

Precious Gems 



*Precious Gems
for transforming times*

sonia friedrich

Publisher logo

My thanks to close friends and family who kindly gave their time to review my early draft and offered generous praise and gentle yet constructive criticism. Sharing this journey with you along the way has brought me as much satisfaction as writing this book. Thank you for being with me.

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It is noted that the author is not medically, psychologically or religiously trained or qualified and that these ideas, practices and understandings are based on personal experience and success. It is recognised that each person has unique needs for self-discovery and transformation and should seek what they require to assist in their passage of growth, whether medical, psychological, emotional, sexual, relational or spiritual advice. The individual takes full responsibility for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and maintenance of their holistic health and must seek what satisfies personal needs. The author and publisher are not responsible for and assume no liability for any action undertaken or arising from the utilisation of the information shared in this work. They do however hope that this work helps the individual to continue the path on which she/he is meant to follow.

We receive precious gems in life. Advice, hints, practices and understandings from family, friends, professionals, even strangers. I find the most profound ones have been simple. These priceless gifts have changed my life in a wondrous way. Each came at a time that was appropriate - when I asked for help to face a hurdle that stood before me, no matter how big or small. Some were generously provided when I didn't know how or what I needed to ask. They surfaced as required. Often the hurdles appeared scary from afar. Yet when I started to jump them, they began to shrink in direct proportion to the disappearance of my fear.

These are offerings of love that I savour to this day. Most have become habits in my life. Some I forget to use for a while, yet they seem to know when to pop up and again remind me to put them into practice. Life has its strange way of providing what it is we need. I used to wonder how this occurred. Now I no longer wonder; I know that this is the beauty of life and the gift that is on offer when we slow down enough to receive it. Life feeds us needed guidance, as we are ready, rarely before.

Because these precious gems worked for me, it made me reflect upon whether they might work for others. I simply want to share them and I pray that they may lighten you too.



My gratitude to the synchronicities that find us

To Cheryl

For the clarity with which you helped me see through my fog

You so wisely share your gift

To Rita

To surrender to pain and feel its opposite is my freedom within

Your light shines and illuminates beyond



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Wandering

I feel the need to divulge a little of myself and of my personal transformation, so that you have a place of reference to understand my urge to write and share these precious gems. These are my thoughts about where my life stands today. I know and respect that it will continue to change. I suspect, daily. In my life, there have been times of considerable change and each of these has been an unplanned result of my response to circumstance.

Life has dealt me a generous hand, I am fortunate in so many senses of the word. Each day I give thanks for where I am and all that I have. I momentarily lose my breath and feel an eruption in my heart as I inhale the fullness of my life. I am enriched and in awe of its abundance. For so long I failed to see this. Thankfully, today I can. There are days when I spontaneously burst into tears of joy in appreciation for all that I have. And there are other days when I weep pain and sorrow, as I release all that is holding me back, to make space for the new and allow myself to move forward. I relish feeling the spectrum that is my life.

I am grateful that my personal makeup includes a passion for self-discovery and the accompanying strength to fulfill it. I welcome change and can do so more readily now. I may take a while to make a decision, but when I do 'I'm off' and you can't stop me. Some may say 'impulsive', while others command, 'about time'. For me the timing has always been perfect. I have been able to walk my steps of change while often not fathoming the magnitude of these decisions. I follow my instinct – that this is simply the right thing to do at the time. I am grateful that I do not live in "I wish I had..."

In hindsight, I can see so much of what I missed, as signs trying to guide and

nurture me. Pivotal times when I felt exhilaration and joy, to exhaustion and grief and they all prompted necessity for change. It seems so obvious now. Today I smile effortlessly in comprehension.



If a year ago anyone had said that I would leave the city, leave my profession, move to the hinterland of Byron Bay, become a writer, have my first book published, take up photography, have a photo in an exhibition and follow an impulsive desire to reconnect with the land and begin growing my own food, I know I would have laughed in their face. Literally. I know this is what I would have done. "Yeah right. No way. I doubt it" would have been my spontaneous response. Yet this is my life today and it has been like this from the day I arrived. I love my life, as I have learned to love myself. The beauty of it all is that I couldn't have planned this if I tried.

I've gone from being someone who used to have her one, two and five year plan of things 'to do' and to 'get to', to now not being able to plan a day. Seriously. I no longer know the shape of my day today, let alone tomorrow. When I awake each morning I simply follow where the day takes me. Some things need to happen, yet their urgency has diminished and amazingly they are all still completed. I have learned that things no longer need to happen *now*. Most things in life don't. Their urgency is manmade. My day deliberately begins with the nurturing of myself and I allow the shape of this to flow as I require. I try to live each moment, each day, for the offerings that are held out before me. I still do not see them all, sometimes I resist and reject them, although more often than not, I am learning acceptance. Initially this was not easy, yet with daily practice, as I live trust, life rewards me. And I am

beginning to live this flow with flexibility, and a kindness and compassion toward myself that no longer criticises or judges the amount I get done within a day, or tries to deny the attitudes and behaviours that define me.

I find comfort in letting my life flow with the energy to support the task at hand, including necessary time for recovery and renewal. I seem to need more of the latter now. Perhaps it's from years of blind abuse, my own. I take pride in disclosing my truth, firstly to myself and then sharing this intimacy with others. I have learned that I have nothing to fear. I look and see myself and my shadow and know that they combine to create who I am. I can do this openly now. I am in the place where this process of discovery now excites me. The honesty of personal revelation bears witness to beautiful growth. Mine. And I see that with healing, gentleness arrives. I enjoy watching this new trait evolve. I enjoy that others sense this too.

A control freak and perfectionist by birth and lifelong practice, I have begun to understand the destruction these traits exhibit when I allow them. I am learning to release their constraints and discover the layers of myself that for many years had been so tightly intertwined. A knot. I think that is the easiest way to describe my previous self. I celebrate my progress in the life-long journey of self-exposure. Now I live to trust my intuition and follow the synchronicities of life; listening to the spirit that communicates within me, throughout nature, holds my hand and connects us all. Reconnection is the next phase I intuitively sense I am within. This book is testament to it. I find life is easier when my mind is put aside. I know I have so much to learn. Yet I love that I do not need to know what lies ahead, for if I strive for knowing, I will miss the valuable lesson of today.

I believe that we are all in the same boat, just rowing at different speeds. Maybe those not rowing at all have mastered *it*. I have had events in my life that affected and distorted me, often unconsciously. Sometimes they distorted momentarily and other times for far to long. The key lesson for me has been that to become conscious, I have had to slow down. There may be other ways, yet slowing down has been my passage for growth. We are all insecure, we all have things happen to us, we all fear, we all wish for love. We crave harmony yet often fail to live harmoniously within ourselves or amongst our immediate family. The question in my mind is – "how then can we have this expectation of others, let alone of the world?" We must accept with honesty where we are today if we have any chance of transformation. This level of honesty can be confronting. For me it always is. It is my fear of confrontation that has harmed me, and I have learned that it is in the facing of my fears, truly surrendering to them, that they are released and diminish. And it is in this instant that I uncover something of myself. My fears are valid and real. I acknowledge and respect this. I admit to both the destructive and healing powers of my mind. And I own up to how often I slip back. At times I find this scary.

For me this has been the most challenging time of my life. It has also been the most rewarding. I have never grieved so much. I didn't know that these amounts of tears were humanly possible, let alone mine. They have been in a deep well, so far within. Yet I have learned to cry. I have mastered this release and I cleanse myself through this act of kindness. I have learned to feel my emotions, to know they are real, validate them and let them pass. They are temporary, where I remain.

My belief is that I am responsible for myself and this is all that I need to honour.

To worry about others and how I think they should change is no longer my focus. It should never have been and was for far too long. I recognise that this was simply my resistance to looking inward, my own fear, that kept me distant from myself. Looking after myself and keeping tabs on my own ego now takes up my time, and this is more than enough.

I believe that if I feel peaceful and harmonious within, then this must consciously and unconsciously ripple out in every interaction I undertake and with every person with whom I engage. I believe this is how we can all give gentleness, compassion and love in daily practice, and in doing so receive what we crave. One small drop of kindness causes an amazing ripple. Imagine what many can do.







Precious gems appear



Truth



Trust and connect

Let people into your world without making assumptions about what they think and feel. There is no need to hide. Share your life and allow yourself to connect on a deeper level with everyone. Let yourself go. Trust. It is safe. You may see that many of your assumptions are not real. In fact, what they have done is held you back. They have stopped you from getting to know others and truly letting them to get to know you. Allow these presumptions to fall away. They no longer serve you. Openly receive the love others unconditionally offer.





Stop Lying to yourself

It is not that you are a dishonest person but by not expressing the truth, your truth, you give up parts of *you*. When you choose not to actively express who you are or what you believe and feel, it really is a lie – both to yourself and to others. You may have conditioned this behaviour with the intent and belief that you are trying not to upset anyone, or as an attempt to keep the peace, to please, or to gain acceptance. This entrenched habit is a response to fear of the anticipated reply you will receive if you speak your reality. Your behaviour compromises a little piece of you, and before long, you may have yielded more than imagined. Deep within *you* feel upset, ill at ease and can't accept yourself, since you have yet to be heard. You have adapted to all your surrounds, to the point you may actually forget what it is that *you* think and who *you* really are. You may think this is O.K. Believe it is not.





Know your truth

Listen to yourself. Really listen. Start with your head and your heart. Then add in your instincts and finally feel all that is happening within your body to hear what it communicates. If they are in conflict, give yourself the gift of time to understand what they are speaking. Peel back the layers of yourself kindly and with the highest regard. With each layer is precious discovery. Tap into the depths of what makes you you. Embrace your own understanding with full knowledge that there is nothing to fear. Find your voice. For some, you may even be finding it for the first time. Start by asking yourself "what do *I* need?", "what do *I* believe?", "what do *I* feel?". You may not know anymore. You may have never truly asked this of yourself. Give yourself the gift of time to hear your answers. Breaking life-long behaviour requires patience. Do not force it. Allow your authentic self to reveal. Delight in who you are and what you believe. Herein lies your value. Honour your truths. Now speak them.





Candle ritual

Rituals help to position key messages at the forefront of your mind.

Purchase two beautiful candles with colours or scents that are meaningful to you. Have one for the celebration of 'truth' and the other for the celebration of 'connection'. Buy them BIG. Large enough that they will burn for a few weeks. At night, light the candles deliberately. Spend time to reflect and be immersed in their significance. Each candle is an illuminating reminder that connection happens as you trust the sharing of your truth. Relive the times during that day that you have followed these words and received their reward. Celebrate them. Invest in this ritual. The daily reminder creates personal change.

Institute candle rituals for instruction in your life - for cleansing negative beliefs; to reinforce positive ones - for love, for compassion, as a prompt to nurture yourself, for guidance or for any instruction with private relevance. Light them as needed. Focus energy and enrich life.





Create rituals

Create rituals of meaning in your daily life. Give further consideration to your habits and routines. As you brush your hair, shower, clean your teeth, make a cup of tea or turn on a light. For example, as you shower each morning create a ritual - as water washes over your hair gently run your hands over your head and down your neck and use this routine to wash away any negative thoughts from the day before and ask that they not be in your day today. In the same motion ask that this cleansing make room for love and acceptance. Using this ritual you cleanse both your body and your mind.

Any regular activity can become a reminder for change and positive reinforcement, to focus thought and change behaviour. Design ones that work for you. Use rituals until new habits form. Their discipline commands easy and on-going self-improvement.





Breathe consciously

Spend time each day to notice your breath. Take three deep yet quiet breaths and inhale the essence of life. Again inhale deeply, softly. Feel your breath through all of your body. Notice where it stops, where your flow of life may temporarily be blocked. With each breath relax. Take your breath to this blocked area and as you exhale release any tension. Follow your life flow. Continue to focus breath until all tension within is released. Become aware of your life flow as you bring consciousness to this vital habit. It only takes a moment to help yourself unwind. When life gets too much, when you start to judge, feel irritated, annoyed, frustrated, angry or agitated, bring consciousness back to your breath and breathe deeply to help you relax a few moments. Life can be placed back into perspective as you slow yourself and your responses down. A few breaths can be all it takes.





Reflections of yourself

Every time a person or an activity stirs an emotion, it is like a mirror reflecting back to you something of yourself. It is a projection of who or where you are. Your reflection may show destructive reactions, for example, that you are judging others, not comfortable in yourself, seeking acceptance, wanting to impress, getting annoyed or frustrated, creating distance; or positive reactions of love, compassion, openness, acceptance and warmth.

With all reactions ask yourself how you are feeling and why. The other person has done nothing but trigger an inner response. Initially this experience can be startling. However, once you become aware, you see each inner reaction as an opportunity to learn, an area for personal growth. Every interaction offers new light as each becomes a meaningful moment for you to better understand yourself. Allow these reflections to guide you. Look into this mirror often. Self-knowledge reflects constantly.





Face fear, live from love



Are you living your life seeking the approval of another?

This may be the most pivotal discovery that transforms your life. Please take your time, be gentle and show grace to others involved. Love transcends all.

It may be your mother, your father or another loved one from whom you seek this approval. The longing manifests, often unconsciously, through your thoughts and behaviours. A yearning for acknowledgement, emotional support and love lies within. No matter how hard you try, how successful you are, it does not appease your discontent. You push away, not able to receive what you desire. You continue craving, seeking, striving, wanting. You may not believe that this is why you crave, seek, strive and want. The dominance of your compulsion has overtaken and is unconsciously running your life as you fill it with continuous distraction to hide from your longing for love.

As you delve into this question, ensure you are emotionally ready to confront what may reveal. If you are not, practice self-compassion. It is O.K. Consider your needs, accepting that you are not in the right space to expose this truth. This is all. It is not necessary to place expectations on yourself. Know there is no rush. You are exactly where you are meant to be right now.

If you choose to delve further, be open and forgiving as you seek to uncover if the 'need for approval' is true for you. Approach entrenched behaviours with the

query: "Why do I do what I do?". Continue to ask yourself "Why? *Really?* Why?". A reactionary response may not be accurate; it may simply be another deflection to continue concealing your truth. Take time, allow space and be honest. Transferring thoughts to paper may assist to make them real, relocating them from your subconscious, giving them life. These are for you, no one else. You can destroy them later if you wish.

If 'seeking approval of another' rings true for you, begin to see how this is broadcast through your actions. The pattern may be reflected in other relationships; with family, friends, work colleagues, possibly *all* your relationships. Ask "why?" until you discover what lies at the root or who lies at the root and why.

The revelation of your truth can be overwhelming, learning for the first time what has been the cog turning your wheel of life. Your behaviour may have become a conditioned response to accumulated feelings of abandonment, isolation, abuse, neglect, emotional distance or other factors. Respect their significance. Breathe slowly and be compassionate. Go for a walk, take a break, give yourself space and energy to digest what you have uncovered.

Do not despair. Rather celebrate. Change is bursting open! The breakthrough of self-awareness is to be cherished. Patterns of behaviour are repeated until identified and deliberately dismantled. This recognition may be the start of transformation in your life. Repercussions now present with responsible choice at the forefront. Space has been freed for new and positive behaviours. And your time for healing has begun.



While awareness is a key step, you must now progress with what you have learned. You cannot change what has gone before. Now is the time to take responsibility. Forgive the person who lies at its core. And forgive yourself. Forgiveness of the self is critical on the path of healing.

If you can, share your newfound understanding with the person who lies at its root. Others cannot read your mind to know what it is you seek or the manner in which you seek it. Make the first call, take the first step. There is not a moment to waste. Take responsibility for your life and your own happiness. Transcend living with fear to living from love. While there are no guarantees about how the other person will respond, you can guarantee your reaction. Be open. For some, sharing may be all it takes for the need to dissolve – you may find you are already receiving that which you crave, within the ability of what this person is able to give you. Yet from where you stood it simply could not be seen. See reality, see their reality and then let them understand you. Accept gracefully what this person is able to offer. Now choose how you wish to respond. You have moved. There is nothing blocking your view. Cure your emotional blindness and remove the need for the approval from others in your life. Forever.



Having lived to fulfill this missing link may have taken you to a place in your life you no longer wish to be, emotionally, mentally, physically or spiritually. When the necessity for approval disappears, so does the required behaviour to support it. There

is no turning back. Flourish in your own acceptance. See that you are beautiful and loving exactly as you are and in all that you do. Believe this. This is a gift of freedom you give to yourself. Powerful stuff! Straight away you can make the required adjustments in your life. Take your time so that your thoughts, decisions and behaviours are conscious, deliberate *and* for you. Become your authentic self. The shackles that have held you down for so long has been broken. Spread your wings and fly. Soar in the sunshine of your life. Brilliant!







Graciously face your fears

Do you hang up your own internal 'do not disturb' sign to avoid facing your cause of anger, despair, resentment, bitterness, envy or jealousy, because you prefer to deny these feelings lie within? These are just a few of the destructive emotions we must choose daily to consciously reject. Remember that when we see these emotions in others they are merely a projection of ourselves, our mirror reflecting. It is a lesson, gently reminding us that we still have something to learn.

The time spent 'fearing fear itself' causes catastrophic turmoil within our minds and our lives. We think of all the 'what-if's?' that may happen in life. They are not necessary. How rarely they happen anyway.

Life is to be accepted, not predicted. Living in fear or denial is not harmonious. You feel it within. You feel the unease, the internal struggle. Yet you pretend to be happy and that all is O.K. It is not. You cannot lie to yourself forever. Be reassured that when you live from love, there is nothing to fear.

Fears buried a lifetime may be both difficult to uncover and challenging to face. Graciously accept that the first step to overcome your fear is the appreciation of its existence. That there is a blockage or a barrier that constricts your energy. Become aware of it, confront it and discover what lies at its root. Fear of failure, embarrassment, rejection do exist. Recognise the ones that represent you. Dig deeper and deeper, until nothing else lays beneath. Find the cause under their symptomatic

effect. As you do, be mentally and emotionally prepared to face what will unravel. For some, professional assistance may be welcome and provide the support and encouragement needed to help dissolve the fear.

Fear is a unique phenomenon and that when faced, can somehow just seem to evaporate. In that moment of understanding, it loses its power. It disappears. Once conscious, fear cannot unknowingly manipulate your behaviour.

Desire to live harmoniously and begin to release constraints that are stopping you from living from love. You deserve no less. See common patterns where fear constantly arises and plays out in your thoughts and actions. Begin to *feel* how your body receives and lives fear. Do you get nervous, agitated, feel your stomach tighten, clench your teeth, have muscle spasms or other bodily reactions? Become conscious of its effect. Get in tune with your emotional response and hear and feel changes to your body. It is a reminder that you have destructive energy to release. In this you gain clarity and strength. Therein lies the return of your personal power.







Listen to body pain

Our body communicates to us through feeling. Yet so often we do not hear, we turn a 'deaf-ear' to ourself. We put up with an ache, a pain, a reaction of sorts. We get so used to the ache, pain or reaction that we accept it as normal, "it's just the way I am". We may be so used to it, we even become numb to the feeling. When we are 'body-deaf' our body may demand more attention - it still has not been heard. It goes into spasm or dis-ease. It is screaming for some attention. There is no self-love when you treat yourself this way.

Create time and space to feel your body's pain and listen to its messages. Emotional and psychological stress often stays within the body and builds up if it is not set free. See pain differently. See it as an opportunity to release something that you did not know you were carrying. You need to allow time and space for this energy transference to take place.



Practicing the following exercise may help. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Now, mindfully go into your pain. Visualise it. Feel it. What do you see? What does it look like, its shape, colour, size, its make-up? Stay with the image you see. Mindfully follow this pain as it moves through your body. Continue for as far as you need. Ask if your pain has a message it is trying to share.

Feel your pain. Now imagine that the pain gets worse. Exaggerate it. Surrender to your

pain and continue on this visual journey. You may feel a corresponding physical increase in your pain level. Take it to its end. Continue to exaggerate the pain until you can no more. As you do, visualise the changing picture of your pain. What do you see? Is there significance or relevance to what this pain is causing within you? What does it represent? Follow your pain until it can go no further. Now hold it there. You have taken the pain to its end and now it is time for release and healing. Surrender and release. Ask what has caused this pain. What do you fear? Face what is lying at the cause. Let go. Tears may come as you release the pain. As you release, energy starts to flow and healing begins. As you feel this energy, stay with it and follow these vibrations through your body.

See the opposite of your pain. As pain is released visualise healing and your body recover. What does this look like, what changes are occurring? Now take healing to its end. See this part of your body healthy, vibrant and fully functional. What does this look like? What do you see? How do you feel? Stay in this space. Visualise health and happiness. Your pain and blockage is releasing. Remember each ache is a reminder that your body has pain to release. Repeat this as often as you need as you choose to unleash body pain. Hear the healing voice your body speaks.







Lighten your load

As you expand your self-awareness and overcome your fears, you release baggage that has been weighing you down. This can take many forms - the baggage of attachment, judgment, envy, anger, jealousy, resentment and many others. And of course at their root, lies fear itself. Lighten your load. There is no need to burden yourself for having carried these fears for so long. They are no longer part of your makeup. See them now for what they were. Replace them with feelings of love, joy, understanding and compassion. Practice these new behaviours daily. At times you may take one step forward and two steps back. Before long you take two steps forward and one step back. And then you simply become. Life is continual understanding and learning. Enjoy your new demeanor. Bask in the living from love within. Be at peace with yourself. Glow.





Allow yourself to grieve

Self-transformation is exhausting, physically and mentally. You require rest and recuperation to prepare for and recover from these transition times. Grief may appear during these cycles of death and rebirth. Old behaviours die as you breathe life into new ones. Be comforted in knowing that we all go through these steps as we grieve*:

- ☛ denial
- ☛ anger
- ☛ bargaining
- ☛ depression
- ☛ acceptance



Grieving is healing work. Let it all out. For some it can take only moments to get through all of these stages, for others the time can seem endless. It is critical that you take the time that is right for you. Recognise that you may need assistance to work through your grief. You nurture yourself when you identify that you need and seek this professional help. Invest in help that works for you. You are unique. Value your personal growth.

*reference to Elisabeth Kubler-Ross



Cry cleansing tears

Sometimes you just need to cry. At times you may not even know why. Do you always need to know the reason? Of course not. Understanding comes with this conscious and unconscious release.

At times you can feel the tears building up yet for some reason try to keep your composure and not let go of what needs to be freed. Emotions and emotional responses are to be felt. They are natural. Your body is telling you it needs this release. Cry. Cry your heart out. Let it flow. Cry from the depths of your being, from deep within your soul, from every cell of your body. Surrender your pain and grieve. In return feel the release your body has served you. Shedding tears is a natural process the body uses to cleanse itself. Cleanse yourself through tears of joy, laughter and pain. Give thanks for this voluntary and involuntary response.





Nurture



Nurture yourself first

Giving from an empty pot is not generous. Where are you on your list of priorities? *Are you even on the list?* To offer something of value you must replenish yourself first. You may feel that putting yourself first is selfish or is something that should make you feel guilty. Nothing could be further from the truth. Dismantle this mind barrier before it destroys you.

If you do not place value on yourself, who do you expect will? The responsibility for your nurturing lies only with one person, you. There is no one else to blame as much as you might like to try. Before committing to any activity ask "*Am I depleting or replenishing myself?*". Make this a conscious and regular question in life. No longer hear the words, "*I don't want to...*", "*If only I didn't have to...*". Know why and how you spend your time. Accept responsibility for your choices. You have created your life, which also means you can change your creation.

Graciously saying "no" is a necessary life skill that becomes easier with practice. Learn it. Be sincere. You do not have to accept every invitation offered. You do not have to volunteer each time something needs doing. Begin to understand that some of these acceptances are in fact welcome distractions to conscious living. When it does not suit, honour your needs. Give yourself a break. Don't you owe this to yourself? Decline gracefully, with a truthful explanation. Others will respect your strength and character. Often they will wish they had the courage to do the same.

Sacred moments of nurturing can be sufficient – a few conscious breaths, positive affirmations before you jump out of bed; 5-10 minutes of meditation (or more if you wish); a walk; a bath; prayer; connecting with nature; a break at lunch for quiet contemplation, a moment before sleeping to release negative thoughts and drift into peaceful slumber. The harmony of mind, body and spirit is an on-going quest. All take but a moment yet renew exponentially. Create nurturing moments within your day.

When revitalised, you can give each person and each activity more. You can give your complete attention. In this way you give from the heart, with love, fully. Respect others enough to know this level of you is what they deserve. Giving in this state supplies energy rejuvenation. Your pot overflows.







Speak lovingly, responsibly

So many words are used unconsciously and inconsiderately, yet by simply speaking them, they have a power that projects destructive physical and mental reactions. These words hold you and others back. They often do not reflect your true intention and can inflict harm on those who receive them. Or, you may use them intentionally as an 'easy out' for you to defer taking responsibility for what you say and do. Become acutely aware of your vocabulary. Begin to construct sentences deliberately and from love.

Remove the words that attach guilt, blame, expectation or judgment including *should, have to, must, but, can't*. Remove others as you feel necessary.

Notice when you use sarcasm or jest and understand why you use them. Often these can be ways to hide from exposing yourself or truly saying what you feel. Become aware of these traits and ask yourself what was your real intention. Was it really sarcasm or jest or your true thoughts in disguise? You have expressed these words, released them from your mouth, however you might try to camouflage them. Know that truth often lies in what you are pretending not to say.





Slow Down

Slow down, slow down, slow down. Modifying a lifetime of 'fast-living' behaviour can be unsettling and takes adjustment. Become aware of how you currently spend your time and consciously start to do one activity with all your effort, rather than many with diffuse energy. No longer act with ignorance or out of habit. Give yourself a moment between activities to make sure your next one is actually something you want or need to do. Stop, take a breath and ask yourself "*what do I want/need to do next?*". Then ask it again. Yes. Ask it again! By forcing this question upon yourself you create that split second to interrupt a reactionary response. A moment to interrupt and hear your truth. A moment for choice.



Do you create distractions in your life to fill in time and then wonder why you have none? Is your first impulse when you actually find you have a moment to fill it in? Do you hear yourself saying: "*I have a few minutes, I'll just get this done...*" or "*Now, what should I do next?*" Stop! Stop!



First learn the art of quiet contemplation. Next learn the art of doing nothing. It is a craft to be mastered. With daily activities ask yourself "*Am I doing this just to fill in time?*" (making that phone call, shuffling papers, eating when you are not even hungry). You

might be amazed how often you do. Identify when you do and ask yourself why. Instead, stop. Give yourself a break, to refocus and realign your body, mind and spirit.

Time provides space to think and this usually allows room to get to know yourself. So many of us fear and hide from this, so we avoid it. You do not have to fill in time with thought though. The aim is to fill in time with nothing, literally. Time for life to simply flow through you, to catch your breath. Doing nothing can feel strange initially. You may become aware of your internal dialogue and of asking yourself, now what do I do? Well, nothing. This foreign feeling soon passes as you begin to create 'nothing time'. Just be. Enjoy!



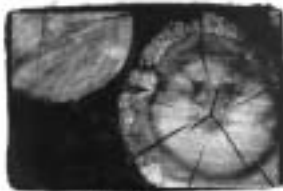




*Illness can be your body's way of
forcing you to slow down*

If you are unable to mindfully slow down, your body may do it for you, forcing a much-needed change of pace. At the very least, illness is a sign, and you benefit to heed its warning. While often debilitating, illness may be a blessing in disguise - to rest, recuperate, rethink and realign. Sudden illness exaggerates the vulnerability of life. The delusion of control disappears instantly, as you question the sense of it all. And denial or blame only seem to provoke illness further.

Enthusiastically face the cross-road to healing. Life's lessons are about to peel open. Greet them one at a time. Spend the effort required to understand the cause of your illness, not just the symptoms. Physical, psychological and physiological causes can combine to produce your symptoms. Find what lies at its heart. Confronting these causes may be difficult, yet they are the key to healing. Trust that you have the strength to face each of them. You do. Only you are responsible for your own healing. Do not pass off this responsibility to doctors, specialists, therapists, healers. Utilise their skills as and when you see fit. Find the healing therapies that work for you and make lifestyle decisions that place your nurturing first. Treat illness with prescriptions of love.





Life provides wake-up calls

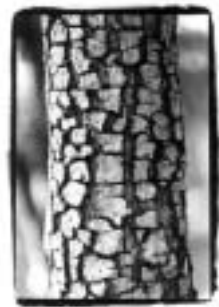
It could be an illness, death, divorce, failed relationship, accident, bankruptcy, job failure that is the impetus for you to stop for a moment and look at where your life is. Are you really happy with your life or is this wake-up call your jolt to make a change? Are you one of the living-dead? – going through the motions of life but feeling 'dead' inside. Living nothing. Wake-up calls *are* difficult to face and overcome, but often we require an 'event' to kick-start a change in our behaviour. Why is it that for some, this still isn't enough? Take responsibility. See the positive in the often difficult to explain blessings life provides. *Wake-up!* Wake yourself up.





Give yourself a break

Habits and behaviours are hard to break. In theory it is meant to be easy. You have performed the same behaviours, often for years, so they now happen routinely, unintentionally or unknowingly. As your focus turns to seeing your behaviours and feelings with clarity, you can see behavioural patterns and traits repeat themselves. At times this can be surprising, if not shocking. You may see patterns in yourself that you dislike or despise. There is no need to be self-loathing. If you wish to change them you can. Take them slowly and one at a time. Be gentle. It's O.K. when you temporarily fall back into past behaviours. Acknowledge this and see it for what it is, the breaking of old routines. Then deliberately change how you behave.





Cocktails for health

Mix new cocktails in your life. Move from toxic to detoxic. Shake 'em up a little! As you take your health and healing into your own hands, start to identify the toxins that you have voluntarily ingested and feel the impact they have on your energy system. The time comes when you wish to reduce this intake or no longer wish to consume them at all. Pick fresh ingredients that cleanse and heal your body. Leave the gin and tonics, caipiroskas and vanilla martinis behind as you blend new creations of diet, meditation, exercise and garnishes to suit. The ingredients for health are endless; yoga, aromatherapy, gardening, fresh juices, water, massage, prayer, cranial sacral balancing, shamanic journeys, and walking are simply a few you can drink to quench your thirst. Enrich life with ones that provide balance and harmony for you. It's time to get drunk on life.





Change as required

When life isn't working, change it. If you make excuses admit that is just what they are. Excuses! Stop kidding yourself. You have this moment – now – this is the only guarantee in life. You have right now. Nothing else. So if 'now' isn't working for you, how long are you willing to live this compromise? As you grow, sometimes life no longer seems to work, you may come to realise and accept that it hasn't felt right for a time. Sometimes tolerating a situation in life seems easier than the effort required for change. Because you feel safe and secure in what you know or you may believe that you are not worthy of being in a better place. This is wrong. Know that you are.

Do not give yourself grief if you haven't been ready to change. This is where you are at the moment. It is the right place for you. The choice to stay in this situation is yours alone, no matter who else you may wish to blame. When you badly want to change, you do. Be honest with where you are.



Ask yourself on a scale of 1 – 10 of importance (1 = lowest, 10 = highest), how badly you really want to improve or change your situation. If you give yourself a 2 it is unlikely that you will make life-changing decisions or start to introduce the steps for change. So stop beating yourself up about moving on. You are not prepared to take responsibility for your life so stop complaining. If you rate a 9 or 10 but then still do

nothing, be honest, you are not prepared to take responsibility for changing your life either and wish someone would do the hard work for you. If you truly believe that you will invest in yourself and make the necessary steps and you rate this highly, say an 8 to 10, and you start to implement change that reflects this goal, know that you will have the strength to make transforming decisions in your life. You are mentally ready to lovingly make the changes that will improve where you are. Obstacles do present along the way, but use this scale as a check, a reminder of the importance of this change for you and the commitment you have to yourself until you create it. Liberating.







Let Go

Learn to let go. To judgments, preconceived ideas and thoughts and simply let life happen. Holding on is constricting. Life can, and does, change in an instant. Allow yourself to be in the moment, and to embrace fully what is happening right now, not what has been or what could be. Stop the monologue that goes on in your mind, the what-if's, the assumptions and chaos of thought. How much of it actually ever happens? Rarely any. Hug the life that *is*.

As you live in the now and are truthful with yourself you may find that your life changes. You may need to let go of things that are harmful to you or no longer work for you. You may need to start some things afresh. For some, this could mean letting go of a job, a home, a relationship, friends, or moving to something more nurturing and healthier. For others, it could be simply letting go of destructive ideas and behaviours. Let the past go, let the irritations go and make space for new and positive thoughts and behaviours to enter.





Surrender attempts to control

Choice, yes, but control? I'm not so sure. When you accept that you do not have total control over your life, it is easier to trust and follow the direction that is mapped for you. You may feel like you are in control but often this is just 'making-busy'. You may do this so that you do not have to face and truly see your life. Ask yourself, "Is being busy a coping mechanism?" Know that in a moment everything can change, life can completely change. Know that each moment is all that you have. Accepting that you are not in control allows you to go with the flow of life rather than resist by placing boundaries around yourself based on potentially limiting ideas.

Know that you have choice about how you wish to take this journey. We are faced with a fork in the road, every second of every day. One is the choice based on love, which is nurturing. The other is the choice based on fear, which is destructive. Each second you choose how you wish to travel on your journey. Choose love.





It's O.K. to change your mind

Nothing is as it was the day before. As life unfolds, you change, we all change. Each day is new, so are you, and so are those around you. When you grow, your ideas may change – often. Be flexible. Let them. Give yourself permission to adjust your thinking accordingly. Even if this means your ideas are different from the day before, the second before, and you seem to be contradicting yourself. If an idea no longer holds true for you, let it go. Give yourself this flexibility. You are accountable to only one person. You.





Courage or necessity?

Significant change can be daunting for some. Often it is others seeing you take responsibility for your life, who find it daunting to comprehend all your change. They may see you as being brave or courageous. You may be neither. You may simply be acting out of necessity – the need to change to be true to yourself. Take the steps necessary for you, one at a time. Reassurance uncannily paves the way.






Share your journey

While you grow, discover your truth, and restore personal power, it is likely that you will make consequential life changes. Share these and your journey with friends and family. This helps others to understand the changes in you. You may receive varied responses including support, love, fear, confusion, concern and distance, among others. Sharing your journey allows others to open up to you about how they feel. Offer and receive support, love and compassion. Provide permission for others to disclose their own journey, knowing it is safe, that there is no judgment. Receive the sharing others wish to return.





Embrace your spirit



Intuitive sensing

Life is beyond all that we see, hear, touch, taste and smell. You have it, you have felt it, you have trusted it. And, you've possibly regretted the times when you have not followed it. It lies within, whirling around inside, mostly dormant to us poorly perceptive beings, occasionally strong enough that it forces us to act. How do we articulate the phenomenon that surrounds the sense of intuition? Perfect perception.

Is it our spirit sharing guidance, calling warning? Tune into the vibrations of your unexplained sixth sense. It resonates. There is no logical explanation. You are simply meant to trust and honour. You have no need to know more.

Intuition develops like any other sense. So put it to work, develop it and stand firm defending decisions using your 'gut feeling' catalyst. It is part of your daily armamentarium for living. While you still need to be discerning about situations that arise in life, your intuition guides making these decisions. Accept synchronicity, heighten intuition, and live from faith. Fully.





Synchronicity stimulates life

A conversation with a stranger that stops and makes you ponder; a diversion that interrupts your day; hesitation before you leave the house because you have left something behind; a flat tyre; a queue in the post office; all may frustrate you, yet a few minutes delay chances that you pleasantly encounter an old friend. Each moment of the day the domino effect is in action. Watch and see life's cause and effect.

We routinely go about our day oblivious, while the surprising surrounds us. Our eyes are open yet we fail to see. It is only when something unexpected occurs that we stop momentarily and question what just happened 'by chance'. How naïve we really are. The ordinary really is extraordinary.

Sticking to familiar routines, setting boundaries to live within, having fears that inhibit us, we consequently miss pivotal and potentially life altering occurrences. In fear we regularly reject what is put before us. Change the way you look at, receive and appreciate life. Alter your perspective. The smallest, most unexpected and seemingly insignificant encounter can have the most profound life changing effect. And they are on offer every second of the day. Nothing occurs by chance. Open yourself to receiving, trusting and following their lead. Refrain from logical thought and judgment for a while. Try it for a day, then a week. Heighten your senses and accept synchronicity. Allow your path to unravel. Watch. *Magic is everywhere.*





Cherish faith

Making time to uncover your core is a beautiful journey of discovery. It lasts a lifetime. Once you start you find you can't stop, you thirst to know more, to discover the self. There may be many difficult, confronting and grieving times along the way. The challenge of opening wounds must first occur before they have a chance to heal. Rely on your faith. Lean on your faith. Ask for guidance, strength, support, love. Tests of faith occur continuously. Know that you receive and build the skills daily to face what life puts before you. Pray or meditate if that is what works for you. Surrender to your faith. Divine power protects.





Angels await

You have guardian angels surrounding you. Patiently they wait. When you are ready you will find them. Ask for their help. They listen whenever you need. They never leave you, yet you leave them, often. Be silent and allow space to hear their angelic voices of comfort. Feel their presence. Know that you are not alone and that there is a higher realm that is guiding your hand. Seek and accept this guidance from your heart. As you do, feel the safest and most secure you have felt in your life. Give thanks in both good and difficult times. Be gracious in your receiving of the Divine.





Enliven your spirit

Spirituality is not 'out there'. The spirit lies within so its growth must also. This is not a religion, a teaching, a dogma. Although for some, following and living based on a religious doctrine may provide the foundation that helps to ignite the individual spirit. For others it may be the connection to earth, nature or another sense of the sacred that helps the light of spirit to flicker. A lightness of being and ease of living accompanies spiritual growth. Reassurance abounds. You smile, live and radiate from the inside out. If you do not feel your spirit, begin personal healing work. Surrender to this your core, your foundation. Feel this inner transcendence enrich every cell of your being. Your spiritual aura cannot help but glow.





Change occurs in its own time

As change occurs, or as the want to change takes hold, you may get anxious, eager to *get there*. As you embark on something new, you can have energy and effort directed to this one day, only to find the next day your energy is elsewhere. Often you feel you should be ready to make life decisions and for unexplained reasons you can't seem to move. Stuck, this only adds to your frustration. Give yourself time. Change is demanding on your body, physically and mentally. Become aware of your energy pattern for change. Feel all of it. Your body prepares for this change mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually and is often drained before and after major transformation has taken place. This cycle of renewal, of death and rebirth is demanding and deserves respect. Being in tune with yourself means that you connect with your own energy flow for change, and accomodate the time and space this requires. Honour your sacred times of change.





Let body, mind and spirit prepare you

Life is uncanny. It knows what you are able to face, when. Your body, mind and spirit aim to work in harmony for your unique journey. They are constantly moving, pushing you forward. At a pace just right for you. You may find that your behaviour alters through this cycle of growth and renewal. Patterns may become obvious as you prepare for your next phase of self-discovery and change. Determine if you have patterns that present as change appears. During these times you may become anxious, easily distracted, binge eat, feel fatigued, become more emotional or it may simply be gut instinct that change is brewing. Feel your physical, emotional and spiritual responses. Tune into your body, accepting these are metaphysical patterns of communication. Be tolerant as you prepare for self-regeneration. Embrace what may previously have been seen as negative or disruptive behaviours as you now learn they pave the way for personal growth. These are signs calling your attention that change is coming. Over time, the need for these patterns may diminish or change as your preparedness improves and you are able to recognise and break these patterns also. Or, you simply honour what you now know they represent. There are steps in this journey too. Relax into life learning.





You smile from the inside out

When you trust life and its course, you live differently. No matter what you are going through, you manage to see the beauty that lies before you. You are no longer trapped by fear or negative emotions. You may fall back into them but know it is temporary. You capture the essence of life – love. You realise that life provides and that there is truly nothing to worry about. Allow yourself to see, feel, smell, taste and touch this essence. Feel it with all your senses. Live with all your senses. Accept your intuition. As you do, you cannot help but smile. It will not be forced or deliberate. Your smile will be natural and heartfelt. Energy transference is real. Beaming the energy of life your presence automatically creates an instinctive responsive ripple – a smile back.





Mother earth



LT's elemental

Connect with the vibrational frequencies of heaven and earth and be charged by the elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Energy pulses. Align yourself and invite the energy to penetrate within. Its power transforms consciousness. Stand with bare feet on the land, close your eyes and feel. Feel for as long as it takes. Feel yourself connect with earth. With eyes still closed, raise your arms to the sky. Solid earth transforms to heavenly light. Share this space.





Sparse and minute

Take a moment to ponder the pockets of life open to you throughout the day. See all that is sparse and the minutia connecting that creates it. A grain of sand so tiny yet trillions of them not only provide a beach for you to walk along, they mould underfoot. A thunderous storm complete with a billion drops of life. Watch one as it showers a leaf and flows to quench it. Appreciate the complex and the simple in your everyday. The team effort of ants, the cycle of life in nature, textures in the land. You learn so much watching these infinite lessons of life. Slow down, see and appreciate new perspectives that appear naturally.





Get grounded again

Whether we like to admit it or not, we often become like our environment. Unfortunately too often we are oblivious to this. The demands of working life leave little time for reflection and reconnection. Break the cycle. Get yourself 'earthed'. Observe the life force of the planet; the cycles of the moon; nature's cycle of life and death; the roles of prey and predator. All have so much to teach. Discover your own connection to this life-cycle. Earthing can be simple – planting some herbs for your own living, listening to the morning bird call to become acquainted with your flying friends, looking at a tree for the lessons of life, a stroll on the beach, the thin air that transforms time at sunrise and sunset. For some, these simple connections are enough. For others, a complete transplant from the city to the country may be required in order to reconnect. If you need to relocate, allow yourself to be guided. Tap into your senses, trust your intuition and feel where you need to move. These decisions will be paved for you if you slow down enough to feel them. Your faith will provide the strength to instigate change.

Nature's offerings are abundant. Our land and time is borrowed. Connect with the earth from which you came and will one day return.





Create your sacred space

It could be the beach, your garden, a favourite chair, or on the tractor. Find a special place that is sacred to you. This is no one else's. This is where you give yourself space to realign your thoughts. It is where you go to calm. Go as often as you need to your special place. It could be once a week, once a day or maybe more. Treasure that this is yours and available whenever you need.





Feed yourself, feed others

Self-sufficiency is possible in your own back yard. Plant your own food. No matter how much room is inside or out, there is always room for at least a pot plant. From a seed partake in nature's cycle of life. Plant herbs, some vegetables or fruit trees. The yield is always more than you need. Learn the seasonal variations that feed you. Savor what fresh fruit and vegetables are really like. Share your crops no matter how small. Create your community. With respect the land provides. Appreciate and share this abundance.





Perfect

Life happens perfectly

There is no wrong. It is all *right*. True. Everything that is happening in your life is perfect. You are exactly where you are meant to be. Even though sometimes it doesn't feel like it and you wonder what is going on or if you are going to get through the struggle. You are where you are meant to be. You have lessons to learn exactly where you are and before you can move forward. Savour the moment and allow your life to unfold. Ease the pressure you place on yourself to get to the next destination. Yes it is hard to be completely present. We continue to face the same lessons over and over again until we are ready and able to understand and learn from them. Life has an innate ability to teach us this way. Don't be in a hurry. Just be.





On my bookshelf

For me a book is to be respected, caressed and then *used*. I dog ear them, write in them, fold them back, while still holding their content tenderly and sharing them with others whenever needed. Over the last two years as I started the inquisition into my life, my bookshelf has changed considerably. The management texts have been replaced by those teaching health, healing and spirituality. Self-help, photography and more recently gardening are the areas that attract me. A metaphysical bookshop has so much to offer that visits are frequent.

I love shopping for books. They are the easiest things I buy. The right ones 'jump out at me' and are the ones I purchase. I simply allow the book to attract me to it and they always do. Regularly I walk out with three or four books at a time. I read daily, yet the amount varies. Sometimes one sentence makes a profound impact and that is all my mind can absorb. Other times it is a chapter and occasionally I can't put the book down. I read and re-read as appropriate. I seem to go back and forth as I grow and each time discover a passage of text that did not connect previously, and that I am now able to understand. It is perfect. Sometimes I pick up a book but my mind is not there, not focused. I never force myself to read. For me reading time is sacred. I know each time I am about to grow.



These books I cherish.



Health & Healing

The Creation of Health – The Emotional, Psychological and Spiritual Responses that Promote Health and Healing Caroline Myss, Ph.D C. Norman Shealy MD Ph.D. (Bantam Books 1999)

Why People Don't Heal and How They Can – A Practical Programme for Healing Body, Mind and Spirit Caroline Myss, Ph.D. (Bantam Books 1997)

Anatomy of the Spirit – The Seven Stages of Power and Healing Caroline Myss Ph.D. (Bantam Books 1997)

Sacred Contracts – Awakening your Divine Potential Caroline Myss Ph.D.(Bantam Books 2001)

Destructive Emotions and How We can Overcome Them A Dialogue with the Dalai Lama Narrated by Daniel Goleman (Bloomsbury 2003)

Women's Bodies Women's Wisdom – The Complete Guide to Women's Health and Wellbeing Dr Christiane Northrup (Piatkus 1998, reprint 2001)

The Universal Heart – Golden Rules for Golden Relationships Stephanie Dowrick (Viking 2000)

Intimacy & Solitude – Changing your Life Stephanie Dowrick (Random House 1997)

Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love – Finding the True Value in your Life Stephanie Dowrick
(Penguin Books 2000)

Heal Your Body – The Mental Causes for the Physical Illness and the Metaphysical Way to Overcome Them Louise L. Hay (Hay House Australia, Fourth Edition 2000)

You Can Heal Your Life Louise L. Hay (Hay House Inc 2002)

Creativity – Unleashing the Forces Within Osho (St Martin's Griffin 1999)

Everyday Grace – Having Hope, Finding Forgiveness and Making Miracles Marianne Williamson (Bantam Books 2003)



The Seat of the Soul – An Inspiring Vision of Humanity's Spiritual Destiny Gary Zukav
(Rider 1990)

Soul Stories Gary Zukav (Simon & Schuster 2000)

The Heart of the Soul – Emotional Awareness Gary Zukav and Linda Francis (Simon & Schuster 2001)

Anam Cara – Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World John O'Donohue (Bantam Books 1999)

The Heart of The Buddha's Teaching – Transforming Suffering into Peace Joy and Liberation
Thich Nhat Hanh (Rider 1998)

Naked Buddhism – 39 ways to free your heart and awaken to now David Deida (Plexus
2002)

The Power of Now – A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment Eckhart Tolle (Hodder, 2000)

Good News Bible (The Bible Society in Australia, 1988)



Chakras and their Archetypes – Uniting Energy Awareness and Spiritual Growth Ambika
Wauters (The Crossing Press Freedom, California 1997)

Eastern Body Western Mind – Psychology and The Chakra System as a Path to the Self
Anodea Judith (Celestial Arts 1996)

Wheels of Life – A Users Guide to the Chakra System Anodea Judith, Ph.D. (Llewellyn
Publications 2002)

Archetypal Chakras Meditations and Exercises for Opening Your Chakras Arnold Bittlinger
(Weiser Books 2001)



Connection

Animal Speak – The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great & Small Ted Andrews
(Llewellyn Publications 2002)

Signposts – How to interpret the coincidences and symbols in your life Denise Linn (Rider
1996)



Angels

In the Company of Angels – Welcoming Angels into your Life Cherie Sutherland Ph.D.
(Bantam Books 2000)

The Book of Angels – Turn to your Angels for Guidance, Comfort and Inspiration Francis
Melville (Random House Australia reprint 2002)



Lifestyle

Get with the Program – Getting Real about Your Weight, Health and Emotional Wellbeing
Bob Greene (Simon & Scuster 2002)

Raw Juices Can Save Your Life! An A-Z Guide to Juicing Dr Sandra Cabot (WHAS 2001)



Life Instruction

The Art of Doing Nothing – Simple ways to Make Time for Yourself Véronique Vienne
(Potter 1998)

The Art of the Moment – Simple Ways to Get the Most from Life Véronique Vienne
(Clarkson Potter 2002)

The Art of Imperfection – Simple Ways to Make Peace with Yourself Véronique Vienne
(Clarkson Potter 1999)

Gift From the Sea Anne Morrow LindBergh (Pantheon Books 1983)



My leaps of faith

There are extraordinary moments in life when the unexplainable takes hold. Times when a surreal moment of truth arrives with an accompanying compulsion that must be followed, usually with life-altering consequences. In my life they have always propelled me into taking a 'leap of faith'. And it has been without reservation that I have obliged. Personal phenomena is how I relate to them and there are three that I hold tenderly and near. They remain in my heart forever. To this day, when I experience the same extraordinary feeling, I shudder with the excitement and knowledge of the unexpected – for it is in this pivotal moment that I know I am about to welcome necessary life change.

Like many, I have lived the saying, "you receive a tap on the shoulder, if you don't take notice, you are hit on the head, if you still don't take notice you get hit by a boulder..." and so on. Well I received all three, but it was the boulder that finally woke me up. And this, not so long ago. I genuinely appreciate my 'boulder' – a personal blessing, disguised as illness. This illness forced me to realign my health and my life, and in my determined search for its underlying cause, connected me with my father on a level beyond my imagination. My love for my father is now unconditional. With gratitude I can live this daily.



My tap on the shoulder came in the guise of a management restructure at work. I was stunned. I witnessed the emergence of fear, as people's survival instinct in the face of change kicked in. Panic and self/job-preservation were the reflex reactions among colleagues. It lasted long enough for the desired impact. I recall my thought, *'if this is having so much of an effect on others, imagine the effect it is having on me that*

I can't even see'. I am forever grateful for this moment of clarity. Awareness had forced its way to the surface. Over the course of the day I was haunted by this thought and realised that for me this was no longer a healthy environment to be in. I resigned from work the next day.

In truth, the end of my time at this company had come. This restructure and the visibility of its subsequent human impact, delved into that sacred space at the core of my being, and awoke an impetus that overtook me, and caused me to act. It was simply my trigger. There were to be more.

Five months later I began work again and embraced the work-hard, party-hard lifestyle of corporate life. The choice to participate was all mine. The adrenaline rush reeled me back in. I was hooked. How easily I fell back into the corporate web, succumbing to the demands of my own trap – my perfectionist nature and my need to please. I loved what I did. Yet in the process I unknowingly lost myself, or at the very least, I placed me on hold. After five years living this lifestyle I was 'hit on the head'. This time the sign came in death.

Over a five-week period, I attended two funerals and learned that a distant acquaintance was diagnosed with a brain tumor. It had been only one year earlier that another friend had passed away from exactly the same diagnosis. I selfishly questioned *why was all this happening to me?* I now see it wasn't happening *to me* at all.

The father of close friends had passed away and I was honoured to deliver the eulogy at his funeral. This brought an intimacy with death I had not previously experienced.

I was mesmerised by these words from the priest *"If anyone stops to look at their life and they question what they are doing and it makes them change, then some good comes with this death"*. His words hit a chord. They resonated, vibrating the core of my being. The emotion of sacred ceremony engulfed me, I was numb. Was this it? Was this all my life was meant to be? Deep in my heart I knew it wasn't. It was time to honour myself, to find my truth. I also knew that I had compromised myself for far too long. I deserved more. It had taken these traumas for me to reveal this raw honesty that until now I had unintentionally camouflaged. In the last year my work had become a tiresome routine. It was no longer enough.

The emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from grief and sleep deprivation was an interesting combination. I am not sure if it provided clarity or complete confusion. Either way, one of the best decisions in my life occurred in this state. The impulsive pattern of my decision-making nature took hold. This funeral was on a Friday. On the following Monday I resigned.

My intention was to give three months notice, buying myself time to decide what I would do next. Then the uncanny occurred. I met with the general manager to resign. Her responding words to me were *"you are too good for me to just let you walk out the door, what is it you want to do?"*. In that moment of being truthful and honouring myself, in resigning, the unexpected was born. We agreed that I would provide consulting services back to the company. I walked out of her office and had the first client for my new business. Unexpected, unplanned and completely satisfying. Mixed emotions flooded through me. I knew someone was looking out for me, guiding me and holding my hand. I gave thanks. Finally, I felt free.



I thrived running my own business. It was the easiest thing I had ever done. I relished the fresh responsibility that every decision in my life was now mine, there were no boundaries imposed by others. There was no longer a distinction between my personal and professional life. Finally my life was evolving to be lived as one. I was aware that I had always had a 'niggle' while working in the corporate world and something within made me feel that now was the time to seek its cause.

I began to invest in myself and worked less to allow time for my personal growth. I sought the life balance that I had craved for so long. While reading a myriad of self-help books, one in particular captivated my attention. I connected with a description relating to a wounded child and feelings of emotional abandonment. I related this to the relationship I had with my father. It was only now that I could see that my own childhood needs had in fact carried into my adult life. I had failed to see that my father's emotional absence during my childhood was, in fact, necessary to provide for our family's physical survival. It was with this discovery that my unraveling began. I had spent my life seeking his approval, without knowing it was something I already had. I realised that I held blame toward him and I learned that to break through this life barrier, I needed to forgive my dad and myself. And so I did. Something within me had shifted. This was a time of significant personal awakening. Having peeled back one layer, many were to follow.

As the journey continued, my bookshelf expanded and I devoured all that I could. Life felt fantastic, my business was successful and in my mind I couldn't have asked for anything else.

Then without warning my boulder struck. Over the course of a weekend I started to feel ill. It lingered for more than two weeks, and a friend urged me to see a doctor. Concerned, I agreed. After five weeks of tests I was diagnosed with coeliac disease.

Its impact was horrendous. Overnight I had gone from being full of energy to having a myriad of symptoms including complete fatigue. I hit my worst when one morning I walked from my bedroom to the kitchen and was so drained that on the way back I lay on the lounge where I fell asleep for the rest of the day. I didn't know what was happening and just as life was smooth, I collapsed in a heap.

I will never forget sitting on the front step of my verandah when I received my test results. My life changed in that instant. It was in that split second that I realised I had no control, absolutely none whatsoever over my life. Until now I naïvely thought I had control of it all. How silly of me. I could see how easily my life could change and be taken away, it just had. All that was guaranteed was this moment, the time right here and now. From that second onward I have lived my life with a heightened level of appreciation for all that exists.

My focus became my health and my own healing. My body forced me to do what I was unable to do myself, it made me slow down.

A change in diet was not enough for complete recovery. Medical advice did not seem to explain everything and as my symptoms continued to persist, I began to seek alternative therapies. My priority was to get my health and my life back. Little did I know a change in my life journey was about to unfold. My bookshelf started to include topics on health, healing and the soul. I continued prayer, began qi gong

exercises and at the enthusiastic recommendation of friends, went to see a shaman. This was to be a pivotal time of awakening and openness that changed my life forever.

With help, I realised that I had not been speaking my truth at all and that I really did not even know what my truth was anymore. My method of protection was to shut others out. There was a wall surrounding me they could not penetrate. A personally constructed 'no-go-zone'. Unconsciously my life had become something that no longer served me. Unconsciously, I was suffocating myself, reeling within and it was time I set myself free. I had to face my personal fears, confront myself, share them with others, let myself go and move on. And so I did. This journey was overwhelming and at the same time thoroughly releasing, and as I have confronted my own fears, I have connected with my family and friends with an intimacy I previously have not known. I realised that once begun, this journey could not be 'turned-off' and that I, in fact, thirst to delve further within, to acknowledge, accept and embrace myself completely, lovingly. I had realised that this journey of discovery is life-long.

In most instances when I shared my truth judgement was absent, as warm and open arms welcomed me and I received the love I had been pushing away for so long. The path of honesty has not been smooth. I began to trust, to share and to connect and when needed, to let go. I had removed my wall. Shattered it in fact. And in doing so, I have learned that 'the truth shall set you free'.

My life had opened up and so much of what I had lived began to hold little relevance now. I began to tap into my intuition and trust the synchronicities of life. Unexpectedly I had an inner calling to move north, to warmer weather. In the space of five months I followed signs that led me to the hinterland of Byron Bay. I sold my

unit in Sydney to a friend of my neighbour. When my real estate agent called to tell me she had found the new house I was meant to live in, I packed up and moved with the full intention to continue my business working remotely. Selling my unit in Sydney provided the financial support I needed and I now know this is what it was there for. Nothing seemed difficult. My life flowed easily and I flowed with it. Everything that was happening was realigning my body, my mind and my spirit. And as I unraveled more of myself, my health continued to improve. Within three days of arriving in the hinterland, I knew I needed to let the business go. And so I did.

In the hinterland, I began to write and started photography – I had wanted to do both of these for years. In deciding to let life flow and to trust I have given myself and continue to give myself two of the most precious gifts of all...the gift of time and the gift of love.

For my renewal, I have had to disconnect and distance myself physically from my previous environs. My need was for a nurturing, supportive and open environment that would allow me to do what I needed without judgment. That would allow me to be, without demands and expectations. The city could not provide this for me. In stillness I have been able to discover my truth, reveal destructive life patterns and find my voice. I have reconnected with nature, with myself and now share myself openly with others.

It is in trusting the process of life that I have been transformed. I realise that it does not end. It continues forever and this is a joy I behold daily.



Heartfelt thanks

*T*ransform your life...because YOU CAN



