dreams and desires, can they flow into view and be released without feeling a needy sense of lack? How high could life take you if you were free from heavy thoughts, compulsions, and "~~shoulds~~shoulds"? To what heights of joy, ecstasy and LOVE could you soar if you let the wind carry you where it may?

Remember:

- feelings are messengers
- resistance is futile
- be open to consider that every feeling may be "right"
- be mindful to not lock your emotions in your body
- your first step toward peace is also to shift into a neutral emotional state

Consider doing the following as you let intense emotional energies rise and fall away.

- describe the emotion
- find the feeling in the body
- ask for insight on what the emotion wants to tell you
- repeat a positive affirmation or your Personal Success Mantra (found in Chapter 7)

- walk away
- consider doing meridian tapping therapy (EFT / TFT)
- pray
- meditate
- surrender
- cease fighting your disease, sickness, or circumstance

Once you've achieved a neutral energy state by allowing the energy and emotions to come to the surface to be acknowledged, heard, understood, and released, it's time to move into a positive energy state. We move up the emotional scale from neutral to positive with the next part of the Attunement Meditation™: ATTUNE.

2. Attune

Have you ever been in love? Have you ever felt inspired by the love you feel toward a child, a treasured pet, or a beautiful place? If so then you may have noticed that when you're feeling positive emotions of appreciation, admiration, and love, your life just seems to flow smoothly and your response to stressful situations is nothing short of miraculous. When we are filled with love, it's easier to let little things slide off our backs without much rancor or negativity.

While living in the love zone we don't need as much sleep, food, or private time. Love provides an amazing inspiration; a passionate creative life energy that makes nearly everything exciting, happy, and bright. Love can make unpleasant things bearable. Sometimes when

we're in love we have great insights and inspiration, and we sense that there's a divine force that illuminates us.

In this step we Attune ourselves and come into resonance with the frequency of love.

In the previous section we learned that the first step is to mindfully aAllow the emotions and situations of the present moment the right to exist without judgment. This helps to create space in our mind for new possibilities to emerge. That spaciousness also allows for a quiet acceptance of what is happening. You may still desire that things were in a different state, but after deep breathing, praying, meditating, meridian tapping, listening to music, exercising, or whatever you did to allow it to be, you may notice that there is more peace and spaciousness. You create more space for solutions to appear or come to mind.

It's difficult to make leaps up the emotional scale. But from a peaceful place of neutrality, you can tap into the energetic field of positivity and infinite possibility. You can move from neutral to positive by bringing your heart into resonance with love or compassion. That's how you'll access a vibrational state of resiliency, power, and creativity. Your ability to transform your situation or transcend the negativity will then be amplified. Some would say that a perfect resolution to your situation can only come from the field of love and compassion.

"The solution to problems will never be found at the level of the problem. The solution will always come from love."
~ Deepak Chopra

When you first Attune, you'll connect with your heart energetically, and literally feel it beating in your chest. Then you'll connect your heart to the energetic presence of love all around you. You will then project loving energy out to the rest of the world.

Begin by closing your eyes and breathing deeply for a few breaths. Place your hand on your chest and feel your heart beating. Taking five long, slow deep breaths will allow you to bring down your blood pressure and heart rate, and will help to lower stress hormones. If you close your eyes and feel your heart, you'll find that it starts to beat with more regularity and calmness. As you synchronize your breathing and heart rate to a frequency of the Earth, you get out of fight-flight-freeze mode. You become tuned into the peaceful frequency that the Mother Gaia emits. Lowering the stress response with deep breathing and feeling your heart tells the reptilian brain, "Hey, this is not life or death! You can chill out. There's no tiger about to eat us!"

Continue with your eyes closed and breathing deeply. Imagine that you are tuned into the "radio station of love, peace, and harmony." What thoughts or words would you hear on that radio station? Imagine the radio waves seeping into your body and mind to melt away tension and stress. What would that feel like in your body? Feel your body relax into a wave of peace and love. Imagine that you're surrounded by a warm caress of loving energy.

By tuning into love, we put ourselves into a more resourceful state. When connected with the field of love, you gain admission to the world of possibility, pure potential, and peace.

Love grants us access to a state associated with our own best outcome and the highest good of all the people tied to the issue. It helps us to put the m'ego on hold, the part of us that is preoccupied with survival of "me." By tuning into love, you tap into the divine consciousness that is associated with the survival of everyone. There are no winners, no losers. There may be compromise, but it's all done in the spirit of love.

Next, look around for anything that inspires love. Perhaps consider why you're on this planet and what's worth living for. What motivates you? Or you may imagine the sweet face of a child, a little kitten, or remember a time when you felt inspired by love in nature such as by a beautiful sunset, a beach vacation, or hiking in the mountains. If you can see any of those things around you while doing the deep breathing, go ahead and observe them. If not, close your eyes and put yourself back in one of those scenes.

Try to imagine that there is a force field of love surrounding you. Get the sense of gentle waves of love coming from the radio station of love and harmony. Those waves are always present in the air. Just like the waves of every radio station in your city are waiting to be accessed by your radio antenna, so too are the waves of love. Your radio will play music from the station to which you tune your receiver. You are a human antenna, and you can also choose which frequency to receive. By just becoming quiet, going within, breathing, and focusing on anything that inspires love, gratitude, and compassion you can access the accompanying frequency. In the vibrational frequency of love is inspiration, higher wisdom, possibility, and potentiality.

Continue to breathe slowly and deeply. Focus on anything that you can love or appreciate. If you can say "I love you" to yourself, do that.

This is a good time to recite the phrases of the loving kindness meditation we learned in Chapter 4. Bring to mind someone who loves you dearly. Imagine them standing next to you, sending you positive waves of love and compassion. You can also imagine sending yourself sincere wishes to be free from suffering. Or imagine yourself as a small, innocent child and send this image of loving energy.

As you allow yourself to bask in this positive wave of energy, you'll gradually build up energy reserves that help you to become more resilient, more resourceful, and less reactive. This is an important part of becoming the best version of yourself, no matter what craziness is happening in the world around you.

From this state of positive energy and emotion, you can now move to the next stage, ALIGN.

3. Align

Now you'll align your mind with higher states of consciousness. What does that mean? Well, normally in the beginning phases of the process, when we're stressed out or we're trying to solve a problem, our focus is very limited or narrow. Typically, the brain only has access to what's already been programmed. When we're stressed or threatened, the brain becomes intensely focused on your own survival, and that of the things or people you hold dear.

When you want to chart a new course in life, write a new book, or solve a problem, you want to be a little more open to greater possibilities and greater wisdom, right? It will be worthwhile to align your mind with a higher mind, one tuned into greater wisdom and

insight. This higher mind could be your higher self, the part of you that is divine or enlightened. Or you might want to tune into the Holy Spirit, or God, or whatever higher state of being you think might be guiding you and supporting you. It may be that, just as Einstein and so many other physicists have talked about, we can tap into the higher capabilities of our own natural brain.

So how do we do that on a practical level?

The first thing to do is to give yourself permission and instruction to do so. In step one, we quieted down the chaos, and we allowed ourselves to come to neutral. In step two, we attuned to positivity. Being in a calmer state creates new connections between the lower brain and the higher brain that we don't have when we're stressed. When we're attuned to love, we are much more open to new ways of thinking and new ways of seeing problems.

You're already learning how to really tune into your body. Consider what happens to you when you come up against someone you may have had a problem with, or that you know has strong opinions. Does your body or mind get full of tension, like mine can? Many of us tend to close down; we tend to become either defensive or offensive, to maintain our position.

Consider what would happen if you felt that tension and said, "oh, okay, I see where this is going, you're feeling threatened." Then take those deep breaths, which are saying to the brain "hey, I'm aware here, this is not a tiger, this is not a big bear, I can handle this. My life is not in danger." This opens us up to positivity where we could consider how to help this person live with ease so that we all get what we need in this situation.

Step three of the process invites you to align with the mind of the Divine where you might say, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." Aligning your mind with the mind of Love, which desires the best outcome for ALL people involved, takes you out of ego-based desires. You can choose to line up your thoughts, will, and desires with a state of higher consciousness. The Mind of the Divine has the answers to all problems anyway. So, you really can't go wrong!

When I say align your mind with the higher mind, or divine mind, you're literally going to say to yourself, "may my mind be guided by peace and love." Or, "may my mind be open to new wisdom." So, as you're sitting at home, in your car, or standing in line, after you've brought that calm to yourself and tapped into love, you can let go of your own ideas about how things should shift by saying, "may my mind be guided by higher wisdom." It's that simple.

You are making a conscious decision to open your mind to other possibilities, rather than being fixed on the ego's insistence on "my way, my way, my way." Normally, when we go into problem solving, we have an opinion of what we think is best. For example, when we're negotiating or fighting with someone, we want to win, we want our point to get across. Sometimes, we might actually be right and our way may lead to greater success. But there comes a point in life when you want harmony, and when you desire peace rather than being right. Yes, you still want the best resolution, but you want the best resolution for everyone involved. In life, we don't always need to think of being the winner while others are the losers.

When you align your mind to the higher mind, aligning it to these higher states of consciousness, you're allowing an opening. It's about opening up and letting go of your agenda and your perspective, to

maybe be more compassionate and to see things from another person's point of view. It may be that who you're dealing with at the moment thinks that they're right; they may really want to get their way. You might choose to give them their way, but you want to be informed by the highest wisdom possible.

When we align, there's not much to do other than to just be quiet, present, and open. All that you've heard in the first lessons about mindfulness, about letting go of these rigid attachments, and becoming more open to what is here — this is one of those keys, when we are just open. We don't have to judge, and we don't have to criticize or label. You just need to decide. We create the intention to be led by higher wisdom.

You could also imagine yourself performing and interacting at your best in the current situation and align yourself in this moment with the thinking and attitude of your Best You. What does your highest state of mind tell you about who you really are in this situation? Align with the mental concept, mannerisms, and beliefs of your Best You, to the best of your ability now. What is the least you can align with now? What is the most you could accept as truth right now?

Make a decision to line up your thoughts, feelings, and actions with your Best You, your higher Self, the God in you.

Most people tell me that when they really decide that they're going to be open to higher wisdom, they start to see tons of synchronicities in their lives where the people they were thinking about suddenly call them on the phone and they wonder, "how did you know?" Or they get an email, or some problem resolves itself when they let go of that rigid control.

I want you to do an experiment. As you get into really opening yourself up to higher wisdom, or creativity, or intuition, I want you to just keep track of all the times that you find the little confirmations in your life where insight comes in. What might change in your life? Well, we never know, but once you have that openness, and that awareness to tune in and look for it, you might find that there is always this sort of hand guiding you and leading you in life. When we can be more open and accepting of it, we really get blessed with these gifts of intuition, insight, and creativity. So, your assignment, if you choose to accept it, is to just go into situations and bring a more open perspective.

4. Act on Inspiration

Acting on inspiration is all about taking that open mind that we just developed and going a little bit further into openness. You will either take action when you've been truly inspired, or you wait and do nothing. You literally wait for inspiration. Now, of course if you're dealing with a major crisis, you can't always just sit back and say, "I'm waiting on inspiration." But in most situations in our life, if we stabilize what's going on, and go away either for a few minutes or a few hours to bring back a sense of calm, to connect again with love, to align with higher wisdom, and to open our mind and heart, we can say to ourselves: "okay, I'm only going to take action on inspiration." This is the principle behind the popular practice of 'sleeping on it' before making a major decision.

Knowing that your thoughts and intentions determine your entire life experience — mentally and physically — you'll find the action that is

inspired by Love, your higher self or soul, that is in line with your highest ideals and values, is the only action worth taking. This is the ultimate in taking responsibility for our choices, thoughts, and emotions.

Inspiration, in Latin is in-spiritus; it means you're connected with the spiritual side of life. And as I've said, the spirit in you really does want the best for you and everyone. Spiritual wisdom is generally connected to everything in the universe, so I tend to think that it knows better than my limited thinking mind.

I like to say that armed with true self-awareness, self-acceptance, and accountability, the "right" path becomes obviously clear. You will come to see, feel, or otherwise sense which actions are beneficial for your life expression, and are in line with your values, and which are aligned with Love. You may find that circumstances spontaneously appear and you know the best course for you. Or, as you embark on a path, you become sensitive to the need to stop, wait, or leave a situation all together.

While exploring this stage, you'll learn to achieve a receptive state to receive guidance and inspiration to create a personal plan of action leading you toward goals you believe are appropriate for you now. All the while, you learn to allow for the unexpected insights that will come when you get really tuned into living life according to your own destiny. Acting on inspiration prepares you for a new way of life that promises more peace, harmony, and fulfillment, which positions you to fully enjoy life!

You are freed from doing busy work that doesn't please you, or mindless activities that fail to advance you on your soul's journey.

Instead, you begin to live with intention and purpose. You are encouraged to tap into your own internal wisdom and guidance from your higher self, the Soul or what you may call intuition. This means that you don't have to feel like you're just trying to solve problems, batting against something that's just not working, or filling up your schedule because you have to look busy. It allows you this space and the consciousness and the heart resonance to say, "I'm now choosing to live my life in a different way. I'm going to live my life in accordance with my highest values." So, when you feel inspired to take action, that's when you'll take action.

It can feel a little risky because most of us are programmed to act fast, to be proactive, and all of which is very good, especially for us entrepreneurs. But when you want to get to a point where you are living on a higher plane of existence, you must tune into the creativity, inspiration, insight, and the spiritual presence that really governs all of life. In this way, the decisions that you make are the right ones for you, not just for right now, but for the long run. This part of the process is all about asking for inspiration, and not taking action until you have it.

INTUITION VS RATIONAL THINKING

So how do you know when it's truly intuition or higher wisdom, and not just your rational mind? Well, this also takes practice. So once again, at the end of the day or at the end of the week, I want you to write down, all the times when you had a hunch, or a feeling that you should or shouldn't have done something, and then write about the result.

Take note of the insight and inspiration your intuition brings you. One way to do this is to look over the last year and think about all the significant milestones and any major decisions that you had to make, as well as any major catastrophes that you had to deal with. Then go back to those decision points, and look at the period just before. Before that decision, were there any feelings that you had about what you should or shouldn't do? Was there a hunch or voice in your head saying "Hmm… watch out"?

If you go back over the last year or several years and look at the major turning points in your life — the major decisions you made about your work, your relationships, moving to a different place — what were those feelings, what were those thoughts, what were the things that you heard in your mind? Or what were the things you saw in your environment that you felt were really trying to lead you in a certain direction? Write those down.

You can also write about what you did or didn't do based on those feelings. So many of us have a feeling like "oooh… I know I shouldn't eat that" or "something's telling me I just shouldn't go to this event." But we drag ourselves out, we let our rational mind talk us into things based on a promise we made. Or we may worry that it might look bad if we don't follow through, or whatever. In other words, we rationalize.

How many times have you gone ahead and done that thing and then regretted it? I want you to be able to see if there are patterns in your life that you can tune into.

Becoming aware of how you already have your natural genius abilities inside of you, that you are naturally guided, you are naturally tapped

into universal wisdom, is the first step to becoming more sensitive to it and trusting it.

The best way to trust your intuition, is to make a list of all the times it comes up, what decisions you do and don't make, and what the outcomes are. Looking back, you might say, "wow, I could've trusted myself in that situation" or "I knew that was the way I was supposed to go. I should have listened to myself." Then you can start being proactive and as you move forward you can ask yourself at any major decision point, "how am I feeling, what's my body telling me? What's my mind telling me? Are there any little messages coming up through my dreams, or through my conversations, or things going on in my environment?"

The more you are willing to give yourself a moment of open awareness, the more you'll find that that wisdom continues to flow in, and that's when you'll know you are acting on true inspiration and not just your rational mind, so make a list. I'd love to hear about the really, really, juicy ones, where you just knew you shouldn't be in that relationship, or you just knew you shouldn't take that job, or you just knew you should've gone on that trip and you heard later how everyone had an amazing time.

5. Appreciate Life

The fifth and final part of the Attunement Meditation™ is Appreciation. Here we take a moment to really look at anything in our life, anything in our immediate surroundings, or in our world that we can appreciate. Then we consciously generate a feeling of gratitude for it. This part is about taking positivity to the next level and

Commented [SL31]: Did you mean to capitalize this?

radiating it forward and outward through everything that we do. (You'll have lots of practice with this one as Appreciation is also the last step of the Attunement Meditation™, which you'll find in the Appendix of this book.

Barbara Fredrickson, who's done extensive research on her "broaden and build theory" says that practicing positive emotions, like gratitude, can help broaden our repertoire of problem-solving abilities. The experience of positive emotions can protect us and actually help us rebound after stressful situations. We can even build up positivity, which helps us become more resourceful when life gets challenging. So, by proactively tuning into love, opening our mind and our heart to higher wisdom, and then generating these feelings of gratitude and appreciation, we're putting positivity coins in the bank.

Did you start a gratitude journal as I suggested at the end of Chapter 5? I totally love them and highly recommend you start writing in one daily. I encourage my clients to get into a nightly practice of writing down three to five things they are grateful for. This causes us to be more mindful of what we can be truly grateful for, even the little things. We take for granted so much in life without noticing the good, positive, lovely things that happen. Generating the feeling of gratitude can help us amplify positivity within our aura. And what we store in our aura will be sent out to the world around us, attracting things of a similar vibration into our field.

Beyond just writing what you're grateful for, the 3 Blessings exercise from Chapter 5 invites you to note the things that went right in your day and what role you played in them. When you can see that you actually played a part, even just as a witness or a non-active

participant, you recognize that you have a place in the world that matters.

So, what are you grateful for? What relationships are you grateful for? Are you grateful for you being willing to read a book like this? Are you willing to appreciate the time that you've put into doing the daily rituals to send yourself compassion? Even these small things can add up.

Fredrickson's research has shown that allowing ourselves to appreciate these small wins can add up to much bigger rewards in terms of our physical and emotional health. This impacts how we interact with others and how we see the world. So, this step of the Attunement Meditation invites you to look around in your immediate environment or within your present circumstances to see what you can appreciate.

The Attunement Meditation initially came out of my need to help patients manage times where they were either stressed, dealing with an addiction, or dealing with crisis. Usually, a person goes through the Attunement to bring calm to body and brain, to create more harmony in themselves and in others, so that when they move ahead they're inspired and take action that's for the highest amount of good.

Sometimes when we're in a situation where life is going nuts around us, it's hard to appreciate anything. It might be much easier to say, "man, my life sucks, everything's going wrong, this person's wrong, etc." We can literally create this spiral of negativity and look at everything that's going wrong in our lives. It's precisely during those times that we must remind ourselves that everything is temporary and nothing lasts forever. So, if you want to connect the dots between

everything negative in your life, you could, but you know where that leads you right? It doesn't lead you where you want to go. So why not look for everything positive that you can, whether you're in a stressed situation or you're in a happy one.

Proactively build up positive resources within you. So, even in the midst of anger, irritability, frustration, or an addictive craving, once you bring that calm to body and brain and mind and heart, look around for something, anything, that can be appreciated. Is the sun shining? Then just take that in, notice it and appreciate it.

The wonderful work of Rick Hanson who wrote Buddha's Brain and Hardwiring Happiness involves a process that he calls "taking in the good." The basic concept is this: we literally need to spend five, ten, fifteen or up to thirty seconds to really absorb and appreciate the good things that are going on in our lives. We have to do this for a half a minute sometimes, because, as he puts it, the mind is sort of like Velcro for bad or negative experiences. They stick to our minds and we get focused on them. Unfortunately, when it comes to positive experiences, our minds are more like Teflon. They don't tend to stick without some effort on our part.

So rather than letting the good stuff enter your mind while barely taking notice or letting it pass away quickly, I want you to actively take note of what you can appreciate in this world. Then savor it and let it soak in so that you remain in that positive frame of mind and being.

If everything is going crazy in my world, and I'm following this guideline, I'm going to look at what's positive to appreciate around me. I see that the sun is shining, I may even say out loud, "isn't it

beautiful the way the sun glistens on those leaves and contrasts the light and the shadows," really taking it in and appreciating it.

Many people find it hard to appreciate anything when they're really sick. This is when you have to look at what might be considered mundane things. Maybe it's the texture of the cushion you're sitting on, or maybe it's the warmth or softness of the blanket that's around you. Perhaps it's just the cup of tea you're sipping, which warms you. The point is to be present to what you can appreciate, what you can be grateful for, and allow it to soak in.

So literally spending a few seconds to feel that sense of gratitude and appreciation is the key. The reason it's helpful to write it down, is because you're getting the emotion to settle into your body. You're actually allowing yourself to see it, feel it, write it, remember it, and cherish it. And that impacts your brain and your energy field, your aura.

If you don't already have a gratitude journal where you list the things in your life that you're grateful for, or the three blessings of the day, then I suggest that you get one. Of course, with technology, there are some really cool smartphone apps out there that will ask you "what are you grateful for today?" and you can type them in.

When life is going crazy and you're feeling bad, you can pick up your gratitude journal and go back and read through the entries that remind you that there is good in your life, you've done good things, you've made great progress, and there are things worth being grateful and happy about. When you meditate on happiness and the sense of gratitude, it makes you more open and willing to engage in life rather than shutting down and isolating yourself. For most of us, what

happens when we go within is that we tend to look to the past and we see all the things we've done wrong and all the programming that led us to a certain point. Instead, mindfulness and meditation is calling us to be in this present moment with a lot more openness, curiosity, and awareness, so that we can see what's new, see where our life can take us now, and see what good we can bring out of ourselves in this moment.

If you're finding it difficult to get to the elevated feeling of appreciation, it may help to work your way up the emotional scale by deliberately experiencing joy, amusement and humor, which have been proven to help us build resources to deal with life's many challenges and negative emotional experiences.

My daughter and I enjoy watching inspiring TED talks to remind ourselves that our problems are really small and that there are many ways to overcome the blues. Others enjoy watching videos of baby animals doing funny or heroic things to bring a sense of wonder and awe back to their day.

Also, watching comedy films or reading a joke a day allows laughter to increase your mood and your happy hormones, like serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin.

Hugging someone for at least 10 seconds can also provide a feeling of comfort, safety and connection plus it gives a brain boost of oxytocin to help you stay upbeat. Plus playing or singing music and dancing boosts my feel-good chemicals almost instantly.

Another of my favorite~~s~~ mood boosters comes from wearing a SMILER, a magical instrument of joy created by a beautiful Icelandic

artist and author named Gegga Birgis, who contributed a story in Chapter 4.

"If you smile five times per day for NO REASON, you can change your life in 90 days."

This quote by the Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, inspired Gegga to create a little helper that when put into your mouth makes you smile. In an inspiring video of one of her speeches online, Gegga shared how she used laughter and gratitude to heal from a dramatic facial injury. It's worth checking out, visit www.Smiler.is

So, there you have it. The last step of the Attunement Meditation™ invites you to look around and appreciate and be grateful for what is working in your life. Your daily assignment is to write down either the three blessings of the day, three things that went right and the part that you played in them, even if it's just as an observer of those three good things, or to write down things that you appreciate or you're grateful for. It could be people, it could be activities, or it could be this book. You could be grateful for yourself, appreciating that you've been such a trooper in your life that you keep going and don't give up. Write those things down and make sure that you savor them and let that good stuff sink in.

Living with Appreciation and gratitude is also the last step of the Cornerstone Process, which you'll see ends the book with a similar invitation to focus on gratitude.

Download a free guided meditation audio of the Attunement Meditation™ on our Resources Page at www.Top10ResilienceTraits.com

The Attunement Meditation™

ALLOW: Take 5 deep breaths and allow yourself to settle into a quiet state of awareness. Allow your thoughts to come up without resistance. Allow yourself to tune into the feelings, emotions and physical sensations, again, without resistance. Become the witness to the thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Allow their messages to come into your awareness without judgment.

ATTUNE: Imagine you have a loving or compassionate being sending out positive vibes your way. There is always love around us, the energy of nurturing, kindness and compassion. Imagine this positive energy swirling around you and draw it into you through your breath and intention. Know that you are cared for.

ALIGN: In a gentle act of surrender, mentally decide to align your mind with the highest thoughts possible. Open your mind to receive the wisdom of the Divine Mind. Say, may my mind be guided by peace, love and higher wisdom.

INSPIRED ACTION: Ask for guidance from your higher self, Source or God for the next inspired step you should take in your life. Listen, stay open, and expect an answer now or in the near future.

APPRECIATION: Find something in your environment or a memory in your heart to appreciate. Focus on one thing of beauty or anything good, lovely, positive, joyful, funny thing to appreciate. Carry this positive vibe with you.

About the Book's Creator

Dr. Andrea Pennington, now known as DaeEss 1Dreah, is an integrative physician, acupuncturist, psychedelic assisted therapy facilitator, retreat leader, meditation teacher, and international speaker who is on a mission to raise the level of consciousness and real self-love on our planet. As a personal brand architect, media producer, and communications specialist, she leverages her 20+ years of experience in broadcast and digital media to proudly help healers, Light workers and coaches to bring their brilliance to the world through publishing and media production with Make Your Mark Global Media.

Commented [SL32]: Did you mean to capitalize this?

Dr. 1Dreah is also a bestselling author, international TEDx speaker and documentary filmmaker. For nearly two decades, she has shared her empowering insights on vitality and resilience on the Oprah Winfrey Show, the Dr. Oz Show, iTV This Morning, CNN, the Today Show, LUXE-TV, Thrive Global and Huffington Post and as a news anchor for Discovery Health Channel. She also produced a four-part documentary series and DVD entitled Simple Steps to a Balanced Natural Pregnancy.

Dr. 1Dreah has appeared in many print publications including Essence, Ebony, Newsweek, The Sun, Red, Top Santé and Stylist. She has also written or contributed to 18 books. As host of the talk show, Liberate Your Authentic Self, and as founder of In8Vitality, she blends her 'nerdy' mix of medical science, positive psychology,

and mindfulness meditation to empower us all to show up authentically, love passionately, and live with vitality.

Visit Dr. 1Dreah online at:

AndreaPennington.com

ConsciousEvolution.live

MakeYourMarkGlobal.com

In8Vitality.com

Get Social!

www.facebook.com/DrAndreaPennington

www.twitter.com/drandrea

www.linkedin.com/in/andreapennington

www.instagram.com/drandreapennington

Other Books Published by Make Your Mark Global

Holistic Healing: 12 real life accounts of healing mind, body and soul by overcoming stress and burnout, processing trauma, rewiring the brain, reprogramming the mind, and integrating the soul

Created & compiled by Andrea Pennington

Manifesting Love: Real Life Love Stories of Conscious Relationships Co-created with the Universe

Created & compiled by Andrea Pennington

Unity Conscious Leadership™ (Interdependent Growth and Transformation): From a Buddhist Perspective by Dr. Joyce Wazirali

The Real Self Love Handbook: A Proven 5-step Process to Liberate Your Authentic Self, Build Resilience and Live an Epic Life

by Andrea Pennington

The Ultimate Self-help Book: How to Be Happy Confident & Stress Free, Change Your Life with Law Of Attraction & Energy Healing by Yvette Taylor

Magic and Miracles

Created and Compiled by Andrea Pennington

Life After Trauma

Created and Compiled by Andrea Pennington

The Magical Unfolding by Helen Rebello

The Orgasm Prescription for Women
by Andrea Pennington

Time to Rise
Created and Compiled by Andrea Pennington

The Book on Quantum Leaps for Leaders: The Practical Guide to Becoming a More Efficient and Effective Leader from the Inside Out by Bitta. R. Wiese

Turning Points
Compiled and Edited by Andrea Pennington

How to Liberate and Love Your Authentic Self
by Andrea Pennington

The Top 10 Traits of Highly Resilient People (1st Edition)
Compiled by Andrea Pennington

Daily Compassion Meditation: 21 Guided Meditations, Quotes and Images to Inspire Love, Joy and Peace
by Andrea Pennington

MAKE YOUR MARK GLOBAL

Get Published Share Your Message with the World

Make Your Mark Global is a branding, marketing and media agency based in the USA and the French Riviera. We offer publishing, content development, and promotional services to heart-based, conscious authors who wish to have a lasting impact through the sharing and distribution of their transformative message. We also help authors build a strong online media presence and platform for greater visibility and provide speaker training.

If you'd like help writing, publishing, or promoting your book, or if you'd like to co-author a collaborative book, visit us online or call for a free consultation.

Visit www.MakeYourMarkGlobal.com or

Call +1 (707) 776-6310 or

Send an email to Booking@AndreaPennington.com