

Reclaim the Juice of Your Life!



# Prevail

SEVEN KEYS TO CREATE  
A PERSONAL VICTORY

Betty Withrow





Prevail







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*Seven Keys to Create  
a Personal Victory*

Betty Withrow, CLC

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*Dedicated to the spark of the Divine Light  
within each of us*







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# INTRODUCTION



This book began from a day of overwhelm, when I had so many things going on that my vision and my drive were literally twirling, and I was getting dizzy just putting two thoughts together. I knew this was a sign from my inner being that I had reached a place that required me to integrate and regroup.

The day before, I had totally blanked out on a coaching call from a business mentor and had to ask her to reschedule. My coach, who had helped me with so many challenges already, was supportive and kind. Her help had allowed me to create new ideas about my life, and I was so full of information that I was having trouble being organized.

She was very understanding, and we agreed to meet again the following week with my having a clear idea of what I wanted to accomplish. Taking the obvious hint, I gave up my previous idea of what my energy level was, and laid down for a couple of hours, without trying to do anything that would cause my mind to stir. I allowed my mind to open to the field of possibilities.

After a while, the field began to open to my feelings, and I started to see that the reason I felt this way was that my truths were coming together in a new way, and I needed to listen to Guidance about what to do next. So as I lay there, listening, I asked for help. During the next couple of hours, I found that I had drilled down a lot, and asked myself this question: “How did I get here?” What was it about me that had brought me to this point, and what message was there for me in making the very best use of those factors that grew my vision?



*Betty Withrow*

I began to acknowledge the strengths I had and the ways that they had become parts of my being, and I started to get an idea of how I could make this message useful to many more people than I would ever meet.

This book is my effort to bring out the best of my experiences and offer what I have learned about life to you. Some of the stories will be shocking and horrifying, yet my purpose in telling them is to show how the transformation can occur in any setting, and this is how I learned it. A problem contains the seed of a miracle. A tragedy contains the seed of enlightenment.

Through the events of my life, I discovered the keys that this book contains, the seven key principles of life energy that you can use to get in tune with your own natural force, find the meaning of events, and reclaim the juice of your life.

My aim is to use these events as illustrations, and to show how a gentle interpretation can change even terrible events into agents of transformation. Learning to see the softer side of life is what got me through, took care of me, and gave me the gift of life, art, and victory.

I am now a life coach, specializing in helping people reclaim the juice of their lives. It's a work of joy for me to be able to offer the gifts of my life to you.

Through the events of my life, I discovered the keys for action that this book contains. These are the seven key principles of life energy that you can use to get in tune with your own natural force, find the meaning of events, and reclaim the juice of your life. They form the core principles of my coaching work.

I hope you will enjoy this book and find it useful.

You can learn more about my work, my coaching, and my life by visiting

[www.creativevictorylifecoaching.com](http://www.creativevictorylifecoaching.com).

Contact me at [betty@bettyofbigsur.com](mailto:betty@bettyofbigsur.com).

Thanks for being here.





# CHEERFULNESS



## IT'S THE ATTITUDE, NOT THE SITUATION

*“The highest wisdom is continual cheerfulness; such a state, like the region above the moon, is always clear and serene.” ~ Montaigne*

**M**ay your day be visited by a cheerful person! And if you don't see one, be that person yourself. It really helps to get things done and to enjoy what there is of each day. Who wants to listen to a grouch?

Have you ever gotten a smile out of someone who was really down, and you felt better because of it? That's the secret of true happiness. When you open your big heart to the ray of sunshine, listen to life, and be in the habit of asking yourself, "What can I do to help?" it all gets better. Know that you have a great gift to offer: that of your own self. So be of good cheer!

Looking at ways to help others will always be better than thinking about what isn't coming your own way. Maybe something better is waiting for you, and you just haven't seen it yet. The mystery of life is that there is so much more going on than we can perceive with our own little selves.

I have lived in the back-country of Big Sur for over forty years.

Arriving here at the age of twenty with a group of people, I faced many challenges from the outset. There was very little human influence or development of any kind here, and poverty was the name of the game.



Being in a state of lack to this extent, in the richest state in the richest country in the world, and yet ... there I was, in the middle of one of the most dreaded human experiences. I was poor, isolated, and not in very good health. Traumatized by my recent experiences with society and the law, I had serious emotional problems that would take many years to overcome.

I had arrived here with three couples, and my son of three months old, with occasional additional visitors. We were running away from the larger world. Brought together by the times, we shared a desire to find a different way. We had come to this place, far from towns, to escape from society at large, from the law, and from our own families. Some had very troubled family histories, as I did. Others simply were not willing to conform to the wishes of their parents. Each had a different reason why this place had become their destination or, for most, a stopping-off point along the way to other lives.

Personally, I was delighted to be here. I have always loved the outdoors; and here I was, living in the wilderness—and even with a cabin! And though it was really a hunting shelter with a metal roof, it was home for me.

I certainly did feel intimidated by the situation, but I wasn't going to let that stop me. So I began to cheer up. Constantly. Cheering up was the only way through. As Carlyle said, "Give us the man who sings at his work."

There was no running water in the house, and so getting a sink that had plumbing was such a big advancement that we celebrated! I did the diapers, along with the predictably filthy work clothes that piled up continuously, by hand, in a washtub. It was a constant struggle to keep anything clean or dry (it rained every day through the winter). Simply keeping clothing that was fit to wear available was a huge challenge!

Besides, with six adults and one baby all living in one room, tensions grew and people freaked out. Big freak-outs. And there was no place to go except outside. So I did that, even in the stormy weather, to vent my rage, my frustration, my fear, until I was exhausted. After enough venting, I came back to my son (whom I had left sleeping in his tiny crib) and my vision.

I felt like I had been drawn to this amazing place by the will of the Divine, no matter what I was experiencing at first. I had prayed for a life in the forest! I felt that I had better live up to the prayers. Yes, there was poverty and discord. And at the same time there was natural beauty and inspiration in such vast abundance that I felt I was living in a state of grace. I felt that I was being held in the hand of the Divine. Physically, things were very difficult. But what a wealth of spirit!

When the weather cleared, I would work with another woman, who had a strong sense of order, and who also had experience living in the wild, unlike most of the group. She, like me, felt happy about being here. We would take everything outside and scrub the floor with bleach, hosing it out like you would an animal pen, through holes in the floor. A back-breaking day of work so that we could stand the situation a little longer ... and yet ... believe it or not, this was a great time for me.



## **KEEP SMILING REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU FEEL**

I had learned early in life that cleaning is not a demeaning thing, and when I could see and smell the improvements, I felt good. The only thing I saw was the beautiful moment of clarity that came when things were clean for a short time. I learned how to ignore so much!

Of course all this cheerfulness was not continuous, nor was it always appreciated. Others in the group got mad at me for staying cheerful! I just refused to be intimidated by our day-to-day reality, dealing with what was increasingly frustrating, as our dreams faced the harsh light of day. People I lived with thought I was stupid or uncaring, but I knew that if I didn't keep my head up, I would not have the energy to take care of my son. So I kept smiling even in the harshest circumstances and in the face of real hostility.

At one point, a good friend, exasperated by my outlook, stormed at me: "Why are you always such a Pollyanna?" For me, it wasn't like that. It was a matter of breaking the moment into tiny pieces, so that I would not be crushed. I simply took one moment at a time. In fact, that was my only choice, so I was literally making a virtue out of necessity. I smiled on, no matter how I felt inside.

## **STARTING FROM WHERE YOU ARE**

Granted, I had an unusual background that had prepared me to be adaptive. When I was a young child, I lived in a very abusive environment in which I endured extreme stress on a daily basis. Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse were facts of life for me. My parents did not nurture me; they conditioned me to withstand the unspeakable. They were true party animals, 1950s style, featuring a knock-down, drag-out party every month. This was a terrifying spectacle for any child to witness, even from upstairs in bed. Loud music, people yelling, sounds of breaking glass. . . .

And bed wasn't safe either. My father was a child-molester, and my mother was in on it. It was a crazy way to grow up. They were violent alcoholics, who flat-out didn't give a damn about other people, except their drinking buddies, gambling partners, or various sex lineups.

Although I sometimes felt angry, I didn't know anything was wrong until I was about four. The abuse began while I was still a baby. I'd been living with this all my life! I had thought, *This is just how it is*. Then, I started to see that other families were different, yet there was no way to escape what my birth had brought me into.



## GOING IT ALONE

At that time, social attitudes were very different. Things that would instantly result in an arrest today were treated with indifference, even in public places. It was an awful position to be in, exposed to the constant wrath my parents expressed toward myself and siblings. There was no safety net. There was no way to do anything that would be good enough to make it stop. Back then, in the 1950s, people would look the other way in public, instead of calling the police as they would now.

So I learned how to cope in any way I could. As the oldest of four children spaced very close together, my responsibility role began very early. I wanted to please my parents, and came to believe that, somehow, if I were “good enough,” all the abuse would stop. It didn’t.

But one of the gifts of life is that at a young age I was able to be in contact with spiritual forces that continue to guide me until today. Without this angelic help, I would not have survived to write this.

I took my early training in prayer very seriously. I still remember how good it felt to sing, “Jesus loves me, this I know.” Yes, I was being taught to pray, even as all around me I lived through the opposite. Those were strange times, indeed. The abuse wasn’t consistent; things seemed to be fine one moment, and then turned nightmarish the next.

## SURVIVAL TACTICS FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

A lot of strange happenings made up my survival strategy. For example, I learned to be miserable as a habit, so that I would not invite abuse by smiling. This was part of an overall strategy of “getting there first” among the kids, which took in games of getting each other in trouble or contests of who could endure the most punishments as we would refuse to confess. I stopped crying when I was beaten, to feel self-control and to deprive them of the pleasure of seeing me cry.

To this day, I have a very high pain threshold that has given me the huge gift of endurance through some pretty odd times. We children weren’t getting much to eat, and so I always polished off all my food and ate the leftovers. I became very tough and resilient as I learned how to withstand physical violence; and I became socially resourceful as I learned how to get myself invited to visit other kids’ houses. I became aggressive in my approach to finding things to enjoy in life, looking for opportunities to get the things I wanted. Kindness and benevolence were precious for me, and still are.

I gained a love of the outdoors at an early age. This is a good thing, because I was often locked out of the house for an entire day after not being given except



a barely minimal amount of food. I had to be on time getting home too—or get pounded and go to bed hungry.

My bike gave me an escape. It took me to other neighborhoods or towns. I went exploring, and found the motion of the ride, and the feeling of the wind, so energizing. I collected wooden 3D puzzles, and would ride many miles in search of ones I didn't have yet. Puzzles gave This ancient admonition from the Tarot holds a lot of power. For it is by holding me an edge: I could solve one, get really fast at doing it, and then show off. I foraged for wild foods in the nearby woods. I learned how to think for myself. I became creative out of a need for a different way of looking at life.

Some of my friends had the most amazingly kind parents. When I went visiting, staying overnight with friends as often as possible, I found refuge, kindness, and safety, learning about how other families did things.

## THE SANCTUARY OF A TREE

But my *real* refuge was my tree house: my place of dreams. I would stay in the branches and look at the sky or the nearby meadow. Here, nobody could bother me, tell me what to do, or sneak up on me. I could see the open field beyond, hear the frogs, and dream of how I wanted my life to be. I felt at one with myself. I built my hope, strength, and determination there. Staring into space, I spent as much time as possible in the tree.

It was a good thing I had that refuge, since I had to take over the household chores as early as possible, and would need to be able to handle the most unreasonable situations with a good attitude.

I got out of the house on baby-sitting jobs as early as I could. At seven years old, I took care of the smaller kids in the neighborhood for a dime a day. Big money for me in those days!

Still, in a classic victim scenario, I came to believe that all of the violent abuse I was enduring on a daily basis was somehow my fault (in fact I was always being told that it was all my fault), and that in some way if I could figure out the answer to the riddle of “why is this my fault?” it would stop.

The violence I had as part of my daily life became a pervasive influence. My emotions became twisted, unavailable to me in many ways, as I sought to numb myself from the brutal way we children were being treated. We lived as though in a parallel universe. Each of us was treated in a different way, each one made to feel isolated in a unique pattern of helplessness.



I did what I could to protect the younger ones. It was never enough. We made up teams to get the other side in trouble, and sometimes invited punishment on ourselves to get it over with. The whole scenario was brutal, harsh, and dehumanizing.

Yes, there was also sexual abuse, systematic and horrifying. I knew this wasn't my own fault. It did come as a shock to me at around the age of six when I realized that other families didn't have this going on. I had come to think it was "normal," and I became deeply enraged, while still being forced to stifle my feelings. I ended up turning the rage against myself, since I was so helpless to do anything about it.

It was horrible to find that I had been betrayed so deeply by those who were defying their duty to protect me. I started to think that the adults were lying about everything. How confusing!

Yet I also had around me, thanks to my outgoing nature, examples of people who didn't lie or treat others harshly. I knew people who acted differently. There were people who cared about the feeling of others, who showed real love. So I knew too that not everyone lied. I protected myself with this new knowledge, knowing there *were* two worlds: the one outside and the one I had to go back to.

So, in reality, my cheerful attitude was a way of defending myself from the outrage I felt deep inside. I was terrified of my rage, which sometimes exploded and made things even worse. For instance, I got into fights with other kids my own age. I had problems with neighborhood bullies, and I took an aggressive attitude toward them, chasing after boys who said mean things, and knocking them over to start fights. I read a lot of comic books, and I started to see myself as a kind of superhero.

This all came to a halt when I got into a brutal rolling fight with the boy next door, which ended with me biting him so hard that he had to go to the hospital! I felt so bad after this, that I swore never to get into a fight again—and turned my weapons into those of words instead. I had to put up with a lot of heckling after that incident! But I answered in kind and kept my promise to myself. No more hitting. And then I refused to answer the hecklers, which seemed to calm things down a bit, at least for me. I wouldn't let them get to me!

The best times were when my parents were absent. There might be some time to do something! When I was left to take care of the other kids at night, when Father was away and Mother was out "with the girls," I did all I could do to cope. But there was too much to do! I sometimes lost my temper and acted just like my parents! Oh, how much I hated that. And yet, it was so great that they were away. The vicious cycle recreated itself within me, and I struggled to find a way to escape. I wanted to read, to play my piano, to draw, to sew, to daydream. And it was so hard to find the time to do that.

I was responsible—along with my other responsibilities of the housework, laundry, and maintaining my standing as an A student—to feed and take care of my siblings,

whenever my parents had something else to do, which was most of the time. Then, after the work was done, I could play the piano for hours and dream of better things. I imagined myself as a music star, as an acclaimed artist, as a well-loved and fashionable woman. I thought of myself as an Indian princess, a magician, a super-heroine. I sang and sewed and made myself happy ... when I could.

I still went to the tree house when I could get time, and sat in silence, looking over the swamp. Other kids were allowed into the tree, but no one was allowed to talk in the tree. It was a sacred place of silence for me, and I so needed that.

## ESCAPE

And cheerfulness was also a way to keep going into the world, which I already knew had a lot of other things in it. I had to hide knowing that too, since it could have lead to random psychotic violence. For example, going out to swim, which was so fun until the hidden terror of my father appeared, from under the water, to dunk and hold my head below the surface. The simplest pleasures were interrupted by tirades of abuse.

The only way to avoid being punished for trifles was to appear unhappy. Or there might be an incident of us being brutally punished “just for practice,” by knocking our heads together, for instance. The hostile question of “What are you so happy about?” was a harbinger of danger.

Outrageous incidents took place daily. Alone, alone, with so many things, I coped in any way I could. I considered myself an adult at age ten. It took me decades to figure out that wasn’t what an adult was!

## THE LIGHT OF DAY

Two weeks out of the year, I stayed with my grandparents and got a different idea of life. They lived in a pretty old-fashioned way for the time, and it made a lot more sense to me than what was going on at home. They spoke in a civil manner, lived moderately, and acted like people who enjoyed life. I wanted so much to stay there! They had rules that made sense, and took time to talk to me about things without lecturing me.

Finally, at age fourteen, I was preparing to run away from home. One of my sisters beat me to it, however, and went to a friend’s house, terrified that I was leaving. It all poured out to her friend’s mother: the violence, the rapes, the horrors. The mother called the police. They came to the house only a few minutes before I was planning to climb out my window. I was furious! My friends and I had planned to run away and join the party in San Francisco. It was 1967, and the party was raging! Now, here I was, going away in a police car! No party for me.



I was removed from the parental home and spent a month in the Children's Receiving Home. I was one of the oldest children in the place, and there I learned how to move beyond self-pity for good. As bad as what I had endured was, I saw things there that helped me understand I had not suffered as much as I thought.

There were small children covered with bruises, unable to speak or make eye contact. These were twins, two years old, who had been beaten because they drew pictures on the wall and then refused to remove them. There were older children who cringed when anyone looked at them. They did not speak, and sat in silence, without answering anything that was said, in the small school. They didn't interact in any way. I knew then that I hadn't had it so bad. At least I could talk.

It was a great day for me when I turned fifteen and spent the whole day in bed crying, and was allowed to do that. The next day I got up and went to classes. I had some new learning disabilities, but made the efforts that I could. For a month, I waited to see what would happen.

At last, the court hearing came, after which I was allowed to go and live with my grandparents.

My prayers had been answered.

## **STARTING OVER**

I took what smile I could muster with me. By then I had become deeply hostile toward many aspects of life, and my good cheer was deeply buried under a tough little dame.

For a few years, as I went through high school, I was able to re-invent myself. I told no one about why I was living with my grandparents—instead, telling a story that got people to stop asking questions, by prettying things up. In school, I returned to being at the top of the class. I went to therapy, and was told that I was “cured.” I wasn't. I had simply learned to say what was expected of me. The real stuff stayed hidden. I resolved that I would “get out of Dodge City” and I would figure things out for myself. Nobody was going to tell me anything about how life worked! I had become unwilling to accept help, as I felt nobody understood anything about me.

I grew up, and struck out on my own. Life goes on, through my getting on top of my energy, losing control of it, falling into a pit, and having to fight really hard to get my life back. A lot of crazy things happened. Life moved on, and I gained a lot of experience. Now, I see a new level of meaning to all of it, and the purpose of this book is to share that.

It was not fun to learn this lesson, but it *is* fun to know it for what it was, and to see it as the force that made me who I am now and who I am becoming. Thanks, Life!



Now, dear reader, I have a few questions for you. It's so common for kids to be "put in their place" and to take those admonitions as the truth of life. But have you had the experience of being resented for a positive attitude? Ever been told to "Wipe that smile off your face"? Told not to get such big ideas? Had it been mentioned that you were a "dreamer" as if that were a bad thing?

Are you scared that might happen, and so you play it safe by not letting others know—until you don't even know yourself—about the *Inner Cheerful YOU* that has all the potential to make it through every situation?

Well, you are not alone. It's pretty common for young people to be "put in their place," with statements that are really not constructive, although they may be made with good intentions, by people who think they are preparing the young for life. In a lot of cases, if people really heard what they tell their kids, and knew what it sounded like to them, they would be pretty upset. So many times they are simply repeating what was said to them, and thinking that what was good enough for them must be good enough for everybody else. This creates the idea of "That's just how life is."

But *is* it?

## WHAT KIND OF EXAMPLE IS IT?

Images and examples of cynical attitudes are easily found in life, and people who have been hurt in life may want to pass that hurt along to you. They might not even know that's exactly what they are doing. They might think they are doing the right thing. Or they might know they are creating hurt, and be doing their most to do harm, in the worst cases.

Just as Brydges mentioned, "Cynics think it vulgar to wonder or to be enthusiastic . . . think the credit of all high qualities must be delusive."

Is there someone who is behaving really badly, doing harm, even? Some cynic who is bringing everybody down? Take that really bad example and use it to your advantage. You can say, "This is the best possible bad example!"

In this way, all events become useful. Use the quality of the example to reclaim your power. Flip it over, and you will see a different side of the situation. Think of what the opposite of that bad example would produce. Then act on your thought, knowing the power of choice.

For example, one way that I learned to cope with the bewildering array of emotions that I felt toward my parents (both deceased now) was to view them as being useful in showing me exactly what *not* to do as a person. In this way, I took control of my feelings as an adult, and stopped being in a reactive mode about



what had happened. I made the effort to try to understand what made them the way they were.

It was the first step in learning how to forgive the person, and let the action remain as condemned. In this way I have learned to free myself. I know that they too had awful things happen in their lives, and that, in a certain sense, they couldn't help doing what they did. They were mentally ill and victims of alcoholism. It doesn't excuse it, but it makes it possible to understand. I took back my emotional freedom. I turned the bad thing into the way to help others. I became free by learning how to forgive.

Each negative experience has a hidden gift. My parents betrayed me in every way, very deeply. Yet the thing about the gift of betrayal is that it creates compassion. After going through that, support and love become very precious. It means you don't take things lightly, and it makes you cherish true and genuine feelings in a deep way.

You can see someone else who has suffered betrayal and feel the loss of dignity that comes from that. It hits you hard, because you know the signs of it, and you see and know the person's feelings.

## **RECOGNIZING THE OTHER PERSON**

Every person you meet has a need to be recognized and honored. Even the smallest gesture of respect may mean so much. By extending that bit of compassion into the world, you become more refined within—and that means better things can come to you.

My ability to forgive is as limited as any human's. Yet, that's what the Higher Power that comes to us can do. Truly throwing your troubles on the Lord will get you out of the rut and on with your life. Just go as far as you can, and then ask for help.

*“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”*

*~ Jesus of Nazareth*

As absurd as it may sound, try not to take things personally.

You may think, “What could be more personal than being tormented in mind and body day and night? Of being alienated from society and from humanity by deep layers of trauma?” Yet, taking it personally only leads to despair and even death.



## WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

It's by putting in place that little hidden knowledge, the knowledge of our true identity as children of the Cosmos, that we enable ourselves to endure the unendurable, to conquer the circumstances.

Believe it or not, you have that knowledge. Inside of what appears to be going on in a situation is the hidden gift of what life has for you. Break open the moment, and you find the inner truth. There is always a small gap between what seems to be going on and your own perception of it. Your perception becomes your reality, as physics has clearly demonstrated—and as your own experience will show you when you examine it more closely.

When faced with a difficult situation, think of these questions: is what is happening “good” in some way? Are you being called to a larger idea? Is there a way you can use what is happening to help others?

For example, if you have a memory of something unpleasant, you can use that memory to create the opposite of it for someone else.

Having had too little affection early in life has made me keenly aware of how much people need acknowledgment and kindness. I have always used people who were mean to me as a trigger point, to prove to myself that I know better than that, and to show it by doing something nice for someone else any chance I get. That way, instead of experiencing a state of lack, I am in the flow of abundant love and universal energy.

If someone said something unkind, I make it a point to say something kind and gentle to the next person, and take back the moment and my feelings, redirecting the energy. I can locate the place of beauty in life by knowing the difference and acting on that knowledge. How many times have you stood behind someone in a grocery checkout line who was rude to the checker? It's a golden opportunity to show that people are better than that when it's your turn. It doesn't take much, at that point.

You can change a sad day into a happy one, by simply acknowledging someone who feels invisible. So much can come out of one moment of communication! It allows you to feel the sacred flow of life, in which we are all connected, the place where the moment is born.

When you find that place of hidden beauty, you can use it to help others, to feel them as another face of yourself; and it will show you the way to win the prize of wisdom. You can step into a larger vision of who you are and what your life can be, and live more completely. For example, if you have been treated badly, you know how that feels.

If someone has treated you badly and used their physical power on you in an intimate way that has harmed you, make your life better, more beautiful, without



them. Become a bigger, stronger version of the person they mistreated, a person who knows their own worth, and acts upon that knowledge.

Outgrow the person they thought you were. Show that you are bigger and more powerful, stronger, living in your own truth. Show that you are more real, more able, far more valuable, than the little picture they painted of you as a victim. Rise above it! Take the time to nurture the person you want to become. It's a great way to make your point about your true worth, and enjoy doing so!

## **YOUR OWN VOICE OF WISDOM**

Somewhere inside you, there is a little voice that knows who you really are and is there to cheer you along. What does that voice want you to know? What is your body telling you today?

By listening to your body and your emotions, you will gain the keys to winning struggles and finding the greater good. If you let it, your body will allow you to live far more freely. This happens by your subconscious mind alerting your conscious mind, and your body, to subtle signals the conscious mind might overlook, since it is focused on its own story and its need to create identity. Little clues like how you are breathing, or holding your shoulders, can give you a wakeup call to how you really feel in a situation. Step back for a minute and notice how your body feels right now. Where is your attention landing?

## **CHANGING YOUR STORY**

Have you ever “wished you had said that”? You can take back a moment and play it out by your own script.

Make yourself laugh. Change your tempo. Find a different angle. Take the moment and turn it into a situation of laughter by refusing to get too serious about it all. Flip the rock over. Hard times do not like to be taken lightly, and the dense energy of discord dissipates; you will eventually move on. You can also welcome an uncomfortable energy when it shows up. Saying “Thank you” can change the dynamic, since you are not resisting the discomfort any longer. It allows you to learn from your own discomfort.

I have realized that humor is one of the best tools for creating an opening in life. Yes, a strong negative influence can be hard to shake, but go ahead and make fun of it. Be outrageous. Make horrible jokes, it's okay.

Terry Braverman calls this a “pattern breaker.” He talks about extending the time period of your negative attitude, changing the way you present it, and turning just about anything into a comic presentation.





His book *When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Lighten Up!* is a gold mine of laughter. He speaks about ways to get more out of life by making yourself into a point of humor and defusing stress and disharmony by ... the use of clown noses! Try arguing with someone who is wearing a clown nose. Or try wearing a clown nose as you prepare to go to a business meeting, (he suggests wearing one in the elevator, although putting one on in as you look in the mirror may suffice) in order to lighten up about your presentation. This is outrageous, right? No way to take everything so seriously if you do that. Picture the person who is yelling or being foolish as wearing polka dot boxer shorts. Then they are nowhere near as scary. See the steam coming out of their ears? What color is the steam? Possibly it's pink or chartreuse.

This book came to me in a way that was surprising. I live in Big Sur far away from town. One winter, I was having a really bad time with machines, batteries, and electronics. It seemed that everything was breaking in sequence, and all my systems were just dissolving. Every time I fixed something, the next thing would break.

One day when I was using my generator to do the laundry, it suddenly stopped working. Now, this is a big generator, and getting it fixed was not going to be easy. There I was with a big pile of laundry, seventy miles from the nearest laundromat. It was the depth of winter, and my washer wasn't going to work! Whew!

Going back to the washboard somehow didn't cut the mustard.

So, the next time I went into town, I had a full car and a good several hours at the laundromat, just to get to a level with the laundry that I could enjoy. Not having any clean socks is not pretty! I was doing my best to keep a good attitude, but it was starting to get to me, the way that every single thing was going wrong. I had just replaced the generator battery—and now this! So I took my little dog out for a walk up the block, and there, on a small wall, was a book, placed there by someone else, in a pile of books left for others. I picked up the book and began to smile. *When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Lighten Up!*, eh? All right, I could see I was fair game for that one.

As I read it, I got more encouraged every minute. I felt I was being acknowledged in some way, and that this was the kind of help I really needed. It was. The machines weren't the only problem, but they were certainly the most immediate.

It made me remember that there is so much more to the workings of life than my own idea, and that in the right light, I could see my situation as being absurd rather than unjust, and to let go of the anger I felt about the level of stress I had as my current stimulus. Suddenly, I noticed how my "pile of problems" was very much like the pile of laundry, and that it was a matter of changing my idea about what things meant. Here was my example! You could do the same. Could something be thrown away instead of washed, perhaps? Maybe I needed a completely new attitude.



The situation was ridiculous! Every single thing relating to electricity was jumping up and down, thumbing its nose at me, right down to the little battery on my desk clock! Vital systems were failing, in sequence, and leaving me very much feeling like I was the object of a conspiracy. So I started saying, “What is it that you guys want?” Yes, I felt like I was being picked on. I felt stupid for being in a situation like this.

And I began to lighten up about it, since this was the only thing that was going to help. Being angry was clearly only going to waste more energy. My life was screaming at me for attention, and suddenly I could see that very clearly. I asked for help in my mind, and in my spirit. Solutions began to appear. The jeering slowed down, and then stopped. Once I stopped blaming myself or being resentful, things got better a lot more quickly.

It wasn’t exactly a joke (it would have been nice to have one, actually), but it was a lighter interpretation. Yes, the big tap on the shoulder was telling me to lighten up, see if I could think of a joke. So I started doing just that, and while I still had a long way to go with the machines, it really did help to make fun of things, and call myself out when I wanted to argue with it all. I would imagine myself with a clown nose on, arguing with the machines, arguing with the laundry, possibly arguing with the weather ... and ... well, just kind of loosen up.

Getting angry about what’s bugging you isn’t going to help. It will just hold you back. Finding the “Cheer Box” full of clown noses could be just the thing to let you know you are taking it *all* too seriously. So, acknowledge your negative strengths ... and then make fun of them!

This approach is really effective because you acknowledge your own negativity and honor it for contributing to your life instead of resenting it or fighting it. This takes the wind out of its sails and immediately changes your polarity. Be grateful for the bad stuff. It helped you wake up. After you’ve welcomed the message, you can tell it that it’s free to go. It has no hold on you. “What you resist persists,” but that which you allow to be released, after acknowledging it, has done its job. You can let go of it, and thank it for leaving.

You can change your story in other ways too.

## **WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?**

This depends on how you relate to your sense of identity. Your identity is created from moment to moment, and is always changing. All moments, even those of the “past,” have resonance in eternity and contain infinite possibilities. Your mind has the power to change the nature of events by the use of intention and conscious focus. Your life is fluid and full of possibilities. You have choices about how your experiences affect your inner states.



A circumstance is not the same as an eternal verity. The Absolute Truth emerges from the circumstances of time, like a butterfly from a cocoon. Time moves on, and everything changes in the course of life. The thing that remains is your consciousness, shaped through your perceptions into a truth of some kind. The way you see and process your information becomes your reality.

The same applies to everything in your life. Here's something every mother and every farmer knows: the poop washes off!

By correct knowledge, the truth shines forth. The circumstance, the “seeing” and “experiencing” part of your life, will give resonance to the Eternal Truth when you view it with correct knowledge. Seeing through appearances into the truth of your soul is the greatest journey. Things are more than they seem to be. There is no such thing as an “ordinary” moment.

In the end, only our attitude remains. Time has its message, and we find it by living.

## TIME CHANGES EVERYTHING

Ever visited an old-age home? You find the people there have stories that show their whole lives in about a minute and a half—sometimes less. If you listen carefully, they will tell you what is important to their souls. These people have no new experiences to gather. They reflect on what has been, in many cases having forgotten their original identities. That short story of important things, which shows details that matter to them, reveals the inner workings of the soul. The stories tell us what they have felt was important in life.

So what is *your* inner story? Where is your point of greatest strength in tough times? Is it that of “soldiering through”? Remember that it is *you* who carries the light forward, and anything that happens can be useful to you and to others, in some way or another.

Cheerfulness is not glossing over difficulty; it is accepting what is, while making room for it to unfold into something better. It is giving yourself the right to cheer up, and making that a conscious decision. You can start out in a gray area and turn it into a white light that goes on continually. This is how you will win the day, with that quiet fortitude that moves on into whatever happens, and the light cheerfulness that dispels the shadows.

To take an example from nature, we can turn to bamboo. Bamboo expresses inner peace through its flexible form, its quiet way of growing and spreading. Bamboo has a simple form that has many uses, from food to fiber, to industrial applications. It is one of the strongest symbols of inner peace. Its quiet nature of simplicity shows us the value of tenacity. Light and resilient, it bends in the wind,



and has a tensile strength greater than that of steel. In the Far East, where bamboo is revered, multistory scaffolding is built of it, rather than of steel. Ten stories or more in height, the lashed structures will hold workers who are doing repairs on very large buildings. Large buildings are made of timber bamboo pegged and lashed together. They are strong, and withstand the elements for long periods of time.

## BECOMING RESILIENT

Taking the time to create that quiet space within so that you can notice the joy that is always there will bring you greater resilience, and allow you to be at peace with whatever life brings to you. It will also allow you to prevail. So sit with your feelings, and get a firm idea of how they can help you rather than drag you down. Take the extra moment to see beyond the surface. Notice the way that your feelings help to create the experience you are in. Listen to the gentle messages of the moment. What is the way you can look at the moment, that is the most nourishing and cheerful for you?

May you have both peace and victory today, and carry that quiet joy with you always.

## THE FLEXIBLE APPROACH

What draws your attention and calls out for flexibility? Where can you make the choice to cheer up? The lack of cheerfulness is an awful thing, depriving the senses and the mind. Life becomes difficult without it. So always take the seemingly negative state you're in as a great opportunity to step into a compassionate state of being.

It's by taking what is awful and unbearable and turning the lesson around to help others that we become free. *That* is the magic trick of life, and it is *the* best work there is. This can be the opening for a new time in which you feel and see the texture of life as a backdrop, to wake up to your true nature and to let go of the idea that there is anything ordinary about anything.

## THE HIDDEN PAYOFF

Do you suffer? Is there some kind of hidden reward for you in that? Being honest about this is not easy. But it's a great reward when you can truthfully say, "Actually I would rather have a good day than feel that I am right about this." Being "right" is the surest road to suffering.



Letting go of the need to be right, and trading it for the right to be happy, is a good idea. There's sure a lot more room for *you* in your life when you make that trade.

Face it: nobody is *that* right. In fact, none of us are. So what? There's too much of life to be right about it. What a great thing it is to let go of controlling anything outside your own perceptions, and allow those very same perceptions to open up to the greater possibilities of each moment.

A friend of mine would ask, "Is this thing, this idea, worth dying for?" I would counter by asking, "In five years, is anybody going to care about this situation?" In fact, "*Do you consider it worthwhile to wreck the next five minutes to be right?*" is a good question too.

Ask yourself, "What is the hidden benefit that I receive from the role that I play here? Do I feel more right or justified by staying safe with that feeling? Am I afraid to acknowledge that such a feeling has taken my energy away from my spiritual being? Am I making someone else comfortable at the expense of my own wellbeing? What are my true feelings toward that person or those people? How am I bargaining with this? What am I pretending not to know?"

## **"PUSHBACK"**

The concept of "pushback" is useful for dealing with strong emotions such as those you will encounter when you confront issues of power and relationship. "Pushback" means looking at a situation that is causing stress and giving attention to the opposite of the factor that contains that stress. Acknowledge the feeling fully, and thank it for showing up. Then thank yourself for becoming aware of it, and give the feeling permission to leave.

Don't argue with the original emotion even when it is very unpleasant. It's there to help you grow by moving past it. Acceptance is the key to unlocking the circumstance. This is easy to say, right? Sure, easy to say. But of course it's not so easy to do.

Just listen for a moment. The simple way is to stop, and just listen to what life is saying. All the information is right there waiting to come to you.

## **YOUR POINT OF REFERENCE**

So what else is going on? Is there a way you can get out of the way of some unhealthy influence? Keep counsel with your own understanding. Let go, as well as you can, of the feeling you may have that things are not good the way they are. These are circumstances, which always change. And you have a say in how they change. You can create the change that is good for you, by taking action on correct observations.



Cheer up, and know that this is the most popular bargain around. People like a cheerful person, or at least most of them do. You contribute to their day, and to your own, by passing along the good stuff.

Can you change the way you view your situation and come to terms with how you really feel? Maybe you are just too pissed off, and being miserable is your refuge. Been there. It just about wrecked my health and drove me insane. Finally, I had to get a grip and cheer up. Here's what happened.

I said earlier that I had a lot of stress early in life. Over time, the chemical reaction of my body to long-term stress led to having eczema syndrome. It began as a small group of rashes, and gradually progressed into a debilitating condition that left me covered in rashes, itching through all my muscles and even in my bones, unable to wear anything but long dresses in summer, exhausted, disfigured, miserable.

At last I had a case of blood poisoning that nearly killed me. It was at that point I began to realize that I needed to change on every level. I had truly reached "survival mode." There was no extra energy for anything, and life began to feel very stark indeed. I could barely function, and was unable to think clearly, since the heavy medications needed to save my life had such drastic side effects.

It was clear that my life had not worked out into one of happiness. In fact, I wasn't absolutely sure I was going to live. At the same time, I had a mentor and friend who was actually dying of cancer. I called her on the phone every week and we would talk for a bit. Her amazing attitude of cheer in her situation was a challenge to my soul's vision. She was grateful for what life had given her up till that moment—grateful for the small choices she would make that day.

There were no complaints, only acknowledgements of the good of life. She was an example of courage that I can never forget. With knowing what she was facing, I felt I had to make the choice to face things constructively, and to live if I could.

This went on for ninety days, at my house in the country, where my main visitors were my grown sons. It was a huge struggle to think. Thinking was too much trouble, and my emotions were so disturbed that I could barely stand to be around people at all.

I was in a state of profound grief. My ideas about who I was had led me to a place where I felt absolutely like everything I had ever done was a mistake. I was angry about feeling this way. I was afraid that this would be the end of my life, with nothing to show for what my life had been. It was a shameful feeling, that my life had been a waste. I knew I wasn't stupid, I felt that I was a good person, who cared for others; so how had this become my reality?

It was a different world from anyone else's, a world filled with strange feelings, and physical agony as I struggled to cope with my condition.



So, here is what I did. I changed my diet, my attitude, and my way of relating to stress. Opportunities to see the good in my situation became my focus. I began to practice the principles I am talking about now, and gradually regained control of my mind, emotions, and health. I am now doing great, with the terrors and pain of the awful disease only a memory. I grabbed the gift of this terrible thing, and used it to be grateful that I was still alive, and that I had hope of recovering.

And I built on that hope. It started with needing to let go of anything that wasn't absolutely essential, since I had no energy to do anything else. That helped get my priorities in line. The pattern of self-nurture began, and I continue to maintain my commitment to self-care, knowing it is the core of my strength and my ability to do anything at all.

It was in admitting to myself that I had been on the wrong path in so many ways, that I let go of the idea of being right and made the decision to cheer up permanently.

## **STEPPING OUTSIDE OF THINGS**

So now, when I find I am bugged by something that is really getting to me, I step back for a moment and say, "You know what? The hell with that idea! Just cheer up, point blank and all across the board." The story above really drove that home for me. . . . I realized that I had that choice, and I remember it every time I am tempted to get angry (which, to tell the truth, still comes up rather often, but not as much as it once did, at all). I remove from my mind that sneaky idea that I am right, or that I should be right. I distance myself from the situation as much as possible in personal terms, and then see it as though it is someone else's life.

There is usually something fairly ridiculous going on. I mean, we are people, and we always make stupid mistakes. It's what we do! So I identify with that, the humor of it; change my idea about what is important; and make a joke about it. Paint it all with the same brush, refuse to give the dumb part any emphasis, and you see it all differently.

It works! I just say, "Betty, you don't know what is going on here if you think being on a bumner is any good at all. So drop it, and laugh it off, or just chant it away if that's what's going to work. Frankly, anything else is a bad investment. It will hold you back in every way, keep you stuck with people who don't make you feel good, and not allow you to prosper. Ick! Who needs that?"

Well my ego might need negativity, or think it does, but it doesn't. "Laugh it off or die." That's what it came to for me. I got kicked all the way back to the "review area," and learned all of it over again from the bones out. I had no energy to maintain negative thoughts or feelings. I needed to live, to heal from the terrible place I had come to. It took every tool in my toolbox (my imagination) and in



my faith to do just that. Total health crisis, breakdown after breakdown, financial disasters, personal problems that are the stuff of nightmares! Well, it eventually dissolves.

But that's another story. This isn't an autobiography.

## HOW ABOUT YOUR STORY?

Enough about me, what about you? Are you ready to dump what's not working, for good? I mean, really dump it?

Good for you. Why not make a list of all the stuff that is "keeping you from being happy"? Then you can have a ritual in which you burn it, flush it down the toilet, ritually disrespect it, make fun of it, laugh at it, and send it away on a little boat or whatever your imagination dreams up. This can really get to be fun. Make a dart board with the worst one in the middle! Sweep that stuff out the door.

One of my favorite techniques is to take a situation that made me really unhappy and reinvent it the way that my deepest desire would have it go. Remember that you have the power to change the way you feel about things. It's not time travel; it's memory adjustment. I use my imagination, take it to another whole level, and turn the whole thing into a cartoon. No blame if you feel embarrassed or ashamed. You don't have to take it all so seriously! It's only a cartoon!

This is really a fun thing, and then you can just go, "Oh, look at all the negativity I was keeping away from myself by stashing it in my subconscious!" Not a good place to keep it, really. Drop the denial, and make that stuff useful! Might as well put it out there and kick it around, break it up, and use that bullshit for fertilizer. Really exotic plants can then grow quite easily, for then your imagination is awakened and helps you see the lesson in a far less painful way.

## THE REAL YOU

You will then be able to notice your natural condition of happiness, uncaused and eternal. It's right next to you, tapping its foot, waiting for you to show up. So get out those excuses, and roll them into a ball and kick it as far as you can. Can you see the goal? It's wide open for you. It's your happiness, your freedom, and your very own sacred life that you came to this world to live!

However...it's popular to be unhappy too. That old saying that misery loves company has a lot of proof. If you can find the good spot in a miserable situation, you may be making others uncomfortable, and you can get punished for that. Others may take offense and say or do things to prove to you that you should be miserable instead. You may be portrayed as a troublemaker.





If lots of people have harnessed their energy into saying that a situation is negative and needs to stay that way (usually so that they can be right), they might get *mad* at you for thinking otherwise!

This is what happened to me so often in my early days in Big Sur, as people refused to confront their own problems, and got into dumping their wrath on me, because I was holding up under fire. Refusing to agree that everything is hopeless enrages those who feel hopeless themselves.

This is when they could (and would) call you names or other bad things, like telling you you're are a bad person, a dreamer, an unrealistic and selfish person, etc., since you are not propping up their Big Top of Misery any longer.

## **CHANGE IS SCARY**

Are you afraid of that? Are these people you need to please, friends of yours, for instance? Or are they your family? It can be threatening to the status quo if you make changes. So how about changing that status, while you're at it (without bragging about it—maybe not even mentioning it)? Change your idea about who you are, and what matters to you. You don't have to keep taking the same medicine everyone else does.

In some cases, it can mean you have to dump a whole section of your life. Big, scary changes can happen! And they can lead to things you never imagined were possible for you.

## **REPEATING EXPERIENCE LOOPS**

Is there a pattern that goes through your relationships and friendships? Is it a pattern that makes you puzzled about why the same thing keeps happening? Something you don't like, I mean. That wondering about the pattern is a sign that you are waking up, and that you aren't really happy about it. Waking up can be very inconvenient; it may cause huge upheavals in your life, and in those of others; however, it is *so* worth it. Sleeping in your comfort zone isn't going to get you into a happy place. Taking action on your inner truth will.

Once you start waking up, "going back to sleep" or playing dumb will only get you punished, in your own feelings, as you know in your heart you are not living your truth. Worse than the kind of punishment that comes from disapproval, the punishment you will gather to yourself for not living up to your own dream will be far worse.

A feeling of insecurity, of a lack of self-esteem, accompanies giving away your power. That is the worst kind of self-betrayal, and it brings the worst in self-punishment. It means a loss of health, certainly of happiness, and very likely



of prosperity too. Don't give up! Listen to yourself with kindness, and forgive yourself for whatever you think you, or someone else, did wrong. It's okay. Wrong is just an idea, and ideas are changeable.

## **SILENT GIFTS OF CHEER AND LOVE**

If you are a salesperson, as I am, you know that you had better be a Cheerful Charlie, and a gentle one. If people are having a bad day, don't tell them they shouldn't be. It's their right.

But you can give them the gift of a hidden blessing and a happy face of the heart. You don't have to tell them you are doing it. They might not take it the way you mean. Silence is golden, after all.

Remember that great piece of advice, while acting as a salesperson: once you've made the sale, stop talking. Sell yourself on the idea of being a happy person. It's a good deal. Then you can be assured of a worthy purchase.

## **JOIN THE FUN**

Is someone having a great day? Smile with them, and help them take that moment into an even better day. Share the gift of happiness with them, and make it bigger. It's yours to have too.

Smile with yourself, and give yourself a pat on the back for keeping on. It really does change your body chemistry in subtle ways and makes a path for you in life.

If someone isn't smiling, see if you can help that person to do that. It's amazing what a small piece of kindness can do in someone's day. To make another person happy is a great privilege, and makes you stronger in your mind and in your life.

So, you may be wondering where all the cheer came from. I can truthfully say that portions of my life as a child were an absolute nightmare that would have made a great novel or movie.

I had to live it, though, and so I did, finding ways to nourish my creative visions, learning how to keep little kids happy, or make them happy, since some of the ones I took care of were also having some pretty bad problems of their own. I gained a vision of myself as a being separate from the person subjected to all the cruelty—as a person who could be strong and help others.

This in turn led me to getting out of the story I was being told, about who I was. I'd get on my bike and ride all day, many miles at times, to get a fresh point of view. Spent a lot of time at the library. I learned about the Two Worlds: the big world, and the place I had to go back to for food and sleep.



## **HELP COMES TO YOU**

My grandmother paid for me to have piano lessons. From my very honorable Japanese teacher, I learned the value of silence, reverence, respect, and discipline. At the house of my teacher, there was dignity, and I was valued. I knew I would have to go back to the house where I lived, but I also was beginning to find out who I was at my core—not the person I was being told I was.

When I went for my first piano lesson, at five years old, it was a rainy day. Mother was clearly angry about something, so I kept quiet. I walked in the door and stood dripping on the mat. A strange looking woman was there, and there was a huge piano. The door closed behind me, and I was alone with her!

Terrified, I started to cry. She said, “Oh, what a pretty raincoat.” This wonderful blue raincoat was my pride and joy, which had kept me dry in the many winter storms. I stopped crying, and she took my hand. She was so calm. She was always gentle and kind, and when I did well, she would quietly say, “Very good, Elizabeth.” No extravagant emotions, no drama. She simply gave me real and strong support. I knew she was telling me the truth. What a treasure she was for me!

## **THE VOICE OF SPIRIT**

When I was seven, I also got into the church choir. I knew how to read far in advance of the grade level I was in, and got into choir two years ahead of the usual time. I was already really good in Sunday school, and was always having to be sent up another grade. I loved the idea of being able to really be a good girl. Somehow, it would make things better, somewhere. I was kind of bad about rubbing it in with the other kids, though. I was not humble.

Time to get me moved on.

## **THE TRUTH I LEARNED FROM SINGING**

As a singer in the choir, and a soloist who sang difficult pieces that I learned by heart, I felt like I had a place in God’s house, a place of honor and prestige. I loved it!

In fact, it is how I found my true identity, and how I began to see that the life that had been imposed upon me, the life of a helpless person, a suffering one, was only one of the lives I would live. Going to church, which we always did, had changed for me. It wasn’t any longer just something we did because everyone else did. I felt new and strong and happy when I sang in church.



When I got there, I would put on my choir robes and sit until the procession. When I got up from the pew my family occupied, and joined the procession, I became my true self; and when I sang, I felt a Divine presence that moved my awareness like nothing else. I sang solo!

The voice that came through me was a source of joy and wonder. I also learned to sing harmony parts, which were solo roles, but I sang along with the group a different pattern of notes that enlarged the harmonies. I started to see myself as part of a larger pattern. When I blended my voice with those of others, in faith, I forgot about my original identity, and it didn't matter to me anymore. I knew that I had a true self, as an angel.

## **WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?**

With the knowledge of my true identity, I became able to endure anything. Unkind actions and words, and the thoughtless behavior that took place in harsh environments were never as real as knowing that the truth of life is that of infinite kindness and grace.

The gift of that awareness which I gained through endurance is the most precious fruit of the great Tree of Life. Through that awareness, I cherished each moment of kindness, any gentle feeling or gesture, and appreciated the happiness of each moment. I felt happy for those who had the things I didn't have, instead of envying them. That had been a gift of immense value to me, and it has allowed me to share happiness in ways I never could have imagined.

I learned about fear, anxiety, and emotional isolation early in life through the experiences I endured. Fear was very real for me, living in a constant state of uncertainty. I felt anxious all the time. I felt alone most of the time.

Singing changed that. When I stepped up to sing in choir, all of those things dropped away, and I became aware of my spirit and soul. I knew the freedom of spirit, moving through me in the voice.

## **STEPPING OUT OF FEAR AND GRIEF**

Fear became something "other" to me. When the Voice came through, moving through my body, lungs, and mouth, my awareness of my larger self became activated. I felt a need in my core to be of service to others. So many people did not know what I knew, and I wanted, and still want, to help them.

So, how did this cheer me up, and why? And how did I take it with me even when my family left that environment, and I was no longer a soloist, except in my heart?



The feeling I gained from singing stayed with me. I felt it as a personal message from the Creator, and it made me able to be happy no matter what else was going on. I remembered. Even when I had to deal with the most brutal things, I still knew there was joy inside me that no one could take away, no matter what they did. Later, I would be mocked for my attitude and rained down upon by cynical people who took advantage of whatever they could find. It didn't matter to my deeper self. Keeping quiet, I drilled down and hid, and learned.

## **THE POWER OF VOICE**

Now that I have lived in the mountains for many years, there is something else I know about the power of singing. In this area, there are lots of wild animals, including cougars and bears. At twilight I sometimes walk around, and I have learned that “prey does not sing.” When I sing, I have no room to be afraid of anything. The animals know that too. By singing out loud, I can alert the animals to my presence and of my lack of fear, and they and I can live in harmony.

## **KNOWING THE WORTH OF THE GIFT**

I knew the hidden treasure would always be there, and it would come to light in the end. I reflected the light into whatever I was dealing with, and gently offered it to all, whether or not they understood what I was about. I'd always strive to find something positive about a situation, and mention it to others. “Well, at least we have firewood!” or “The place is clean right now!” or “Well, I hope you feel better soon. Just calm down a bit.” Annoying cheerful to some folks, I know, but I couldn't help that.

My idea was to serve as an example of freely giving joy in the moment. I'd smile at people who frowned at me (that is, if I could; it wasn't easy) or just say something nice to someone who wasn't expecting it. Once again, this was not always appreciated. The way I was seeing it was that I had knowledge, and the knowledge of the light is a gift that can only be used if shared. I kept on being nice to people at home or in other places, no matter how they acted. This was a way of taking control of my feelings. I just wouldn't let things get to me.

## **RESURGENCE OF SELF-PITY**

I absolutely refuse to feel sorry for myself, except when I am being a real fool—which does happen. In fact, it happens a lot! What would happen if I didn't do something about it? I would spend all my time whining. The small child, the hurt one, still hangs around; and I take the time to comfort her. When I find that I am feeling a lack-consciousness mentality about the many types of nurturing that I



didn't get, I turn it around, re-parent myself with a loving substitution, and talk nicely to that little girl. I make an effort to be nice to someone else, knowing that person is another me. We are all connected beneath the surface. I know that giving to others is giving to myself in the best way.

This includes making physical gifts of time and rest, giving myself credit for being the person I am and who I can be, and letting myself know that I am valued. Then I pass that feeling along as soon as I can, to another person, to reinforce it and give it a larger life.

When it does happen that I ask, "Why me?" or something like that, I look the self-pity in the eye, thank it for showing up, and ask it what it wants. The answers are great motivators. Then I can ask questions like "What does this really mean for me and my life? How can I turn this around?" instead of "Why am I having to deal with this?"

Having compassion for your self is absolutely necessary in this quest for laughter and smiles. Pity is not compassion; it's anger dressed up pretty. Real compassion allows for the truth to emerge and be dealt with realistically.

## DESIST FROM DEFENDING YOUR IDEA

It's important to let go of identifying with your own little window on the world. Most people spend most of their time defending their ideas, many of which are not really their own at all.

When you drill down and have a chance to see how your thoughts are formed, you will notice that lots of stuff is in there that you just sort of picked up from somewhere and added to the ideas about who you are, and how things are supposed to be. This is stuff that has little magnets on it, and it's hanging on without being really active, just cluttering things up. Visualize yourself as being an electromagnet and take control of the magnetism for yourself. Then you can turn its energy the other way, or turn it off, and the little gobs just fall off!

## WHOSE IDEA WAS THAT?

Each one of those little thought-forms is a way to interpret your life, and each may or may not be useful in taking you to where you want to go. So letting the light in can be as simple as saying, "Okay, I've had a look at what I *was* thinking, or reciting, so what do I *observe* to be the case?" You can ask yourself, "Was I really thinking that, or thinking I was *supposed* to think that?"

Ask yourself, "Is there something here (in my mind) that is not serving the higher good? Am I holding onto old patterns because I am fond of the person who gave them to me, or even because I am not fond of that person and feel a need to argue



with them in my life? Is there some reason I hold on to this idea that doesn't make me happy?"

That information came to you for a reason, so don't just blindly discard it. It has a message for you. So don't fight it, join it, greet it with respect, take over the boat by asserting your right to do that, and change course. It's your boat, your life. Take charge!

People who have been traumatized or have been through hard times are often enclosed within a shell of sorts, which keeps them within a field of perception that seems to be safe, but actually draws the same events in through the cycles of life. Becoming aware of the shell is the first step, and correctly identifying the nature of the emotions opens the pathway to taking back the life force that built the shell and reclaiming the energies that keep it in position.

## **RIGHT TO THE END OF THE TRAIL**

*Thick Face, Black Heart* by Chin Nien Chu has a great point that states how your negativity is the tag point of your identity. It's what makes you the individual that you are.

Your negativity contains your unique signature within Universal energy. No one else has the exact same gripes or problems that you do. Without those individual characteristics, your spirit doesn't know where you are. However, by changing the polarity in a conscious way, every bit of that energy that has been so draining can be brought home, made happy, and be a great asset to you.

This great book led to a breakthrough in my life, and I highly recommend it for a fresh perspective.

Here's what happened: at one time, I had a business that took me out of town to do food demonstrations for a product I was selling. I had put together three days worth of supplies for demos and had driven to a distant city, where I had a place to stay with a friend. I saw the book on her bookshelf, and asked her about it. She said she knew it was good but was having trouble reading it. She thought it was kind of harsh. That made me wonder why she thought so. Did it say things she didn't want to hear?

The next day, I prepared my kit for the day's work. I went to the store where I was planning to work giving out samples for the day. When I got there, I was told that all demonstrations had been cancelled because the food regulatory authorities had gone over the shelves and found some violations. There had been over fifty demos canceled for that day alone.

This was devastating. I could hardly believe it. For me, this was the last indicator that what I had been doing was now failing. The business wasn't going to succeed.



It had been on shaky ground for a while, and I was not happy being away from home or my family trying to make it work. I'd been toughing it through, and this was a complete defeat of my ideas.

My gut told me, "This is over." I called corporate headquarters and was told there was nothing that could be done. It was still early in the day, and I had an event to attend the following day in a nearby city.

I drove to my friend's house, took the opportunity to lie down, and read the book that day. In it, the author went over the idea that sometimes we have to go all the way to the end of an experience to see the message. She pointed out that an end, or a failure, is an important message about life, so listen to what life is saying. Experiences of failure can be great ways to find out how to do things that work. Point by point, what was it that made the failure happen? Turn it around, point by point, and you have a good and accurate map to success.

This whole idea of failure having a meaning rang true to my soul. So I began to look at the failure as a beginning. I went over every single reason for the failure, and began to design a business that would work for me, creating the kind of success that I wanted, in terms that would work for me. I took the negativity and heartbreak I felt and used it to fuel a time of creative thought and feeling that would take me forward. I was able to see it as a signature of my soul instead of something that "happened to me." This allowed me to create the life I truly wanted, the life I have now, instead of the one I thought I should want. Thus, failure led to victory.

The terrible grinding work of failure also allows you to notice how you can line up better with how life really works. Sometimes, not getting what you want is the best thing that can happen. You may have wanted something that, in fact, was going to drive you slowly out of your mind! Or it could have been setting you up in some other way for consequences that wouldn't serve you, or the world, as your own gifts were not shared, or your own happiness nurtured. Maybe you need a bigger game, and your vision was too limited. Or you may have been doing what others told you was needed for you to achieve *their* version of success, not in harmony with your own soul's needs.

## FOLLOWING THROUGH FOR YOURSELF

Father Anthony Mello wrote a great book called *Awareness*. In it, he points out how the reason you want to give is a selfish one. Because it gives you pleasure to help others, giving is a good kind of selfishness. But as he points out, being aware that your original motive is to make yourself happy about being good to others puts things in the right perspective. You want to tell yourself you are a good person (understandably so).





You didn't start out as a benevolent creature, but as a person who has many motives. Being truthful with yourself about why you want to give makes you stronger in the will to be helpful. You are doing it for *yourself*: your real self, your true human identity, which is that of a great creature who has both high and low motives, kind and unkind ways.

You are a complete person, not just a good one. And when you do good, knowing that you have so many types of motives, so many reasons to do what you do, it makes it far more meaningful, far more useful, than the little story you may have started with. Perhaps you said, "Oh, I just want to give and give, not thinking of myself." Make it stronger by noticing your own role in this! Give yourself credit! You came out of the darkness of selfish intent where we all begin, and grew into a creature of compassion and knowledge. Now *that* is a good person!

## TRUE HAPPINESS

It is also Father Mello who pointed out that true happiness is uncaused and lives in the eternal. He advocates clearing away that which blocks us from seeing this great gift. Spiritual nature is your true nature, and the "story" you are repeating to yourself keeps you from seeing who you really can be.

So, have esteem for yourself in every part, for it's all a gift to the larger good, once you take hold. You need to be in touch with the entire basis of your consciousness to have an accurate picture of what drives you, how you will learn and how you will teach. This gives a far deeper level of respect to you and to humanity than would be possible by glossing over the painful parts with a denial of your true strengths.

*"All true love is based on esteem." ~ Buckingham*

## YOUR DARK SIDE IS YOUR FRIEND

We all have a deeper darkness within us that comes to teach us things. Facing our true motivations is one of the greatest liberations around. Once you don't need to defend the "little you" any longer, the "big you" can show up. And *that* person is a really great one. It's like turning from the inside of your car to the view outside your window. You need the car to get places, but the car is not the places you are going. So when you "drop the story," you open up for the Big Story to come to you and to show you how it wants to make everything work so much better for you.

Following through on the good intentions is key, of course; and nothing good comes of keeping back the great gifts. Knowing those gifts for what they are makes them so much more valuable. They are the gems that you dug up from deep



in your soul, and the dirt you found along the way washes off in the vast ocean of Cosmic Love.

## CHEERING UP SOMEONE ELSE

*“Frame your mind to mirth and merriment, which bar a thousand harms and lengthen life.” ~ Shakespeare*

Of course we may be deriving that “selfish pleasure” in a way that is of benefit to others. A great example of this is that of cheering someone else up. It makes you feel good to do that, so in pleasing yourself by pleasing others, you create a feedback loop that serves everyone. For example, if you are that person who walks into a room and is greeted by smiles, you are already good at making others happy, and people are happy to see you—which, of course, makes you feel good!

Noticing what makes others happy and adding to it is one of the best ways to cheer up that Little You. So go ahead and encourage yourself to be nice to everybody, whether you like the particular person or not. In fact, most of the time, when we don’t like someone, it’s because of some kind of misunderstanding. Possibly that person there reminded us of someone else whose behavior displeased or harmed us, so they must be like that other guy, right? Well, probably not exactly.

## GIVE THE HUMAN RACE CREDIT

With the exception of the few truly bad people in this world, most people really want to do good things for others, and want to be liked. That’s usually how they got into such a mess! So, if you can just be cheerful and nice, with an air of detachment, you avoid looking for the payoff in the moment. Just step into the flow of life, and know that you will get your reward somewhere along the road.

*“God is a very sure paymaster. He may be slow, but be you sure he pays in the end.” ~ Madame Swetchine*





## .....PATIENCE.....



*“Hope in adversity, but mistrust thyself in prosperity.” ~ Tarot*

**T**his ancient admonition from the Tarot holds a lot of power. For it is by holding hope in an adversarial situation that you will find the lesson it offers you. You may be called to a higher level through your challenges, as you would never be by simply going along with things that are easy. By bearing with it, you learn that you actually can handle things and that you have the ability to see things through. You get a basis for your spirit’s life to expand. Life takes on a depth and additional color through those seeming obstacles that come.

There are cycles in life. Learning to lean into them takes a lot of letting go, and a lot of acceptance. Everyone loves the good times; yet, as sure as you’re born, that isn’t going to be the whole story.

*“Patience is not passive; on the contrary, it is concentrated strength. There is one form of hope which is never unwise, and which certainly does not diminish with the increase of knowledge. In that form it changes its name, and we call it patience.” ~ Bulwer*

### WHAT PATIENCE GIVES TO YOU

When you are patient, you can see the hidden meaning of your experience. Then, difficult situations that make you wonder what is going on show



themselves to be the guardians of the doorway to your inner truth, the knowledge deep within you, which is not fooled by outer appearances.

Being patient is not easy, and there is no simple way to learn it. It comes to you by means of quietly learning to bear with unreasonable things and people, without needing to “fix” things. It comes from accepting the fact that events are in a state of becoming. It comes from being with the moment, and sitting quietly listening to it. It is also by patience that beauty is found.

## **CHANGE IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER**

Waiting for the gray to clear up, while you accept it for the beauty it shows you, you notice each nuance of color and shape. Think of the sublime beauty of dawn, with its statement of arrival. Without the night, how could this happen? True beauty is quietly manifesting all around you, and if you rush on by without patience, you will not see it.

The great thing about patience is that it is always waiting for us. Without it, nothing that is worth having can be had. It’s an attitude of being with things the way they are, and working to make them better. It all starts with the way you look at those things and approach them. One way of doing so is by, as I say, “When things get rough, put the car in low gear.” That way, the panicky feeling that comes from facing a huge challenge can be broken down to a series of moments, and I can look at them one at a time instead of facing down the whole monster.

Breaking a situation down into increments that are manageable is key to having the ability to focus on what each bit is saying, and to respond intelligently. Things happen in the moment, one moment at a time; and the connections that are drawn together within your mind can vary as much as the stars vary from one another. A human mind has the ability to make a vast number of neural connections and create many paths for interpretation.

These patterns your mind creates become the road map for your future. As you emphasize a situation, you give it more power; as you allow it to change, it *will* change. By focusing on the opportunities for growth instead of on the problems, you will outgrow the discords and find the beauty that is always there, waiting to be found. Is there a tough challenge? It’s ready fuel for your active involvement, and this will give you the momentum of a lifetime when you take the opportunity that is offered.

## **STRETCHING THE MOMENT**

Patience can also make things a lot easier, since the many opportunities that each moment presents are more accessible when the moment is respected for what it is.



Each moment is composed of an infinite number of possibilities, and the way you interpret this one leads you to the next one. The “Observer Factor” is the key to the “Experience Factor,” and each time you grab that conscious handle, you get a better grip and a better idea of how this little ship that you call yourself is steered on the Cosmic Sea.

Embracing the infinite number of possibilities is a wonderful thing. A relaxed state of acceptance, and a flexible attitude about life, can let in the possibility that things can get better in the way that is best for you and for everyone.

Sure, having an overarching plan is key to getting yourself organized to grow the life you want. However, trying to stay the whole time in that mode (the “see the big picture” one) will keep you from expanding those tiny moments, from growing a potential creative process, and from listening to life as it gives you instructions. You can find simplicity in the moment. Then you can expand that simplicity into the next moment.

Your happiness is alive, and it wants you! When things don’t go the way you had planned, it’s a sign that life wants you to listen more carefully. Quite likely, there’s a higher truth waiting for you there.

## THE POWER OF AN EXAMPLE

Nothing and nobody is completely useless; they can always be used as a bad example! In fact, it’s by taking those bad examples seriously that you can grab the handle of a situation and use the momentum to rush to a new place that is a lot closer to where you want to be.

*“Instead of getting angry, nurture a deep caring and respect for troublemakers, because by creating such trying circumstances they provide us with invaluable opportunities to practice tolerance and patience.” ~ Dalai Lama*

## POLARIZING YOUR ENERGY

Events have magnets on them that respond to your mind. That polarity principle, of making use of every example, no matter what type it is, has endless applications. You can grow or shrink the level of importance things have by seeing them as a part of an energy field within you, the observer, making the call about what is important and how to act upon that.

If you find yourself playing small, expand upon your ideas and dreams to the largest possible framework. Really grow a big dream! Never mind about whether or not you believe it can happen. That comes later. Listen patiently to what your heart is telling you about your world, and take action on that feeling.



To get what you want, get rid of what you do not want. This can take a lot of layering. Not everything is going to come off in the first pass, if you find you are covered with too much mental clutter and too many mental layers to believe in yourself. It really does take consistent effort to create new patterns that are stronger than the things you want to outgrow.

Everything that happens is there for you to learn from, listen to, and find to be useful in some way. Maybe this means needing to wait for a person, or a situation, or some type of reward. Every moment of time that is used within acceptance adds to the value of that treasure.

When you accept a situation as it is, you acknowledge its power and add it to your own. This gives you the power to change it by aligning yourself with life itself. This is sure a lot easier than arguing with the whole Universe by arguing with the moment.

## **YOUR GIFT TO THE WORLD**

Are you often being thanked for your patience? It's a good sign if you are. This happens to me a lot, and I always wonder what we thought we were going to accomplish without patience! Why do people notice this? This surely says something. Perhaps it says that there are so many impatient people around that simply behaving reasonably is now considered worthy of acknowledgement.

So what's so special about patience anyway? It's like you are really remarkable for not blowing your top over something that is perfectly natural, like having to wait for a moment in line because someone in front of you needs a little extra something. Or it means that you are amazing because you smiled instead of frowning—said thanks, or even just hello, instead of not saying it. How strange that is, when you think of it.

Another thing patience shows is that the pace of information is now such that if you can go slow enough, you can kind of wiggle through events and open the space to learn more and to take action on what you observe. In other words, while others are rushing to get through the moment, you can open it up and embrace the time, knowing it will expand to fit in what you need.

Lots of effort goes into believing that you are so busy, you don't even have the time to think. This is a popular idea in a "doing-oriented" culture. But is that really true? Does it need to be true, for you? How much of that busy feeling is not needed, and in fact keeps you from the essential core of your being?

Are you responding to false information about how important it is to ride the edge of overwhelm, through overstimulation, and a process of absorbing stimulus that is not even useful?



What does that feel like? What is something that clogs up your mind and causes you to feel blocked that you can eliminate from your flow? Ask yourself, “Whose life is this, anyway?” and find something you can get out of your information flow, some little thing you can eliminate that drains you. Notice how that makes you feel different about your day. Do it again as soon as you think of something to eliminate. Before long, the trickle becomes a flood of change. Fresh flow! Real energy!

## **WAITING IT OUT**

But how about those times when all there is to do is wait, and that’s that? As a military mother, I can relate to that. It’s pretty hard dealing with times like those: to know that no matter what happens, it’s going to happen anyway, regardless of your feelings or actions. Accepting that you are not in control on any level is a big thing to have to face in any situation. Yet, those situations can, and do, come up. And the only thing you can control is your own way of dealing with the fact.

I’m taking a deep breath, here, as I consider what this means. Birth, separation, chaos, trauma and tragedy, death: we all get those things in life, and they are not for us to control. These things are given facts, and they don’t respond to our ideas. They are universal experiences.

Sometimes, all there is to do is just plain wait.

## **TIME OPENS UP FOR YOU**

Waiting can be the time in which you watch what is going on and get a deeper feeling of empathy for your fellow humans, or that you use for silent meditation, or to think on something pleasant that is just refreshing for you.

It’s also an opportunity to observe yourself and your process. It is the hardest, and also the most effective, strategy for gaining wisdom in the face of disagreeable events or people. It’s also the way in which all the good of life grows. Between the blossom and the fruit is the time of growth and ripening. Learning to wait until a situation is ripe is an art in itself.

I still remember the sense of exasperation when my young sons would proudly present to me a basket of green strawberries, picked with all the best intentions. What a challenge to explain to them that they had moved on their impulses too soon, and that the berries were not fit to eat. Was I angry and upset? Of course! There went all that work, and the berries would never get ripe. More important, though, was the conversation that followed. It was not too easy to keep my own ideas in the background while I made the effort to get connected with those little faces and help them understand, but it was worth it. I explained to them about how



the berries weren't ready, and now would never be. I thanked them for wanting to give me something nice, and asked them to talk to me about things in the garden before picking them. The next year, the berries were really good.

Each of us has done something like that in life, usually on a much larger level.

Still waiting for that ideal moment to happen? That's the other part of the paradox. It doesn't happen; you cause it to happen. Getting into sync with your energy and listening carefully to what life is telling you will allow you to know when to wait and when to refuse to wait. Refusing to wait also has its place.

In order for things and situations and relationships to become ripe, patience is essential. And as for the end of patience ... think about what happens when your patience runs out. Is the result predictable? Do you make the choice to change your idea of what's going on, reframe your priorities, or the like? Is getting angry your way of dealing with it? Do you have a pressure relief valve for those exasperating moments that come to everyone, when nothing seems to work and everybody is behaving stupidly?

Simply put, waiting is as waiting does. If you are angry about the wait, it will seem a lot longer, and you will suffer a lot more. Even when things aren't fair, which does happen rather often in life, or so it seems, waiting with a simple mind saves tons of energy and allows you to bear even things that are, at first glance, unbearable. It gives you time and energy to create a different picture of how things are, and what your place is within them.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Dr. Victor Frankel speaks of how the prisoners in concentration camps who survived were those who somehow managed to find meaning in the experience. Those who did not perish, under the exact same conditions.

Finding someone else to talk to always is of immense value. You can write things down or talk to your "invisible playmate," your journal. It has been said that a person can bear anything at all in life if they get to talk to someone about it eventually.

Don't worry, that person will show up. It may take a long time, until you are ready to share that hard-won bit of wisdom, but it's worth the wait. That kind of waiting takes time and space out of the picture and shows you the lessons of eternity.

By great patience, in my own life, I have learned that I am worthy and strong, and from the learning of that, all the false information and suffering of my childhood became the foundation of my highest calling. Bearing patiently with the discomfort





of facing my own deepest pains, my spirit allows me to grow into a better person who understands how important compassion and dignity are.

## **PUTTING IT IN LOW GEAR**

My own method of finding patience has been to find physical ways to express myself through arts and crafts. While I was living with my grandmother, she sat me down one day and insisted I learn to crochet, as my ancestors had done.

It turned out that the little piece of string and the hook brought me back to myself, and allowed me to sit quietly for hours while what was going on inside me boiled around. From this experience, I grew a new skin of patience, of calmness. The Voice, the one I knew from my earliest spiritual experiences, came back to me, and spoke to me of quiet things and spiritual values.

Years later, I have crocheted many miles. It's the simple monotony of it that I find so comforting.

Time loses its grip, and the texture and the memory of my hands take over, and I feel myself joining the many who do this, who have done it over the centuries. It's the letting go that does it. This means entering a vast sea of uplifting and comforting energy.

The piece of string as a metaphor has endless illustrations. Here is continuity, flexibility, and the ability to change into something different, yet retain the original character of the medium. What was one thing becomes many, and yet remains as one. The unseen moves into the seen by means of the consciousness that guides the hand. And things of beauty appear from out of the invisible into the visible. Things of beauty and usefulness are created out of the potential that the ball of string holds.

## **THE RHYTHMS OF OUR SOULS**

There are lots of mediums that convey that comforting sense of rhythm. It's like the rocking motion of a cradle for your heart and soul, soothing your deep mind with simplicity. Music is always good for the soul. It is the Universal language. Humming a simple tune can be a gentle way to remind yourself that you are special, you matter, and your life is good. Associations that are meaningful show up, and feelings that you enjoy are enhanced by music.

Writing down your feelings can help you understand yourself better, and learn more of what you are, what you can be, and what you have to offer the world.



A simple conversation with nature can bring vast harmony in a short time. Step out the door and look at the larger picture for a little while. Find a tree or a bunch of them, flowing water, a bird—find ways to notice the small beauties of the day.

Connecting at a specific level to a form of expression that reflects your authentic presence can bring out huge untapped energy fields, which you will find are part of your own nature, waiting to be expressed. That can be your anchor point. It can be the jumping off place that you use to define how you will engage with what comes your way.

## **INFORMATION HAS ITS PLACE**

Modern life is full of over-stimulating environments, which cause our consciousness to be stressed on a subtle level, and deplete our natural energy. Frazzled by too much information, your mind can just want to shut down and tell it all to go away. You have a choice about how to respond to this problem. Shutting down or refusing to grow, to listen, to relate, are just two options. It's not going to help in the long run, however, since the whole run of static is still happening, and will keep showing up for you.

What kind of information can you do without? Probably a lot more “stuff” than you think is just sifting through for no particular reason, and without doing anyone any good. It's not a bad idea to just turn the darn thing off once in a while, on a regular basis, whatever the darn thing is—could be the TV, the phone, or the computer.

What would happen if you just took a break, a walk, a nap? Is it going to make or break your situation to get in touch with your own system, distinct from artificial stimulus?

Don't worry: the world can do without you for a while. And you can do without it. You can take action to reduce the amount of excess information you are processing and to get better at handling the things that are more important to you.

Make a conscious effort to clear your mind and connect with your own feelings and notice the richness of your senses when you are “unplugged.” Give yourself permission to not know every single bit of news that comes along. It's your world too, and your feelings count. Buying into overwhelm diminishes you and keeps you from creating a better world.

## **GROWING PAINS ARE REAL**

Okay, so you've been patient, listened to your Inner Truth, been nice to yourself, and things are still not working. Now what? Time to jump out of whatever mindset you are in and get ready for some real moving around!



What this means is that you are outgrowing something. And it's quite possible that you haven't wanted to look at that, or that you just weren't ready to face the consequences of getting real about something that is not serving you ... for there are consequences. Nobody said this was going to be easy! You will need to get some confidence.

## **CONFIDE IN YOURSELF FIRST**

But what is confidence anyway? What does it mean to have it?

The Latin root of the word is “con” (or “with”) and fide” (or “faith”). As I understand it, confidence is stepping into the moment and listening to the message of life. It's being ready to learn, and to change, when you listen very carefully to the message of what your heart and life are telling you.

It's having perspective in the situation, knowing that you are bigger than the situation that you are in. It's seeing circumstances as being less important than the alignment with the deeper meaning of things.

Confidence is listening to your own heart about what is important. It is to trust in the messages of life—knowing that there will be a message, even if you don't know what it is, without being attached to the result. It is to be ready to be with life, the way it is, on its own terms. It is to be ready to take action on your dreams, to use what is happening to help create a better or more enjoyable reality. It can mean the difference between stepping up and claiming the prize, or wishing you had. Confidence is saying, “I face fear realistically, and I learn from its message, not being held back by it. I see fear as a tool of awareness, not as a roadblock.”

It's opening up the gifts of life with acceptance and gratitude. It is to decline the opportunity to retreat into a safe, small place, sacrificing happiness and self-worth, and instead, stepping up to the challenge of grabbing the handle of a situation, claiming its energy for your own, to use in a way that makes your life better.

## **IMPERATIVE CHANGES**

You will have to change your parameters if you find yourself being stifled, and you will need to get ready to face some possibly very unpleasant choices. It's okay. It's better to face the pain of growth than the slow strangulation of denial.

You are being called into a place of letting go of something that hurts you in some way, and saying *no* to the thing that brings it to you. This could be a personal situation, a need to make changes in your work, or maybe you are unhappy with just everything about the way you are living.



This is a good time for the pros and cons list. It's always a good way to evaluate choices about what to do next. Take it to the spreadsheet! Ask your friends about what they think. If you don't want to do that, for whatever reason, tell your journal. Tell your Inner Hero, your Big Vision Person, your Angel, your Inner Wise Self. Whatever you call him/her, he or she will always listen.

What I like to do is what I call "Listening to my Big Heart." I get really clear about what choice it is that I am considering. I create a picture of the options. Then I outline in my mind what exactly each choice for each option is. I describe it in the most impersonal terms I can reach. I make a real effort to remove my own person from the situation and view it as though I am considering someone else's choices. I let myself have the freedom of making a leap of faith, by stepping outside myself.

Then, I take a deep breath, and connecting with my intuition as well as possible, I ask myself, "What happens if I do this, what happens if I do that?" And I start to know what to do. Sometimes I know right away, sometimes I have to ask a few times, or change the questions. But it clears up pretty fast.

I am making the effort to connect to my Inner Knowing, which is far more tuned than my conscious self, and I trust that I will get accurate information. This has truly led to some of the best breakthroughs and choices I have made in life.

Listening to what the body is saying has been a huge lesson for me, and it brought me into such a better life! The reason being that the body is directly hooked into Universal Intelligence, which directs each breath and every beat of the heart. The vast knowledge of this Universe is, hence, readily available by trusting the body. When you let your spirit into your body, you have everything lined up to make the right choices.

## **THE LARGER INTELLIGENCE**

Because it means that I am not putting all the authority in my mental abilities, and because I listen to my other parts, my balance is enhanced and my mind feels more relaxed. Then I go back over the situation and ask my mind what's going on. I ask my body and mind to cooperate and lead me to the right decision. Usually I get told to make some kind of a leap, and sometimes I feel great about it. Other times not, and that's where the trust part comes in. I have to trust that I will be patient enough to face the consequences of change. This means I have to face the fear that comes from that. What if people reject me, or my ideas? What if I'm wrong?

This also comes with having to face my fears of being laughed at; being seriously misunderstood; reinventing my ideas about what is important; making huge physical changes in my style; working so hard that I can hardly see straight



because I believe in what I am doing until I begin to wonder if I am crazy, and can hardly sleep at night; needing to create a whole new frame of reference so that I can get integrated with the creative flow and still have my life work; and *more!*

These are not the most fun parts of making the leap. The *most* fun part is knowing that it's better than dying of boredom, that new things will happen that I can't even imagine yet, and that there will be great people I will meet along the way. *That* is real fun.

So, be patient, dig down deep, and find that hidden treasure that is the real you. It's well worth going through whatever you have to do to find it. This might mean ending a long-standing relationship (check), changing your attitude (right), getting in way over your head (well all right, then), having to give up stuff *that you don't* want to give up (yikes!), letting yourself feel stuff you have been hiding from so you can put it to work instead of having it work you (Holy Moly!).

## **GO AHEAD AND DO IT!**

Better to do it than wish you had. Trust yourself. You *are* good. You walked through the invisible wall to find, and to face, your life. When you face the whole Big You, something truly grand happens. You live. And that real you, the big, courageous one, has a lot to offer the world, as you grow and change and give others silent permission to do so too.

## **LETTING GO OF THE OUTCOME**

Now comes the part called being and becoming detached. This means allowing for things to turn out far differently than you may at first have supposed, and being okay with that. When you do your very best and then let go of the outcome, something mysterious happens, and things grow all on their own into something that suits you and your soul just perfectly. The Universe has big ideas, so it can come up with some really fine things for you as you listen better.

Remembering that you are a soul with a body, and not the other way round, means that you release the idea of controlling the world, release it completely. This is contrary to a lot of modern thought and processes; however, it's very effective in getting you into position to be able to deal with unexpected events and changes, which are always part of the way things unfold. It frees you as an observer too, since your emotional being is not tied up with attaching itself to a certain type of display.



## **FINDING YOUR TRUE ROLE**

It doesn't mean you don't pay careful attention to detail, take control where it's needed, or accept being responsible for what you do. It means that you simply allow it to come out the way it does, giving room for the creative nature of life to express itself through you.

With any type of expansion and success comes a time when things have to be surrendered to a person or process that is out of your direct control. The next person isn't going to do it the same way that you would, since their ideas and priorities are their own and not yours. That is actually a good thing because it allows for change and growth.

## **RELEASING THE NEED FOR PERFECTION**

Letting go of the position of direct control means that you'll see some different results than you would have otherwise. This can go in many directions! Other people will take their own directions in doing the work. Mistakes will be made. Stuff will get messed up. You may be disappointed at times in results. You may have to step in and start over, since your plan didn't address everything that came up.

Here is the place where patience must be used in its most useful form, as you find ways to counter the inevitable and to flow with it. Then you see some things you didn't even notice before, and they may turn out to be just what you needed.

Or, in fact, you may be amazed at how your next-step person or team member "got it" so quickly and pulled you into a brand new process! Probably all of these things will happen. Being patient as things move to the next level will show you a lot about how your idea interacts with the world. Be observant, and don't rush into conclusions about how it's going.

## **THE LESSONS OF FEELING LOST**

On the other side of the picture is this type of feeling: "What's the point? How can all this make sense?"

I can remember being so riled up about not understanding why I was having so many difficult situations, and some of them were really a challenge to every part of me. It was a really bad time of my life, with far too much work, and far too little appreciation. My health, self-esteem, and ability to get things done were all in really bad shape. It seemed like nothing was working ... no matter what I did!

But I let myself know that it was time to learn, to listen, and to keep going, even when I really didn't "get it" at all. Whatever I had to do, I refrained from freaking



out (well, not always, but as much as possible). After all, freaking out is *very* undignified, and it hurts. And, it scares the kids. They don't know what the limits are, till you tell them, and if they see you in a no-limit state, it's scary!

One day, I was “venting” and I suddenly realized that my sons were looking at me in terror, wondering what would happen next. What an awful feeling that was for me! Remembering what that feeling was like, from my own experiences, made me feel terrible and ashamed. I stopped myself and apologized to them for scaring them by losing my temper. I said, “Let's try again.” Then, I took some deep breaths and made a real effort to explain how I felt. What a difference! They felt better, and so did I. We worked things out.

This is an example of how calming down created an opening for something to happen differently.

What happened then was that I was able to handle the next thing, and then the next. After some time, I started to understand that I was actually the problem; my own precious little self was the hang-up. And I started to talk about that, with people I cared about.

My sons were very helpful, after initially wondering what all this talk was all about. Bit by bit, one situation at a time, I started to acknowledge how I had co-created things as they were, and that I wanted something to change. I started to work on getting the people I love to accept and trust my vision of my new self, my new life.

## **HOW FAR ARE YOU WILLING TO GO WITH THIS?**

I wanted change! In fact, I wanted a whole lot of change. I met a lot of resistance from some folks, and none at all from others. Things got more interesting, though not easier, at least at first. I hit my work hard, cut out things that I didn't find productive or rewarding. I dropped people who were driving me crazy.

When it got to be overwhelming, I took time out for some “light lifting.” By that, I mean doing something that didn't apply to anything except taking care of my feelings.

A small distraction can do wonders to take the edge off. Focusing on something that *is* working will help you put the offending situation into perspective.

Nobody asks to be made patient, since it's pretty darn hard and not glamorous at all. But without it, what do we have? A mess.

*“With patience, bear the lot to thee assigned, nor think it chance, nor murmur at the load; for know that what Man calls fortune, is from God.” ~ Rowe*





# FRIENDLINESS



## REACHING OUT GENTLY

*“The only way to have a friend is to be one.” ~ Emerson*

No matter where you go, a friend is there, waiting to meet you. It may be a deep friendship or just a passing pleasantry, but each time you give or receive friendly energy, you gain an adaptable and gentle way of being that carries you through all types of situations, bringing a richer and better you to the world and to yourself.

People can feel it when you reach out with a sincere regard for them and their feelings, and they will treasure you for it. With so many phonies around, a truly friendly person stands out in any crowd. Your day becomes better when you speak a kind word to someone; and you never know when that same energy will return to you at a time when it is most needed.

Your friend is going to see things that you can't see, and will let you know how to move forward by giving you the benefit of that view. Agree or disagree, it doesn't matter; what does matter is that the extra set of eyes will give you further insights, in a kind way.

You might find yourself in a situation in which someone is doing something that you find to be so obviously foolish that you can't understand how it can be that they don't see it. In that case, speak gently about it so as to let them know your





concerns, without disrupting the flow of trust that defines a true friendship. Or there are times when not saying anything is even better, since your motives may be questioned, if your friend is not ready to change or see why that would be a good thing.

Look at that time carefully; see what the lesson is for you. All friendships come together for the purpose of lessons, and the lesson differs from one person to the other. So being discreet is a true gift of friendship. Give the situation time, and let them figure it out on their own. Allowing your friend to unfold, not giving advice, will give you the great pleasure of hearing them say to you just the thing you held back from saying to them.

Sometimes, a friendship will grow and flourish, and then kind of fade away. That's all part of the path of life. A new friend will appear at the right time.

*“Be discreet in all things, and so render it unnecessary to be mysterious about any.” ~ Washington*

## **BEING READY TO LISTEN**

Everyone likes to talk, and finding someone who will listen is such a treat! Be that person, and you will learn so much just by being there. The world will open up to you, and people will be amazed at your ability to understand them. All because you simply paid attention, you will be seen as a person of value—one who understands how to communicate.

It's the key to making a sale. That old saying that says, “Once you've made the sale, stop talking” is so true! That's the time to let the customer tell you so much. From why they said yes to what they would like happen next, people will tell you what they want if you let them.

Or if they aren't buying, they will tell you what they don't want.

If they don't, you can always ask them! And they will be grateful to you for that. It shows that you value their point of view, creating a key bit of happiness, which you can bestow easily. And you'll have some more information to use.

## **WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO OTHERS?**

You will also have the opportunity to observe that what people think is important. This varies greatly from one group or environment to another, and it is a fascinating study. It can help you learn how to make yourself more useful. This is a study pleasant for you as you become more comfortable in your role, and contributes to your success in opening up the hidden doors of a situation.



Listening is a great art. Keeping quiet while the other person opens up allows you to create a trusting relationship in a way that nothing else can do. It lets the other person know that you value their point of view. It shows that you care about what they have to say. You can then find the opening to allow them to expand on things and express what is going on more fully—once they feel safe in the situation.

The simple gifts of unqualified attention, acceptance, and listening will all bring you to greater realizations of your own strength and challenges. The person you are hearing is giving you another version of what is happening in your life, one that comes from fresh eyes and a different set of values. It's your chance to get information that you can't get any other way.

*“Happiness is the harvest of a quiet eye.” ~ O'Malley*

## JUST BEING WITH IT

*“Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other's gold.” ~ Girl Scout song*

After all of this, it's time to let things *be* the way they are. To truly understand the message, get ready to let go of what the result of a situation will be. If you are stuck on your idea of how it has to be, you will find disappointment occurring quite often, as life doesn't conform to your wishes! Your friend will be there, change, grow, stay, move on, and may return, perhaps. It's all part of the flow of life; so don't hold on too tightly to what things look like. Letting go is far more realistic and practical. How?

I came to the mountains with a group of idealistic people. We had little practical experience in a lot of areas, and were stunningly naïve about what we were facing. That went both ways. Because we didn't know what couldn't be done, we went ahead and tried; and, in some cases, we actually did things that had been deemed impossible until the proof became visible. We starved ourselves in order to buy supplies, dressed in rags, worked until we were exhausted, and got up and did it again. People cracked, people freaked out. People coped, and we laughed when we could.

After a while, the idealisms began to fade, and the stark realities of our situation couldn't be bargained away any longer. Then, people turned on one another, and in some cases exacted terrible revenge for the loss of their dreams. Things fell apart.

I had possibly been the most idealistic of the bunch. For me, letting go of my great dream of everyone having a place and finding happiness here was really hard. I truly wanted things to work out, and they clearly were not. So I had to let go of my original idea of how things “ought to be,” and instead look at how to move on in a way that would allow me to keep at least part of my dreams alive.



At that point, I began to see that the dream I had been nurturing was both too big and too small. Life has its message, and it won't be gainsaid. So I learned to listen to the bigger voice of life, and by that means I found the path to real happiness. Accepting my place in the flow of life has freed me from disappointment and allowed me to know joy.

## **WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU DOING?**

It has been my experience that I am almost never doing what I think I am doing. I am only going after an idea that will show its true character as I keep going. And the true character of the idea is always, *always* better and bigger than what I thought. There's a hidden gift in every situation. I don't see it because I am busy "doing."

So let go and let God. It's so much better than making yourself crazy trying to second-guess life's great pattern.

## **WE'RE JUST PASSING THROUGH**

About your friendships, letting people be the way they are and forgiving them for not being perfect is absolutely essential. It's too easy to idealize those we love, and this makes it hard for them to grow and learn. It creates disappointment, as people are not who we want them to be, but who they truly are. People are filled with contradictions and perceived faults. It's natural, and good, that we are so. It keeps life interesting.

It's essential to be honest with those you love about their faults, and your disagreements, so that new understanding can grow. Talking things to a place of acceptance is a real foundation for love. There will always be something "not quite perfect." That's because we are people. There will be things you "can't stand" that aren't going to change. The only thing that will change is your attitude! Love the things you can't stand about those you love, and see how that changes your idea of what's best in your relationships.

Now, not everyone will understand who you are. But who cares if other people don't get it? The people who will be your companions in growing freedom and abundance will get it, you can be sure of that. And you will not understand the value of a true friend unless you let that person come and go, just the way he or she is, even if that means that person changes in ways that take you on separate journeys. When you allow for that, without being in need of holding on, you honor your friend and let things flow onto the place where your new friend will appear. You give your friend the gift of freedom to grow and change, in the same freedom you want.



*“The world is a scene of change; to be constant in nature would be  
inconstancy.” ~ Cowley*

## **YOUR REASON AND MY REASON ARE RELATED, NOT THE SAME**

Big perfect mistakes happen all the time, and they are how we learn. As Tryon Edwards said, “The error of the past is the wisdom and success of the future.” Imagine how strange it would be if you always knew what was best and acted on that, never flubbing or overdoing it, or failing. How would you learn? Who would understand what you were talking about?

There’s another idea in play here. My art teacher used to tell us that there are no mistakes in art, and if something doesn’t turn out the way you want it to, make it look like it’s supposed to be that way. Similarly, your life is your work of art. So you can allow yourself to get stuck, just for the knowledge that getting unstuck is going to be better. You can get into your mistakes and laugh at yourself for thinking you were going to get it all right.

*You* are the friend you are going to have all your life, whoever else may come and go. Be nice to that friend. Listen to your friend. He or she has more than one precious gift for you.





# CREATIVITY



## THE RAW MATERIAL

*“The heart has eyes that the brain knows nothing of.” ~ C.H.  
Parkhurst*

**C**reativity can begin anywhere, at any time, using whatever happens to be on hand. It starts with observation. What is it that is most obvious about where you are and what you see? How does it relate to you? And, how do you relate to it?

Your surroundings are an indicator of the energy level you are living. If you are in fairly pleasant ones, you have more room to be observant. You can ask yourself, “What’s the best thing about where I am, and how can I expand on that to gain more of what makes life good for me? Who would I need to be in order to create the life I want? And what is there available, right here and now, to help me make that happen?”

You are in a place of many possibilities. Your gift is that of fluidity and of choice. Every problem you meet contains the seed of an opportunity. So what are the best opportunities you have right now? Who are the most meaningful people to you? Make some lists of these people, and of ideas that you would like to see come true in your life. Put them into categories, in groups of five.



You can do this on a notepad, your computer, or anything that you are comfortable listing things on. Another way to do this is by writing things down on sticky notes or index cards and shuffling them around or arranging them on a large board. Then group the notes into logical sequences so that you see patterns that appear and so that you can create a plan.

Then add notes on each one until you begin to see how they relate to one another in new ways. Add more in each category as your ideas progress. Reduce or remove those that don't really have much energy available. Create action steps for the ones that hold the most energy.

## **WHAT IF IT'S NOT PRETTY?**

If you are instead in a situation that is unpleasant, uncomfortable, or even dangerous, your observation process is going to reflect just that and will influence the first things you notice as you begin to take stock of what your raw materials are. You may not have time to get very deep into this process. Or ... you may be so buried alive in a situation that you don't even notice anything at all except that you don't like the way it is!

In that case, your first gift is that of cleverness. You already have the ability of coping ingrained in you, and of dealing with things that don't really work for you. You can make them work even when they don't! Change your idea of what works and doesn't work. If you have an opportunity within a situation, if you have choices to make, even if they are unpleasant choices, things are "working," though not as well as they could be. Coping is a form of making things work when they don't, by creating mental bargains with the situation.

This could involve keeping your mouth shut and allowing things to go on that you know are not serving you, while you figure out what to do. Keeping up a front while you gain time to regroup is not wrong; it's essential! Don't give a dysfunctional situation any more energy than absolutely necessary to keep from adverse consequences. Get into changing what you don't want into what you do want, no matter what it takes. Watch for the time to make a move.

Keep that energy to use in developing a solution. Do not complain or argue with the problem. Ignore the whole idea of having a problem, and look through what is going on for the opportunity to use it to your own advantage. It's an energy pattern, with a message. That's all it is.

I've made things work when they didn't by remembering that everything changes, by keeping my head down, and making my priorities, the ones within my own being, more important than the ones the situation seemed to demand.

For example, at a certain point I was doing far more than my share of the work at the ranch. Projects were begun, and then left for me to complete, giving me no



time for my own ideas to develop. Too many responsibilities for other people's feelings and ideas just kind of gravitated to me, as a consequence of my wanting to please to an excessive degree. I was in the habit of giving too much.

It was bewildering and annoying. I didn't understand why it kept happening. But I had a sense of commitment and responsibility. I kept working and doing what would serve me best in the long run, refusing to identify with a sense of lack. Sometimes, I just didn't do the things people expected me to do; after all they weren't *my* projects! Because of this, my self-esteem was enhanced instead of reduced. I learned how to handle a lot more than I thought I could. Eventually, this new skill set gave me the advantage I needed to step into a better role.

## **GRAB THE HANDLE!**

That opportunity is always there, if you look hard enough. The bad energy itself has an opening in it, a weakness, which you can find by observing it without becoming emotionally entangled. That's the doorway to a better situation. When you find that opening, it's yours. Go! Grab what you have learned, and know that all the bad stuff was only a teacher for your higher good.

You may call it survival, but this is really a valuable skill that life has brought out in you. Give yourself credit for making it this far, and know that by taking control of your inner resources, you can, and will figure, out what to do to free yourself.

*“The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell,  
and a hell of heaven.” ~ Milton*

## **A GIFT YOU DIDN'T EXPECT**

Ask yourself, “What is my hidden gift in this?” Is it about knowing that you can do better? Is it a feeling that you don't deserve to be treated badly?

That's your need for self-esteem talking. It's saying, “Why am I putting up with this?” A lot of disturbing questions come up as you start to break free of your limiting self-talk. Each of those questions has a place in letting you know that better things *are* out there. That discontent, that bad feeling at first, is the beginning of correct knowledge.

That's your true self, wanting to wake up and be given the honor and opportunity it wants. Those feelings of not feeling you are being given what you deserve are gifts of hidden treasure. Take the opportunity to learn from your own pain, and realize what you really want. Then you can begin to figure out how to get it.

Opening the door to the treasure-house means taking your time in learning what is the best place to begin. You can start by writing down groups of things that you



want and don't want, and ideas about how you can do better by using what you already have. You can practice saying out loud to yourself, "I deserve to have a good life with dignity, freedom, and comfort."

Being in a bad spot may very well make you afraid to ask for help. But help is what you actually need! Find a way to *ask for help* in your heart before you do it out loud.

Ask yourself who can help you best. Ask your own spirit to help you! Ask the Higher Power. Ask your discomfort to show you how to move on. Ask your pain to help you learn what will make things better. Ask your hidden enemy to give you the clue that will help you overcome a situation. Ask yourself how the very thing that you don't like about yourself could be the tool you need the most.

Think of the opposite of what your idea of what's going on would be like. For example, what if the thing you thought was so bad was exactly the one that put you in position to get some huge benefit? Or what if the thing you thought was so great was actually a trap for you, locking you into a role or situation that doesn't serve your highest good?

And then, accept that what you can see from where you are is only part of the picture.

## FIND YOUR ALLIES

Think of someone you know who could give you a hand with the tough situations. A person, or an organization you know of, may have just what you need to guide you on.

Is there some reason they wouldn't want to help you? Or maybe there's some reason you don't want to ask for help, like feeling embarrassed that you're in a weak spot. Asking for help is a good thing, a sign of strength. It's okay! It's essential, to open the door to a better reality.

When you open up and accept help, it will come to you in new ways that will challenge you to be brave. Talking to someone about things will also give you new insight about your situation, and a chance to learn something that can be useful to you, either now or some time later. The other person sees parts of you that you can't see, and very often will tell you the very reason things are the way they are, and even the method of finding the change that you seek.

Remember that everybody had to start somewhere. You never know what happened in that person's life before you were aware of how things are for them now. They could have been in the same place you are right now. If so, they are going to understand you a lot better than you may think. And chances are they will





be ready and willing to pass along the blessing of release from the place that held them earlier, in a place so like the one you see now.

*“Those who make us happy are always thankful to us for being so; their gratitude is the reward of their benefits.” ~ Mme. Schwetchine*

## THINNING THE HERD

How can you use less of your personal energy on things that don't reward you? How can you make yourself more available and more useful to those who can help you, and who are willing to do so? How can you be more available to yourself and spend less of your time, or mental energy, serving those who don't appreciate you?

How can you make the transition to the “New You” (that is, the Real You) go smoothly wherever possible? What kind of backup are you going to need in order to be able to break out? Write these things down in groups of five so that you concentrate your ideas.

Which one is closest to what you can do right now? Take that step today—and again tomorrow, take the next step. Which step is going to take time to put together? Create a timeline for yourself, and take action every day to bring your freedom closer. Carry little index cards with you so when you have an idea, you can quickly write it down to add to your new system.

*“What we hope ever to do with ease, we must first learn to do with diligence.” ~ Samuel Johnson*

## CREATING YOUR IDEA OF LIFE

What do you think life is about? Do you have a calling, or a feeling of higher purpose?

How do you visualize yourself in the process of life? Are you an observer, riding along and watching what goes on, wondering how you can change things that you don't like, or creating more of what you do like? Are you riding in the boat, steering it, or watching it go by? What do you do when the boat encounters an obstacle? Are you a co-creator, stepping into life with firm conviction and a sense of purpose?

Each of us goes through these roles many times in the course of life. It may be that on one day you have one identity, and in another you feel completely different about your processes. That's creativity! It's messy and unpredictable at times, and it can be very inconvenient, indeed. Yet it's the very essence of life. Open up



the flow, and see what happens. It's going to surprise you how quickly life will respond by bringing things to you that you never imagined could happen.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

*“Sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny.” ~ G.D.Boardman*

Now, to really get a handle on this flow, you will need to take charge on some level. Commit yourself to seeing situations in various ways, turning things around in your mind until you see the place of action, or that of release. See familiar things in new ways.

You have things that you need to do every day in order to create the life that you have. Start with small loads and work up. Little by little, those things you do become habit. Just get started, one moment and one step at a time. Many of those will become habit, and it is scientifically proven that habit is stronger than will power.

It takes will power to create those habits, yet once they are in place, you are kind of on autopilot. So, it is a good idea to take stock of your habits on a regular basis and make decisions about which ones serve you the best. For example, if you are a morning person, then it might be a good idea to do all the most important or demanding mental work as soon as you can get your brain in gear. Or, does the evening or the afternoon suit your nature better for the things that require most of you? In this case, set up your day to be in harmony with your own natural flow.

## BUILDING AN ENERGY BODY

My own regimen takes some time every day, but by the time I am tuned up, my energy is really strong and centered. I'm not running after whatever shows up! (By the way, I like to do a lot of the most demanding things in the morning, then ease up a bit.)

It goes like this: wake up as early as possible, (my Chihuahua helps a lot with this one), eat breakfast, take a walk for twenty minutes while saying some of my favorite spiritual passages either aloud or mentally. Then I go to my mental affirmations. By then I am back at the house. Check the news and emails. Online brain-training games give me further elasticity and hone my concentration.

I drink a glass of juice with vitamin and supplement powder in it to kick-start to the working level. Ready! By then, I am unified in my mind and able to take action, having examined my whole world and overcome my “little things that come up.” And they DO come up! Because I have a system, my brain is trained to



override anxiety, confusion, or unhappy mental patterns. I take a stance, and get real about my feelings, so that I can think properly.

## GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE AS MYSELF

Because I have so many types of things going on, it's essential to put "one Betty" into position. Using this habit system has increased my ability to be focused and creative many times over from when I woke up more or less at the mercy of whichever of my personalities decided to show up first. Yes, multiple personalities are real, and it's important to get them all working together.

You have several stories going on at once, at any given time. Which one serves you and your life the best? Get behind that one, and polish it up so that it shines as a light on your path. The other stories will obey the best story and will help it to be the ruling principle of your life.

The story you tell yourself about your life *becomes* your life.

*"Union does everything when it is perfect. It satisfies desires, simplifies needs, foresees the wishes, and becomes a constant fortune." ~ Senancour*

## YOUR HABITS, YOUR PATH, YOUR LIFE

So, what habits do you have that are comforting to you? Are they making you stronger? Are you in the habit of waking up harshly and jumping into things before you really feel motivated? This gives a feeling that life is "happening to you," which leads to feeling disempowered.

Is this something your environment forces you to do, or is there something you can do about it? Can you change the way you wake up in some way that brings you more energy? Do you put yourself first, in order to be strong enough to serve lovingly? Or do you just jump to the service position without really taking care of yourself? Do you recognize yourself as being worthy of the love and attention that you give to others? By giving yourself the recognition and nourishment that you deserve, you will be able to do more, to give more, to be more.

What habits can you build that will help you let go of the ones that don't serve you? It's been said that humans don't give things up. We replace them. The habits described above, that I use, are all replacement strategies for things that I previously did that were draining my energy.

Pick one habit that is not serving your needs as they are now, and replace it with a new one that does serve you. Give it a few weeks to take root, and notice the



result. Find a new goal to point a new habit toward, and then create the next new good habit.

## TAKE ACTION AND COOPERATE WITH LIFE

Instead of waiting for something to happen, you can co-create experience through movement. Instead of resisting life, you can be welcoming to whatever comes to you as a resource for conscious development.

Instead of giving away my power, I am now able to reinforce my faith early in the day so that I know my day has value, and I use it as well as I am able to do. Time expands to fit in what I need to do! This is the gift of Spirit, showing me what is needed and how to go about arranging my being to be in harmony with that need. You have this gift too.

## THE LITTLE VOICE IN YOUR EAR

Where is Spirit whispering to you that you have more power than you think? How are you keeping in tune with your own energy level so that you can communicate with anyone, anywhere, in an effective way instead of freezing up or protecting yourself from what you can learn?

What type of motivation drives you? How can you tune your life, little by little, day by day, to resonate with what's important to you? What one small action can you take, right now, of saying "yes!" to yourself?

When you take one step at a time, each day will show many times that you have a choice about how to relate to the moment. Seeing the choices for each moment gives you the flexibility you need to respond to life in a realistic and creative way.

## THE SENSITIVE STUFF

*"If thou hast well begun, go on. It is the end that crowns, not the fight." ~ Herrick*

Now, every creative drive has another, and not so fun, part to it. It can be extremely lonely to be the driving force in a situation, or the only person in the room who is interested in a positive conversation, for example. What to do when that feeling of isolation is strong?

Remember that it's only a moment. There are over seven billion people on this planet. So, if one person, or one group of people, doesn't feel good to be with,



doesn't feel friendly, or understanding, don't take it too seriously. So what? What does it matter, in the big picture?

Creativity can involve destruction too. Sometimes, something has to be destroyed so that something new can take its place. This may feel very scary or like something you don't think you can do. If that's the case, find someone to talk to about the situation, and get some feedback about your ideas. Changing things from "the way they have always been" can be a risky feeling, and you need to understand what the benefits can be for you and what the risks truly are, and be ready to take the best course of action.

## **WHAT'S YOUR REASON TO DO IT?**

As long as you are doing things based on motives that consider the good of others, you are in good territory. Sometimes people you love may feel threatened when you make changes. Just keep being your own best self, and let them know you consider their feelings too. Set clear boundaries for yourself, and take action on keeping your personal energy intact and on track. Don't quit just because things get hard to handle. It's true that when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

***"Use the light. Come home to your true nature. Don't cause yourself injury: this is known as seizing the truth." ~ Lao Tzu***





# FORTITUDE



## HOLDING YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

*“In itself an essential virtue, it the guard to every other virtue.” ~*

*Locke*

**F**ortitude is that quality of holding firm regardless of circumstances. It is internal strength that does not allow itself to be swayed by emotion, or influenced by conditions.

Fortitude does not evaluate people or circumstances. It accepts life on its own terms, and learns how to move in quiet and with mercy. It makes a person flexible enough to adapt to whatever comes.

This begins with acceptance and grows into union with the flow of events. Take first things first. Seeing where you are with accuracy and being willing to face the consequences of this give you a strength that cannot be conquered by anything. Dropping down below the emotions into the level of survival thinking, and then re-emerging to normal life, gives a perspective that has many advantages.

Ah, fortitude. The most essential ingredient in the group of qualities for those who would prevail, fortitude is more encompassing than bravery. It is simple endurance made great by its enduring qualities, its simplicity, and its inevitable victory in the end.



Fortitude outlasts all things. It is the matter of attending to one's duty, whatever the cost to one's own comfort, safety, or even life. It is to give freely the gifts of Spirit to those in need, and keeping to the standards that you know are right. Fortitude asks nothing of the Universe, and yet gives everything.

Everybody knows the difference between right and wrong, kindness and cruelty. Fortitude watches carefully to see how we use that knowing.

## THE GUARD OF ETERNITY

Fortitude is the guard at the doorway of eternity. It grows through acceptance. People sometimes mistake fortitude for courage. In fact, those two are related. However, courage is the outcome, not the process. Fortitude is simply bearing with life in the knowledge of one's own frailty and the temporary nature of events. It is formed through facing the truth for what it is. There is nothing better than the truth, no matter how difficult it may be to face. It has the very great advantage of always being there, always showing up, and never needing to be defended or invented. Truth may make you very uncomfortable or even sad, but it will not ever lie to you.

Fortitude acquaints you with truth, as it keeps you from jumping to conclusions or interpretations. The holding steady allows you to see illusions for what they are. With fortitude, there is no room for falsehood. Fortitude and truth uphold one another as two pillars of the doorway to higher knowing.

Truth gives you a place to begin. It allows you to be in the flow of things, and to receive and give accurate information. This accuracy will help you prevent mistakes and learn from those you will inevitably make. Then they are not just mistakes, but steps to your reality. They are ways to grow into who you can truly be. This takes back the energy that is lost through regret or guilt, and sets you and others free.

You can tell something is good when it lasts. That's what truth does, and that's what fortitude is here to let you know.

*"All the sorrows are as shadows; they pass and are done, but there is that which remains." ~ Tarot*

## TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE

It is by taking responsibility for the situation that fortitude is able to emerge and grow. Any time you hand off that responsibility to another, you are losing your ability to change what life brings you. You are responsible for taking charge of what your life means, being where you are at this moment. The person who is



right in front of you is your teacher, brought to you by divine appointment to bring you into a more conscious state of being.

When you acknowledge that with full respect for yourself, you will be able to take the situation into a more fluid level of reality in which you begin to see the growth opportunity that is being presented.

## ACKNOWLEDGING YOURSELF

*“Help thyself, and God will help thee.” ~ Herbert*

Through acknowledging this understanding that your Higher Self has called you to become more conscious, you begin to obtain control of your responses. A small gap also appears in the moment, in which you can place things in your frame of reference in a conscious way—one that is new, not controlled by conditioned responses. It is a realm of action more free of your preconceived notions, which offers you many more choices. This isn’t a matter of ignoring your feelings or emotions, however. It’s simply taking a more liberated approach to what they mean, instead of allowing yourself to play small. You are being asked to greet all events equally, so that you can take with you the seed of soul knowledge and use it to benefit yourself and others.

We aren’t machines; we have each other. And when we know that, and notice it, and pass along to others that we have noticed them, they feel seen and heard, and become ready to reciprocate to the best of their ability. Our lives are related in deep ways. Seeing things in this way, you begin to notice that all problems can be broken up into parts, and that each part contains the seed of an awakening, an opportunity to change things.

What follows is whether there could be a way to change a small part of the situation so that it is more harmonious, or to use a different method of dealing with it. The truth is, every moment has its contradictions. Unlocking the way in which the contradiction is created will lead to finding a way to address things more efficiently. Finding a better tool can change a hard thing to an easy one.

*“He who is firm and resolute, in will, molds the world to himself.” ~  
Goethe*

## EACH PART OF THE WHOLE IS UNIQUE

What this means is that each part of a situation has another side hidden from your usual way of looking at life. What’s the flipside of the deal? In a given situation, try asking yourself, “What would this be like if it was easy?” See what comes up about the way you fit, or do not fit, in the flow of energy as it exists. Can you change your role in some way? Will taking on more responsibility make you a





better fit for the situation, or is there a different type of interface that needs to be improved? What about taking less responsibility for the details of a situation? Is there other help needed? Check the level of commitment that your role requires, and notice how you feel about that.

How about asking the other person or the people involved about what they think? This can change the entire nature of the human interaction that is represented by the situation. Sometimes a person is being stubborn or even mean just because they don't feel valued. They may be clinging to something that they don't even believe in order to feel secure. Listening to what they have to say, asking them actively what they think, gives a place in the interaction for that to change. A child who has been acting up will calm down when asked about what is happening that is creating unhappiness in his or her world. Then you can respond to the concern. This works for adults as well.

When people are heard and feel valued, they open up and let you know what they feel is important.

## **BEING READY TO CHANGE YOUR POINT OF VIEW**

Readiness to change is a sure sign of intelligence, and being ready to change your frame of reference gives you more ways to change! So it's an outward spiral of opportunity within events as they are presented in the moment. Every time you choose the larger version of the picture, more possibilities open up.

*"I could change my mind into something new  
And transform my life if I wanted to.  
I can change my mind, cause I still have one  
And it feels so good to enjoy that fun." ~ Betty Withrow*

## **THE HELPER OF THE SOUL**

"Oh, please send me the help that I need." How often that little asking, that small prayer, has opened my heart and allowed help to come. It changes desperation to anticipation, as I wait for the help to come—and faith grows, little by little.

I ask for help every time that I remember to do it. And it seems to work, since so often the exact person that I need will show up in ways I never could have imagined, in ways that are so rich in meaning.

For example, I needed someone to understand my dream of growing food when we first started here. People came along who knew what to do, and not only taught me ways to get food growing fast, little tricks of conditioning soil or nurturing plants, pitching in with chores at times, but they gave me vegetable starts. This was knowledge from their own families' pioneer experience, and (oh, precious)



even the overflow from their own abundant harvests. This wasn't charity, but genuine sharing, and I felt recognized and valued for my desires to learn from the old ways.

And again... I had almost no material at all to work with in the beginning of creating my hand-made fashion business, which I grew from scratch, and which has brought me so much happiness. I asked for help, in my heart and spirit. I can't begin to tell you how many times people have given me huge amounts of materials to work with, ideas for designs, people to connect with. This has happened so much that I now always have to give away piles of things myself, so that other artists can have what they have been praying to have. It feels so good to give back to the universal flow of energy, knowing things will go just where they are meant to go.

When I need a connection or new information in business, or in my personal life, I ask for help in my heart and ask those around me for ideas and help, and this makes life rich in many ways, as I acknowledge my connection to the beautiful web of connectedness that makes life happen. People love to help others, and are grateful to show their own worth.

## HOW FAITH APPEARS

*"God be praised, who, to believing souls, gives light in darkness,  
comfort in despair." ~ Shakespeare*

Speaking of faith, consider this: faith isn't given to us; we grow it, and step forward on it, advancing to the Light. And the Light moves toward us.

Modern thought is big on the idea that we are all individuals, and we are supposed to be "able to handle whatever comes up." Well, we can, *and* we need help. So go ahead and let that little prayer be part of everything you do, asking for help from whatever term you use to address the Big Cosmic Force. We all know it's there, and each person sees and feels it differently.

## THE BRIDGE OF SPIRIT BETWEEN ONE AND ANOTHER

*"Each person you meet is a temple with magical doors."  
~Betty Withrow*

Those doors are the interactions of each moment. All things are open to interpretation, and it is well said that when you begin to blame someone else for what is making you unhappy, you become a loser. When you take the attitude of forgiveness and compassion, you become a winner by taking control of your own spiritual communication with the Universe.



When you let it, life will give you a continual stream of information about the ways of change that will be of best use for you. Whenever things work well, ask yourself why that happened, and how you can take that knowledge to the next level. When they don't come through in the way you had hoped, look at the reasons why that is, carefully—and use them as a springboard to invent new ideas that are more accurately lined up with the forces surrounding you.

## COMPASSION MAKES IT HAPPEN

*“The most amiable people are those who least wound the self-love of others.” ~ Bruyer*

Give yourself a break and the benefit of the doubt. You can do more than you think. You are an expression of Infinite Intelligence, learning and growing into a new conscious being. Take small steps, and remember to give yourself credit for making the choice to use your gifts.

So, changing your point of view really means changing your idea of who you are, based on more accurate and nourishing information. Making one small step at a time, you can get to where you want to go by being open and receptive to what life is telling you. The less you hold onto who you *think* you are, the more you can learn about who you *can* become.

And a little extra compassion in a situation may take you a long, long way. Think of how the way you communicate affects others. How does the other person feel? That other person has a sense of self, and when you help with that, you help yourself in mysterious ways. It's an expression of kindness planted in the mystery of life, so that new flowers of manifestation can be formed. And you can walk in that garden of freedom and delight. Fortitude and compassion go together. By this means, we help each other through life.

## SETTING PRIORITIES

*“A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers.” ~ Shakespeare*

All this talk about nourishing yourself is also aligned with putting others and their benefit out in front. There's a real benefit in looking at the higher good of the many as being foremost in life.

It doesn't mean that you don't take care of yourself first. Without a self, you have no tools for service. A good strong healthy “you” will have the energy and the love in his or her heart to take steps that take real courage, such as letting go of your ideal image of what you have, what you want, or what you think you should want in life, and getting into your own higher vision. That's really great



*Betty Withrow*

and exhilarating stuff. It's also really scary as soon as you see your big dreams come around to tell you, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" Get ready for that to happen as you take over our own life.

So, get enough sleep. Eat good food. Take that walk. Do that small kindness for yourself. And remember to do those every day. You can walk across the Bridge of Spirit with a full heart and open hand, knowing you will meet Life and her gifts as your best self.

*"Who has health, has hope; and who has hope, has everything." ~  
Arabian proverb*





# PERSEVERENCE



## QUIET ENDURANCE

*“Perseverance is more prevailing than violence; and many things which cannot be overcome when they are together, yield themselves up when taken little by little.” ~ Plutarch*

Just about any kind of success depends on sticking with it. In fact, that’s the single biggest factor in learning to prevail. For it is a skill to see that by being with yourself honestly and truly, and sticking with your knowledge of how deep and true you really are, you will win the day in the end. Really, all you have to do is know that what you are saying and what you are doing is real. Dig down into that reality, and take the gift of perseverance for your own.

And how is gaining the victory done? Just one little bit at a time.

You can start by having a really great dream and all the inspiration that goes with that. You start out, and it all feels right. Then, you hit some kind of a snag, or you begin to think maybe it wasn’t such a good idea, or someone you know and respect says something negative to you regarding that dream—or that person even just makes a careless remark that gets all the doubt going. You feel like you are on the wrong track. Might as well just scrap all that grandeur and get back to grinding along.



That feeling of being in over your head is a good sign. It's at that point that you are beginning to feel true motion beginning, as well as the resistance that goes with it. This may sound strange, but fear is a sign that you are moving in the right direction. Lack of motivation is the flipside of enthusiasm. Face it: making changes is hard work! It's going to take some nurturing to convince yourself that changing is worth it.

It's time to look at things in a new way. Do you need help in finding out the tools you need to advance? Do you need support in getting your mental and emotional energy aligned with your new dreams? Do you need to buckle down and do something that you don't want to do, but that is going to be of benefit in the long run?

Have a true and honest look at what is affecting you. Consider what your options truly are. Step back and look at your situation as though it were happening to someone else. How would it look? If this were your best friend having the experience you are having, what would you say? What would your best friend do to get going? What would the person who most embodies your goals say to you about the experience you are having?

Find someone you can talk to, or someone to listen to, about the problem you are having in keeping on track. Spill the beans, first to yourself. And then, decide what one little step you will take to accomplish your goal. And do it.

Make an outline of what it is that you want, with baby steps that you can accomplish simply, and that add up to a bigger result. Keep going, hitting the list as often as possible, making check marks, adding to it, keeping your dream alive. Take action every chance you get. Your dream will begin to show itself to you and come toward you. Little hints of your new life will show themselves as you take action consistently. They are signposts on your journey to a more conscious and rewarding state of being.

Don't be afraid of obstacles. They are there to be overcome, and when you take firm and committed action, help will come to you.

## **STAYING ON THE PATH**

Look, you are going to be persevering, whether or not you know it, anyway. Even simple survival requires that.

Here's where I quote Lauren Bacall, who said, "Anyone can survive. I prefer to prevail." I found this in a magazine article about her, with her gritty and humorous take on life, which I so admire. That statement came along at the right time for me, as I was in a situation where a lot of conflicted and judgmental behavior was going on, and the people who surrounded me talked all the time about "surviving." At that time, they all seemed to be in a state of lack, complaint, moping, despair,



or the like. It was a bleak mindset, and everything was presented as being gray, boring, stupid, no fun, etc. I was thinking, “That type of dialogue about life is no fun. Struggle to survive? Bah. I want to win.” It was an important decision.

Looking back, I can see that it was a key insight for me to hear about a victorious mindset at exactly that time. It shifted my level of perception of my situation and woke up a part of me that had been hiding.

I cut out the magazine article with Lauren’s picture in it and put it in my journal. There, I could look at her and think about what she said. Those words helped me through many a dumb remark and many a stupid situation.

You could do something similar. If you don’t like where you are, think of a place nearby that you can visit as often as possible to build your dream and keep it alive. If you can’t go anywhere, make pictures in your mind, or cut them out of magazines, and paste them in a book. Save quotes that you like, and read them out loud to yourself. Talk gently to yourself in the mirror. Doodle, write poems, write love letters to yourself!

## **DRIVING A GOOD BARGAIN**

Which is a better deal: persevering in “playing it safe,” or in “going for the big ride”? If you persevere in going where you really want to be—where you are what I call the Big You—you will get to a much better place.

There will be times when the best course of action is to acknowledge defeat. Something is just not going to work, and that’s that. Seeing it for what it is simply means being realistic.

It’s a great opportunity to use everything you learned to get to something that *does* work.

However, giving up is not the same as acknowledging defeat. Giving up is just that... throwing in the towel and not doing anything with all the energy that was put forth. It’s sitting down on your hands and saying, “I can’t handle it.”

There will be times when it becomes quite clear that the way you were going was not the way that will take you where you would like to be—in fact, quite possibly very far away from it. That’s the time to grab the information and run with it! You can look at every single thing that wasn’t working, and turn it into a way to get things to work for you.

How did you get to where you are now? Even if you don’t like where you are, looking at the factors that got you there will be essential in understanding what you will need to be persevering about so that you would change the situation. You can take what you don’t want and break it into small bits that can be handled one by one, as I’ve mentioned before.



If you think you don't have enough, possibly that's true. It's also possible that you can look at what you *do* have as a way to get things going. What raw materials do you have? Do you have dreams? Does your soul long for more or better experiences? Are there things you can learn from your friends? Does your family have important resources and wisdom to share? How about resources your town may have, or organizations or groups that you can join? If there isn't one that you find appealing, you can start one. You may be surprised to find that others have the same needs and desires. You don't have to do this all by yourself!

These raw materials can help you move into your action steps to create the life you want. Your own mind and heart are there ready to help you to begin with.

## DESPERATION LEADS TO INCREASE

At a certain point in my life, I had literally no money at all, and Christmas was coming, with my two little boys waiting, wondering what was going to happen. Actually, I had about forty cents. So I bought a roll of contact paper and cut up little pieces of tissue from my hoard (which I was building in hopes of being able to make art some day) into confetti, laminating them into the clear plastic, and then cutting them out for bookmarks. I made small holes in them and put the last little bits of colored string I had on them to make them look nice. Then I went to the local kid's bookstore and sold them for a dollar each.

Hey, before long they were selling, and I had enough money for Christmas. It wasn't fancy, but there were presents for the kids, and some nice food. So there's an example of how taking what I did have, very basic raw materials, and using those with imagination and nerve to get me to the next place and to create happiness for myself and others.

This was a great lesson for me in rising above the "don't have it" idea, although it was years before I was able to apply this lesson more fully and actually take care of myself.

It did allow me to feel that I had some hope of being able to get on my feet some day, and I kept on making small things, gradually getting new items for sale. Christmas ornaments, dolls, all kinds of tiny things that cost very little to make, became my way of getting some dignity into my life. I loved it when people received my creations well and paid me for them. I started realizing I wasn't beaten; in fact, I really was the person I believed myself to be inside. I continued to expand, making hats, fashion items, anything that I could sell, out of whatever came along. It was by working with what I had that I became able to rise to a better life, and better opportunities came.

*"Prosperity is a way of living and thinking, and not just money or things. Poverty is a way of living and thinking,*





*and not just a lack of money or things.” ~ Butterworth*

## SEEING THE GLASS HALF FULL

It was by looking at what I could do rather than what I couldn't that I managed to keep my dreams alive. Poverty-stricken, in bad health, with several children to raise, and in a relationship with a man who was often absent, I did whatever I could to keep my little light alive inside. I wrote on small pieces of paper and turned my feelings into poems. I made things out of string and yarn and herbs from the garden. I sewed with whatever cloth came my way. People gave me piles of cloth or stashes of yarn, knowing that I made things. I grew as much food as I could.

Now, I am a grandmother and have been through more stuff than is going to be put into this book. I have time to take care of myself; and I am grateful for everything I have now and have lived through, whether or not I enjoyed it. Not one single bit of it is going to get wasted if I can help it!

So, in terms of principle, keeping a close watch on what is available to you will pay off, as you overcome the ideas of limit or those feelings that something can't be done. One little lemon can make a whole lot of lemonade!

*“By sowing frugality, we reap liberty, a golden harvest.” ~ Agesilaus*

## GAINING THE MOMENTUM

It's about self-love carried forward into the world, and grief or desperation about a situation that is presented being silently transformed into beauty. People respond to that touch of love.

It's a silent gift to the world. I can't tell you how grateful I am to the many people who acknowledged me silently with their eyes, as it was so obvious how I was suffering, in lack of so much. And this gave me encouragement to believe in myself. They were being helped too, I now realize, by seeing me keep on going, in a state of hope. It gave them permission to hold hope in whatever it was they were facing.

My latest trick is to go around telling myself out loud how much I love myself, throughout the day, for each and every small action, and for anything that comes up. I sing little songs to myself. The “Love you, Betty” song is a fun little jingle of self-love; and sometimes I crack up hearing myself singing it. It's funny too how my sense of identity expands as I hear the voice of love coming into my ears. And I find new things to love about me all the time, even the ones that at first glance I could say I don't love at all.



## REINFORCEMENTS ARE ON THE WAY

I learn to love the parts of me that are not fun, those that make me upset or that other people may not like. And I learn to say out loud to myself the things that *are* really fun to acknowledge and thank myself for saying so. It's a self-feeding loop!

This is really fun! As I am doing it, I notice that my field of perception shifts. The person telling Betty how much she loves her is heard through my ears, and it's as if my larger self, the Hero of my Spirit, is telling my little self these things! And by hearing them out loud, being told that I am loved, I gain the knowledge that these things are actually true. It's a nice refreshing drink of self-love... and it's free! There you are, reinforcing your glory! Drink up! Guzzle it down. Try this. It's a blast!

Sounds crazy? Maybe it's not. Truly, it's the people who don't talk to themselves whom you have to watch out for. How fun it is to hear myself giving the good girl credit, thanking her, and promising her the honor she deserves! Try it out.

See for yourself how you have a lot more to love in you than you may have thought. It shifts the energy field in a very perceptible way. You are unable to have negative self-talk going on while you are doing it. Since you are talking out loud, your whole brain is engaged in the conversation, talking with yourself. And you have a really good listener too: your self, an audience who will be there for you no matter what.

So keep on with recognizing yourself, who you know yourself to be, not who others may tell you that you are. How would they know? Okay, so you told them who you think you are, but is that the real you, or someone who you think you are supposed to be?

## A CHANGE OF TEMPO

What can you do to enhance the experience you are having right now—something simple like opening a window, changing the lighting, or turning off the excessive stimulation that so many people take for granted? Excessive stimulation, too much information, is not helpful. All that background noise is robbing your serenity. It is eating up your bandwidth!

Now, look at something beautiful, and take a moment to acknowledge your world. Give yourself a short break, even if it's only a ten-second one, to notice something that you have been overlooking. Keep an open mind, and allow yourself to see the beauty in your surroundings. Clear the channel, and find all the room you have created for a higher and better flow. Turn off the machine, breathe deeper, talk to someone you love, or just sit quietly. Any of those things can bring a lot of relief



to your mind and your feelings in a short time, giving you the energy to continue. Take your serenity back; it's your birthright!

The quiet of spiritual communication can take place in any type of atmosphere. It's a matter of training the attention. What you pay attention to grows and takes on new life. So put your investment capital into something that's going to give you good stuff.

## THE TRUE VALUE OF YOUR OWN LIFE

*"If you realize that you have enough, you are truly rich." ~ Tao Te Ching*

I sometimes see life as being like a carnival. At birth, you get a dime. Then you walk by the carnival, and all kinds of choices rise up, to get you to lay down your dime for some reward, choices that feature loud, gaudy displays inviting you to throw it away. "Over here, throw the dime" or "No, over here, take a ride." On and on they keep yelling, showing you such great things ... telling you things that aren't really accurate upon closer inspection.

Of course, once you give up the dime, that's it! You bought into it, and that becomes the reality you live. How about holding on to that dime so you can invest it in life instead of all the stuff that claims to *be* life? That dime is your very being, your potential within the life you live. Is it worth giving up your dime to the carnival? Or can you just say, "That's my carnival, and I control what happens there. What else do you have?" That's when you find out there *is* more going on.

So by keeping the dime long enough, you come to the giant Slot Machine of Glory, guaranteed to pay off in ways you never could have imagined. Good place to let go of the dime then. Since *you* own the slot machine, both the Big You and the Little You win.

The Slot Machine of Glory is rigged in your favor. Fortune favors the bold! It's your true game, the big version of what you can be, have, become. Get ready for a shower of gold coins ... yes, real gold for the real you!

## KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR ENERGY

I read somewhere that the money people spend on coffee each day, in stylish cafes, over time will add up to a tidy fortune. Like, two million dollars if you start when you are twenty and "indulge" a couple of times a day. What?!

If that same energy is turned into working capital, that's right: the purse grows full.



It's the same with your life force. Keep it healthy, and feed it with things that are true, and it will flourish. Focus on things that feed your mental strength. Don't allow yourself to finish a sentence with a negative statement. Stop yourself, and finish it positively.

Energy attracts other energy that is like it. When you focus on what is good, what is possible, it becomes stronger and brings more of the same to your attention. Opportunities that have been present all along will become visible to you in a new state of awareness, and you will have the perspective to act on them, thus attracting more and better opportunities.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR TRUE PRIORITIES IN LIFE?**

Being in a system that is organic and grown by yourself will give you the advantage. Creating such a system is an ongoing process, not a finished product. Put something into it every day, and it will grow, respond to the love you are putting into it, and give you direction.

I like to make a list of the Top Five and the Bottom Five. Each should be clearly recognizable and not in the same category as any of the others in the group of five. You can theme them according to whatever categorizing method you choose. Some people like lists that start with all the same letter, some prefer acronyms that spell out a word they can use to put them in order. You can go by color, or by any other system that resonates for you.

See if you can visualize rotating the top five every day or at least once a week. Even a token of acknowledgement to each of them will cause you to start patterning, create new habits, and reveal a lot of ideas you have—ones that may or may not be furthering your cause. Where did these ideas come from? Are they accurate, or are they there because of some form of loyalty you feel toward the source of the idea, such as the person who told you they were true?

Are you “going with the flow” even when it's not serving your needs?

I used the same questions in de-cluttering my home when I found I had just plain too much stuff around that was dragging me down. It was pretty bad at one point! There were lots of things left over from other people's lives, all over the place, filling up the “nothing” that I felt. At a certain point, I resolved that this effect had to go. There wasn't any room for me!

Every day I would pick an odd number and remove at least that many things from their positions and put them in a box. As I did so, I would ask, “Why do I have this item? Is it because I like it, or is it because it reminds me of something or someone? And if so, is that something I should release and allow myself to be free of?”



The answers were surprising. It took a long time and many layers to get to a place where things functioned efficiently, since I had so much anxiety attached to some of the things. But it's worth it, because now my life and home reflect my own energy and not that of some leftover idea of how things *ought* to look.

*"One cannot collect all the beautiful shells on the beach. One can collect only a few, and they are more beautiful if they are few." ~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The same thing goes for all types of habits, not just those of collecting things, but also of keeping with you feelings or ideas that don't serve you. When a thought comes to you, you can ask whether it fits into the top five—or perhaps the bottom five. Look at things that way, and take what you know is the right action. If it's in the top five, do something about it. If it's in the bottom five, get rid of it. Everything in between will just naturally fall into place in sequence once you have set those boundaries effectively.

Hire yourself as an enforcer to keep your boundaries functioning. Acknowledge your small victories throughout the day, knowing they will add up and snowball as you continue.

## BREAKING IT DOWN

Returning to the idea of creating priorities: are your financial management systems manageable? Are you facing some kind of a mess that seems to sap your energy just thinking about it?

I have had that experience too, of feeling drained by paperwork, financial matters, and the need to put things in order. So here's what I did: every day, at the same time, I would make myself go to the office and face the stack of truly awful paperwork that was there. It was really bad. I had to clean up the huge mess my parents had left behind when their marriage finally exploded in a psychotic extravaganza of alcohol, violence, and police intervention, this time for the last time. I was the only person who could deal with it, and it had to be done. There were overlapping problems, urgent situations, and disturbing energies at every turn.

I made a promise to myself to stay in the office, for exactly twenty minutes a day, every day, at the same time. I made the decision that I would get this done, period. I refused to let it get to me. I'd organize things into stacks, dive into the stacks, and get a grip, same time, every day. I'd make one difficult phone call every day, if needed.



Within a few days, my nervous system began to expect that it would be going there, to the office, and facing these things. I went at the stack with the simple promise that I would stay for twenty minutes, face whatever had to be done that day, and then leave. Feelings of dread, and expectations of bad surprises, were replaced by those of habit. My system was telling me, “Let’s just do this.”

## THE PATH WELL WORN

Here’s where being aggressively cheerful is so useful. I was getting really mad about some of the problems I had to deal with. I was having a hard time even going into the office, much less sitting in my chair to do the work. Handling things with grace seemed a long way off.

I was solving problems that I had not created, that were the result of other people’s lack of willingness to face their lives. It was a great illustration of injustice, and here I was, dealing with that stuff *again*! By now, I had a good idea, a promise I had made to myself. I was going to tame the mess. Yet the fact that I had this work to do, to handle these awful problems and situations, after everything I had gone through to overcome the original situation, was a huge emotional challenge for me. And it was going to take years to get it handled.

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE HORRIBLE TO THE BEAUTIFUL

I saw it as the huge and life-changing responsibility that it was. Then I decided to break up the emotional turmoil, the disempowering story that I had going, all the anger and chaos that I felt, using the sledgehammer of cheerful victory.

At first, I could only hold that attitude for twenty minutes, and when I felt the rage coming up, I had to fight it hard. I would actually force myself to smile. There were times I marched out of there, after exactly twenty minutes, with a really sick sense of humor. But I stayed the whole twenty, so that I could promise myself to get this process into a manageable condition. And I felt good and empowered by keeping my promise.

By continuing in this manner, I also gained the ability to manage my own systems far more efficiently and to see how I could eliminate things that were draining my energy. Things that had to be dealt with regularly—or on a weekly or monthly basis—and important phone numbers went on a 6x6 piece of cardboard, placed where I could grab it in a second and find what I needed.

This was also a situation that involved a lot of crisis activity, which was part of what I had to handle. Things were falling apart, family members were yelling on the phone, and lots of times it felt like I was being roasted alive.



The paperwork and the level of anxiety it represented were daunting. I learned how to hang up the phone on people, tell them I didn't want to hear their stories, or yell back at them. It was a challenge to my faith in myself as a reasonable person.

And I kept going.

Larger or bulkier items went into stacks that could be sorted and winnowed before being placed in files. The top five, the worst problems, got looked at every day. The bottom five were found and removed, one by one.

I became proactive and sought out things that I dreaded doing, so I could get them over with and so that I'd know I was doing the work of breaking the hard edge. After the work session, I'd sometimes have a bitter smile, but I also had the self-esteem of knowing I would do what it took to prevail.

## **WHAT RISES TO THE TOP?**

When you follow that process, new things appear to become the bottom five. The top ones tend to stay the same. Those are the ones you want to keep on top of your true priorities. What do you want those to look like? Visualize yourself having the feeling that you want to have, from having your priorities handled properly. Keep it with you in your heart as you work to create that reality in visible form.

But the bottom five are so great to get out of your life! With only a commitment of twenty minutes a day, I was able to get control of things that were wasting an hour or more, in time spent being upset or unproductive.

This was something that went on and on, with continual variations.

Within a couple of weeks I found that I could stay on task for half an hour, or even an hour, without getting upset.

Eventually, I was able to create a system that allowed me to process information efficiently, to overcome my emotional reactions to what I was handling, and to turn my feelings into tools of self-esteem. The knowledge of having tamed the monster is a strong foundation. It serves me well as I continue in more enjoyable activities.

The most important parts of using the process I am describing are consistency and commitment. By knowing that you will follow through and by continuing to build the right type of system for yourself, your priorities will also grow and change. When you honor your ability to focus and you keep your promise to yourself, you get a charge of energy. If you don't do that, you don't have trust within yourself; and if you don't trust yourself, you will get bad messages that drag you down.



## KEEP YOUR PROMISES TO YOURSELF

Make a promise to yourself and keep it, and you will know that you can do it again.

So trust yourself, and live up to your system. It can be really simple, like making a schedule. What kind of workflow do you have? Do you work in big blocks of time, or is it more like an hour or two at a time, for a complete level of energy to come through you? Do you have choices about how to structure your day? Take into consideration what the best time is to do what, and use that knowledge to put yourself at the top of your game.

Knowing your flow will add to your ability to focus and will give you greater flexibility. Get tuned into what your work is in relation to your own inner states, and you will be so much more efficient—and happier, since you are not fighting your own energy. A lot of juice goes right out of you and dissipates if your mind is preoccupied with negative interpretations.

Having a system in place that you work with consistently will also boost your confidence. Make it simple, friendly, and easy to keep up with, and it will become a natural part of the way you do things.

Simplicity will give you the most satisfaction and freedom in life. Keeping your mind and your spirit open to the freedom of the simple condition will also keep you alert to opportunities. You can step into a new type of energy far more easily when your field of energy is kept simple so that you can adapt freely to change, responding to others in a spontaneous and creative way.

*“In character, in manners, in style, in all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity.” ~ Longfellow*

## THE POWER OF DESIRE

*“Manifest plainness,  
Embrace simplicity,  
Reduce selfishness,  
Have few desires.” ~ Lao Tzu*

How much of what you want is based on your own true desires, and how much on what you think you should want? The common ideas of success involve having lots of “stuff,” wanting and needing more, and being ready to sacrifice all to reach that goal. Is this really harmonious? Without harmony, is it worth having “stuff”?

How about making a list of what you want, and then looking at where those desires came from? There are probably at least a few things there that don’t





exactly resonate for you, but you still keep the desire anyway, since it's what other people are saying is important.

Then refer these to the top five priorities mentioned above, and see what happens. It's a good exercise to visualize how it would be to remove everything possible from the list, and check in with your feelings about that.

Take action! Get rid of what you don't want to attract and keep what you do want. The Universe will fill the void with much better things.

## **WHOSE SUCCESS IS THIS, ANYWAY?**

Don't let other people define your success! Remember that you are a soul that has a body, and not the other way round. Is what you are doing, what you are striving to attain, feeding your soulful knowledge? Your soul and your body can work together like the warp and weft of woven cloth when they are in balance.

Your soul will naturally draw to you that which is most beneficial when you recognize your inner truths, and will act on that recognition. Everyone wants attention and recognition, and when you give yourself that precious gift of the latter for your inner truths, you will find much better clarity and simpler ways to bring about your happiness than you will by striving after things that don't reflect your inner beauty.

Then, let go of what doesn't serve your highest good, and send it lovingly back to the Universe so it can find its true home. Open heart and hand will free your energy to grow and receive in elegance. Then ask Spirit boldly for what you really want.

## **WALKING IN YOUR TRUTH**

Walk in the harmony of "beauty way," and know that all around you are harmonies waiting to be discovered so they can grow within you. They will take visible form, and arrive to you in wondrous ways.

At this stage, you won't waste money on things you don't really want, because you will be clear about what you really *do* want, and impulses will be easier to control. Your home will be more satisfying as a place of refuge and true reflection of your life. You will be able to make decisions about what you want to create as your next reality; and you will manifest that reality much more quickly when you just keep on track with your simple ways.



## MOTIVATING YOURSELF

*“He that does good for good’s sake, seeks neither praise nor reward,  
but he is sure of both in the end.” ~ Penn*

How do you know when your energy is going to prevail in the right way? When you are ready to put aside smaller ideas, and get on with making the change to your energy that holds you to your spiritual and emotional goals, you will have the driving force that takes over and makes your way inevitable. Yes, there will be some interesting detours, and some times you really won’t figure out where you’re going.

That’s the way of Great Truths. They appear as lights in the forest, leading you and showing you the way, then vanish from sight so you can gain the confidence and faith to create your own ways, co-creating the forest as you go, lighting your own lamp that you create.

## STEP ONTO YOUR BRIDGE OF FAITH

As I mentioned earlier, faith isn’t something that you are given; it’s something you build, as you step forward not quite knowing how it’s going to turn out. You project a bit of the path and then step onto it, and it unfolds bit by bit as you tune in to the new ways. Twisting and turning, moving right under your feet, the magic road holds you and guides you as you create it, moving into position to take you to the right place.

Very nice, you say, but how is that done? Once again, it’s a little bit at a time. When fears and doubts come up, as they will, check out the message that they contain about what you find to be important. Don’t discard that knowledge, and don’t let it hold you back either.

The truth about bravery is that it’s just doing what you have to do. Recognizing that voice of fear and saying, “Thanks a lot, and I am going ahead anyway” is such a piece of power. You are not cut off from that part of you that created the fear. Fear is there to help you stay safe. It lets you know when things are going to change, and alerts you to beware.

## WHAT IS THE MESSAGE FROM FEAR?

*“Fear is the mother of foresight.” ~ H. Taylor*

Change is a threat to the stable ways that our ancestors sought so dearly, and that we even now find to be so important. Of course you want stability in your life. Are you willing to be stable while being bored to death? If not, then look carefully at what scares you, and why it scares you. Then take a small step of faith to move toward the fear rather than away from it. What is it telling you about yourself?



What is the fear doing to protect you? Fear rises from within your being, not visiting you as something outside. It's a step on the path, no more than that.

There's an interesting hypnotherapy technique that I used to help me understand fear. It involves getting in touch with the subconscious, through specific body relaxation and mental tuning in. You then call forth the fear to visit so that you can see that it is separate from the real you, and you visualize the very worst that can happen. Finally, you let it dissipate. Wow. What a great feeling.

When I did this over a period of months, I was able to understand that the fear is really nothing but a product of my own mind, and that I can detach myself from it while I learn from it.

## GETTING MOTIVATED

So how does this relate to motivation? Much of human activity is designed to help us avoid fear and unpleasant experiences. The type of motivation that causes people to hide from the raw edges of experience is a deadening and stifling impulse, leading to no victory at all.

If, instead, you look at what is causing you to hold back from what you want—or that which is blocking you from doing things that matter to you—and welcome the “opposing” sides of the team to come together, this means you are moving into life and embracing its message.

## GETTING IT WRONG

*“When you think you are facing a contradiction, check your premises.  
One of them is wrong.” ~ Ayn Rand*

Being wrong is a great first step to finding out what is right and functional. Your motivation and self-esteem get an immediate boost when you suddenly see where you have been missing something, or disregarding the quality of information you are willing to accept. When you learn to only accept high-quality information, your whole world lights up. Much more vital energy can go through you. Ask yourself, “What would this be like if it was easy?” as often as possible, and you will get answers popping out seemingly from nowhere, simply because you asked.

That sense of ease, and the ability to flow into the moment, feeds your soul.

## TAKING CARE OF YOUR BEST TOOL: YOURSELF

Then there are the physical tricks to keep yourself going. Getting enough rest will keep your mind in good condition. Believe it or not, daydreaming when you don't have time for a nap can be very helpful too.



It's a big status symbol to be too busy to actually live, but is that good value? How about going for under-stimulation and seeing what is available to boost your nervous system and give you the true value of your life? How about making room for yourself in your own life?

Even turning down one invitation to over-engage, over-communicate, take in more irrelevant information, can free up your mental balance and help you take that little step again.

## THE POWER OF SCHEDULES

Schedules are great for this. "At a certain hour, I will refuse to allow myself to tax my brain any longer, and I will actually allow myself to breathe," you might tell yourself. Whew! What a vision of life that is!

And yet it's so common that all the data of life just runs free, running the show, until that's really how people are living: living for the data, instead of being served by it. The data is taking over, and there's, what, no room for life? Really? How does that work? It doesn't work.

So the schedule needs some time for reconnection information. Reconnect with your dreams, every day, several times a day. Remind yourself in a conscious way of what is really important to *you*, not what you are being told is important. And what that means to you, emotionally and physically. And remind yourself of who is really important in your world, what kind of quality is there in your communication and experience. Breathe in your knowing of your higher self, even if it is invisible to you at the time, since that's the real *you*.

## CUTTING THINGS DOWN TO SIZE

Breaking things down into smaller bits so they are easier to look at, and making sense out of them, is an effective approach. Give yourself small emotional rewards. Connect with yourself every hour on the hour if that's what it takes to remind you. Give yourself twenty seconds to recognize who is doing all this! The things that are being done are illustrations of reality, not reality itself.

Take the time to connect with the reality that goes through the moment like a stream of happenings. That reality is where all the real action happens, even as nothing at all is happening in the usual sense. Life is both: the stream of visible events, and the subtle whispers of the unseen as it becomes visible.

When you chunk your information more carefully, and stick to your formula, things can happen in a gentler, more nurturing way, and your success can come to you more easily.



You will be able to listen more to the people you care about, and deal more effectively with those who are of lesser importance.

Those loved ones are the beauty of life! So don't wear yourself out until you have no love left, because you got stuck in some idea of who is to be loved. You know who is important to you.

It's not likely you need to be anyone except who you really are. You are already that person! That's going to happen anyway. Might as well get into it. Turn the person you are, right now, into a happy person. It's the best gift you can give yourself and the world. Be authentic about your activities, be real about your feelings. Allow yourself *not* to say things, even if you think they are important. People will figure things out on their own.

Being pleasant to everyone smoothes the feeling of your life and keeps you from judging others. That really saves a lot of energy and can lead you to some key opportunities, just by being someone that people like to have around.

*“Complaisance pleases all; prejudices none; adorns wit; renders humor agreeable; redoubles love; augments friendship; and united with justice and generosity, becomes the secret chain of the society of mankind.” ~ MMe. de Scuderi*





# COMPLETION



*“It Ain’t Over Till it’s Over.” ~ Yogi Berra*

## HOW DO YOU COMPLETE THINGS?

Completion is the crown of the victor. When things become complete, they are transformed from mere projects into realities that are tangible and that produce results. Many people find that completion is a really difficult thing to accomplish, and it often is. Yet, without it, the motivation you have so carefully built will leak away and dissipate like vapors on a warm morning.

But what is it that makes things difficult to complete? What makes them easy? When you are doing something daring and original, motivation is easy to get at the beginning, then it gets kind of tricky in the middle. At the end, there is sometimes a real anxiety about finishing things up. Why is that? How many people do you know who have begun something and then found a zillion reasons why finishing it up was too much trouble? Does this sound like you?

One of the most common reasons this happens is simply having too many things going on at once and not having a clear sense of what is truly important and why. Another possible reason is that the emotional fuel that began the enterprise has run out and the rest of it has now become work, and work is seen as something that is not fun.



However, unless and until the product is complete, it can't go to market. And this means whatever market it is, not only the commerce type of activity, but also the expression of self and the reward that comes from knowing you have finished the job. Paying yourself with good vibes for following thorough is pretty good stuff!

If you actually do what you say you are going to do, and complete the job, you will end up winning, because most people can't do it. It means holding yourself accountable, and pulling the rabbit out of the hat when you think you really can't take anymore.

It's a problem I have faced during hard times in my life, where the simplest things become difficult and any excuse will do. Yuck! And that feeling gets worse every time. "Why didn't I finish this?" I was working on it, and I flaked out. Or something that isn't really vital but appears as if it's important shows up, which leads to saying, "Oh, that again... wish I could get rid of that."

At one point, I had an entire front porch full of materials for art and craft projects. One day I realized that I had enough materials for ten years' worth of projects. I was discouraged because I felt unorganized, and lacking in motivation. It was also hard to find things, because they were all in giant piles that were so hard to move around. Yuck.

I resolved that I would figure out how to get my energy back, by taking action and figuring out what I could actually use and do, and get rid of the rest so that other people could have the benefit of my gathering.

The way I dealt with it was to just "dive in." I would open a box, or a bag, look at the project, and ask myself, "If I had time to do this, would I rather be doing something else?" If the answer was yes, out it went, no matter how much time I had put into it or how close it was to being done. There was quite a bit of that going on!

I started to feel good about it right away. The pile of giveaways grew. It wasn't hard to see that what I wanted had already changed, and was going to change again, so I then resolved to keep only the things I *really* wanted to finish. It was a huge amount of energy going through me as I let go of the connections I had with the places these things had come from, the mindset that I had been in when I gathered them, and the idea I had been identifying with, about who I was.

## **GETTING CLEAR ABOUT WHO IS WHERE IN YOUR LIFE**

This technique can be used in any area of life. Not to sound heartless, but do you have relationships in your life that are draining you? How about admitting it and being okay with letting go of them? There's no real feeling from being with the "sort-of" friend, for you.



You need the real friend who is actually there for you. Who is there in your life, a person who listens to you and cares about you? Who is only there to say things that aren't helpful? Who has time for you when you need them? Who, instead, is too busy except when they need something? Seeing these interactions and what they do over time can tell you a lot about who you were, who you are now, and who you are becoming. Give yourself permission to change and to use your time and emotional energy in a way that is good for you, and to let go of people who drain you.

Take time for the things that nourish you, not the “sort-of” idea that you don't really want to follow through on, but feel you have to for some reason. Letting these things move down the list of your priorities into the bottom five will give you a lot of control over how you deal with what they represent for you. It can change your whole idea of how they got there in the first place.

## **THE NEED FOR APPROVAL IS A POISON**

The most insidious thing that keeps completion from occurring is the old standby, the need for approval. When something is completed, it will be evaluated.

It's a real source of anxiety to face the verdict of the world on your efforts. It's enough to keep things from ever getting done, in fact. It reminds me of something I heard from someone I knew in business some years back. We were talking about the fear of failure that all entrepreneurs know so well. We were joking about how failure is such a great inoculant against that fear. As she put it, “Failure is no big deal, because you can just get up and do it again.” It's true! Once you've actually failed, and admitted it, and haven't given up, you can go ahead on and do anything.

Yes, I know that, but . . .

## **FAILURE IS NOT FUN**

It's true that failing is no fun. It can be devastating, and could set you back both personally and financially in a really big way.

It can also be an energizing step toward getting it right. Think of everything you have ever done which you have seen as a failure. Was it only that, or was it a key way to get going on something that was better?

Each way that you “didn't get right” is a signal to you about how to change that factor, turn it around, and get it right.

How many times have you gotten through a whole day without “making a mistake”? Unless you slept all day, there were probably not too many.





## **LISTEN TO YOURSELF ABOUT WHAT YOU REALLY WANT**

I encourage you to follow your inner knowing and learn from each and every moment of your journey, and to learn from what you thought and what you believed were mistakes. Maybe you just didn't see the whole picture of what your true needs and desires are, as they change and unfold through your life. Maybe you were just taking your very first steps along the path that gets clearer and more open with every motion of your life.

As my grandmother used to say, "Don't let other people tell you that you can't do things. They don't know."

So don't let fear of failure or of being judged hold you back from making that leap. In the end, it's all about the decision to continue on and find the way. How does anyone else know what your question is, let alone what your answer is?

Faith involves knowing that there will be an answer, not faith in a specific thing. Make the move, knowing there will be a message in return.

## **GETTING OUT OF IT COMPLETELY**

In other cases, however, it's just time to jump ship. Let go of an idea, or group of ideas, or situations, that doesn't work. There's nothing wrong with admitting that things have changed. They always do. You can say, "It seemed like a good idea at the time, and now with new and better information, it doesn't look like it's worth it. ... Therefore, I will release the energy and relate to the experience in a different way."

Accepting imperfection is part of the process of completion. If you insist on things being perfect, nothing will ever get done. It's okay if you don't think what you are completing is exactly perfect. It's probably going to be better than you may think, if you put your heart into it. And sometimes the thing you thought was an imperfection is just what other people think is the best part. "Done is better than perfect!" You will get another chance to become more excellent next time around. Just do it!

Finish the report you have come to despise, fix that broken thing, throw it away, or send it to where it needs to go next. Round up all the junk and take it to the dump, both literally and figuratively. Put the finishing touches on your beloved project, and release it to the world! Whatever it is that you haven't quite gotten around to, dealing with it as soon as possible is sure to be more rewarding than kicking yourself about not doing it.

What if someone doesn't like the result of your efforts? What if it's not good enough? "What if I could have done better and I know it?" Only you will know when it's time to just accept that you are not going to be perfect the way your



conscious mind would like to present you, but you already *are* perfect in the Truth of Spirit. Is that hard to get your brain around? Sure it is.

## THE GRAND PLAN

Each of us has a place in the pattern of things, and the Universe doesn't make mistakes. What you see as a failure or a bad thing may be just what is needed to create the energy field which makes it possible for a much larger truth than the one you had imagined to emerge, both for yourself and for the greater good.

When you can see yourself as a channel for that truth, the distress that comes out of needing to control events disappears. You align yourself with Divine Purpose and learn to listen for the voice of the Helper, that voice of your own higher self, telling you what you need to know about how to grow from your experience. The Helper is always waiting for you to listen to the message deep within you, the hidden knowing that your heart and soul have.

The Helper wants to let you know how to make your life what you want it to be; and completing things opens a pathway of energy for that help to appear. It's a little doorway for the Universe to speak to you. You gain the self-esteem of carrying things through, and you open yourself to receive the message.

In *Shambala: The Way of the Warrior* by Chogyam Trungpa, he states that faith is knowing that there will be a message of some sort, without being attached to what that message will be. It's all of life responding to what you have done. You are the mirror of the Cosmos, showing forth the patterns that are created through your awareness. Your life is an illustration of those patterns.

Completion opens your awareness and lets you see yourself.

## THE RETURN OF ENERGY

*“When the still heart is firm, fresh energy is victorious.” ~ Ancient  
law of charioteers*

Have you ever felt that you expend far too much energy for too little return? Where is your energy going, and what is the quality of your intention? What motivates you, and why? When you look deeply into these questions, you will see a pattern.

It's natural to get enthusiastic about things. When that enthusiasm goes away, what does it feel, look, and sound like? If you are like me, it is as if you're stepping into a place where everything is gray and flat and nothing means very much. That type of feeling is a sign that you are in need of a reality check. Something



is blocking your ability to interact with life in a way that is contributing to your higher emotional needs.

## **WHERE'S THE BLOCK?**

Are you ready to let go of that block and allow your energy to return to you? Take a moment to imagine or visualize feeling vibrant and strong, with a flow of energy that is fulfilling. Is there something in your life that leads you to that feeling? Follow it, and you will be a little closer to your own vision. What is in the way of that? Is your conscious or unconscious mind telling you that your dreams or ideas don't make sense? That it's too early or too late? That it's not safe to have what you want? Remember that as long as you are still on the game board, you can still win. Let go of what doesn't make things work for you in your life. Make room for your next move.

It's possible that having less to work with will allow you to see more clearly what your choices really are.

Discard what is not relevant to your mission, whatever form it may take. Is there someone in your life who is an energy drain, a whiner, or a parasite? Do you feel that you somehow can't get that influence out of your energy dynamic? Are you feeling sorry for that person, or are they reflecting something in yourself that is ready to give away your energy, so that you won't make the effort to change?

Isn't all that just a waste of your time?

## **SO WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?**

You can be too busy to listen, or you can learn the skill of saying, "Uh-huh" at the correct intervals. You can downright refuse to engage on any level. If it's someone at work that you have to put up with for some reason, you can take the humorous approach.

Again, I refer you to Terry Braverman, whose tip of imagining such a person wearing polka dot boxer shorts was a life-saver for me. Hiding my amusement, rather than managing my anger or frustration, helped me through some really difficult conversations. Imagining someone who has an oppressive mindset as appearing ridiculous can really lighten the load.

The trick then is not to keep from perishing of boredom, while the bore drones on and on, but to keep a straight face as the other person buries himself alive in deadly earnest.



Whining, griping, grouching, complaining. Face it: it's a disease! So have a little compassion for the whiner, but not too much. Have more for yourself, since you have been such a great listener for so little reward.

Then, develop selective memory loss, hearing intermittently, or asking the person to repeat themselves. (Yes, that's right. They will begin to feel you are not really listening and will go find someone else to rattle on against. But you have been "polite" enough to ask them again, so it lets you off the hook.) If this makes them irritable (probably), you can apologize and say you have some work to do and get on with things.

A good apology saves a lot of your time and energy, even if you weren't wrong. It will smooth things out and allow for the return of energy. The other person will very likely feel honored, being ready to be a little nicer the next time. And you then become free from needing to be perfect on your self-defined terms, allowing your higher perfection to grow.

## GIVE GIFTS OF COURTESY

*"A deserved and discriminating compliment is often one of the strongest encouragements and incentives to the diffident and self-distrustful." ~ T. Edwards*

How about a compliment? It can work wonders to change the tone of things. A person who has been closed up may possibly begin to smile and feel seen and appreciated by your acknowledgement. You are making them feel safe and appreciated when you take that small step of friendly action.

Feel free to compliment yourself too, for being conscious enough to choose the way in which you interact. When you are behaving in a reactive way, nothing changes except the appearance of the situation, generally a change for the worse. When you instead get into that small gap between you and the appearance of things, and take action based on knowing you have a choice, the whole picture shifts—sometimes very quickly.

When you have the nerve to stand on your own strengths and honor your feelings realistically, your energy can circulate freely and return to you more grown-up and functional. It's okay to be giving and generous here too. Nothing is lost when you allow each moment to be a seed of better things to come.

*"He who now goeth forth on his way weeping, and beareth good seed, shall later return rejoicing, and bringing his sheaves with him." ~  
Psalms, 126:6*



## SEEING THE GAP FOR WHAT IT IS AND TAKING ACTION

There is a gap between events, between thoughts, between feelings. It's the open space of the Universe that is shaping itself to express truth. When you see that gap within your field of action, it presents you with an advantage, because you are able to realize that you have choices, which might not be apparent without taking the time to look more closely at what is being presented.

Events occur, and they may or may not be under your control. What you can control, and must learn to control if you are serious about prevailing, is the way you interpret and act upon those events. Living in a reactive mode will only bring you the leftovers of life.

Learn to allow events to speak to you without interrupting their message with your ideas about what they mean. Look carefully for signs of how things touch you, who brought them to you. Notice ways that you can move in a situation that create flow, rather than asserting your interpretations. Allowing this will draw you into harmony far more easily.

In order to be in harmony enough to reap the first-fruits, you must hone your perceptions to recognize what opportunities come your way, and not dismiss them as unimportant, based on how they come.

## WHO CAN DEFEAT YOU NOW?

*“Observe your enemies, for they first find out your faults.” ~  
Antisthenes*

Where is the enemy? It is within your own perceptions, telling you things about yourself that are not true. How about talking to the enemy and winning them over?

So is that negative information your enemy? Only in a relative sense, yes, in that it makes you uncomfortable and holds you back. It's the conflict, not the content, which creates the position of “enemy.” Possibly there is something of very real value being presented in a conflict situation. The trick is to see past the conflict and into the value of what's going on. Then there is no enemy, only a teacher.

## CONFLICT WASTES YOUR ENERGY

*“Whenever you're unsure if optimism is the right way to handle something, ask yourself, ‘What's the cost of being wrong here?’” ~  
Eric Barker*



Getting away from a conflict orientation frees up so much of your ability to interpret events in a correct way and to show you the way through them.

Your gap of perception is also related to your emotional interpretation of the sensory input you receive. As you attain a more gentle and disciplined relationship with your emotions, the field around you, which brings you that information, is able to become friendlier and more elastic.

The negative content that you experience, as a natural part of your thought process, is there to let you know something important. It's actually part of you, so it would be more efficient to win it over by listening to what it wants to tell you. It's there to keep you safe.

Honor that intention. Ask your negative self out loud what it wants. You will find that it's coming from a place that can be of good use to you, and it will appreciate being listened to, and give you back the energy you have lost by fighting with it. Then you can thank it, tell it you will be ready to learn from it, and then move on, instead of having a feedback loop going that saps your intentions.

Perhaps you have disagreeable people in your life. It takes a lot of discipline to realize they are not truly the enemy, but actually teachers who have come to you so that you can learn something about yourself. It is said that you can truly learn valuable things from those who don't like you or agree with you; things that you can never learn from your friends. This type of information is sent to you from a candid point of view, whether or not it is accurate; so at least you know the person sending it is sincere, even if misguided, misinformed, or perhaps simply hostile.

The gap allows you to accept information of this type without prejudice and use it to shape the next experience based on what you learn from it.

## **THE MOMENT BETWEEN MOMENTS**

In between each thing that happens and the next thing, there is a time of transition when one thing changes into another. Stepping into the flow of change in a graceful way is like getting into a friendly wind that gently takes you, with far less effort, to the most advantageous place within that flow.

Resisting and insisting will only keep you from enjoying the energy and understanding what is really going on, and without the more accurate information that comes from an open frame of mind, you will not be in harmony. Inaccurate information, such as that which you get when you are stuck on an idea, causes you to make mistakes. Mistakes are just another step on the path, it's true, but the fewer of them you make, the more quickly you can progress into being where you really intend to go.



## ONE LAST LITTLE STORY

Where I live in the mountains of Big Sur, the terrain is steep in places. When I was in my early twenties, I had a jack donkey, Frank, which I sometimes rode over the hills for visits and to see the magical views.

One day I was out with Frank on a really steep section of trail. He stepped in a yellow-jacket nest, and began to buck furiously, trying to throw me off. I grabbed the pommel and yelled at him not to throw me.

When he heard my voice, he calmed down, turned around on the narrow trail, and headed home at a gallop. I had no choice but to drop the reins, put my head down as low as I could, and hold on for dear life. What a ride! We got home. Sometimes that's just how it is. Frank was right, and I just had to go along with it.

Grab on to the place you know is going to work for you, and ride toward home for all it's worth! That very road is yours to create and travel. Your own inner genius is waiting for you to open the magic door of your perceptions and step into the larger reality that is your birthright.

May you find the way, and be blessed in all things. May your path always be lit!









## AFTERWORD



**T**his book is an expression of my heartfelt desire to give back to life for the many gifts and benefits I have received. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to express my truths in this way.

It is my hope that you have been helped or inspired in some way by reading these words. They are part of my larger mission to help to unlock the Divine Potential within all people, creating a Victorious World of White Light.

I write these words from my heart. It is my acknowledgement of the power that opens up to those who ask for help and trust their own spirits. I encourage you to take one moment at a time, to use your own truth as your guidance, and to be ready to face some serious challenges as you make the promise to yourself that you will do it.

Keep your promise. You will prevail.

If you would like to work with me as a coach and mentor, I welcome your inquiries. I will work with you to find ways to get clear on what works and doesn't work for you. I'll help you set goals that will help you move to the life you want.

And I will be your support person on this magnificent journey.

Please contact me at [betty@bettyofbigsur.com](mailto:betty@bettyofbigsur.com).

Betty Withrow  
64527 Hwy 1  
Big Sur, Ca 93920

(831) 667-2314







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Let's just say that they are each incredible beings of the Light. And I am honored to know them.

