

# GIFTS FROM THE DARKNESS

OUT OF YOUR DARKEST TIMES  
COME YOUR GREATEST GIFTS

KIM BAIRD



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Gifts From the Darkness: Out of Your Darkest Times Come Your  
Greatest Gifts © Kim Baird 2016

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**This book IS NOT a manual or professional advice on how to get out of depression. If you are suffering from depression, then please do seek professional help and assistance. This book may, however, be a great resource to help on your journey out of depression to complement other professional services.**

### **Dedicated to...**

Andrew, for always believing in me, supporting me and helping me shine. Thank you for being part of this wild journey called life and staying with me during even the toughest challenges. *I love you.*





## A PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Hi there!

As the Founder of Gowor International Publishing, my publishing house, I make it part of my practice to offer a personal review for my authors about their books. The reason I do this is so that you, as the reader, can glean a further understanding into why this book is about to become a valuable part of your life.

What you as the reader might not know is that Kim's book – *Gifts From The Darkness* – was selected as a winner of the Gowor International Publishing Author Award. We had shortlisted a series of books that all had extraordinary potential. As I sat down to review the finalists and choose a winner, I opened up Kim's manuscript... and I just knew that this book was the winner.

The heart, gratitude and incredible energy that Kim radiates as a woman was glowing off every page of the manuscript and the core message of the book – that great blessings can come from adversities – reflects what I also stand for in the world: people overcoming their tragedies to live an amazing life. I felt an instant connection with Kim from the moment I first opened up the word document – and this is why you are now holding this book in your hands and reading my heartfelt words of acknowledgement for the book and who Kim is.

*Gifts From The Darkness* is profound, deep, raw and heart-touching. It will warm you up from inside, give you hope, and bring you to the realization that you can come out the other side of whatever it is that you may be struggling with right now. My sense is that this book will, like it did for me, draw you in on the first page and keep you there until you turn the last page and set the book down... and leave you feeling more inspired than when you first began reading.

I am excited and honored to be the publisher bringing this book to life so that you can receive the gorgeous message and love that is within it and allow Kim's presence to impact your life for the better.

Enjoy every page... I know you will love it!

With inspiration,

**Emily Gowor**

**Founder of Gowor International Publishing**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Personal Note From The Publisher.....	V
Foreword .....	IX
Introduction .....	1
 PART 1 .....	 7
The Gift of Inner Strength.....	9
The Gift of Forgiveness .....	27
The Gift of Self Acceptance.....	43
The Gift of a Turning Point Decision.....	61
The Gift of Intuition.....	81
The Gift of Quality Questions .....	95
The Gift of Unconditional Love .....	111
The Gift of Believing in the Impossible.....	131
 PART 2 .....	 147
Getting To The Core of Your Emotions .....	149
Investing In Yourself.....	167
You Are The Creator .....	187

The Energetic Web .....	205
9 Attitude Shifts To a Happier Life.....	215
Ask Quality Questions .....	233
Finding Your Own Gifts.....	239
Finding Your True Self.....	253
 PART 3 .....	 267
The Gift of The Power to Choose.....	269
The Gift of Life.....	277
The Gift of Courage .....	285
The Gift of Finding Purpose .....	295
The Gift of 'I AM' .....	305
Out of Your Darkest Times	
Come Your Greatest Gifts... ..	315
Acknowledgments .....	321
About The Author.....	325
Are You Ready to Consciously Create Your Life? .....	327





## FOREWORD

Imagine, if you will, a local fun race. It's five kilometres in length. Amongst the ninety-three competitors are Harry and Gemma. At the end of the race, Harry crosses the finish line first and sets a new record. Gemma, who walks the whole way, comes in dead last.

Who are you more inspired by? For most people, it's probably Harry. However, what if I told you that Harry is a former Olympian, and Gemma had been confined to a wheel chair for the last two years. That changes things, doesn't it? Gemma was told by her doctors that she would never walk again. Now we have a whole different story. Suddenly, Gemma is the one who inspires us.

For someone to inspire us, they have to exhibit courage. The French have a saying: 'hauts les coeurs.' Literally it means 'high the hearts' – to infuse with courage. That is where we get our word courage. It's about heart.

When seeking inspiration, we tend to look to others. The mountain climber who scales the peaks of the Himalayas, or the courageous sportsperson who gives it their all.

But what if courage and inspiration were much closer to home than that? What if you happened to be the hero of your journey?

Have you ever been through a hard time and come out the other side? Did you perhaps, come out wiser and stronger? Is it possible that you might have actually learned something in the process? The hero's journey is not for those lofty Olympians alone. It is for all of us.

This book is about that journey and the author is someone who has made the pilgrimage.

For over a quarter of a century, it was my great privilege to coach tens of thousands of people around the world. I saw firsthand, countless heroes and heroines. Almost no one makes a movie of their life. Yet their struggles are no less significant.

An Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, once lost an election for saying, 'Life wasn't meant to be easy.' It is an incredibly unpopular sentiment. So many of us harbour the belief that if only we become rich and famous, or if our situation changed to X, then all the troubles would vanish forever.

I've spent time with the rich, the beautiful, the poor and the homeless. Despite that article you've read about the golden lives of the rich and the famous, all of them have had their moments.

Here's the horrible truth. Being on planet Earth is a joyous, difficult, and sometimes distressing experience. There, I said it. Of course there are a million smiling 'experts' and authors that will tell you otherwise. Not good for business, telling the truth. Here's the next truth. It is part of the design.

The next time you see a diamond, bear in mind that this was a lump of carbon, formed more than a billion years ago, through intense pressure, way down in the bowels of the earth. It went through its own hero's journey. It didn't sit in a hammock in Tahiti to become a diamond.

Now I am not saying you should seek out misery. There are a lot of people who seem to have made a full-time career of doing that. Here's what I am saying. The word sin comes from an archery term. It means to miss the mark.

So you just screwed up, or out of the blue something hit you from behind. Is it possible that you could learn something from that? That you simply missed the mark and all you need to do is correct your aim?

That time I was on crutches for ten months. That time I got screwed over by a business partner. I could scream into the void, 'IT'S NOT MY FAULT.' Or I could listen, and perhaps in the silence, I might hear some lessons. A different path.

Am I saying that every time you stub your toe you should contemplate your belly button for several hours?

Not really. That sounds like masochism to me. However, there are experiences we can learn from.

It's the ego's job to keep you away from those lessons. The ego will scream, 'I'm right, there's nothing to learn!' Bear in mind one thing. Gemma, the heroine of our fun race... she had a coach. The coach gave her feedback. She listened and acted.

When I read the manuscript for this book, I was blown away. It's a story of tremendous courage in the face of searing adversity. We're not just talking about a particularly difficult time. No. We are talking about years of hardship from someone who never gave up AND came out the other side bigger and better. I came away from it grateful for the life I have. I believe that it is a story that you can learn a lot from. There are diamonds in this book that can nurture you over the course of a lifetime.

I first met Kim years ago. To see the transformation that has occurred is truly inspiring. I talked about the process of becoming a diamond. Kim Baird has been to the depths and emerged as a diamond in her own right, shining a light for others to follow.

**~ Brendan Nichols**



## INTRODUCTION

Each day that we are here on this Earth we have choices. Choices about what we do, choices about what we think, and choices around who we are being. Some days it certainly doesn't feel like we have any choices.... we can feel completely trapped by our circumstances and what is happening to us, by what people are doing to us, by things around us that are out of our control. It can feel at times like there is no way out of the horrific mess that our life is in.

But there is. I have felt defeated, crushed, heartbroken, useless, helpless and completely trapped during numerous times in my life, and what I can say to you with certainty is that there are always choices that we have. There are always choices that you can make and actions that you can take to improve a situation. You always have choices.

At its core, this book is about choices. The choice to get out of the dark or challenging times that you experience in

life, the choice to see life from a different perspective and the choice to live the life you truly desire.

In every dark time and challenge in our lives, there are amazing gifts, blessings and life lessons that can be found. These lessons and gifts are there to help us propel our lives forward in a positive way, and we all have the choice to see these lessons and gifts and embrace them or ignore them.

This isn't your typical self-empowerment book filled with fluffy positive theory on how to live your life; this book is different. This book is raw, it is real, it is authentic and it contains many profound lessons to truly transform your life for the better.

*Here's what you will get out of this book:*

- **A new way to look at challenges and dark times in your life** ~ What if, instead of just trying to beat you down and ruin your life, challenges were actually there to help you? To lift you up and move you towards living a better life? What if a challenge in your life was actually the greatest gift that you ever had? You might not feel this way now, but by the end of this book, you will see challenges in a very different light. What if one of your darkest times lead you down a path, a different path from where you were

heading, to a place that is now amazing? What if the difficulties, the pain, the anguish, and the heartache were actually showing you the lessons that you needed in order to create the life that you truly want? This is what this book is all about: shifting your perspective on what is usually considered bad and negative.

- **Inspiration and motivation to make changes in your own life** ~ This book is filled with inspiration and motivation from the start to the end. I've filled this book with real-life stories that you can relate to and connect with. The stories are real, they are raw and they are profound in the lessons they provide. These are stories from my own challenging life experiences, and also stories from some special friends who agreed to bravely bare their souls and share one of their own dark times as well in order to help others.
- **How to cope with dark and challenging times** ~ The truth is that we all have challenges and dark times at multiple times throughout our lives; every single person on this planet has them, whether you are wealthy or poor, whether you are healthy or ill, whether you were born to a great family or a bad one. It doesn't matter who you are. We all have challenges, no one is immune from that, and there is no magic place that we can get to where

all challenges disappear. So knowing how to navigate these dark times, get through the other side and come out of them stronger and wiser is something that everyone should know how to do, and this book is going to show you exactly how you can do that. It doesn't matter if you are currently going through dark times or not; this book contains guiding principles to live your life by that can help anyone no matter where they are in their life right now.

- **Practical tips and strategies to implement in your own life** ~ I'm not interested in just throwing fluffy theory at you that you are never going to use in the real world. Positive changes come from clarity, a shift in beliefs and action, so this book is filled with easy, simple and powerful strategies that you can implement and use in your life to create amazing results. *Gifts from the Darkness* is about creating everlasting and sustainable change in your life so the information and strategies contained within are not just surface level stuff. We go deep into what is really going on to make sure that the changes happen and are lasting.
- **A new appreciation and gratitude for your life** ~ It is through other people's experiences of life that we can reflect and appreciate our own life and create a deep level of gratitude for what we



have and for how far we have come. Life is an amazing gift that we are given, it is a privilege to have, and yet most people take it for granted. This book will open your eyes to a new appreciation of life, to seeing gifts where there seem to be none, to finding comfort when there is only chaos, to being truly grateful for everything that we have, even if it feels like we have nothing.

In Part 1 of this book, I will share with you some of my darkest and most challenging times that I have experienced in my life, and then share the amazing gifts that came out of each of those times.

Then in Part 2, I will show you how you find your own gifts and blessings from the challenging times that you have had over your life, and how to use these gifts to move your life forward. I also share with you powerful strategies and tools to help you to open up to the amazing life that you are capable of.

Finally, in Part 3, I have invited some very special people to share a story of one of their own big challenges, how they dealt with them and the gifts that came out of their own darkness. This is to help you see that everyone goes through big challenges, and it is a choice to decide how you want to deal with your own challenges and how you

want to look at them. These amazing, brave people that have agreed to share their stories have all found blessings and gifts from their challenges, and I hope their stories will help you to do the same.

I'm going to be truthful with you here: this book is about looking within yourself and asking deep questions to get a better understanding of your life and everything that you have been through. You may feel uncomfortable at times reading this book, but I can tell you if you stick with it, and work through those feelings, you will be rewarded massively.

It is my deepest intention and desire that this book will be a life-changer for you, to help you move forward through life, choosing to embrace and create your life on your own terms despite any challenges that come up. Enjoy.



## PART 1

# MY PERSONAL GIFTS FROM THE DARKNESS





# CHAPTER 1

## THE GIFT OF INNER STRENGTH

*"Strength Doesn't Come From What You Can Do.  
It Comes From Overcoming The Things You Once  
Thought You Couldn't."*

**~ Rikki Rogers ~**

It was by far my darkest day on this planet; something unthinkable was happening in front of my eyes, something that no parent should have to go through... my 15-month-old daughter, Zara, was fighting for her life... and losing.

Only an hour earlier we were enjoying a visit from my mother-in-law, Zara was having a good day, and it was looking like we would be out of hospital in a couple more days. We had already been through massive challenges. Zara had been rushed to hospital in an ambulance three weeks earlier struggling to breathe. We found out later

that night she had pneumonia, and so she was admitted to the wards, and we were told she would be home within a couple of days.

Three weeks later, we were still there in hospital and had been through hell. Zara had developed double pneumonia during that time and picked up some other nasty bugs as well, including influenza. Just as she was getting better, she would get hit with another bug and get knocked back again. It had been an emotional roller coaster and we were all exhausted.

So as you can imagine, we were so excited at the thought that we would finally be leaving in just a few days. Zara was enjoying the visit from her grandma and we had watched a helicopter land on the heli-pad outside of her hospital room window, which Zara absolutely loved doing.

After my mother-in-law left though, things turned extremely fast. Zara's oxygen levels started dropping and despite turning up the oxygen, her stats wouldn't go back up again. I could see her going backwards fast. So I called for a nurse.

Within minutes, the big red emergency button had been pushed, I had six nurses and two doctors around the bed within 30 seconds, the resuscitation cart was brought in, and all of the team were frantically working on Zara to help her.

Zara was lying on the bed, and I was sitting on the bed with her, holding both her hands tight to let her know that I was there for her, and I was looking in her eyes, hoping that doing so would keep her with me.

She was panicking with all the people grabbing her and putting things on her, and so I wanted to keep her focused on me to keep her as calm as possible. I remember repeatedly saying to her, "I'm here Zara. Mummy is here for you."

It was a frantic time, with the eight people crowded around one tiny hospital bed, rushing around and doing what they could for her. I didn't really notice them though; I was totally present and there with my girl, trying to keep her calm.

I didn't cry or freak out. I was actually an amazing tower of strength, which is not like me at all! Normally I cry at even the smallest things; I never would have thought that I would be able to cope with such a situation – but I did.

I didn't know what was happening or what was going on, but I knew that I had to be calm for Zara. Somehow I felt that I had to hold both her hands and look into her eyes and just be there with her in that moment. It was like time stopped, and the rest of the world zoned out, and in that moment, I truly connected with my daughter like I never had before.

The doctors and nurses worked on her non-stop for over 20 minutes before one of them pulled me away and told me that they had to take her down to intensive care right away. My heart sank. “She’s not *THAT* bad,” I thought in my head, but looking at the nurse, I could see how serious it really was.

They had made no progress at all, she was continuing to go backwards and time was critical now. Zara was struggling to breathe, she was getting almost no air into her lungs, and her oxygen levels were dangerously low.

### **We Were Losing Her**

The nurse took me outside and told me to call my husband to get him to come in straight away. My hands and body started shaking, and I could hardly dial the number. Andrew, my husband, answered, and I remember my voice was so broken and shaky I could hardly talk.

“You need to come in. Zara is going down to intensive care.”

He could tell straight away it was serious. He didn’t ask questions, just jumped in the car and headed straight to the hospital.



I had to ring my mum and get her to pick up our son from pre-school and then I had to ring the pre-school to tell them that my mum was going to pick him up, and that is when I broke down. I was out of the room, away from Zara, and it all started to sink in. My tower of strength came crashing down.

The poor teacher who answered the phone at the pre-school could hardly understand me, and I could hardly even put a sentence together at this point. I managed to get the message across in broken-up sentences, and I hung up the phone.

I had just a few seconds to pull myself together again as the nurses and doctors wheeled Zara out of her room in her hospital bed, cables were everywhere and Zara was still panicking. We rushed her down to intensive care, and Andrew arrived. We stood there for a minute just embracing in a tight, strong hug.

## **The Long Wait**

The next few hours were intense, and all we could do was trust that the doctors and nurses knew what they were doing to save our girl. The doctors and nurses were working non-stop on her, all while we watched and waited for some positive news.

We had a lot of people pulling us away to tell us what was happening and what the next step might have to be, but it was all such a blur that I don't think I heard most of what they were saying.

They were keeping our girl alive, but only just. Her stats had been critically low for hours and they were running out of options. It wasn't looking promising.

At this point, Zara had been heavily sedated to stop her panicking and allow her to completely relax to try to get her to breathe deeper to get her stats back up, but that wasn't working either.

My phone was filled with messages from worried family members who wanted updates, but I couldn't talk to anyone. I had to be there for Zara. She was our baby girl, she grew inside of me for nine long months, I gave birth to this amazing being, she had filled our lives with so much joy and happiness, and here we were, sitting next to her bedside, holding her tiny limp hands and she was slipping away from us. We felt helpless, scared and had no idea what the future was going to be for our family.

Andrew and I sat by her side for hours, holding her hands, being together, and sending love and positive energy to our girl. The thought never crossed my mind that we would lose her – I don't know if that was me being a mother in total denial, or whether it was just my optimistic outlook

that everything was going to be ok, but I knew she was a fighter and she could get through anything.

I kept talking to her and telling her how much we loved her. She was unconscious from the drugs, but I knew on some level she would be able to hear or feel what I was saying. I had to tell her how much she meant to us and how much love surrounded her.

If you have kids, you will know how excruciating it is to see your child sick and not be able to help them. Watching our girl limp and lifeless in that bed with cables and tubes coming out of her, I felt completely helpless, and it was breaking my heart to see her like that.

## **A Glimmer of Hope**

It was four long hours before the first glimmer of hope came – her oxygen levels went up by 2%. I can remember the sense of pure relief that poured through me at that moment: it was overwhelming.

Her oxygen levels were still in the “danger” zone, but we had made progress forward.

The next few hours saw even more progress. Her oxygen levels got up to 89%, which was still very low, but we were out of the critical zone and we could all let out a sigh of relief.

I had been in hospital by Zara's side day and night for the previous three weeks, and so by this point I was exhausted and had been pushed past my limits physically, emotionally and mentally.

That night though, since she was in intensive care, I was not allowed to stay with her. She had a 24-hour nurse sitting with her watching her constantly, so I got a parents room on site at the hospital so that I was close by but not with Zara.

This room had a single bed and phone, and that was it. It was a tiny box basically, but I got into that room that night, fell on the bed and slept solidly until morning.

One thing you will know if you have spent any time in hospitals is that you never get a full night's sleep. Every night is filled with getting woken every 1-2 hours to check stats and do obs, so I was completely sleep-deprived at this point. I woke up in the morning feeling better than I had in weeks, and rushed over to intensive care to see Zara, hoping she had made big progress.

She had improved slightly over night, but not much. The doctors took her into the operating room that day. They wanted to do more investigations and stick a camera into Zara's lungs to see if that would reveal anything more as to what was going on. It didn't give us answers, and it didn't reveal anything new, just like the hundreds of other tests that she already had over the previous weeks.

So in the end, the doctors concluded that Zara went into respiratory arrest because she had a big chunk of phlegm blocking her airways. Whether that is the truth of what happened on that dark day we will never know.

Zara spent a total of ten days in intensive care, making just a small amount of progress every day. We saw other patients come and go and it felt like we would never get out, but there were definitely some blessings in being there for that long as well. Since Zara had a nurse with her all the time, it meant that I could have some small breaks when Zara was sleeping.

I could go have a walk, get some fresh air, see the outside world and even have a shower – oh the luxury! So the time we spent in intensive care, oddly enough, recharged me so that I could better look after Zara when I was there. It was, in a lot of ways a godsend, but not something I would ever want to go through again and not something any parent should have to go through.

I'm so grateful to all the doctors, nurses and technology that brought our girl back from the brink of death; they all do such an outstanding job on a daily basis and will stay forever in my heart.

We were welcomed back onto the regular ward of the hospital after being released from intensive care with open arms from the nurses. We had been in that ward so long

that I had become friends with a lot of the nurses, and Zara was considered the favourite patient on the ward by many of the nurses. They were so glad to see Zara looking better than she had in weeks.

We spent another week in the hospital before finally being able to come home.

## **The Most Amazing Day**

I remember the day that we were finally released from hospital like it was yesterday — five excruciatingly long weeks after she was rushed to the emergency department struggling to breathe, we were finally going home.

It was by far one of the BEST days of my life. Which may seem a bit odd, and definitely my wedding day and the birth of both my children are up there too, but this day may have brought the most emotion to it, which really does go to show you how challenging that time was for all of us.

There were times during those five weeks where I lost hope, where I gave up, where I didn't know how I would go on another day, and leaving that hospital on that day felt like I was leaving that all behind... it was amazing!

I had been out of the hospital very briefly just twice in the five weeks Zara was in there, and that day when we left, I was filled with total excitement, happiness and joy.

Five weeks away from my husband and son was tough. It was the longest we had all been apart, and that day we were back together. It felt absolutely amazing.

Returning to the outside world though, was very weird; it was almost like a foreign land to me, and everything looked so surreal.

It certainly makes you appreciate and be grateful for everything you have once it has all been taken away from you. Simple things like having a decent shower, having a decent night's sleep and eating proper food again! Wow, the first meal was amazing!

Life felt like it was getting back on track, and we had an amazing sense of optimism and excitement to life.

## **The Gifts**

Although at the time I struggled to see any good in the situation, looking back at this time in my life now, I can see so many amazing gifts that this dark time has brought to me and my family.

Firstly, the gift of inner strength — I had no idea that I could possibly manage that entire situation and come out the other side. It really is through our challenges that we discover how strong we truly are.

I had always relied on other people to take charge and to be the strength in any moderately tough situation. I was the one sitting quietly in the background not sure what to do, looking at others to direct me.

During this five-week challenge though, I was alone with Zara for the majority of the time and I had to be the tower of strength in the situation. I had to make decisions by myself, I had to speak up and ask questions when I wasn't sure about things, and I had to find a deep inner strength to get me through the days when all I wanted to do was die because the pain of watching my daughter suffer so much and be so sick was unbearable. It hurt like I had never felt before, a deep unbearable pain in my heart that words can't even describe.

Andrew was doing his best looking after our son full time, keeping our business running and trying to keep clients happy while I was away. He really did step up and did an amazing job, and I am so grateful to him for being the stable rock at home that I needed during that time.

This inner strength that I found though, was one of the greatest gifts from this time — I discovered that I wasn't



weak. I had gone from living with my mum in my early twenties and studying at university, to being married and living with Andrew, so I never had time to find that independence in my life where I had to make all the decisions for myself and be a strong independent person. In truth, before I had been through this experience in my life with Zara, I still felt like a weak, scared child that needed someone to look after me and be my strength.

During this time, I was forced to have that independence. No one was there to look after me, and I had no other adult with me most of the time. The tables had well and truly been flipped because I now had to be that strength and guidance for Zara that I always looked to others to give me. I discovered that I had an amazing amount of inner strength that got me through this time, and I saw that I could actually make decisions for myself without anyone having input to help me.

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**During our greatest challenges, in our darkest moments, we find within us this deep inner strength that we never knew we had**

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I believe that all of us have this untapped inner strength. If you are reading this book, then you are still alive, and you

have already been through so many challenges in your life and you have survived. You are here today. You have overcome so much in your life; can you see that within you there is an amazing inner strength that you have, that probably you are not even aware of?

I also got the gift of gratitude during this time. There is something really powerful about spending an extended amount of time in hospital on a ward — you become very grateful for your life and how much you have in it. During those five weeks, I met some amazing families that had been there much longer than we had. That had been through way more than we had. I met one mum and son that had been in that ward for 11 months solid, with no break whatsoever, and no going home. How could I even dare complain about being there for five weeks when I met someone who had experienced that?

We also shared a room with a teenager and her daughter for a week. At just 18-years-old, this teenager had a beautiful baby girl with Down Syndrome, and the father had no involvement at all. This was a single mum at just 18-years-old with a baby with special needs, still practically a child herself. She had to travel from a different city every month and spend a week in hospital alone with her baby. No family around to visit or to support her, all by herself.

Wow, that left me totally humbled and speechless and wondering what I was so stressed out about!

I also met an angelic little girl that was four years old, and she had never been out of the hospital in her whole life. Since birth she had been in the hospital; it was her home and she didn't even know what the outside world was like.

Connecting with people in the hospital, talking with them and hearing their stories, touches you to your core, and makes you realise how blessed and lucky you are despite the pain and suffering that you are going through.

This was probably the time that I learnt the most about gratitude and appreciating what I have thanks to these amazing people who were going through even greater challenges than I was in their own lives.

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**Appreciate and be grateful for what you have,  
because even in our darkest times there are still  
many things in your life to be grateful for**

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Every day you have choices. You can choose to see challenges as opportunities, opportunities to grow, and

opportunities to learn, and that is what I decided to do. There were so many more gifts and blessings from this time as well. Zara and I now have an amazingly strong bond between us that I credit to going to hell and back with her. I can't imagine not having such a strong bond with her now, and I am so eternally grateful to the Universe for giving us that experience so that we now can feel the phenomenal love, joy and connection that we get to experience every day.

It doesn't mean that I want to go through that again, or that I enjoyed any part of that challenge; it was extremely hard, but I can look back now and appreciate the gifts that came because of it.

We also became much stronger as a family. Some families break apart during difficult times, and some families choose to grow stronger and band together during difficult times. We thankfully chose to band together and become stronger. It wasn't easy to keep us all together, but we knew that we had a choice: either we could fragment and drift apart as a family, or we could bond together and get through it as a stronger family.

There is something really magical about a family that has suffered together — the bond is stronger, the love is stronger, and there is this knowing that you can get through anything that is thrown at you together.

A week after we finally left the hospital though, we were back in there. Zara was struggling to breathe again, and that's when we realised the challenges weren't over yet...





## CHAPTER 2

### THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

*"True forgiveness is when you can say,  
thank you for that experience."*

**~ Oprah Winfrey ~**

It turns out that the five weeks in hospital was just the beginning of a time that would test all of us in our family beyond what we thought was possible.

Zara spent the next ten months in and out of hospital on a regular basis. Her immune system was compromised, and she was a very sick child. She would go from having a small runny nose in the morning, to it turning into full-blown pneumonia within hours and was back in hospital struggling to breathe again.

Life can be extremely fragile and we certainly experienced

this during that year with Zara. Our girl was “failing to thrive” according to the doctors – developmental delays, losing weight, and her immune system was badly comprised.

Any bug that she picked up, no matter how small, would turn into pneumonia and we were back in hospital within hours. So we had to go on lock down and keep Zara away from anything that could put her at risk of getting sick. No one was allowed to visit us if they had even the smallest inkling of being sick, and we stopped going out to avoid her unknowingly picking up a bug while out and about.

It was a year focused on the health and life of our little girl. Nothing seemed more important than getting our fragile, unwell girl healthy and thriving again. After all she was such a strong, healthy baby. What on earth happened?

The medicine and drugs that the doctors gave us weren’t working, she wasn’t getting better from them, and it felt like my daughter was a guinea pig as they tested drug after drug on her in the hope that one of them would work. I lost count of how many medications she had in the end, but it was a lot, and none of them were helping her.

So I turned to natural medicine to see if we could make progress with her health and wellbeing – and we did. It was natural medicine and natural therapies that got Zara putting on weight again, something that even the high



calorie “fat drink” that the nutritionist at the hospital gave us couldn’t do. Within a week of seeing a naturopath, Zara started putting on weight, and after two months, she had gone from being not even on the national growth chart scale for her age because she was so small, to being at the 25% mark. This was massive progress because with her finally putting on weight, her immune system would be able to function better.

The naturopath also helped directly with her immune system and worked on getting that stronger so that she didn’t get pneumonia every time she got sick. This definitely helped, but was slow at working, and we continued to be in and out of hospital with repeat pneumonia. However, every time our length of stay was getting shorter and we could see that Zara was slowly but surely getting stronger and better able to fight the pneumonia when it hit.

## **My Breaking Point**

I hit breaking point though, when Zara was back in hospital with her fifth pneumonia and Andrew was in Australia on business and couldn’t fly home early. I remember how guilty and helpless I felt that I was there in hospital with Zara again while my son had to be rushed off to extended family members to look after him.

It was such a low point for me because I felt like I was failing my kids and I felt like I was failing as a mother. It was a massive wake up call for me because I could see at that moment how much my son was being affected and how he was having to take the back seat in our family. Nearly all of my focus had been on Zara for over ten months and here was our son, getting pushed to the side yet again because of his sister.

When you have a critically sick child with other children, it really can be a challenge to make sure that your healthy kids are getting the attention and love that they deserve, and this was the time when it became obvious to me that our son was not getting me as a mum. Sure he was being provided for, he was getting what he needed to survive and he had a good life, but he wasn't getting the acknowledgement and presence from either of his parents that I felt that he should be getting, and this started really tearing me apart on the inside.

It was day seven on this particular hospital admittance, and I had reached my biggest breaking point yet. Zara had fallen asleep in the cot next to my bed; the nurses had just been in to check on her, and after they left, I totally broke down. In that moment I let it all out: I cried my heart out, which wasn't unusual considering the year of misery we had been through. I had cried many times over the months, but this time I cried for hours and I couldn't stop. I had all this built up emotion inside of me that I was

holding in because I had to be strong for Zara, and that night it got let out and released like never before.

My heart was broken from the pain of it all, I felt completely alone with Andrew in Australia, and I had lost my faith that things would get better. I was asking “Why me?” and feeling frustrated that I had been given this crap life that I felt completely and utterly trapped in with no hope of getting out.

I was exhausted as well... I had been caring for Zara pretty much non-stop for nearly a year; the countless sleepless nights sitting up with her, rubbing her back, rocking her to sleep, and crying out of total desperation had all taken its toll. There were many nights that I would be begging and praying to God to heal my little girl and to keep her alive because in reality, we just didn't how much more her little body could take of this before it eventually gave up for good. Healthy people die from getting pneumonia, and here was our fragile 2-year-old girl fighting her fifth pneumonia. How much more could her body take? How much more could we all take?

The exhaustion sunk in and I felt like I had nothing left to give. I had lost myself during this intense time and I didn't know what to do anymore. I felt broken, alone, and I knew that I couldn't keep doing this.

When I finally calmed down and the tears stopped that night in that hospital room, I felt a sense of calmness roll over me. I had released so much anger, stress and tension that had been built up inside that everything seemed different.

I was suddenly very present and lying in that moment, staring up at the roof of the hospital room with absolutely no thoughts running through my mind. I knew in that moment that I couldn't continue like this. That something *had* to change. I was ready for a different story in my life!

## **Total Surrender**

So I decided to surrender back to the Universe – to God, to the divine energy that surrounds us. I'm not a religious person, but I am spiritual and believe that there is a universal force (Source energy) that is surrounding us all and co-creating with us.

I had lost my faith and trust in the Universe slowly and surely over the previous months, but now I knew I had to trust and strengthen that faith again.

So I looked up and asked for help "What is causing Zara to be so sick?"

The answer came so quickly and clearly that it took me by complete surprise. "It's the house."

"The house! What?!?" I said

"The house is toxic, get out!" I heard come back straight away.

So I got the message that the house that we were living in was toxic and that we had to get out of there. We had moved into that house when Zara was just nine months old, and we moved there in a rush to get my son into the school zone for the school that we wanted him to go to. We loved the house; it was an amazing house in a wealthy area that had panoramic views overlooking the water, as well as a massive backyard for the kids to play in.

I let the news sink in for a while, just staring at the ceiling in shock, and then things started to make sense. Zara had been a healthy, happy baby that was developing ahead of the "norm," then we moved into that house and a month later, she got Rubella, and every few months after that, she got sick, until the big one where we ended up with her in hospital for five weeks.

Doubt set in though, and I wasn't sure if the house was actually the problem. Could I trust the Universe's guidance when it had allowed me to go through so much pain and suffering over the last year? Could a house really make someone that sick for no apparent reason? So I asked the Universe to give me a sign, one that was so obvious that I would have no doubt that the house was the problem and then we would move.

Well the big sign came a week later, and without a doubt, we knew we had to move. Our landlords rang us out of the blue saying that they were getting rid of the house and building a brand new multi-million dollar mansion on the property to utilise the amazing water views and big section; we needed to be out of there within a month.

So that was it. We had no idea why the house was so toxic or why it was making Zara so sick, but we knew now that we had to go and we did. We were out of there within a month, but the day before we left we were saying goodbye to our lovely neighbours that we had grown to love, and they revealed the shocking truth about the house....

## **The Shocking Truth**

The neighbours mentioned to us that the house used to be P lab a few years before we moved in: the occupants were manufacturing illegal methamphetamine drugs. They thought that we had known, but we had no idea and were totally shocked at this news. The house had apparently been cleaned by professionals, but clearly not good enough to completely decontaminate the house of the toxins.

With Zara being just 9-months-old when we moved in, she was in that core stage of building her immune system and was crawling around on the floor. It seems she had been

severely affected by the contamination of the house and this was no doubt the cause of her recurring pneumonia.

I really didn't know how to process this new information. I was so angry – angry at the neighbours for not mentioning it us sooner, angry at the P dealers for wreaking my life and angry at myself for not being intuitive enough to know not to move into that house in the first place, or at least to get out of there sooner. We had been in that house for 18 months. That was 18 months of exposure to those horrific toxins going into not only my baby girl but all of us, and that left a truly sick feeling in my stomach.

It was valuable information to know though, and I did feel somewhat empowered that now I had the answers to help our gorgeous girl to get better, and was glad that we were out of that house for good.

We moved house and within a few days, we were all feeling different. We hadn't noticed it while we were in the house, but all of us had some sort of health problem while we were living in 'the' house.

I had eczema flare up on multiple patches over my body, our son Rylan had asthma that had flared up in the house and Andrew had some skin issues as well. We hadn't realised that all of these ailments had come about since we were living in the house, and once we were out, they cleared up pretty fast. Things were starting to make sense

and we felt a sense of relief that we could finally move forward and get on with our life, knowing that we were now out of that toxic environment.

So I took this new information to the specialist doctors that were assigned to Zara's ongoing care, letting them know about the P lab and how this must be the cause of Zara's recurring pneumonia. They dismissed it though, stating that there is no proof of the damage that methamphetamines can cause, especially when the house had been cleaned and it had been such a long time since it was an active P lab.

I was furious. How could they think that it could not have an effect! I had no doubt in my mind that the house we were living in had caused Zara to get so sick in the first place and then continue to get sick after that. After all, she was a healthy baby up until we moved into that house. This certainly opened my eyes to just how set and closed off the opinions of the medical profession can be, and I knew then that I had to take the health and wellbeing of my child fully into my own hands and do my own research on how to best heal her from the toxins.

A week after we moved house, Zara was back in hospital again, but this time it was considerably less severe. In fact, it was the first pneumonia that she got where she didn't need to be put on oxygen and we were out within just four days. Things were looking up and we were very excited to be seeing the end to the entire ordeal soon.



I am pleased to say that was the very last admission into a hospital ward for Zara. She never got admitted again, although we did need to visit the emergency department a number of times to have her in for observation when she got sick because of her history.

Over the months in the new house we saw Zara improve in massive leaps. It took a lot longer than I was expecting to completely detox all of us from the toxins, but with every month that went by, we saw improvements. I remember so clearly the first time that she got sick and didn't get pneumonia; it was one of the best feelings in the world and felt like we were getting back to a life with some stability in it!

## **Moving Forward**

Finding out that someone else (aka the drug dealers) had caused all my misery and made my daughter suffer so much and nearly lose her life because of their stupid addiction was pretty challenging, and I did struggle with coming to terms with this. But ultimately, I had to take responsibility for the situation, because if I handed all the responsibility over to the drug dealers, then I would be giving them my power and would have lost all control of the situation.

I wanted to move forward in our lives and close that dark chapter of the book that we had just been through and in order to truly do that, I had to forgive. I had to forgive myself from the heavy guilt of choosing to move into that house, even when I had no idea it had previously been a P lab. I had to forgive myself for not knowing sooner that it was the house that was causing Zara to continually get sick, I had to forgive the neighbours for not telling me sooner, I had to forgive the doctors for not caring, and most of all, I had to forgive the drug dealers for causing all the pain and suffering that they had created unknowingly in my life.

It was the only way that I could move forward and truly focus on getting Zara completely better, and so I forgave the drug dealers. I truly forgave them. I forgave the doctors, I forgave the neighbours and I forgave myself. It did take time, and I can't say that it was easy; I found it really hard to completely forgive and let go of all the anger when I had seen and experienced the pain and suffering that living in that house had caused. But I did it. I forgave everybody because I knew that was what was going to set my family and myself free to move forward in our lives.

## The Gifts

This challenge gave me that gift of forgiveness – to truly let go of all angst and anger towards the situation and towards the complete strangers that I had never met, but who completely changed my life forever. They will never have any idea of the trail of pain and suffering that they left behind them, but I do truly wish them all the best and hope that they are in a happier and more fulfilling place in their lives right now.

The gift of non-judgement and acceptance eventually came through with this challenge as well. I didn't know the drug dealers, I didn't know their life story, I didn't know what they had been through and what they had suffered through in their own lives, and so in order to truly forgive them, I had to show compassion and non-judgement of them for what they did. They had no knowledge of what was going to happen years after they were in that house, and so it wasn't a personal vendetta against me or my family; it just was what it was. So I got the gift of acceptance for the situation of what it truly was, instead making it about me and going into victim mode for the hurt and damage that they caused. That wasn't going to help. Sure, it could make us feel better for a while, to feel that we were right and not at fault in any way and we had been unjustly hurt. But how was that going to help me and my family move forward from the whole situation? It wasn't.

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**Holding onto anger and hatred towards someone that has hurt you or done you wrong is not going to hurt them, it is only going to hurt you and hold you back**

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By forgiving them, it didn't mean that I was saying what they did was right or ok, it just meant that I was releasing the anger and negative emotion towards them.

I am a strong believer though that everything happens for a reason in our lives, and so I also had to trust that moving into that house, the preceding dark years and all the challenges that followed were indeed all for a very powerful reason.

The gift of truly trusting came during this time as well; trust that it was all part of a divine plan to help Andrew, myself, Rylan and Zara grow as people and as a unified family. Trust that it was all part of our path in this lifetime together. Trust that it was there to help us with our own life purpose, even if it didn't feel like it at the time. I look back now and see how that period of darkness has shaped where we are today, and I sit here in full gratitude for that. Not for the pain and suffering, but for the lessons and gifts that came out of that time.

This was a time where my faith in the divine Universe not only got shattered, crushed and broken, but when it got put back together as well, even stronger than before. I think in life, your faith and trust in the Universe is tested many times and at some points, we lose it to then regain it stronger when we look back and see the purpose of a challenge in our lives.

My faith and trust that the Universe is indeed supporting me to live to my highest potential is such a powerful gift, one that I am so grateful for. It has been tested again many times since, but with each challenge in my life, it only grows stronger and stronger, to show me that everything happens for a reason. There are gifts in every situation if you are willing to look, explore and find them.

So I want to ask you a question now: are there any people or situations in your own life that you feel you need to forgive so that you can truly move forward in your own life? Make the choice to release the anger and resentment and forgive those people and situations now, because it does just take a choice in order to let go and move on. I know you have been hurt deeply, I know you have suffered and felt heartbreaking pain... is it time to let go and forgive so that you can move forward in your life?

Often there is an unwillingness to forgive. We want to strike back, we want justice, we want karma to get them, and we want the other person to know the pain they

inflicted. Forgiveness is for you though, not for anyone else. It is about finding peace within you so that the situation no longer stirs up a raft of negative emotions.

So who is it time for you to forgive?

Nine months after we moved out of the toxic house, Zara's health was under control, but once she finally became a healthy and happy kid again, we had new long-term challenges to deal with. I'm going to go into that later in the book, but right now I want to go back to the early years of my own life to share some gifts from that time.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE GIFT OF SELF ACCEPTANCE

*"You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire  
Universe, deserve your love and affection"*

**~ Gautama Buddha ~**

**From early on in my life I didn't feel good enough.**

I'm sure a lot of people will be able to relate to this because there is an epidemic in this world at the moment of people not feeling worthy, not feeling good enough, not feeling loved, and those are all things that we need in order to feel happy and fulfilled in our lives as humans.

I strongly feel that it is time to change this, and with self-love and self-worth soaring, we will experience a completely different world. So many people are suffering. They are hurting inside and a lot of people then take that

out on others in the form of criticising, belittling and judging which causes even more self worth issues. So where did this unworthiness and low self-esteem come from for me?

Well it started right from my birth. I was born with cataracts in both my eyes, which means that the lenses inside my eyes were clouded over and my eyesight was very limited. In fact, my left eye was completely blind from birth. My right eye had enough sight that I could manage through life in a faded and blurred out world, but the impact that this disability had on my life was massive.

I had trouble seeing more than a few metres in front of me, and I grew up being so scared that I might lose my parents in a crowd, which I had done many times, that I was filled with anxiety and fear. I was always close by my parents, clinging on to them and not willing to wander far from where they were. This drove my mum crazy as she didn't realise why I was so clingy and she had no idea about the fears that were consuming me inside – my fear that I would lose my parents forever. She wanted me, like any good mother would, to be confident and go out and be social in the world instead of constantly clinging to her.



## **The Stories That We Tell Ourselves**

As kids we made up our own stories in our heads of what a situation means, and it wasn't usually the correct interpretation of what was really going on either!

So I had this story in my head that, "I wasn't good enough for my mum, and that I was disappointing her because I wasn't behaving like the person she wanted me to be." This of course wasn't what my mum was meaning, and her intentions were good ones. She loved me and was just trying to help her daughter spread her wings and be confident in the world.

This is why it is so important to listen to the words that we speak to our kids, and not only listen to those words, but also watch their behaviour around what we are saying to them, because I have seen now with my own kids that my misinterpretations as a child were not unusual. Most kids interpret what we say and even what happens in a particular situation very differently from what we actually mean or from what actually happened.

I also grew up in a family and extended family where I had a number of strong opinionated people who were "always right". You couldn't disagree or even discuss anything with them, and they didn't want to hear your viewpoint because, after all, they were always right and

so there was no point even discussing it. The story I took out of that situation as a kid was that, “My opinions and my thoughts weren’t important and didn’t matter,” and so with this going on and also with the harsh criticism that was constantly being thrown my way, I pretty much stopped talking and kept going inward, continuing to feel like I was never good enough.

I became extremely shy and was very quiet in life. I didn’t speak unless I had to, and in my inner world, I just kept going deeper and deeper into self-pity. I had low self-worth from being born with this disability, low self-esteem from not feeling good enough for everyone around me and had no self-love because I felt like I was useless. These feelings just kept snowballing during my childhood, and I would see reasons to validate them everywhere, in every situation.

As I grew up and went to school, my disability became more and more obvious. My blind left eye that I had no control over would wander a lot and I got the name “bung eye” by the other kids and would even get teased by some of my friends’ parents. The teasing and name-calling had a massive impact on how I felt about myself, giving me further validation about how worthless I was. All I wanted as a kid was to be ‘normal’ and to fit in, and I would do anything to make that happen.

I struggled to keep up in school as I couldn’t read as fast as the other kids and I had trouble seeing the blackboard

at the front of the class, so I would copy the work of the friend I was sitting next to and then would get in trouble a lot by the teachers for copying and being a distraction.

## **Two Defining Surgeries**

As a kid I also had two surgeries that were transformational to my life, but in two very contrasting ways. Both surgeries were there to help me, but I took very different meanings out of each of the surgeries.

The first surgery I didn't want to have. My mum decided to get cosmetic surgery for me to pin my ears back as they were sticking out; she insisted that the surgery was the best thing for me and told me that I would thank her one day, but I never did.

It was a horrible surgery, and because they didn't do cosmetic surgery on kids back in those days, I was put in an adult ward in a shared room. Sharing a room with three very sick elderly people was terrible, and I reacted so badly to the anaesthetic that I was vomiting all night. I wanted to die.... I was alone, sick, scared out of my mind and feeling like I was broken and not good enough for being born with big ears.

This surgery affected me deeply throughout my life and has taken many years working through the issues and

doing a lot of healing to come to terms with it. Personally I would have rather dealt with living with big ears than have gone through all of that, but I know that everything happens for a reason and in perfect grace and so I also know that this surgery has helped to shape me in to the person that I am today and I am grateful for that.

The second surgery however, I had a completely different “story” from. I wanted this surgery even though it was a big risk. When I was 11-years-old, my loving parents paid a huge amount of money to get me groundbreaking surgery on my right eye (the one that had some sight in it). This surgery put an artificial lens into that eye and the cataract from that eye was removed.

This was big risk surgery – it was a new procedure and the risks were high. I might end up blind in both eyes, or it would be a transformational surgery and I would come out seeing from my right eye like I had never seen before. My parents made the decision to take the risk and go ahead with it, and I’m so grateful that they did.

However, the fear of me going blind was so strong that when I came out of surgery and saw everything was black I started screaming and panicking that I was completely blind. It took the nurses a long time to calm me down and explain that I just had a bandage on my eye to let it heal for a few days!

The time finally came to take the bandages off and I was in awe and amazement at the world. The world was nothing like the dull and faded world that I had been seeing – it was bright and full of amazing colours. I couldn't take the smile off my face for weeks and a whole new world opened up for me. I'm so grateful that my parents took that risk and that it all worked out, but isn't it interesting how, with both of those surgeries, I took completely different meanings out of them, yet the love and good intentions were the same from my parents' perspective. I took one of them to mean that, "I'm not good enough, you don't accept me how I am and I am broken," and the other one as, "You love me so much that you take big risks and spend money to get this amazing surgery for me."

## **Teenage Hurt**

Of course my eye surgery didn't stop all of the challenges with my disability — I was still blind in my left eye, the teasing and bullying still continued. I was still so different, and the desire to be normal and fit in grew stronger.

I was told by the doctors that it was impossible to fix my left eye. Even surgery wouldn't help because the connections in my brain had now "blocked" any chance of sight coming to that eye, even if sight was there. I would have given anything to make it possible for me to

see out of that blind eye, like somehow that would fix all the pain I was feeling, but I had been told so much that it was impossible so I did what I could to be “normal” still with my blind eye.

I refused the extra help that I got from the school. I didn’t want anything extra; I just wanted to be like everyone else and so I continued to struggle through the rest of my school years, getting by with the help from some good friends who looked after me.

All while deep inside I was hurting, I was broken, and I felt so alone. It felt like everything I said or did was never good enough for the people in my life, and I was always getting criticised or put down in some way, no matter what I did and no matter how hard I was trying to please them.

In my teenage years I became depressed, which got worse when my parents got divorced and so I ended up on anti-depressants and had to go to therapy. I absolutely hated that though. I didn’t want to talk to anybody. After all, my thoughts and opinions weren’t important, so why did I have to talk about things with a complete stranger that kept patronizing me. I preferred living in my own self-pity to the flat lifeless world that was around me on anti-depressants. So I put on an act that I was “over it” and happy again, I lied to my parents, I lied to my therapist, I lied to my doctor and I got myself off the anti-depressants within a month.

I definitely do not recommend that approach. It was not a very smart thing to do, but it worked out in the end for me and the whole thing made me realise that I was dwelling in self-pity and it was ruining my life. It was time to make some radical changes to my attitude and my life.

### **My Dream To Be 'Normal'**

So I worked on improving my life – changing my attitude, taking small positive steps, and still dreaming of that magical time when I could say that I was “normal”.

It wasn't until I was about 21-years-old that I felt like I had hit the jackpot and become “normal”. I was fitting into society, had lots of friends, a job, and a boyfriend and was doing all the normal things that a 21-year-old did. There was a great sense of accomplishment that I felt within myself to getting to this place.

That feeling didn't last long though, as I discovered that being “normal” really was just an illusion and wasn't very exciting at all! Not only was it not very exciting, but pretty much every one I knew who was “normal” was unhappy and unfulfilled in their life as well!

What I discovered was that “normal people” had jobs that they hated and that didn't pay them enough to do things that they really didn't want to do. They would work their

butts off and then they would go unplug from their life on the weekend by getting wasted with alcohol and drugs, only to have to get up grumpy on Monday morning to do the whole thing again the next week.

To tell you the truth, I felt really ripped off! Here I was, this sad and unhappy person striving towards this amazing place called “normal,” I had been dreaming about this place my whole life, I worked hard to get there, and then it was like, “This is it?!?”

I certainly realised that “being normal” didn’t live up to the expectation that I had of it in my mind. Which is so often true of any goal that we try to reach – you have this massive expectation of achieving that goal and then when you do, it is often no way near as exciting or fulfilling as you thought it would be. Interesting isn’t it?

The gift, the growth, and the true fulfilment, comes out of the *journey* and not the *destination*.

That doesn’t mean don’t go for goals. It means to realise that the value in setting goals and achieving them is actually in taking the journey to achieve those goals and not so much in the actual final achievement of the goal. So focus on the journey more and appreciate it more as you go on the journey rather than getting fixated on the outcome at the end and missing out on all the amazing gifts along the way.



A couple of years later, after getting married and then wasting my nights and weekends partying, getting drunk and getting stoned like all my other friends were, I started to question things again and my husband, Andrew, and I started on an interesting journey that was a complete twist of fate. Looking back on that time now, it all seemed destined to lead us to where we are today.

## **The Journey to Greatness**

This is when we started looking for a better life, one that was a great life—one filled with happiness, abundance, joy and fulfilment.

I started embracing who I was and I started learning to accept myself even with all my flaws. Now I will admit it was a slow process. I had so much work to do to release all the negative emotions and negative energy that I had built up over my life, and it was hard to take the stand and tell myself that I was actually worth it and that I was good enough because I had never heard that from anyone else. The harsh criticism from my past stayed in my head. It had taken up residence there and wasn't going to leave easily. Of course it wasn't actually anyone else's job to tell me that I was good enough or worthy enough or lovable enough. It was up to me to find that within myself, and eventually I did.

Over a period of a decade, I worked on myself: I invested in myself and I rediscovered who I was. I dived deep into personal development – attending seminars, buying books and programs, investing in coaching, getting energy healing and body work done. I’ve spent tens of thousands of dollars getting here, to this place of total love and acceptance for myself, but it was all worth it.

Every day I now see people that struggle with the same issues that I did – low self-esteem, not thinking that they are good enough to achieve anything, not believing that they deserve a good life or are worthy of it, and it really does sadden me, because what I see is unlimited potential in that person. It’s not surprising though, that this is so rampant in society, because we are raised in a world with so much criticism, so much judgement and so many high standards that we are told we “must” fit into in order to be worthy.

It is not me that has to convince people of their unlimited potential though. As much as I can encourage them and help them see it, it is not my responsibility; it is actually theirs. I didn’t reach the place of self-love and self-acceptance from hearing people tell me that I was great and that I was worthy. Some gorgeous people did tell me along the way, but I didn’t believe them. I got there from looking deep within, by looking into my soul and finding out that I am truly enough, and that I am worthy to be here on this planet as a human being.

It is our own responsibility to do this for ourselves, not anyone else's, and the truth is that looking within isn't fun. It is uncomfortable, it hurts, and that's why so few people do it! But when you get past all the darkness that you hold within, you find the truth of who you really are – pure unlimited potential, and that will set you free to start living an amazing life.

## **The Gifts**

All the pain and suffering throughout my childhood, throughout my teens, it was all a blessing for me, even though it hurt so bad going through it at the time. Even though it felt like it crushed my soul. I can see now that it was this amazing gift that helped me to crack and fall apart so much that it made me take responsibility and put myself back together again — one powerful tiny piece at a time. Then with that gift, I was truly able to see the amazing soul that was inside of me. If I didn't feel so broken during that time, then maybe I never would have reached that breaking point where I finally said, "Enough of this crap!"

I am now so grateful every day that I am who I am, and I love so deeply my teachers along the way who helped me to get here, especially my mum, who with all her good intentions and love, and dealing with her own massive

challenges, broke me the most in those early years. But out of it all she gave me the greatest gift as well – a drive so strong to discover my true self at the core of my being that I will be eternally grateful to her.

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**Every person in our life is a teacher, the ones that love us, the ones that hate us, the ones that hurt us and the ones that drive us absolutely crazy!**

**Learn from your teachers every day and ask how you can become a better person because of them.**

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I've got to point out here that overall I did have a good childhood with loving parents. It wasn't perfect, but who's childhood is! We rarely come out unscathed from our childhood and it has been acceptable and normal for a long time to criticise and knock people down, especially our children. This is why there is such a massive epidemic of low self-esteem, low self-worth and low self-love in our society.... It is because we have all been beaten down from other people's judgements and harsh criticisms, and it is time to break the cycle now on this destructive behaviour.

It is time to drop those feelings that you are not good enough, not worthy and not deserving enough, and it is time to start standing up for yourself and your

amazingness. We are all enough, we are all unique and we are all so freaking amazing! In order to turn this around, we need to be more conscious of it, set boundaries of how we want to be treated and not take it personally when people do criticise us.

Today I have a great relationship with my mum. I love her deeply and we've both healed so much of the past. I'm so proud of her and the journey that she has been on because she has learnt and grown so much over the years as well. I'm not interested in dwelling on the past. I am always looking at enjoying the NOW and laying foundations to build a brighter FUTURE for myself and the people around me and I'm so glad that my mum and the rest of my amazing family is part of that.

So many gifts came out of this continued challenge over my life. The gift of self-acceptance, the gift of self-love, the gift of truly getting to know myself at a core level — these gifts are the ones that I value the most in my life. Too many people are going around now days feeling lost and alone and not knowing who they really are. We get brainwashed in society to believe that we must act a certain way, that we must obtain certain material stuff to “succeed”, and that we must do certain things to fit in. If you can break free from this and truly lead your own life filled with purpose and passion just being who you were born to be, then life will truly shine for you.

The gift of inner strength also comes in here as well. I never thought of myself as a strong person, especially in those younger years of my life. I always felt so weak and insignificant, but the reality is, looking back now, that I was strong and I did have inner strength that got me through. I didn't commit suicide when I was a teenager; I used that inner strength to keep going despite the pain and suffering I was feeling inside. I definitely let too much of the crap get to me, and I took all of it personally, but under all of that was this inner strength that was starting to build and prepare me for other challenges in my life.

Seeing different perspectives in a situation was also a gift that came to me because of this time and an important factor in the process of forgiveness. Nearly two decades after the cosmetic surgery on my ears happened, I was able to see why I was so angry and upset about it and why my Mum thought she was doing the best for me. I was able to forgive and come to a resolution around the whole situation.

Looking at situations from all perspectives of the people involved can help to see the situation in a different light, from a different point of view, and by doing this, it can help to heal, forgive and resolve the situation. I now find myself choosing to look from different perspectives all the time in life, which is a really powerful tool that anybody can use in resolving conflicts and difficult situations when other people are involved. It also increases our

understanding and compassion, which is something the world definitely needs more of right now.

Probably the most profound gift that came out of that time was the gift of being different and the desire to create an extraordinary life for myself. As the majority of people continuously try to 'fit in' for most of their lives and create a mediocre life, I am so grateful that I discovered early that one of the keys to sustained happiness is being who you are meant to be.

Have you noticed how the unique and weird people in life, the ones that truly embrace and accept their own uniqueness and weirdness, are often really happy? That is because they are being themselves and truly shining in the world. They don't care if people find them weird or strange because they are not going to change who they are to please other people. It is a gift to be ok with who you are and not be swayed by what others think of you. So embrace yourself and embrace your life, because there is so much more to life than just a mediocre life. It doesn't matter who you are: you can live an extraordinary life if you choose to.

There are endless examples of people having difficult childhoods or massive challenges in their life and overcoming all that to go on to have an extraordinary life... Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, Oprah Winfrey, J.K. Rowling, Steve Jobs, Christopher Reeves.... the list goes on.

I want you to know that it doesn't matter where you are right now; you can choose to go anywhere and achieve anything that you want to in your life. It's not always going to be easy, challenges and obstacles will come up, but you can do it if you make the decision to do it. Decisions are so crucial in creating the path of where you are heading in your life, and that is what my next dark time is all about.





## CHAPTER 4

### THE GIFT OF A TURNING POINT DECISION

*"It is in your moments of decision that your  
destiny is shaped"*

**~ Tony Robbins ~**

Have you ever looked back on your life and realised that one key decision that you made completely changed the direction of your life for the better? Do you ever look back and think, WOW, what would my life be like now if I didn't take that risk and make that turning point decision? Just how terrible would my life have gotten if I didn't make that important decision, and would I even still be alive today?

This next dark time for me led to probably the biggest turning point in my life. In fact, I believe that this one decision saved my life.

I was an extremely sick teenager. For weeks on end I would be sick. In fact, I would go from one illness to the next without much time in between to even see what wellness was or what it could feel like. My immune system was weak and no amount of drugs or treatments from the doctors seemed to help at all.

My teenage years also brought extreme pain – pain that I never want to experience again. I had extremely heavy, long and painful periods that were so bad I would spend days just curled up in bed crying in pain – no amount of pain killers would help. On top of that, my periods were so out of control that I would bleed for almost two weeks non-stop and they would be extremely heavy.

I became very anaemic due to the excessive loss of blood, and in the end, I had to go on medication to force my periods to only come every two months. This gave me my life back somewhat and it was so nice to be able to do some of things that normal teenagers did. Of course, my immune system was still so weak and so I was still not well and the period pain continued for most of the time despite only having a period every two months.

I saw numerous doctors and specialists to try to get to the bottom of what was causing all the chaos, and I had so many tests to find answers. During one of the many ultrasounds, they found a growth inside my uterus. Finally we had an answer of what was going on. I had a successful surgery to remove the growth and I was expecting a miracle recovery from all my symptoms.

That didn't happen though, and a month later, at the follow up visit to the specialist, I told him that I was still in extreme pain and was still having a lot of issues. He told me very sternly and without a doubt that I had psychological issues and I was making the whole thing up. Ouch! That really hurt! I started doubting myself and questioning my sanity... Was I actually making up this pain? Why on earth would I do that? Did I really have psychological issues?

Months went by and the pain wasn't getting better. In fact, it was getting worse. I also started suffering from persistent and consistent headaches and migraines. So now on top of all the tests and investigations I was having for the lower abdominal pain that I was experiencing, I was also having tests and investigations into my headaches as well.

I was absolutely petrified that it could be a brain tumour, and for over a month that haunted me, but thankfully that got ruled out with further tests, and it put my mind at

ease. My whole body was in chaos, out of balance and breaking down. Then an answer finally came. I went and saw one of the top gynaecologists in New Zealand and after having investigative surgery, we found out that I had endometriosis.

Endometriosis is where the lining of your uterus escapes and attaches itself outside of the uterus onto other organs and areas inside your body. During your period, these pieces of lining then shed as they would do inside of your uterus and cause a lot of pain.

The diagnosis was bittersweet. After years of excruciating pain, I finally had an answer. I wasn't imagining it all and that was a big relief, but the diagnosis was scary. My gynaecologist said that I had an extremely severe case of endometriosis and the only way to get rid of it was cutting out all those pieces of lining through surgery.

Three surgeries later, with long recovery times, and I was getting frustrated. I kept having this surgery to cut out all the endometriosis and six months later it had grown back and I was having surgery again. Sure the surgery helped, but it felt like it was not fixing the problem, and if I didn't find another solution, this was going to be the cycle of my life – constant surgeries — which I did not want.

Then to make things worse, my gynaecologist had to have the tough conversation about my future. I was 20-years-

old at this stage and I had just had yet another surgery. I remember so clearly walking into her office that day and seeing the look on her face, knowing that she had something serious to tell me. She told me that the scarring from all of the surgeries was bad, really bad, and that it was very unlikely that I was going to be able to have kids naturally. My only chance for having them was if I started trying immediately, and even then, the chances weren't going to be great.

This was devastating news for me. I knew from all of the endometriosis information that I had read that infertility was very high with the condition, but I was always hopeful that I would be one of the lucky ones. I had always wanted kids. I knew from a young age that I wanted to be a mother – it was something that I felt deep in my heart.

In fact, as a kid, every birthday I would ask my mum to get pregnant and give me a younger brother so that I could have a baby to look after. She rightly refused every year and ended up getting me a puppy instead to at least satisfy my love of animals and my need to nurture!

So when this news came that it was unlikely I was going to be able to have kids, my heart got crushed. Most 20-year-olds aren't thinking about kids yet, but I knew that was part of my dream future, and so it was heartbreaking to think that my dreams weren't going to be able to come true.

Andrew and I were dating at this point and we had been going out for over two years, but neither of us was ready to become parents. It took a lot of really hard conversations and digging deep to decide that at 20-years-old I was not ready for kids and that we were going to have to take the risk of never having kids because of this decision. It was a tough decision, but I knew somehow that it was the right one.

### **Then something life changing happened...**

My mum found out about a naturopath that had helped one of her friend's kids to get well, and we decided it was worth a shot giving the world of natural health a go since conventional medicine hadn't helped me much. As well as finding that my body was in total chaos that we already knew, she also discovered two important things that were going on.

Firstly, I had Roundup poisoning and that was making me very sick. We lived next to a park and so it would get sprayed regularly with the weed killer, Roundup. My body had absorbed this poison, just by living near the park and it was affecting my body and my health. The naturopath gave me some homeopath remedies to clear this out of my body.

The other thing that she found was that I had severe food and environmental allergies that were massively affecting my health. When she told me what I had to cut out of my diet I thought that she was joking! Pretty much every chemical in our house had to go... from laundry powder, to cleaning products, to soap and shampoo, all of them were affecting me and had to be replaced with natural plant-based ones. Next was the food... She found I had a major allergy to refined sugar, so bad that she said I was never going to be able to eat sugar again. Hearing this as a self confessed sugar addict was devastating. I loved chocolate, I loved lollies, I loved all things sweet and sugary! How could I live without sugar? And how on earth is that going to help me get healthy!

It seemed like the most ridiculous and absurd thing that I had ever heard, remembering that this was back in 2000, when the damages that sugar does to your body were not widely known. I couldn't stop thinking that cutting out sugar from my diet would have little or no effect on my health, and how was it causing all of my health problems anyway? It just didn't make sense to me and I really did not want to do it.

Of course, I was just thinking about all of the obvious things that I had to cut out... the sweets, the cakes, and oh god not the chocolate!

Then the naturopath made a further blow. Because my body was in such disarray and chaos, it was also reacting to lots of other food as well... wheat, dairy, colourings, flavourings, pretty much anything processed, and I had to cut all of these things out of my diet for at least three months if I wanted to get better.

Oh my goodness... What am I supposed to eat!?!

## **The Big Decision**

I had a big decision to make, probably the most important decision of my life – was I going to listen to this crazy lady and live a life miserable and starved of the joy of good food, or was I going to continue to live the way that I was living – constantly sick and in excruciating pain, but at least I could enjoy lots of chocolate?

As hard as it was, I made the committed decision to give it a go, to fully give it a go for three months and see if there was any improvement in my health. It was an extremely tough three months, and when I committed to the decision I had no idea just how tough it would be. But then that is like most big commitments in life that we make: we commit to something not realising how tough something is actually going to be, and we are tested and pushed more than we ever think we will.



The first afternoon after I made the decision, I went to the supermarket with Andrew to buy dinner for that night. We walked around that place for over an hour just to buy food for one meal, reading all the labels on the cans and packages. Every single thing that I used to eat had sugar in it. I was shocked.

Here I was thinking that I could just cut out the obvious sweet treats, but no, everything had sugar in it... cereals, sauces, all the packaged stuff, even tinned tomatoes had sugar!

It was a real eye opener for me. I had no idea just how much sugar and wheat and all round crap that I was actually eating, and this was back in 2000 when 'gluten free' and 'organic' weren't even around! There were no 'health' or 'natural' food sections in the supermarket back then and in a supermarket filled with food, there were only a handful of things that I could eat.

We ended up buying rice and a few vegetables for dinner that night after we walked around the supermarket in shock for over an hour. There was no sauce, no flavouring, just plain rice and a few vegetables. It was bad, it was disgusting, I wanted to vomit and I cried the whole way through dinner. It made me feel sick just thinking that I was going to have to eat this disgusting stuff that I didn't even think should be considered food for a whole three months.

To top it all off, after a couple of days on this disgusting diet, I started getting bad withdrawal symptoms from cutting out the sugar, wheat and all the processed foods. I got sick, I had even worse headaches, I was grumpy as hell and I just wanted to die. After years of being sick and going through so much pain and suffering, here I was lying in bed feeling like I would rather be dead, and I couldn't even enjoy a piece of chocolate to make me feel better.

I questioned why I was doing it, I questioned whether it was worth it, I questioned my sanity... yet again.

One of the gifts that I had from a small age is my connection to Source energy.... To the divine Universal Energy. Whatever the name you use, the divine energy that surrounds us all and guides us in life. Thankfully, that connection never got drummed out of me as a child, and my mum would always tell me to follow my heart and listen to my intuition.

So at this really low and dark point in my life, I questioned the Universe and asked for guidance. I didn't have the answers, and didn't know what to do, so I needed help. The guidance came clear that I needed to do this, and that I needed to keep going and be tough and it would all work out. So I trusted the Universe and kept going. It was hard, excruciatingly hard. I couldn't eat out at all because no cafe or restaurant had anything on the menu

that I could eat, and so my social life pretty much stopped. Thankfully Andrew stayed with me and stayed by my side supporting me through the entire thing. Going through this together made it bearable, and having him there with me meant the world to me.

He could have left, he could have gone out partying with his mates, but he didn't, and I am so grateful for that. He had seen me at my worst and I wanted to get better so that we could have an amazing life and so he could see me at my best.

## **Commitment Pays Off**

Three months passed and I was starting to feel different. I was starting to feel better. Things were definitely looking up and my mum had even found a natural food store where I was starting to be able to eat some more interesting stuff! Thank God! Halleluiah!!

When I reached the six-month mark of no refined sugar, I was ecstatic. I had seen massive improvements in my health and I was feeling great. The headaches and migraines had reduced massively, and the lower abdominal pain was becoming manageable. It was feeling like it was all worth it and I had settled into a new routine with the meals that I was eating.

My best friend turned 21 and had the usual big party to celebrate, so I decided that I would have a drink to celebrate with her. It was the first time in six months that I had alcohol – yes even most alcohol is filled with refined sugar!

One glass of Bacardi and juice later and I was in the toilet vomiting profusely. The vomiting was so bad that we had to leave the party only an hour in, and on the drive home, the whole way, we had to pull over and stop every few minutes so I could throw up. I kept vomiting for six hours ,until I collapsed absolutely exhausted.

It turns out when you cut something out of your diet that you are allergic to and detox your body of it entirely, you actually need to reintroduce it very slowly, otherwise you could have a reaction like I did. Seems so obvious now looking back, but I had no idea at the time! Isn't hindsight great! One glass of sugar filled alcohol and juice was too much for my system and it went into full on evacuation mode.

I was absolutely devastated that I missed my best friend's 21st birthday. It was gutting for me and it was even more gutting for my best friend. I let her down that night and I couldn't make it up to her. It was a powerful gift though, that the Universe had given me that night — showing me just how much damage sugar had done to my body and why I needed to continue to not have it.

## **The Last Surgery**

A few months later I went in for my last surgery for my endometriosis. The pain was so much better, but most of the symptoms were still there and I wanted to see if this time, with my new diet, whether it would make a difference in any way.

I remember the moment my surgeon walked in the hospital room after that last surgery so clearly. She had a massive smile on her face and she looked like she had some good news.

She certainly did. She had told me that my endometriosis was way better. That she only needed to cut out a few small patches during surgery and that my insides were looking much healthier. My scarring from all the previous surgeries had started healing really well, and that she could see patches of lining that were there but had clearly healed themselves somehow and were nearly gone. She was absolutely astounded and so was I!

It was amazing confirmation that my change in diet had caused miracles. I had no idea before this point that the food that you eat had such a massive impact on your body and on the health and well-being of your body. Turns out that it does!

At this point I realised the immense impact that the decision that I had made earlier that year to go to that naturopath and take her advice had on my future. I had no idea when I made that decision what would come out of it, but I was so glad, and am still so glad to this day, that I made that tough decision.

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**Often the toughest decisions you have to make are the ones that have the greatest impact on your life**

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That was a turning point decision for me, and such a gift. I believe that one decision saved my life because the way I was going, getting sicker and sicker, I don't think that I would still be here today if I had continued down that same path.

Which may seem overly dramatic, but in my heart, I know that the situation back then was serious. Either my body would have given in to all the chaos and sickness, or I would have taken myself out because the pain and darkness was too much.

## The Gifts

The gifts that came out of this dark time were abundant — giving me more inner strength, courage, and resilience to get through it all.

I also have the gift of amazing health and vitality that came out of it. Today I am healthy, I am happy and I am full of energy. I very rarely get sick now, and usually if I do, it is very mild and over in a day. Back then I could never have imagined that the health that I have now was even possible. Your health is one of the biggest gifts that you can have in your life: cherish it, look after it, and make tough decisions that will lead you to greater vitality and abundant health.

I know that grabbing and eating that junk food is way easier and more pleasurable than eating an apple or a carrot, but the long-term gains in your health are worth it. You are worth it. Making the hard choices for your health is worth it, and in the long run, it will pay off with a reward that you will be so grateful for. My abundant health now enables me to live such an amazing life – a life that I have created, a life filled with experiences that I love. That is the best gift anyone could ask for.

Andrew and I also became connected on a much deeper level because of the challenges. When you stay with someone through dark times, and if you manage to make

it out the other side, then your bond and the depth of your relationship becomes so much stronger. This built our relationship on such a solid foundation and would prepare us for the massive challenges that were still to come in our lives. I really do wonder sometimes why he stayed with me through such dark times. He didn't have to, and most would have fled from such a challenge, but he didn't. He did stay and I am eternally grateful for that. That is a gift.

During this time, I was blessed with the gift of finding the right person at the right time; it was pure divine timing. If I had met that naturopath sooner, then I probably wouldn't have taken her advice. I needed to go through absolute hell, to be pushed to my limits, to show me how dark and painful life can be, to get me committed enough to make such a big and bold change in my life.

It may seem like it was an obvious decision to make, but as humans, we like things to be easy, and staying comfortable in what we know is much easier than making bold moves that change our whole world.

I've had friends that have had similar challenges to me – they have endometriosis, been through countless surgeries and I've shared my story with them. They've seen the transformation in me and still they choose not follow the path that I took, and that is ok. It is their life; they need to make their own choices and carve out their



own path, but I do wonder sometimes if they made the bold choice to truly commit to their health, would they have a similar story of success to share as me. Would they enjoy the abundant health that I now experience? It is certainly something interesting to think about.

I love that I learnt as such a young age about the power of food and about how what we put in and on our bodies affects us so much. This has been such a huge gift in my life. I was always certainly the weird one, not eating much at gatherings and saying 'no thanks' to cake, which I can tell you gets you very strange looks if they don't know why.

It became interesting to me to see just how much of society is based around consuming food, and usually bad food as well. All holiday gatherings, birthdays, celebrations are always filled with junk food, processed food and unhealthy crap that I no longer would want to put in my body even if I could. Knowing just how much food affects our health and well-being has served me so well, for healing my own body and also for helping others to heal as well.

Keeping my kids healthy and strong and knowing that I could detox my family using food and natural medicines after we lived in the toxic house was so valuable to me in order to get us all full of vitality and great health. What a valuable gift that was.

In the depths of that dark time with all of my health challenges, I wanted to die. It was absolute hell, and back then, when I was in the middle of it, I wouldn't have been able to tell you anything good about the situation, but I look back at that dark time now and see so many amazing gifts and blessings that came out of it, so many life lessons that have been instrumental in carrying me through other times in my life, and I see how, in a divine way, it was all meant to be and it all unravelled in perfect divine timing. I am so grateful for all of the experience.

Think about a challenging stage in your life that you are now well out of. If you look back now, can you see how much that has shaped your life and who you are today? Can you see that there were gifts and valuable life lessons that came from that time? Take a moment right now to stop reading and think about that, because if you can start to see a new way of looking at challenges in your life, things will change and life becomes easier.

So that one turning point decision that I made was such an amazing gift, and we all have those moments at numerous times in our lives, where we are faced with a turning point decision... Do I leave the job that I hate or stay? Do I leave the marriage that I am unhappy in or stay and work out a way to make it better? Do I take the scary leap to start a business? Do I go to that party... The list goes on, and really, we all make turning point decisions every day, because every day the world is filled with possibility, and

one small decision, like my one of visiting that naturopath, could absolutely change your entire life and destiny.

But how do you make those decisions? How do you know which one is right? How do know which decision is going to eventually lead you down the path to your higher good? That is a great question, and the answer comes in the next chapter, as we delve into a time that brought new life into the world....





## CHAPTER 5

### THE GIFT OF INTUITION

*"Your intuition knows what to do.  
The trick is getting your head  
to shut up so you can hear."*  
~ **Louise Smith** ~

I had never been so nervous going to the toilet in my life!  
The next few minutes could change my life....

Andrew and I had been trying to get pregnant for five months. It had been a long five months of excitement, anticipation and disappointments. Every month that went by and I didn't get pregnant, I started doubting whether it would happen.

I so desperately wanted to be a mother and even though I was still pretty young to have kids at 25-years-old I

knew that my chances of conceiving were lower than most with my previous health challenges and the chronic endometriosis that I had struggled with for years.

So here I was, my period wasn't even due yet, but I felt different. Changes were already happening in my body, and I guess because I was so aware of my body and how it worked through all the health challenges that I had experienced, I actually noticed the very subtle shifts that were going on.

I was nervous though; maybe I was imagining the changes because I had wanted this so much. All the other months were a disappointment — was this one going to follow suit? My hands were shaking, and I could hardly read the instructions on the pregnancy test packet. I did the test and then was the two-minute wait...

Don't look, I thought, give it an extra minute, just in case it needs longer to tell.

Three minutes were up, my hands shaking so much at this point I wasn't sure how I was still holding the stick. I flipped it over and went into immediate disbelief.

## **A Faint Blue Line!**

I was actually pregnant! The little blue line in the “Pregnant” section of the test was showing up! Very faintly, but it was showing that I was pregnant!

Oh my goodness, this was a miracle, and somehow it was hard for it to really sink in. I didn’t believe it and Andrew found it hard to believe too when I called to tell him.

I needed more confirmation, so I made an appointment to see my doctor for the next day. I still wasn’t sure if it was real, if I was actually pregnant — after all those tests are wrong sometimes, right? And the line was very faint, so maybe it was wrong. My doctor did a urine test and did a blood test as well; the results both came back positive: I was definitely pregnant!

Excitement was in the air, as well as the fear and doubt that started to creep in. Was I going to be a good mother? How on earth was I going to look after a baby when I have enough trouble looking after myself sometimes!?!

Then, another massive challenge came — the morning sickness hit, and it hit hard. Morning sickness is bad enough as it is. You have this joy of being pregnant and growing a new life inside of you, and you feel like absolute crap throwing up all the time.

In my case, I couldn’t stop throwing up, and it was intense. I couldn’t keep any food down and couldn’t even keep water down. It didn’t take long before I ended up

in hospital with dehydration and exhaustion. How could this little life inside of me be causing so much pain and anguish?

## **Hyperemesis Gravidarum**

Turns out that I had Hyperemesis Gravidarum, which is a rare complication in pregnancy where you have excessive nausea, vomiting and dehydration. Really!?! After all that I have already been through in life, you are going to throw this at me as well Universe! In just a few weeks of being pregnant, I had lost five kilos in weight due to the dehydration and not being able to eat or drink. I spent a week in hospital, and before I got released, had thankfully got fully rehydrated and put back on some of the weight that I had lost.

The next four months saw me completely couch bound. I couldn't work anymore; I actually couldn't even function as a person. None of my friends or family saw me for months, except the few that came to visit, as I couldn't leave the house.

This pregnancy pushed me right to my limit. I really had no idea being pregnant could be so bad, and it put a toll on every area of my life. Our finances suffered because I couldn't work. Here we were, supposed to be saving money up for this baby, and I was on the couch, not able



to do anything. My friendships and family relationships suffered, my health, sanity and well-being suffered and my marriage suffered – it's not very sexy watching your wife be a continuous flow of spew!

Andrew was amazing though, and again, he mostly stayed strong during this incredibly challenging time. I remember he would have to make dinner every night because I couldn't go near the kitchen without throwing up, and I would have to hide in the bedroom and shut the door and open the windows so that I couldn't smell dinner cooking – because just the smell would make me throw up. Then, after he had made dinner, he had to eat out in the dining room alone, while my dinner had to be put in the fridge until it was stone cold and had lost nearly all of its smell. Then and only then could I eat.

Night after night he would go through this whole drawn out, ridiculous dinner time process to cook me a meal and in the end, after two hours, he would bring me my dinner. I would take one look at it or have the tiniest bite and would be running off to the bathroom to throw up again! I'm not kidding; any man who can manage to do that for their wife every night for months on end is an angel!

I ended up surviving on a diet of mashed potatoes for months. That was one of the only foods that seemed to stay down. I'm sure I ate enough potatoes to make the potato farmers of New Zealand very wealthy during that time!

My extreme morning sickness lasted for over seven very long months, and it was only in the last two months that I could actually go out and leave the house again. That wasn't the end of the challenges with this baby though!

## **The Arrival**

Our gorgeous boy Rylan was born into this world after a gruelling 32 hours of labour, and then the real fun began... The no sleep, the crying, the problems with feeding... oh my goodness, what just happened to my life!

I don't think anything prepares you for having kids. You hear the stories, you hear what it is like, but it doesn't even come close to the actual reality of it all!

Rylan was not a sleeper, and when I say that, I mean he barely slept at all. He wouldn't sleep when we were out, he wouldn't sleep when we were home, and no matter what I did and what I tried, he just wouldn't sleep.

My midwife came around numerous times for a few hours and tried her best to get him to sleep with absolutely no luck. She referred me to a specialist who also had no luck in getting him to sleep. I read parenting books. I tried different techniques. They told me he would cry himself to sleep; he never did. Even after forty minutes he would still be screaming.

One day after one of the 'experts' that I saw told me that I was being too soft and needed to leave him to cry to sleep until he fell asleep, I did. I left him for three hours crying and screaming and crying. He never stopped.

I hated that I did that to him. It was full on neglect and did cause a lot of emotional damage to him, but I was listening to this 'expert' and so I did what I was told without question. After all, I was young and had no idea what I was doing raising a baby.

## **Desperation and Depression**

At the worst point, Rylan would only sleep a couple of hours out of every 24. Things were getting desperate. No one can survive on that little sleep and the lack of sleep had me losing my sanity. I was sad, I was depressed and I was starting to resent this amazing little man that had been gifted to me by the world.

Things had to change, so when he was 11-months-old, I made some key changes that would see things turn around. I found another baby sleep book that took a firm routine-based approach but with very gentle and loving methods to help them sleep.

Plus, the most crucial turning point in the whole situation was that I also started listening to my intuition and my

own internal ‘mother knowledge’ that was actually there all along, but I had no idea that it was because I was too busy going out getting external advice.

So with the combination of those two things, I managed to start to turn things around. Rylan was absolutely petrified of his cot and would start screaming before we even got close to it. So we started co-sleeping. Back then, all the books discouraged this massively, but I knew in my heart what my son needed was comforting and love, not the tough cry it out approach.

He started learning how to fall asleep on me and then we would co-sleep together, and slowly, slowly, bit by bit, I got him to sleep for longer and longer.

It didn’t take long to get him reassured and relaxed enough with me snuggled up to him to fall asleep. Thirty-minute naps would turn into hour naps, and hour naps started turning into two-hour naps.

It took well over six months to get him fully sleeping, and to get him sleeping in his cot on his own, but in the end, we did it and it was so worth every bit of energy and effort that we put in. Today Rylan is now nine-years-old and he is an amazing sleeper with no issues whatsoever. I know that by following my intuition and trusting in my own abilities it saved us from years of continued struggle with him. Those first few years of being pregnant and

then going through all the sleeping challenges with Rylan were a very dark time in our lives, but again, out of it came some amazing gifts.

## **The Gifts**

Firstly, it gave me the gift of looking inward and getting internal guidance through my intuition and trusting in myself and my abilities as a mother. We are taught from a young age to always seek outside help and to trust the experts, and that is definitely valuable, but what happens when the advice from external sources and experts doesn't work for your particular situation? Every person and every situation is different, so although the expert advice might be solid in a number of situations, you can never give blanket advice for every situation and expect it to work.

This is why your intuition and your internal guidance are so valuable in your life. If I didn't listen to my intuition during this dark time, I really don't know where I would be. The safety of myself and my son was starting to be in jeopardy due the extreme lack of sleep that we were experiencing, and I don't know what path that might have taken us down. It is drummed out of most of us from childhood not to trust our intuition and our abilities, but we are much more capable of handling and solving challenges than we think.

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**Your intuition is such an amazing gift, embrace it, grow it and learn to listen. You'll find that it will make a huge difference to the flow and ease of your life.**

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Now, if you don't usually follow your intuition in your life, then now is a great time to start. It is useful in absolutely ALL areas of your life, and in truth, it just makes life so much easier. If you could make key decisions in your life knowing that it was absolutely the right choice for you, then wouldn't you want to know that? If you could use it even for small decisions in your everyday life to make your day smoother, then would you want that? You may, of course, be thinking that you don't have intuition or you don't hear what your intuition tells you. A lot of people feel that way, and it is no surprise because we are discouraged not to listen to it as children and so we stop listening to it.

Everybody has it though, and everybody can tap back into it whether you are aware of it right now or not. I've created an entire bonus chapter for this book called "How to Tap Into Your Intuition So You Can Know The Truth About Anything." You can grab this free gift at:

**[www.GiftsFromTheDarkness.com/Gifts](http://www.GiftsFromTheDarkness.com/Gifts)**

Patience, persistence and commitment are more gifts that I received with these challenges with Rylan. I didn't find a 'quick fix' to solve the situation. Sure, I wanted one, but usually dark and challenging times will not get fixed in a day. It does usually take time; and often it does take one small step at a time to move forward. This is what happened with Rylan. Most days were a small step in the right direction, with a whole lot of not so good days in between. It was a journey — it didn't happen overnight. It took months. In fact it took a year to get to the point where we could put him to sleep in his bed, kiss him goodnight and leave him to drift off to sleep by himself.

Having the patience, persistence and commitment for us to get to the desired outcome was a great gift here. We got to this amazing outcome in the end, and I found the level of patience and commitment that I needed to have to make it happen. It was a great lesson that, in life, in order to achieve to something big (and yes, getting Rylan to sleep was big!), you need to be patient, you need persistence, and you need to stay committed to the outcome that you are seeking, because even when you are on the right path, there will still be obstacles and challenges that come up along the way. This gift has served me so well since then in our business as we continue to grow and expand it. It has taken time, much longer than we wanted and expected, and having that gift of persistence and commitment to keep going in business has served us so well.

If you are finding things are taking longer to happen in your life than you want, then remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. Persistence will get you far in life, for not only helping you to get out of dark times, but also for achieving the goals that you want to in your life.

I also got given the gift of an amazing bond with Rylan during this time. Before, when I was taking the advice from the parenting experts, our bond was getting weaker and weaker and I found myself disconnecting from him and starting to resent him, rather than connecting and bonding more. What an amazing gift it is to truly bond and connect with your child on such a deep level. The whole experience brought us closer together and helped us to be a stronger mother and son duo. I think that is one of the best gifts that a mother can have.

It also gave me huge gratitude and appreciation around the small things in life... Sleep is such a blessing that we often take for granted unless we are lacking it! I had no idea just how important sleep was to our well-being, our sanity and our vitality until it was taken away from me almost completely. Sometimes the smallest things in life can have the greatest impact, and a good night's sleep is definitely one of those!

Love truly led the way to heal and resolve this situation and helped to pull us out of this very dark time, and I saw how strong love can be — that is an amazing gift in itself.



The other powerful gift that I got was courage – courage to make different choices, courage to start trusting in myself, and courage to take actions towards a better outcome – even if it was only small ones to start with.

I could have just kept going and hoped that the situation would resolve itself, but often this is exactly what it is: wishful thinking. Action was required to sort out this mess that we were in, and different actions from what we were currently doing because what we were doing clearly wasn't working. I had a choice to take a different path with different actions and I took it with courage, not knowing whether it was the right choice or not, but knowing that my intuition was leading me down a path that I had to take.

Courage can be such an amazing gift because often we stop ourselves from making a move or taking a different path because we are scared of the unknown. I totally agree: the unknown is scary, it is really scary, but would you rather be certain and miserable with the situation you are in, or would you rather step forward with courage onto that scary unknown path because it may lead to a better future? Courage is a gift, and if you have ever picked that scary path in your life with uncertainty ahead, then you have that gift of courage. Appreciate it, and give yourself a pat on the back because now adays, it is rare for people to take that unknown path.

Asking different questions and starting to question advice that I was given was also a great gift that came out of this time. Today I don't automatically take expert advice and I encourage you to do the same – I question and analyse whether any advice I get will work for me in my particular situation, and I know that has helped me massively in all areas of my life to make some really great life decisions and choices. What a great gift that was to have.

In any situation, it is so powerful to ask questions and to take advice, but to then ask whether it will be useful for you and your situation. There will certainly be some advice and tips in this book that will not be suited to you and your specific situation and there will be some advice and tips that will be perfectly suited to you and your situation. Work out which ones do suit you. Ask what is going to move you forward the most and act on those, because everybody is different and I am under no illusion that everything in this book is going to resonate with you or be the perfect advice for you. That is something that you need to work out for yourself.

This brings us nicely to the next dark time in my life, which goes into the biggest financial crisis I have seen anyone have that I know and is all about asking quality questions of any situation to really help you get the outcome that you truly desire in your life.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE GIFT OF QUALITY QUESTIONS

*“Successful people ask better questions,  
and as a result they get better answers.”*

**~ Tony Robbins ~**

Money. There are not many things that bring up as much emotion in people as money does. Money is one of those things that we need to survive on this planet. It is an essential part of day-to-day living and the more we have of it, the more comfortable life can be.

However, many people struggle with money: they struggle with their own issues around money, they struggle with making money, they struggle with keeping money, but really money is simply just a tool. You can do good with money or you can do bad with it – it is your choice.

Unhelpful and deep beliefs about money have been ingrained in many of us from a young age: “Money is the root of all evil,” “You have to work hard for money,” “Rich people are nasty, greedy or have ripped people off,” and because money is an essential part of living, it brings with it so many mixed emotions that cause many of us to struggle with our relationship with money.

Like many people, I have struggled with massive money issues at different times in my life, but when I was just 26-years-old, I would find myself in a monumental financial crisis.

Andrew and I had been in business since he got made redundant from his high paying IT job just one month before we got married – that was another really challenging time for us that I’m not going into detail in this book, but was one that we are so grateful for now because it gave us the push that we needed to get started in business.

Our goal was total financial independence. We wanted to be wealthy and only choose to work if and when we wanted to. They were big ambitious dreams, and some people definitely called us crazy for being so unrealistic, but we were young, naive and had no idea what becoming financially independent would actually involve. We were, however, willing to take big risks and do the work. The first year in business went great, but once we hit the

second year, things started turning pear shaped and we nearly went out of business.

We were great at what we did technically (building websites), but we had no idea how to run a business and how to market and sell our services – something that is vital for any business to actually survive.

The situation was looking very bleak and we had to consider whether to close the business down. Then we found an amazing business mentor, a man that has changed our lives in so many ways. He taught us how to actually run a business and he helped us turn that business around. We were back on track, moving ahead financially and it didn't take long to get the business to thriving over the six-figure mark for turnover while still having time for a life.

## **The Investing Game**

A few months after Rylan was born we decided to take the leap and start playing seriously in the investing game. We had already been doing research for years in the investing and wealth building arena, and we had done some property investing with great results.

Now we wanted to seriously get into share trading and start building our investments in that area. We found a company that would do the investing for us, would

completely manage the investments, and they had a phenomenal track record.

Their investing results were amazing and we had found people that had invested with them that had great things to say about them and had achieved great results themselves by using this company.

So with all the research done, we decided to take the leap and jump onboard. We got advice from an “expert” that we should get a loan from the bank so that we could really make the most of investing and so we did. We got a loan and put a large chunk of that loan into this company for them to invest.

The first month we made thousands and we were so excited at what was about to unfold in front of us. Month two, however, took a shocking turn...

The GFC (Global Financial Crisis) hit, and almost overnight we lost a massive amount of money. We had no idea what was happening, and in all the chaos, we decided to listen to our advisor who told us to keep our money in the investment and it will bounce back up, so we listened to him and kept our money in. The company that was managing the investments were confident that the investment portfolio was strong enough to bounce back quickly.

It didn't.

Month after month went by and we kept losing money – thousands at a time. It was obvious from all the news reports that the GFC wasn't going to be fixed in a hurry and since our investments were losing large amounts of money every day, we decided to pull the little bit we had left back.

We were in trouble though. We had borrowed this large amount of money from the bank and lost it due to rather unfortunate timing. Rylan was only six months old at this point and I was hardly working as I was looking after him full time, and with his sleeping problems, I had very little ability to work.

What on earth were we going to do?

We didn't know how to deal with it all, and with the challenges that were happening with Rylan as well, we decided to just ignore the financial mess that we had got ourselves in.

Six months later we were going deeper and deeper into financial crisis. We had maxed out all of our credit cards, we had somehow managed to get more loans to survive and we were still struggling. Some weeks we didn't know how we were going to buy food or pay the rent.

It was terrifying. The feeling that you get when you don't know what is going to happen because you don't have enough money is horrific. The warning letters in the

post that come because you are overdue in payments is frightening, the phone calls that you get saying your credit card payment failed again is scary, and the sick feeling in your stomach from the fear of what is going to happen to you and your family is absolutely heartbreaking.

I wouldn't wish that stress on anyone, but I know that many people go through this financial stress and anguish on an ongoing basis. Some people live their entire lives with this ongoing experience with money.

We got to a breaking point one day where we decided that we couldn't bury our heads in the sand anymore. We had to face the situation and deal with it because we were so sick of living in this state of financial crisis and it was taking its toll on every aspect of our lives. We had no idea how bad it really was, so the first thing to do was add up all the debt and get real with how we were going to deal with it.

## **The Day Things Got Very Real**

The day we added up all the debt and all the money that we owed people, I got the shock of my life. We were \$250,000 in *bad debt*. That wasn't debt for a mortgage or debt tied to any asset; it was purely bad debt – from credit cards, loans and money that we owed people.

\$250,000.



That's quarter of a million dollars! Back then we could have bought an entire house for that amount of debt. In fact, we knew people at the time that had houses worth less than that! But we didn't have a house. In fact, we had nothing to show for that debt and we still needed to pay it all back.

Being in that much debt really snaps you out of denial extremely fast. How on earth could we possibly be in that much debt? How could we let it come to this? Ignoring the problem and being in denial meant that we kept going backwards and we had no idea how deep we really were into this financial mess.

Knowing the truth though, was a very powerful place to be, and I recommend that if you are in denial about your own finances and you don't know exactly where you are at with your own debt, then work it out today. Work it out right now, because from there you can improve the situation and stop things getting worse.

I wish that we had got out of denial sooner because then we probably wouldn't have gone so far into debt, but we didn't, so we had to work out how to get us out of this epic mess that we had put ourselves in. It doesn't matter how bad things get, you always have options, and you always have choices that you can make to move things in the right direction.

## **Positivity and Optimism Led the Way**

So Andrew and I took our never-ending optimism and we decided that we would get through this challenge, just like we had the other big challenges in our lives.

As tempting as filing for bankruptcy sounded, we knew that doing that would massively limit us in running a business and what we wanted to do with our lives. So we decided not to file for bankruptcy and deal with all of the mess and debt ourselves.

We took full responsibility for the whole situation, which was hard to do, but we knew if we wanted to fix this that was what we had to do: take full responsibility. We had got ourselves into this situation, even though there were a number of unfortunate circumstances that happened to create it, and we were going to get ourselves out of it.

It wasn't easy; it was unbelievably hard. It took us years to get out of the massive financial mess, but we did it, one small step at a time. Often when you have such a monumental task that you need to achieve like we did, it looks impossible tackling it as a whole, but if you break it down, it becomes more manageable to achieve.

There were lots of little steps along the way; we couldn't think about the big number that was hanging over our heads. We just had to focus on the next small and achievable goal to move us forward. At times we wanted it to be

moving much faster, and at times we hit massive walls that stopped our progress in its tracks. Paying off the debt got put on hold a number of times when higher priorities popped up, like when we were intensively caring for Zara when she was in and out of hospital.

Running a business during all of this time was not easy either. At this point we were no longer in our original website and online marketing business. We had started up our business coaching and consulting company that helped small businesses to thrive.

We got ridiculed at times from friends telling us that our business wasn't successful because we didn't "look" successful. We didn't have a flashy house or fancy cars, and so to the outside world, it didn't make sense and people thought we were fake and ripping people off.

They didn't know about our massive debt because we didn't want to tell anyone. Partly because of the shame and embarrassment of having this much debt, and also because we wanted to focus on the bright future that was in front of us instead of the dark past that was behind us, and we felt that talking about it wasn't useful in helping us get out of it, and so we told no one.

We weren't by any means ripping people off in our business either. We were great at helping businesses and we were getting them amazing results – helping them to

double or triple their business, plus we were making good money to help us pay off the massive debt. Paying off the debt was a priority, not buying all the “looking good” material stuff.

## **The Gifts**

One of the great gifts in this time was that we really looked deep inside of ourselves about what we considered as “successful,” and we got to work out what ‘success’ meant for us personally, instead of being dictated by anyone else what it meant.

We now have a very different viewpoint on what success is than most people, and when I share with people our definition of success, they love it and really get that our version is way more powerful than just measuring it purely by external and material things. I really believe that this big shift in our definition of success has helped us to have a way more happy and fulfilled life.

By others judging us and ridiculing us, it also helped me to realise where I was being judgmental of others and the choices that they were making for their own lives. You just don’t know what other people have been through in their lives. You don’t know their full story, or the pain and suffering that someone has been through or is currently going through, and even if they have had a good life, I

can guarantee you that they have gone through some big challenges, because we all have. No one is immune to challenging times; and all challenges are significant. We all go through them – even people that have it “all.”

So it is important to remember that judging people doesn't help them and it doesn't help you either. It helps no one; so if you do find yourself judging someone and the life that they are choosing, consider changing that judgement from a place of criticism to a place of compassion. How can you make a difference to that person's life? How can you help them to get through a challenge?

Which flows nicely into the next gift, and that was the gift of changing my questions to quality questions. Now this is a bit of a cryptic sounding gift, so let me explain briefly here and then I am going to go into more detail about this in Part 2 of this book as this tool is so crucial in turning around any challenging situation – big or small.

We all ask questions of ourselves every day. Most of the time we are not even aware of the questions that we are asking, but asking questions is a key tool that we all use to drive our lives either forward or backwards.

I remember learning about quality questions during this massive financial crisis and it is what actually helped us to get out of it.

If you are always asking: “Why me?”; “What have I done to deserve this?”; “Why am I so stupid?”; “Why don’t I have enough money?” then that is going to move your life backwards. Like most people, I was asking bad questions like these ones that were pushing my life further and further backwards.

Those are all very disempowering questions, but during this financial crisis, I found out about the great gift of asking more empowering quality questions to move my life forward instead of backwards. Questions like: “What can I learn from this?”; “Am I ready to change this?”; “What do I want to bring into my life?”; “What can I do now to improve this?”

This simple switch in questions can have a profound effect on the results that show up in your life. Instead of me continually focusing on the lack of money and the massive financial hole that we had dug ourselves into, I started focusing on what I could do to improve the situation and what I could learn from it.

It was essentially like flicking the switch from taking no responsibility for the situation and being stuck in victim mode, wallowing in my sorrows, to taking charge, taking full responsibility and working out the small but impactful steps that we needed to take to move the financial crisis forward. We were where we were. There was no point wallowing in that because that wasn’t going to help us

get out, so focusing on the end result that we wanted and asking how can we make that happen was essential to turning the whole situation around.

I also got the gift of timing during this time. You see, timing is actually a really important factor that we often don't take into consideration when making choices. Timing is not everything, but it is pretty damn important! You can have the very best strategies, you can have the very best advice and the very best team on your side, but if the timing is not right, then it won't work.

In the case of our investing and then the Global Financial Crisis hitting, it was all about timing. It wasn't the strategies or the team because we had done the research to make sure it was all solid. The same goes in other various areas of life as well. I can be coaching a business owner on a powerful marketing strategy that I know works to bring in a flood of new clients, but sometimes that strategy is not going to work purely because of timing. The world works in ebbs and flows and if you can work with that to your advantage then life goes so much smoother and easier. Having this knowledge of timing and knowing just how important timing is has meant that I've been able to go with the flow more and know when to push to achieve something and when to chill out and take some down time, which has been such a gift in my life.

One thing I do want to be clear on here, is that by sharing all of these challenges with you, it is not to say, “Wow, look at me and all of the bad stuff I have been through and overcome,” because we have all been through things that have pushed us beyond our limits and they are all significant to the person who experiences it, whether it seems significant to anybody else or not. You may have been through much worse experiences in your life than me, or you may have not experienced anything to the magnitude that I have experienced, and either way, that is ok because this book isn’t about how big your challenges and dark times are, but how you can help yourself to deal with them, and what gifts you can get out of them.

There are certainly stacks of people that have been through much worse challenges than I have. I know people that have experienced much deeper pain, much deeper heartache, much deeper betrayal than I have. I actually feel very blessed in my life, and I believe that I have had overall a very good life. After writing the first draft of this book I nearly threw the entire thing away. I questioned it heavily. For months I was thinking that my challenges were not “big” enough to share with the world to actually be able to help people, to actually create change, because that is what this book is all about.

I wrote this book to help people, to truly change lives and change the way that the world looks at challenging and dark times. I wrote this book to give hope to those



people that read it and are in dark times right now in their lives, and I wrote it to help heal the hearts of those people that have been through challenging times and are having trouble finding resolution from those experiences.

This book is not about my challenges. The point of me sharing these most intimate moments of my life with you is to show **you** that **you** can find amazing gifts and lessons from your own dark times, and so although they are challenging, although they hurt so much when you are in the middle of such a dark times, you can find something good in the situations as well.





## CHAPTER 7

### THE GIFT OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

*"Sometimes the heart sees  
what is invisible to the eye."*

**~ H. Jackson Brown, Jr. ~**

Once we had moved out of the toxic house life certainly did improve with Zara's health. She was getting sick less often, and each time it was less severe, which was good because it gave us some space to deal with the challenge that was now upon us...

Zara had been sick for over two very long years, and during that time she was not thriving. She was only just surviving with all of the pneumonia and other illnesses that came along. There were many sleepless nights in our house, many ambulance calls to rush her to the emergency

department, and many times where I sat awake with her all night, holding her upright so she could breathe easier and praying that life would get better and that our girl would stay out of hospital for good.

A child who is experiencing this much sickness has a challenging time just getting through the day, let alone learning and developing in the way that they are meant to. It was obvious that Zara was falling behind developmentally. The other kids her age were doing and saying much more than she was, and it was truly heartbreaking watching my child not “thriving” like other kids.

Then there were the behavioural issues as well. She could not sit still for any length of time, not even a couple of minutes, and the massive tantrums were nothing like I had ever seen or experienced before. They were much more than just the normal tantrum of a child that wasn’t getting what they wanted. Some days, the entire day was a screaming, anger-filled tantrum that just wouldn’t stop. Many things would get broken in the rampage as Zara would go around like a tornado throwing anything in her way, and nothing we did seemed to solve the problem.

I could see as well that every time Zara got sick, each time she was on more and more drugs, her development and behaviour would get worse. Her development was actually going backwards at some points and not going forwards.

## **The Reality of Our Future With Zara**

We were facing the daunting reality of having a child with special needs and behavioural problems, and to start with, I found that really hard to take as a parent.

I remember one of the doctors that saw Zara during one of her times in hospital; it was one of the earlier times before her development was even under investigation. He came in to the room on his high horse, took one look at Zara and declared to me that she had developmental problems and something was wrong with her. The way he did it, it almost looked like he felt proud of himself for making this predication. I was furious, and could not believe that not only could a doctor be so disrespectful in the way that he approached the matter, but also that he could even say that my gorgeous, amazing daughter was damaged and that there was something “wrong” with her.

To me, she was absolutely perfect, and as a mother, I would do anything to defend my child against this awful man that had just met her and said something was wrong with her. Truthfully I had no idea at that point whether she had developmental delays or not and neither did he, but since I had been born with a disability, I knew how hard being different was and I knew how challenging it would be if he was correct, so I did not even want to

remotely entertain the idea that my daughter could have special needs.

It did turn out six months later that the doctor was right. Zara was falling further and further behind developmentally, but the reason I got upset wasn't about the fact that he was suggesting that Zara might have special needs. It was the way that he approached me about the subject that I felt was hugely inappropriate and offensive.

At 22-months-old Zara was still not walking and was not talking either. She had been developing normally and was even saying a number of words when she was one, but with all the sickness and trauma that she had experienced and all of the drugs that had been pumped into her tiny body, her speech had gone back to zero.

By the time she was two-years-old, Zara had paediatricians, developmental specialists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and a range of other specialists as well to help with all areas of her development. I must say that I am truly grateful that I live in a country where all this support is available because it has, for the most part, been an amazing resource to help my girl. Even with all this help though, development was still very slow.

We would go for months without seeing any progress at all. Months of therapy would get her to stand up and hold

her weight, and then months later we would see her take small assisted steps. It was over six months of therapy to get her walking, but the celebrations were massive when we did. There were many times where I would question if the therapy was working at all, if it was having any sort of benefit, because most of the time we could see none.

## **Life with a Special Needs Child**

I've generally been really positive about the whole situation. Even many of her therapists have commented about how impressive my attitude has been through it all. But in all honesty, having a child with special needs is tough. It is hard enough to raise healthy happy kids, let alone when you have a child with health problems and extra needs. It is even more challenging than you could ever believe.

It is tough emotionally, physically, mentally, financially and with your relationships inside the family and outside of the family.

Emotionally, having to come to terms that your child is going to develop slower than all the other kids their age is a challenge, I won't lie. I would like to think that I was the big person about it right from the start; after all, I am eternally positive right! But I did struggle with the fact that she was getting behind. I felt such pressure as a parent to have my child keeping up with the rest, and it was a struggle when that didn't happen.

I know in the early days, I would have my hugely optimistic attitude on and would think that she wasn't that far behind. I would tell myself that she was keeping up or only 'just' behind, but if I went to the playground or saw some friends with similar aged kids or even younger kids, it was pretty obvious that she was falling further and further behind, and it hurt. It is a pain that you can't really describe unless you have experienced it. Kids that were two years younger than Zara would be saying more than she was, or doing something that she couldn't do, and when you have kids, you think you won't compare them to other kids, but the truth is that you do.

When you have kids you expect them to be born healthy, and develop well like all the other kids. You don't ever expect to have a child with special needs, and I guess there was the thought in the back of my mind, like for most people, that something like this would never happen to me, but it did.

Comparing other kids to Zara was really tearing me up inside, and yet I kept doing it. I was living in hope and trying to see that she was just a little bit behind and that she would be able to catch up. Or see that maybe she had made big improvements from last time.

It was emotionally tolling, getting my head and my heart to grips that my child could not do what other kids her age could do. I loved Zara just the way that she was. I could



see such an amazing little soul inside of her and I was continuously trying to come to a place of total acceptance of where she was, but it wasn't easy.

Then there was the reaction from other people that made this whole acceptance process challenging. We would go to the playground and people would stare at her. Some kids would find her weird and call her names. Thankfully, some kids were completely accepting of her uniqueness and included her, which just melted my heart seeing her being accepted by her peers. Some parents though, would actually pull their kids away from Zara and give me a nasty look so that their kids weren't near her. Wow, that was a real eye opener and felt like a knife stabbing into my heart. How could anyone not totally adore my little angel, and why do you not want your kids to play with her? Was this going to be what the future is going to be like for my gorgeous girl? Was she ever going to have a true friend? The fears and doubts and worry start creeping in again, setting me off onto another emotional roller coaster ride.

People wouldn't talk to Zara, wouldn't want to connect or even acknowledge her at times. It was hard to watch and be part of, and all I could do was shower her with more and more love to counteract the negative vibes she would get when she was out. I get that she was different, and I get that people didn't really know how to respond to that — goodness, I'm sure that I had probably done the same thing numerous times myself to other kids that

were different before Zara came along as well, but now I really got how much that small stuff really affects the children and parents of special needs kids because I was experiencing it myself.

## **Unconditional Love and Acceptance**

I would get to a lovely place of unconditional love and acceptance for Zara and then would go out and an “incident” would occur that then threw me back into doubt and fear and wanting my girl to be normal; wanting to do anything to help her “catch up.”

It really is a constant process of continuing to accept your child for who they are and where they are at, but also doing everything that you can to help your child develop – to be the best that they can be whatever that looks like for them.

As a parent, you should love your child unconditionally and accept them for who they are, but I think so often we as a society miss the mark on that one as we strive to have perfectly achieving children. We strive for them to succeed, we strive for them to be the best, we strive for them to achieve, but what about kids just being kids and being who they really are without expectation, without forcing things on them, without a plan of what they “should” be and do because that is unconditional love

in its truest form. True acceptance no matter what your child can and can't do in life; it is easy to say, but to truly live this is much harder to do.

It is not just your own emotional struggles that you have to deal with either, but also the struggle that your family and friends go through at accepting this child into their lives too. The extended family of that child understandably also goes through an emotional roller coaster ride as they work through their own emotions around the situation. We had family members pull away, family members that didn't know what to say or do, and family members that found it difficult to even be around Zara.

I found that it was an even deeper emotional journey for me as well due to the fact that I had grown up with a disability my whole life. I had a lot of healing to do around fully accepting Zara for exactly who she was because of the feelings that I had felt around my disability and growing up feeling broken and not good enough. I knew that I didn't want that for my daughter. I didn't want her to ever feel that I thought she wasn't good enough, because I knew how that felt and she has always been more than enough in my eyes. In fact, she has always been absolutely amazing.

When you get to that place of full acceptance and unconditional love, you can be really present with a person when you are with them, and when you are present, you see the radiating

light of that person's soul shining through. Zara has such a massive shining light, and her soul just radiates around her. To me she is perfectly Zara in every way, and I'm so proud of her for owning her power every day.

That has been such an amazing gift that has come out of it all—the growth and learning that I have personally experienced having such an amazing unique child. She has truly pushed me to grow as a person and to rise above society's constraints of what children “should” be like, and to find a place of unconditional love and acceptance for my gorgeous child.

In order to love Zara unconditionally, I would have to remove the desire for my child to fit into society's ‘little box’ of what a child should look like and what they should do and I would have to fully love my daughter just the way she was – the good, the bad, and the downright challenging.

I am happy to say that I did finally get to a place of surrendering to the fact that I was doing everything that I could for her to be the best Zara that she could be, no matter what that looked like and without having the attachment to her achieving anything in any sort of timeframe. She is now six-years-old and is still not talking properly, and I have no idea when she will, and that is absolutely fine. She will get there in her own time, in her own perfect way, and in a way that is right just for her.

Every child is amazing exactly how they are, no matter where they are at and what they are doing or not doing, and if as parents, and as a society, we can start seeing that, and embracing that instead of forcing kids into small well-defined boxes filled with conditions and the way they “should” be, well, the world would be a very different place: a more loving, accepting and caring place, with a lot less people feeling unworthy and not good enough.

I have absolutely grown to love this place that I have got to. It is an amazing one, not based on anyone else’s judgements or opinions, but a place where I am happy and my family is happy and Zara is happy and that is what counts the most to me.

## **Physical and Mental Exhaustion and the Gifts Within**

As well as the emotional challenges though, caring for someone that is so dependent on you and requires almost constant care does also drain you physically and mentally. I remember many days when I didn’t feel like I had the strength to go on. I would get completely drained, to the point of total exhaustion.

With that brought the gift of learning to love and take care of myself. Sure I had to look after Zara and make sure that she was being taken care of, but in order to do that and be

my best for her, I needed time out and some self love and care for me as well. I had never really looked after myself in that way and given myself time to just re-energise and nurture me, so it was amazing to see what started coming out of that gift time.

As parents of children with health challenges and extra needs, we can get so caught up in looking after them that we forget that we are a person as well; a person who needs space and time just for us, and time to remember who we really are, which is not exclusively to look after and care for our child.

Then there is the strain on the relationship with your partner. I have always been so lucky to have Andrew in my life, and I am grateful every day that he has stayed through raising Zara. The statistics for marriages breaking up with those couples that have a special needs child is absolutely shocking. It has been documented that 80% of marriages fall apart when there is a special needs child involved. When I first heard that statistic, it scared me to my core. The number seems exceptionally high, but understandable with what is involved to raise such a child. I am definitely one of the truly blessed ones to still have a loving partner by my side on this journey.

It has been a strain on our marriage though, and at times it has been extremely hard, but having Zara has also brought our marriage closer together and made it much stronger.

Andrew and I chose to band together and work as a team to make our lives better, and because we made that choice and set that intention, we have stayed strong through it all. Through every challenge that we face, and we have faced some big ones now, our marriage gets stronger and deeper. It is really important to embrace that relationship with your partner and make sure that you are giving that relationship attention too and not just become purely focused on your children.

Andrew and I commit to regular date nights and time together with just the two of us to strengthen our marriage so that we can be more fully committed to our kids when we are with them.

There is also the financial pressure and strain on the family as well. Zara costs us tens of thousands of dollars extra each year because of her extra needs, and at times this has been extremely hard to manage. It is one of those things that is part of having such a special child, but every cent spent on her is worth it because I am committed to making her life the best that it can be.

The other area that does suffer that has been a real personal challenge for me to deal with is the affect that it has on the siblings in the house. It is a real issue that happens in a household with a child that needs a lot of extra support, care and time.

There is no denying it: Rylan has also had to learn to grow up with a sister with special needs. He does get less attention than Zara, and has had to learn that she does need extra time and often that simply isn't fair. He has had to take on more responsibility and has grown up faster because of the more complicated family life.

I am so unbelievably proud of him though. Rylan has stepped up all the way, and I know how hard it has been for him, but he is growing into an amazing, caring young man because of it. He sticks up for his sister when others are making fun of her, and he explains to people so beautifully how special and different Zara is. He embraces his sister, taking that big brother role even more seriously and he helps Zara to learn and grow by including her.

## **More Amazing Gifts**

I really do feel so grateful to have Zara in our lives, especially since we were so close to losing her when she was young.

My heart overflows with love for her every day because, despite the challenges, there are so many amazing and special gifts that come from raising such a unique child. The gift of the intense love that I feel for this amazing girl – that is absolutely priceless. Zara has challenged me so much in her short lifetime, and through those challenges,



I have grown so much as a person, and I'm so thankful for the lessons that have come along the way.

I have had to step up in my life, take responsibility and become a leader, a leader who five years ago would never have written a book like this. I wouldn't even have written a book at all! Zara has certainly broken me apart, but in the process, I have been put back together a more amazing person.

Before I had kids, I used to get told that I had such great patience, and I really did. I was always so patient with people, but raising Zara has created an entirely new level of patience that I didn't even know existed!

Some days were spent purely coaching her through tantrums all day. With very little ways to communicate, the anger and frustrations that would explode from her were intense. The broken toys, the broken furniture, the broken items that were meaningful to us that would get picked up and thrown in a rage of anger, or pulled apart and wrecked because she was feeling frustrated. That tested my patience.

The toilet training that took well over a year to get to a point where I wasn't cleaning up messes all day, every day and doing mass loads of washing. That tested my patience too.

It was a gift though, upgrading my patience to a whole new level, so that now there really isn't that much that

knocks me off my centre. This new level of patience also helped with the gift of persistence, because when you have a child with special needs, you certainly need persistence! Persistence to not give up on her, persistence to keep helping her, and persistence in holding that strong vision of her being the best that they can be. When things take longer to learn, it can get tough and you can lose hope that your child will ever get there, but persistence will get you through, and that is a great gift to have in life because often goals and things that we are striving towards take longer than we expect. It took two years to teach Zara to walk up stairs with alternating legs – two years! Now that is persistence in action!

Persistence is such a crucial element to all areas of life because persistence is what gets you through when things are not working and when everything around you is falling apart. Persistence will keep you going, still striving and moving forward for the outcome that you want no matter how long it takes.

In that persistence, I also got the gift of hundreds of tiny celebrations. Most parents celebrate the big milestones, like crawling and walking and saying their first few words, but often the smaller achievements are overlooked and taken for granted. For Zara, because it was so long in between the big milestones, we got the opportunity to celebrate the small and tiny milestones as well – like when Zara would start saying a new sound, or when she was

able to sit and focus for five minutes solid, or when she was finally able to climb up a ladder. The smallest bits of progress were big celebrations in our house, and in a lot of ways, this was a really cool gift because we could appreciate and acknowledge every new thing that Zara did no matter how small or insignificant it seemed.

She has also given me the invaluable gift of not caring what others think. Before Zara, I was a person that was a constant people pleaser. I would care deeply about what others thought of me and what I did. Having Zara completely changed that ... for the better!

When Zara would have one of her massive tantrums at the supermarket or in the playground or just when we were out and about, you would get so many judgmental stares, disapproving looks and even people approaching you telling you that you are doing things wrong or that my daughter needed "sorting out." It was really hard for me to start with, but I worked through my own personal issues, doubts and fears, and I came out of the other side with this great gift of not worrying about what others thought of my parenting ability or my daughter's behaviour. I knew that I was doing the best that I could every day with her, and that was what mattered. Yes, some days were downright messy and I didn't cope so well, but it didn't matter what anyone else thought... I WAS doing a great job at raising her.

It is amazingly liberating and freeing to remove that pressure and worry off your shoulders of what others think of you, and I've come to learn that it really doesn't matter how much of a saint you are, how much good you do in this world, you will still have people that hate you, judge you and criticise you, so what is the point of changing your entire life to try to please everyone?

The more authentic you can be in your life and the more that you can stand in your own power and make your own decisions in your life, the happier you will be. This does not mean that you should be mean to people or be completely selfish. It is about being your own true self, standing in your power and living from a place of love – love for yourself and love for others.

What is really interesting out of this entire journey with Zara is that I feel that I have started to find my true authentic self. All the layers and shields that got built up over my lifetime have been ripped down. I thought that I was getting broken by it all. Many days would be spent crying on the floor, sobbing about how hard life was and what a crap mother I was, but the truth was that I was just learning who I really am and through it all, I found myself, my true amazing self. I am now clear about what kind of person I am here to be in this world and I am clear about who I am as the real me. There is something really powerful and amazing in finding that.

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**In those dark times, when you get completely broken and stripped back to your core, it is actually an amazing opportunity to find the true you.**

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I call Zara my Angel, because I truly believe that she is a human angel that was brought into our lives for a reason. It has been extremely hard, but every part of it has been worth it to have this amazing soul as part of our family, and I feel so truly blessed to have her as my daughter. Zara truly is an amazing soul, despite having to live with challenges on a daily basis, she keeps going, she continues to shine and she continues to grow. She accepts and embraces her differences and she lives her life to the fullest.

Here is the thing though: although I talk about Zara and her special needs in this chapter, she is just like any other child, because if you are parent, you will know how much your child pushes you, and know how challenging it is to raise any child. Just like with Zara, every child is also a human angel if you are willing to look deeper and see the amazing greatness that they hold. Every child is there to challenge you and give you the opportunity to grow, and every child is amazingly special in his or her own way if you are willing to take the time to see them shine.

As I write this book, Zara has just turned 6-years-old. She still has a lot of challenges, but life now is so much easier than it was a few years ago, or even a year ago. Zara is progressing well and developing at a rate that she has never developed at before. She has just started school and absolutely loves it despite the fact that she is well behind her peers and still cannot speak properly. She has even found herself some great friends at school; friends that include her, friends that help her, and most importantly, friends that accept her for who she is. The future is indeed bright for our girl.

Every challenge in your life, big or small, gives you an opportunity to grow and learn. So when challenges arise in your life, will you choose to embrace the misery and pain, or will you choose to embrace the opportunity to grow?



## CHAPTER 8

### THE GIFT OF BELIEVING IN THE IMPOSSIBLE

*"The limitations that we have placed in our minds  
of what is possible is massively restricting the  
amazing and limitless potential of the human race."*

**~ Kim Baird ~**

So far in this book I have talked about a lot of miracles that have happened in my life... My daughter coming back from the edge of death, my own health miracle recovering from endometriosis and chronic sickness, my son who just wouldn't sleep no matter what I did, financial disaster—coming back from being \$250,000 in bad debt.

I have been truly blessed by many miracles in my life, but this last miracle really does top the all the rest.

What you believe is possible for you right now is likely to be tested in this chapter, because if you told me that something as impossible as what I have experienced in the last nine months was actually possible, I would have thought you were dreaming.

Yet, I am living proof that the 'impossible' is actually very possible and is much easier to obtain than we think. So I want to ask you right now... "What is actually possible for you in your life?"

I hope that by the end of this chapter, your mind will be open to more possibilities than you ever thought possible. So let me share this last key story of my life with you...

As you have already heard, I was born with cataracts and was completely blind in my left eye. My right eye had some sight, but not a lot. Then I got that amazing gift of having surgery when I was 11-years-old to gain the sight in my right eye. That in itself was a miracle, but the story of my cataracts was far from over at that point.

A string of amazing synchronicities happened in my twenties and after I had got to a place of full acceptance for who I was with my disability, something really profound happened...



## **The Mystery Tour**

I was 24-years-old and I went on a spiritual adventure with a small group of people into the wilderness of Colorado. We were in the middle of nowhere and I was completely out of my comfort zone.

It was a 'mystery tour' and so Andrew and I had no idea what we were in for. I had signed up for this tour purely on a flash of inspiration and a deep intuitive feeling that I needed to be there. So we went.

All we got told was to be in a certain carpark on a certain day and time in a small town in a remote part of Colorado in the United States. Just getting to this place all the way from New Zealand was an adventure! Then the six-day mystery tour would begin, of which we had no clue what we would experience. We were scared and nervous, but we knew we were in the right place.

The tour was amazing and we got the experience of our lives, meeting the most amazing people and visiting some very special and sacred places. Then on the fourth day, something unexpected happened to me. On the adventure we met a very special Native American medicine man.

During a profound few hours with this medicine man, and him telling each person in the group of their future and

what was blocking them right now, he looked me deep in the eyes and told me that one day, I would be able to see clearly from both my eyes.

This is without me even telling him about my eyesight or my blind eye.

I didn't believe him. After all, I was born blind in that left eye, and being able to see out of it was impossible – the doctors had told me again and again that it was impossible. Even surgery wouldn't fix the fact that I was blind in that eye. So that was the reality; this medicine man must be wrong.

When I started to explain to him about my blind eye, he stopped me and gave me a reassuring nod that he knew it all and I didn't need to explain it.

It completely shocked me and I didn't know how to process this information. How on earth was I going to see out of my blind eye that I had been told my whole life would be impossible for me to ever see out of?

I couldn't even believe that he would suggest that to me either, after I had done so much work on accepting myself and my eye as it was. Was I supposed to throw that all away, stop accepting myself, and start finding a way to magically heal my eye?

If you had told me when I was a child or a teenager that it was possible to see out of my blind eye, I would have given and done anything to make it happen. I wanted that so bad, but now things were different and I saw myself very differently.

It was all a bit much and since I had come to this place of full acceptance of myself, I didn't have any desire to make it happen. So I threw that deep bit of wisdom in the "whatever" pile of my brain and moved on with life.

### **Ten Years Later....**

Fast forward to just nine months ago, and during a meditation, I got guidance from the Universe to start healing my left eye. I immediately dismissed the idea, but the same message kept coming to me during my meditations every single day.

"Heal your left eye." "Heal your left eye." "Now is the time."

It took a few weeks of this constant and persistent guidance coming to me before I stopped dismissing it and took notice. I was thinking that it was not something that was going to be possible and not something that I wanted to do, but the guidance kept getting louder until I couldn't ignore it anymore.

Then a flashback came to me and took me back to that moment around ten years earlier. The medicine man back in Colorado, and him telling me that I would be able to see through both eyes. I had completely forgotten about his words of wisdom, but with all this guidance coming to me through my meditations, I had to find out and see what was possible. Clearly this is something that I was meant to do, despite still not wanting to do it.

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**If you get guidance from the Universe.... follow it.  
It may be scary, you may be uncertain, you may  
even have no idea why you are supposed to do  
it. Sometimes guidance has no logical reasons,  
but trust it because it is 100% the path you are  
supposed to take. Walk forward in certainty.**

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One of the things that I know for sure is that if you listen to that guidance from the Universe and do what you are guided to do, then life just flows so much easier because you are following the path that leads you to your greatest good. You get in this place that I like to call "The Bliss Zone," where everything flows smoothly and synchronicities are abundant. When you are in the zone, you find yourself in the right place at the right time. You meet the perfect people at the perfect time and everything just gets laid

out in front of you like magic. In the zone you can be in absolute awe of just how the Universe has managed to create the amazing synchronicities that are happening all around you. So I got this guidance and I finally listened. I took action and set the intention to heal my left blind eye.

As one of those perfect synchronicities, I had just completed a Reiki course (a form of energy healing) a month earlier — talk about perfect timing! So I started doing a bit of healing on my eye using Reiki, as well as using some of my mindset tools: saying positive affirmations around my eyesight and doing visualisations, seeing the lens of my eye becoming clear.

To tell you the truth, it was a pretty half-hearted effort. My own internal resistance and small thinking kept popping up and so I did a bit of work on it, but not much. I did the Reiki healing, affirmations and visualisations just a few times over a couple of weeks, but to my utter shock, I started to notice a little bit of vision in my left eye!

## **Gaining Sight in My Blind Eye**

Out of almost complete darkness, blurry shapes were starting to form and I was starting to see light. This was only a couple of weeks in, and I hadn't done much to get that result... Was it possible that gaining sight in my blind eye was actually going to happen?

When I started to see results, I decided to make more of an effort. I still was unsure what this all meant and why I was supposed to do this, but I had to go with the flow and trust that this was all for a reason.

I did more Reiki on it, more affirmations and more visualisations; I set the strong and committed intention to be able to see clearly, and with an already good diet, I went even further, researching food that had good healing properties for your eyes. I also started getting Network Spinal Analysis for my body to help my nervous system assist in this massive healing. The progress came extremely fast and was nothing short of a miracle.

My vision became clearer and I started seeing more. Fuzzy shapes were now becoming more defined, colours were getting brighter, and suddenly I could start distinguishing what objects were when I would cover up my right eye and was just using this new sight from my left eye.

Getting sight in that eye wasn't the only challenge though, and as you can see, starting to get sight came very quickly once I set the intention and took the actions I needed to in order to make it happen. The biggest and hardest challenge was training my brain to see out of that eye.

I had been blind since birth, so I had never seen out of that eye and my brain had shut down the receptors and connections for good. This is why the doctors told me that

I would never be able to see out of that eye, even if I were to have surgery, because the connections were never built for me to see out of that eye in the first place.

Your brain is an absolutely phenomenal machine though, and thankfully, we know now that your brain has neuroplasticity, meaning that it can build new connections and be trained and reprogrammed.

So it isn't just about getting the sight back, but also training the brain to build these connections and reprogram it to start looking through that eye. I started doing some "brain training" as well, to get the connections built and get my brain working how it should.

Suddenly I started to see things when I least expected it. Like the day that I was driving and suddenly saw my left wing mirror for the first time out of my left eye – I nearly jumped out of my skin! The training of my brain was starting to work and the connections were starting to be built.

It wasn't all smooth sailing though. About two months in, I started questioning what I was doing and why I was doing it. Fear and doubt starting wriggling their way into my mind, and I realised that I was losing myself.

I was born blind in my left eye, that was my story, that was who I was, and suddenly my identity was being changed. It is funny the games that your mind and your ego play

on you, especially during times of dramatic change and growth.

My ego was hurting. I didn't realise this straight away, but your ego is attached to your identity and who you are, and when this identity starts changing in any way, the ego can do all sorts of tricks and mind games to put a stop to that change.

So I hit a bump, a big one called my ego, and the thoughts that I was losing my identity of who I was by healing my blind eye. 34 years of "being blind" and now I could start to see, that brought up some big, deep issues that were hiding inside of me.

"Who am I really?"

"Why am I here?"

"Am I losing myself?"

It was a massive upheaval internally and took me over a month of internal chaos to work through. Ultimately I came to the conclusion that my identity is not my eye and whether it sees or not. My identity is not any other part of my body – all of that changes anyway. It isn't what I do or what I say. That is not what defines your identity. Your identity defines you as a human being at a certain point in time, but it is forever changing and forever evolving.



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**When striving forward into an unknown place in your life, with lots of big changes that you haven't experienced before, your internal resistance comes up to stop you in your tracks. Don't let it stop you.**

**Recognise it for what it is, work through it and continue to move forward.**

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So I got back on track and started working on my eyesight again, and again I was seeing results. It was about four months into the journey of healing my eye, and I decided to do a test to see how far I had come. I got Andrew to hold up random letters on paper a few metres away. I had no idea what letters he had chosen. I covered up my right eye, looked purely through my left eye and told him what I saw....

"T," "K," "S," "N," "O," "P," ...

I read every single letter correctly using purely my left eye.

WOW!

If you were to tell me a few months earlier that I would be able to read letters with my left eye, I would have told you that it was impossible... And really it was impossible to me and to the doctors and to everyone I knew, but it

had happened... and what do you know, it looks like that medicine man in the wilderness of Colorado was actually right with his wisdom that he had given me ten years earlier.

This was a miracle that was at least ten years in the planning from the Universe, probably actually even more. Some things take time for them to reach the perfect moment for it all to come together.

Although gaining sight in my blind eye happened very quickly once I started working on making it happen, it took a long time in getting to the start line. There was actually much preparation over decades that took place in order for the impossible to happen very quickly.

I can look back on the path of my life now and see how so many situations and so many synchronicities that happened over my life all led to this seemingly almost instant miracle happening. It is clear that there was always a grand plan in my life for this to happen, and that doesn't mean that it was ever guaranteed to happen, because I still had to make the brave choice to pursue it when guided. I could have just as easily said 'no' to that guidance and ignored it; I didn't have to take the action that I did to make it happen. I could have stopped once some of the challenges that came up happened. I had a choice to make this miracle happen in my life, and I followed through with action to make it happen.

This miracle showed me that more was possible in life than I could ever imagine, I could do the impossible, and if I could create the impossible in my life, then of course other people could do it too. In that moment I saw that all the struggle and pain and suffering that, I had experienced with my eyesight was for a greater reason.

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**Everything in your life is happening for a reason.  
What if the struggles and challenges that you have  
faced in the past and are facing now are actually  
there to help you and to teach you, leading you  
towards a greater place in your life**

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There's still a long way to go before I get full vision in my left eye; things are still blurry, but how amazing is it that a girl born completely blind in one eye is now seeing out of it 34 years later?

Making the impossible... possible.

The thing to remember is that I am no different from you. I have no extra special skills or abilities than any other person has or could get — you can achieve the impossible as well. What was impossible for me is now possible. It was simply the limitations of my mind and my limiting beliefs that were stopping that miracle from occurring.

There is a great quote from the amazing Nelson Mandela: “It always seems impossible until it’s done.” So many of the things that are now possible in this world were once considered impossible: TVs, phones, the Internet, flying, space travel... We are capable of so much more than we give ourselves credit for. Now is the time to drop that narrow thinking and see the possibilities of what can be created.

Now through this gift, through this miracle and through my story, I can inspire and help others to make the impossible happen in their own lives.

So I want to ask you again... What is possible for you? What do you believe is impossible for you to achieve that might actually be possible to create in your life?

What could you create if you put the intention into it, trust that it will happen and take the action you need to make it happen?

## **The Gifts**

There are so many great gifts that I got out of this lifelong disability and challenge of being born with cataracts. The gift of strength and resilience from the bullying that happened to me at school, the gift of problem solving when I had to find solutions to things that I couldn’t do because

of my eyesight, the gift of persistence and determination with me striving to be normal, the gift of being different, which on the journey to achieve being “normal” led me to realise that being different is an extraordinary thing and I now cherish that gift so much.

I love being different, I love being unique and I love that I don't fit into the box. The truth is that we are all different, and we all have amazing special qualities, but society has a great way of conditioning us to fit into a defined box, and it builds this great desire for all of us to want to fit into that box.

My ability to now see that box and all the constraints that it holds and to do what I can to stand in my own power and space and be my true self, well that might just be the greatest gift that I have received so far in this life and it is an amazing one! I am so eternally grateful to have been given that gift.

As humans we tend to see limitations and accept them. We let them stop us from going for our dreams or achieving the impossible, but what would happen if we let go of those limitations? What would happen if we dropped the victim stories of our life and our circumstances and we dropped all of the reasons that we give ourselves that we can't do something... What if we dropped all the stories about our challenges and our struggles and what if we could actually do anything that we wanted, and achieve

anything that we put our mind to... What then? Do you want a mediocre life, or do you want an extraordinary one? So much more is possible in your life than you could ever believe. We are infinite beings that are capable of greatness... Every single one of us, no matter where we are from or who we were born to or what experiences we have had in the past, is capable of greatness. Every person on this planet has more potential inside of them than they ever thought possible, so the question now is: Are you going to use it?



## PART 2

# TURNING CHALLENGES INTO GIFTS







## CHAPTER 9

### GETTING TO THE CORE OF YOUR EMOTIONS

I know, I know. Emotions are not something that most people want to talk about, but let me tell you that emotions matter. In fact they are really important because emotions are the driving force behind everything that you do, so in order to help you move forward in your life, no matter where you are right now, it is important to get in touch with your emotions.

#### **Open Up To Your Emotions**

What I do want to be clear about now is that this book is NOT about suppressing your emotions and putting on a false act of being 'happy and positive' all of the time, even when distressful and traumatic experiences are happening to you and around you.

Putting on a mask and pretending that you are ok and happy when you are not can be damaging to yourself and to others. If you try to push your true feelings and emotions away or not think about them, then you are suppressing those emotions. Continuous suppression of your emotions leads to substantial negative effects in your body and that will eventually lead to disease and emotional disharmony.

One sign that you are suppressing your emotions is that your emotions erupt unexpectedly – yes we have all experienced this, haven't we? When you are not expressing and releasing your emotions in a healthy and manageable way, you can lose complete control of them and your emotions can become very erratic. Some people are in this state constantly, and for others it is more of an occasional thing that happens.

What you want to do is to open up to your emotions. Feel them. Acknowledge them and work through them so that you can release them in a manageable and healthy way. It is really about increasing your emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathise with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict. It is a really important skill to have, so working on increasing your emotional intelligence is going to help you massively during challenging times in your life – big and small.

## **5 Ways to Increase Your Emotional Intelligence**

### **#1 Be The Observer**

Take yourself out of your mind and become an observer of your thoughts and behaviours – like you are looking in from the outside and observing yourself in an unattached way. When you are observing how you are feeling and how you are behaving in a non-judgmental and external way, you can catch and be aware when emotions are starting to rise, or when you are getting stressed out about a situation. The more you are aware of your emotions and behaviours, the more you are able to make choices around what you do about that. You can choose whether to get upset in a negative situation, or you can choose to be proactive and look for a solution to resolve the situation.

Being an observer in negative situations is one way to be aware of your emotions, but you can also ask yourself at any point throughout the day, “How am I feeling right now?” This is going to give you some insights into how you are feeling and why in any given moment, because it isn’t just the times when we are wound up and reacting badly that we need to tap into our emotions, it is all the time.

So take a minute to pause and observe how you are feeling right now. Ask yourself that question: “How am I feeling right now?” Are you feeling stressed? Are you feeling

relaxed? Are you feeling irritated? Is there any pain or tension in your body? Just taking a few moments to observe and become aware of those emotions is a powerful tool to help you to become stronger in your emotional intelligence.

## **#2 Change The Language That You Are Using**

The language that we use gives us great insight into how we are feeling and has an impact on the life that we are creating around us. So start listening to the language that you are using in your head and also the language that you use to talk to others. You can then make a choice to consciously change it because the language that we use has such a great impact on the life that gets created around us. In Chapter 12, you will find out exactly why this is, but trust me now when I tell you that the language that you are using in your everyday life is having a massive impact on the life that you are creating for yourself.

Do you say that “life is hard” all the time? Those very words are creating that in your reality. By simply changing your words, you can start to change your life. Instead of saying, “Life is hard,” you could change that to say, “Life is getting better for me every day.” Do you always talk about your lack of money and how you can’t afford anything? Then you can choose to change that language to drive you towards what you do want, like: “I am beginning to be able to afford what I want.”

### **#3 Practice Being Emotionally Honest**

If you say that you are “fine” to someone, but really you have anger bubbling away under the surface, then you are not communicating honestly with that person. Being honest with people helps you to be in touch with your emotions and also helps you to be happier in your life. Now this doesn’t mean that you should be completely blunt, call someone nasty names and be hurtful towards another person, but you can let that person know that you are not happy or are upset with the situation so that you can both work through a suitable solution to resolve the issue. Try practicing being more open and honest with your emotions in a respectful way so that you can have a deeper connection with people and solve problems faster when they arise.

### **#4 Talk To Others About How You Feel**

Sometimes just talking to someone about what is really going on in your life and how you are feeling about it all helps you to become more aware of the situation and releases the emotional build up. Have you ever had a time where just talking to a friend and explaining the crap that is going on in your life has actually made you feel better? That’s because talking about stuff helps us to process it and better handle it all. That friend doesn’t even have to offer solutions or fix the problem. Just the simple act of talking it through with them can help massively to get a

better understanding of the situation and move through the emotions of it all. If you don't have a friend or person that you can talk openly to about it, then get out a piece of paper and write it all down. Write down all the anger, hurt and frustration that you are feeling and why you are feeling that way. Let it flow out of you and don't worry about spelling or grammar or how it comes out, just write out what comes. Writing down how you are feeling can work just as effectively as talking to someone. It helps to release the negative emotions and get you back into balance while also providing valuable insights about what the underlying reasons are as to why you are feeling so emotional about the situation.

## **#5 Take Ownership of Your Emotions**

In order for you to increase your emotional intelligence and be able to better create your life and the situations around you, you need to take 100% ownership and responsibility for your emotions. It is not someone else's fault that you are choosing to be emotional in a situation. It is entirely your choice on how you choose to react and respond to that situation.

Now I know this is a hard one because a lot of the time someone else can actually be at fault to cause the situation. It is like the drug dealers that caused all the pain and suffering in my life for our beautiful daughter. She didn't deserve that, and she had no control over the situation.

There is no doubt in my mind that they were at fault and caused her health challenges, but I still have a choice about how I react and respond to that situation. At the start, when I first found out about the P Lab, I was furious. I had a lot of anger and hate towards the drug dealers, and I didn't take responsibility for my emotions and how I was reacting. It wasn't until I took responsibility that I took back the control and power of my own life and my happiness.

Another example is that I have experienced the violation of sexual abuse in my life. I understandably let the emotions of that experience negatively impact me for years. It wasn't my fault that it happened to me, and I didn't deserve that. It was hard to let go of it, and it was hard to step out of that place of being a victim from the event. But I knew that I had to, I had to take responsibility for the way that I was feeling, because I was only imprisoning myself by holding onto all that negative emotion around the situation.

So this one is easy to say and harder to do. It does take time and practice but it is worth it, because taking 100% responsibility for your emotions can completely transform a dark situation into a positive one. You get the control back in your life when you do that, and you get to choose the path of happiness and joy instead of the path of anger and sadness.

## What's The Cause?

It is useful to find out the cause of an emotion and why you are feeling that way at a particular time. Where is your anger, sadness or resentment coming from? This can give you insight into the situation and how to shift your negative emotions to a more positive place.

It is understandable that negative emotions can come up during intense times and challenges, and so sometimes it is the situation at hand that is leading to the emotion, but sometimes it is actually deeper and more complex where that emotion might be coming from.

Ever found yourself angry at someone and you have no idea why? You know you are angry, but when you think about it, you don't actually know *WHY* you are angry at them. This can happen because sometimes emotions do not come from the situation at hand, but rather are being triggered by it. Sometimes emotions can actually come up because of something from your past that has triggered it to appear. Or maybe there are some unconscious beliefs that you have and the emotions are being triggered because of that.

I remember one particular time that I was really angry with Andrew. I was furious in fact. He wasn't giving me the attention or compliments that I thought that I deserved. It wasn't actually him that was causing all this emotion



inside of me though; it was my unresolved emotions that I had from past hurts that were triggered by his actions. What was actually going on was that I wasn't feeling good enough and wasn't feeling worthy in our relationship, so I was looking to Andrew to make me feel good and make me feel worthy. It wasn't the particular situation that was causing the emotion, but an underlying unresolved emotion that was being triggered because of it.

Of course that is my responsibility to have enough self-love and respect for myself and not Andrew's responsibility. So although I could blame him till the cows came home, it was actually me that needed to address my issues to sort out that situation and why the emotions were arising.

Similarly, two months before Zara started school, I was an emotional mess. It was understandable because sending your child to school can be scary enough in itself; when you have a child with special needs it is even scarier. But there was actually a deeper reason that was causing all the emotion to be triggered. I had unresolved emotions from my childhood about being bullied at school and not being accepted by my peers, and so I was unconsciously bringing those unresolved emotions into how I was feeling about Zara starting school. My past unresolved emotions were getting triggered by the situation that was happening to me with Zara, so you can see how your past can have a massive effect on how you deal with things in the future.

It is useful to find out WHY the emotions are happening and the root cause of them so you can resolve those past emotions; however it is easy to get caught up and spend way too long on over analysing some situations. As good as it is to analyse the root cause of the emotions, it isn't always necessary to know why the emotions are happening to resolve them. You can just feel them, acknowledge them and ask the Universe to release them without knowing what is fully going on. You actually don't need to know exactly what is behind every emotion, so if you are getting stuck in trying to work out the cause, then just simply acknowledge that you are feeling how you are feeling and ask to release it.

## **Giving Yourself Time**

Some challenges in life are heartbreaking, gut wrenching and life crushing. The loss of a loved one, a relationship breakup, a violent attack, a terminal illness, a financial crisis, a tragic event... the list goes on. Life can be pretty harsh and cruel at times, and that can leave us feeling completely broken, like our soul has been crushed and we will never recover from it.

We can experience such intense emotions like anger, fear, guilt, extreme sadness and even shock and disbelief at the situation that we are going through. These emotions

can completely consume us and we can find ourselves in a place that we don't want to be in. I know that I have found myself in that place so many times over my life when things are going bad. I want to suggest to you that there are definitely gifts in those times, many blessings and valuable life lessons in disguise, but in order to find those gifts, often you first need to give yourself time. Give yourself time to grieve and feel the intense emotions that you are feeling. It is ok to feel these emotions, and it is ok to need time before you want to move on.

Everybody handles challenging situations differently, and so for some people they will move past the negative emotions quickly, and for others it can take a long time and that is absolutely ok. Your emotions are your own, and so you get to move on when you are ready. But know this: you can get out of it; you can have a great life if you want to, once you are ready.

## **The Purpose of Challenges**

This might be an unusual thought, but how much do we actually ask what the purpose of challenges are? Why do we actually have them?

Most people will go through various challenges their entire lives and never ask this question. They will never realise what purpose all those challenges had in their lives

because they didn't think about WHY those challenges were happening to them.

So what is the purpose of challenges?

Well, it comes back to the reason that I believe that we are all put here on this Earth. It comes back to our life purpose, and I don't mean that in the typical way that you may think of a life purpose, like, "I'm here to be a doctor and help people," kind of a life purpose. I mean at a core fundamental level.

What is the purpose for why we are all here? People have very different views on this, but I believe that we are all here "to grow and evolve."

It is a simple and yet profound purpose.

We are here to grow and evolve.

So as humans, much of the purpose of our life is to grow as people, make mistakes, learn lessons, become more aware and evolve as humans.

Yes, you might want to be a doctor to help people and that might be one of your purposes that will help you grow and evolve as a person, but you may not be a doctor your entire life. You may then find another purpose that you want to fulfil once the purpose of being a doctor has completed its time in your overall growth and evolution as a person.

That is why people can completely switch careers and jobs but still feel happy, fulfilled and on purpose — because they are. We all can have multiple ‘right now’ purposes in our lives; they don’t need to be lifetime purposes. The lifetime purpose for you though, is to grow and evolve.

In order to grow and evolve, that is where the challenges come in, because there is generally a bridge between the person that you are right this very second and the person that you truly desire to be, or the person that you truly can be. There is work inside of you that needs to be done and growth that needs to occur in order for you to achieve what you want to achieve and become the person that you want to become. You need to stretch. You need to expand. You need to grow.

The great news is that the Universe or Divine Source Energy knows exactly what areas we need help with in order to grow and evolve over this lifetime and will therefore give us challenges to stretch and grow us in exactly the areas that we need it.

It is no coincidence that Zara was my child and that she had those exact challenges. It was exactly what I needed to grow and evolve as a person, and it was exactly what Andrew and Rylan needed to grow as people as well.

Now you might go, “Well that is unfair on Zara, isn’t it?” Well, in some ways, yes, but I know that in my heart they

are exactly the challenges that she needed to grow and evolve as a person as well. I know that we will look back in ten years and go, “Wow, how perfect was all of that to shape Zara into the amazing person that she is today.”

Any challenge that we face is an area we need to work on, otherwise it wouldn't be a challenge. So if you are constantly having financial challenges, then you need to work on learning about how to create and manage your finances better. If you are constantly having challenges meeting and keeping an amazing intimate partner, then that is the area that you need to work on in your life. If you are constantly having health challenges then that is the area that you need to work on.

The Universe gives us this amazing gift by telling us clearly what we need to work on, but often we don't listen. We ignore the whispers, and so it turns into a sign, and we ignore the signs, and so it turns into a mild challenge that we then continue to ignore, and then it turns into a major challenge before it hits the catastrophe or multiple catastrophe phase. This is the Universe telling us what we need to deal with, what we need to pay attention to and work on.

What if we listened to that first whisper and made changes? What would happen then? Well, then it wouldn't have turned into the massive catastrophe that it did. If I had listened to my intuition in the first place when Rylan was

born and got him to sleep on me, then his sleeping problems wouldn't have escalated to the catastrophe that it did. If I listened to the "whispers" from the Universe saying, "pull your money back," when the Global Financial Crisis hit, then I could have saved us from losing tens of thousands of dollars in the stock market crash. If I had listened to the "whispers" around my health challenges and got it sorted earlier, then I wouldn't have gone through years of pain and extreme suffering.

The Universe is trying to serve you and transform you into the person you want to be, into the person you are here on this planet to be, so be happy for that and start to be open to that connection and guidance that the Universe is giving you.

If you think that you don't hear that guidance from the Universe, you do. We all hear it, some hear it clearer than others, but we all have that resource there and it is available to us at any time. We are usually told as children not to listen to that guidance. It is drummed out of us... We are scared in a situation and our parents tell us to stop being silly, we don't want to go and play with a certain kid but they make us, we don't want to go somewhere and we are forced to anyway. So most people stopped listening to the guidance when they were young, but it is always there with you, even right now in this moment. You just need to start acknowledging it and listening to it again. Which is a process, it takes time, but with practice,

you can get that guidance back clearly again. Later in this book I am going to tell you exactly how you can do this so that you can know the truth about anything whenever you want it.

## **Challenges Equal Growth**

Learn to like them, love them, embrace them because as unpleasant as challenges can be when you are in them, challenges mean growth for you and it means that you are able to move ahead in your life if you choose to get the gifts out of them.

The Universe will show you what you need to see in order to grow as a person. This alone is a gift. I have grown and learnt so much from all of the challenges in my life: the big ones and even most of the small ones as well. They have helped to shape me into the person that I am today, they have helped me to write this powerful book to help people around the world, they have made me stronger, they have made me wiser, and most of all, they have shifted me to be authentic as who I show up as every single day. As painful and uncomfortable as each of the challenges that I have faced have been, I am so grateful for all of the gifts and lessons that I got out of every single one.

Looking at challenges from this altered perspective can open up amazing possibilities for you when challenges



do arrive. It doesn't mean that it won't hurt anymore when they do happen, it won't mean that you won't get to breaking points, or will no longer have times when it is all too much, but if you can look at them from the higher perspective and the purpose that they serve, then you can have a greater acceptance and understanding of what is happening to you during any given challenge.





## CHAPTER 10

### INVESTING IN YOURSELF

Now you might be thinking that this all seems great, finding gifts and lessons out of those dark and challenging times, and in theory, it is easy to do, but in reality, it is not exactly easy to see the gifts and lessons when someone you love is dying, or when your marriage is breaking up, or when you have found out that you have a terminal health condition...

I know, I get it. Let's be real: it really is way easier said than done! Because in reality, when you are in the midst of a major challenge in your life, or even a small one for that matter, it is easy to get all caught up in the emotion of it and the situation that is happening to you. It is far easier to look back and see the gifts and lessons when you are well out of the challenge, say a year or ten later.

So is it actually possible to find gifts and valuable life lessons *during* the challenging and dark times without

suppressing your emotions and putting on the positive mask?

Yes, it is. But it does take work to shift your mindset — the way you think, feel and behave — to be different than how you currently think, feel and behave right now. It is really about investing in yourself, working on yourself, creating a more amazing and happier you. Because YOU are worth it, and I can tell you that working on yourself always rewards you massively.

This isn't to say that there is something wrong with you now, because there isn't. You are great just the way you are. This is simply about being more amazing, up-skilling yourself to handle challenges better and so that you can feel happier and more fulfilled in life. When you invest in yourself, improve your mindset and continue to work through your own "crap" that is holding you back in this life, the world just opens up to you.

This book isn't just about helping you make it through challenges, but is actually about helping you to have an amazing life, one that you truly embrace and love. Challenges will still arise on your journey, that never stops, but you will be able to handle them with more ease and you will be able to feel happier as a person and more fulfilled in the life that you are leading.

## What is Mindset?

Your Mindset is made up of your habits, your beliefs, your thoughts, and your intentions.

**Your Habits** - These are the things you do automatically without thinking. This can be everything from how you drive your car, to what you eat, how much you exercise, to how you respond to negative feedback.

**Beliefs** - What do you believe is true? What beliefs do you have that are shaping your life? If you believe it's hard to make money, it will be. How could it be any other way? When we have set beliefs, our brain will attempt to make those beliefs true for us — that's why you can have two people who have the same experience in life but come out of it with vastly different outcomes. It's because their foundational beliefs are different, so they experience life differently even when they are in the same situation, and their results are different because their awareness and expectations are different.

**Thoughts** - The thoughts that run through your head are a part of your mindset. What happens when something goes wrong in your life — does your internal voice support you, help you pick yourself up and tell you that everything will be ok, or does it smash you down and tell you that you screwed up yet again? Does it help support your results? We think around 70,000 thoughts per day,

so what those thoughts are have a massive impact on our mindset and how we see and experience the world.

**Intentions** - The power of your intention is a part of your Mindset. If you have met anyone who is ultra successful, they have a very strong intention of WHAT they want to happen, and the clearer your intentions are, the more likely those intentions are to manifest into your life. Strong intentions are a very powerful and strong part of your mindset.

## Why Your Mindset is So Crucial

Your habits, beliefs, thoughts and intentions have a massive impact on the life that you are creating for yourself. These things affect your life, they affect what happens around you and they affect the people around you as well.

Mindset is so crucial because this usually is the area that is holding people back from creating the success, happiness and fulfilment that they truly want in their life. Often it's not that they don't know the right strategies and tactics, it's not that they don't know the right people. It's not that they don't know what to do. It's actually that they have mindset blocks and limiting beliefs that are holding them back, and their mindset needs to shift in order to get the results that they desire.

During times of crisis, when you are going through your most challenging times, your mindset is crucial for not only getting you through, but also helping you to grow from the experience. Most people don't take much notice of what is going on in their head and have very little awareness of how much what they think, how they behave and what they believe has on the results they are getting in their lives.

Gandhi put it rather nicely with this...

*"Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,  
Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
Your values become your destiny."*

**~ Mahatma Gandhi ~**

Your mindset is a crucial component of your life and how enjoyable your life is and is going to be. So taking the time to improve this is worth it. Let me share a real life example with you...

I had a big "aha" moment recently when I realised a big whooping limiting belief that was holding me back. Here it is... and I'm sharing this with you to help you see how much we are unaware of what we do and how it can have a massive impact on the life that we are creating.

So here it is, I would always cringe and tense up when an email came in, or when I got a message or a text, and even answering the phone or checking the mailbox would make me want to run and hide. I had no awareness that I was even doing this though until recently, when it hit me like a lightning bolt!

Bad news and complaints... That is what I was always expecting! When a message came in, I was thinking, "Oh no, what's gone wrong here?" Seems pretty stupid, right? And yet I had no idea I was doing this – I had no awareness that I had been in this subconscious habit for 15 years! But after asking for some guidance from the Universe, this is what showed up that I needed to clear. I had this big 'aha' moment where I became aware of what I was doing and how it was blocking the results that I was trying to create in my life. So I went about changing this, and truthfully, it wasn't an easy one to clear because of the emotion from where it came from...

It came from my days as a teenager after I left school and started working in a small insurance firm. The firm managed the insurance for the City Council and it was my lovely job to take phone calls and emails from distraught people of the public that had a claim to lay with the council. They had gone too fast over a speed bump and damaged their car, or a council tree had dropped a branch on their car and dented it, or a pothole in the road had punctured a tyre.



It was, in truth, a crappy job that I absolutely hated. Dealing with grumpy people all day long for two very long years that I worked there, and it led to this mindset block that I have had since then... that any incoming messages or phone calls were going to be negative ones... Yeah, that isn't going to serve me, is it!?! This one limiting belief that I have been holding on to has lead to many challenges coming up in my life. It has caused so much chaos in my life that wouldn't have happened if I didn't form that limiting belief in the first place, or become aware of it sooner.

So I worked on clearing this limiting belief, and what do you know.... Things shifted massively! Cheques started arriving in the mail, good news after great news arriving via email, lovely messages and texts, unexpected money showing up! And the best part is that I can now go on with my day and receive phone calls, emails and messages without having that underlying sick feeling in my stomach thinking that they will all be bad news!

The world can be so magic when you face your "crap" (aka: your negative mindset and limiting beliefs that you have) head on and work through them instead of fighting, denying and hiding them deep down, which will only lead to more challenges showing up that will encourage you to work through them anyways. This is why I encourage everyone to invest in themselves and work on themselves, take the courageous steps to look within and get to know the real you, releasing those limiting beliefs and mindset blocks. Your world will never be the same again.

## **Where does Mindset come from?**

Mindset is actually built over time; you naturally form habits, beliefs, and how strong your intentions are as you go through life. These are a useful part of us. Habits, for example, are a shortcut you use so that you don't have to think and do everything manually all the time. Remember when you first drove a car, there was all that concentration that had to go into it, clutch in, off the accelerator, move gear stick, clutch out, back on the accelerator, as well as having to look where you were going — and now you can do all that automatically and easily.

Habits are useful — when they're good habits that drive you forwards. But most of our Mindset is built UNINTENTIONALLY. When we were kids, we saw things happen, or experienced things that caused us to form a certain belief, and we adopted that and it became part of our persona.

Say your parents were always fighting about money; then you may have unintentionally created a belief that money is wrong, or that money makes people fight, or that there never is enough money. So that belief then gets ingrained in you and you carry that belief throughout your life. That belief that “money is bad” then creates constant challenges around money and the lack of it throughout your life until you become aware of it and decide to change that belief.

Now these things are just an idea; they are not usually the truth, just a story in our heads, but we start to identify with the idea. We start to think it's who we are — when it's just a BELIEF we've taken on. Impatience is a classic one here. I hear people say, "Well, I'm just impatient, that's who I am, I can't change that." Of course you can! Being impatient isn't who you are. It is a quality that you are identifying with and you can change that if you want to.

I used to be extremely shy and never spoke. I identified with that for a long time, until a few years ago in fact. Then I made the decision that I didn't want to be that anymore and chose to change "who I was." Now I am an author, a coach, a speaker and a mentor, and that wouldn't have happened if I kept choosing to let my mindset and the identity that I held of myself stay the same.

You can make a choice at any point in your life to change your habits, beliefs, thoughts and intentions. This means that you can choose to completely change the person that you currently are if you want. Of course, some parts of our mindset are useful and help us—but where they're not, we want to be able to consciously change them because they so massively drive our results in our life. So let's talk now about some specific examples of how Mindset drives results.

## Your Beliefs Drive Your Results

Here are some examples of particular beliefs and how they create certain results...

**Belief:** “I have no time!”

**Result:** Running around, days are filled up, always busy, has no time and always feeling exhausted

**Truth:** We all have 24 hours in a day — some people achieve a lot more than others in that time! There is plenty of time; it is what you choose to do with that time that matters.

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**Belief:** “Money is evil.”

**Result:** Find it hard to make money, never have enough money, hate people that do have money

**Truth:** Money is simply a tool — it is not good or bad. You can choose to do good with money and help people in need, or you can choose to hurt people with your money. The money itself doesn’t do that; it is the person with the money that is driving it.

**Belief:** “Rich/Wealthy people are greedy, mean and ripping people off.”

**Result:** Find it hard to make money, never have enough, justify not having enough by thinking that you are a better person because of it

**Truth:** There are plenty of greedy and mean rich people out there, but there are also plenty of greedy and mean poor people too. It's not about how much money you have; it is about what kind of person you are. Money generally amplifies the kind of person that you are. So if you are a generous, kind person when you have little money, you will still be a generous kind person when you have money. I know many multi-millionaires, and they are the most kind, giving and generous people that I know.

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**Belief:** “You need to work hard to make good money.”

**Result:** Works their butt off to make good money, usually getting sick and having an unhappy life along the way, feeling exhausted, missing out on time with loved ones, always working and never taking down time

**Truth:** Some of the hardest working people on the planet make very little money. I remember my first business mentor telling me about his first job as a builder's assistant.

He worked really hard all week, working long, gruelling days carrying bricks, lifting heavy wooden planks. He worked so hard, and by the end of the week he was exhausted. And did he get paid well...?

No! He worked his butt off for very little money, and if he wanted to make more, he would have to work even harder! So it's not always about working harder; it's actually about working smarter. Sure, there is work involved, and yes, sometimes you are going to have to push hard. But believing that you have to work yourself into the ground to make money is not a useful belief!

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**Belief:** "Relationships are hard work!"

**Result:** Always experience a relationship that is extremely hard work, lots of fighting and disagreements, relationships end up unsatisfying and you wonder if it is worth it, jumping from one failed relationship to the next

**Truth:** Relationships are what you put into them. If you choose to grow and support a loving and easy relationship, it will turn into an amazingly rewarding relationship. Relationships are built with the mix of two people coming together, and in the mix gets thrown both of their beliefs and mindsets around relationships. This is why, in a relationship, you want both parties to jump on board and work on the relationship together. Relationships

can be absolutely amazing. Andrew and I have been together for 18 years now and married for 13 years. We have a phenomenal relationship and rarely fight or have arguments. We have put a lot of time and effort to getting this solid relationship, but it is absolutely possible.

So as you can see from these, what your beliefs and thoughts are can have quite a dramatic effect on the results that show up in your life. They can also be the cause of many of the challenges that show up in your life as well, and if you have reoccurring challenges in a certain area of your life (like relationships, health, money) then that is a sure sign that you need to work on that area of your life. So the key here to having an easier life with fewer challenges is to start changing those beliefs and thoughts and habits to better ones to get better results.

## **Shifting Your Mindset and Clearing Your Limiting Beliefs**

Now this might surprise you, but clearing your limiting beliefs is generally really simple. There is one strategy that in my thirteen years of studying mindset has proven to be the most effective at shifting mindset blocks and clearing limiting beliefs.

This strategy has two parts to it. The first part is about raising your awareness. Raising your awareness about

what you do, say and feel through observing your thoughts, language and behaviours. This will lead you to become aware of the limiting beliefs and mindset blocks that are holding you back.

The very act of becoming aware of something can actually be all that you need to do to clear that limiting belief. I am serious here. Sometimes, as humans, we want things to be more complicated than they are, and so we dismiss something or try to find something more complicated in order to solve a problem when the answer is actually really simple.

The very act of knowing what mindset blocks you have can be enough to start to shift them. You can simply become aware of a limiting belief and go, “WOW, I had no idea I was doing THAT!” and then make a choice that you don’t want that limiting belief anymore. It is about making a committed decision to not hold onto it, let it go and choose a new supportive belief that will empower you, and then, from that moment, that limiting belief no longer holds you back.

Like the example that I shared with you about being scared of incoming messages and phone calls. That belief changed the moment that I became aware of it and made the choice to release it even though it had been ingrained in me for fifteen years.

So the simple act of becoming aware is a powerful catalyst for change because often we are not even aware of what



we are actually doing. Have you ever had someone tell you that you are doing something, and you didn't actually know you were doing that?

I remember the first time I spoke in front of an audience. Now I'm one of those people that used to hate public speaking. I'm ok with it now, but it was a big fear that I had to overcome. So the first time that I spoke in front of a group of people I was doing my presentation, and it was all going really well. When we stopped for morning tea, one of the crew came up to me and mentioned that I was pacing back and forth along the stage. I had no idea I was doing that! I wasn't aware of it at all. Then, because I had that new awareness of what I was doing, when I went back up on stage, I didn't continue to do it. I caught myself every time I started to do it and stopped that behaviour because I decided that wasn't what I wanted to do.

So the first part is to become aware, and the next part is to simply STOP IT. Stop doing it! Stop believing or doing or thinking whatever it is that is holding you back and limiting your results. Make the choice and then follow through on it if you really want to change it. It seriously doesn't have to be a struggle, it doesn't have to take lots of hard work, it doesn't have to take years to change; you can simply make a choice and make a change. Once you are aware of it, then make the decision to STOP IT; stop letting this belief hold you back, and simply make the choice to let it go and move on.

## **The Journey of Mindset Shifting**

Sometimes, however, we have trouble releasing our limiting beliefs that easily, and stuff will hold on tight and not want to be released. Other times, we will release it, but there can be many layers to a particular belief, so even if you clear one layer of that belief, other deeper layers can then come up.

I often have people tell me, “I’ve done a Mindset course, so I’m done working on my Mindset. I’ve got that sorted.” There is no “done” when it comes to Mindset and self-development. It is a continual journey that is best to embrace your whole life.

I’ve been working on intentionally developing and improving my Mindset and myself for over thirteen years now, and I am still on a continuous journey of uncovering more about myself that is holding me back from my true potential. I’m still peeling back the layers, I’m still a work in progress as a human being, and I will be until the day that I die.

I encourage you to embrace that journey as well and be on a continual adventure of self-discovery. It won’t always be fun; it won’t always be easy. There will be times when you don’t like what you find out about yourself when you uncover it. It will be painful and heartbreaking to release some of your old beliefs and past hurts, but it is

definitely worth it, and it is an extremely fulfilling journey – one filled with many amazing rewards and possibilities. Ultimately it will give you the freedom and happiness in your life that you not only desire, but also deserve.

I wouldn't have been able to write this book and help so many people if I hadn't continued to go on the self-discovery journey over the last thirteen years. In high school, I failed English. I had multiple English teachers over my school years that were very expressive about how bad I was at writing and storytelling. That affected me for years, for nearly two decades in fact, and I had no desire ever in my life to write a book. I wasn't a writer! But here I am now, with multiple co-authored books published, this book published and hundreds of blog posts, articles and content in my name that people rave about. I am a writer, and I love it, but if I hadn't discovered, released and cleared the limiting beliefs and mindset blocks around that, none of this would have happened.

I didn't have to become a writer, but along my journey, I found that I wanted to because I loved doing it, and because my writing was actually helping people and changing lives. So I knew that I had to move through those mindset blocks and limiting beliefs around writing.

It wasn't easy. It was painful at times because I had to go deep into the real reasons why I didn't feel good enough, and why I didn't feel worthy and deserving enough to be

a writer. I had to be real to myself about how I felt like I couldn't help anyone, and that fear-based feeling of, "Why would anyone listen to me?" I had to work through those painful feelings and beliefs and acknowledge that despite how I felt, and despite the harsh criticism that people had given me all my life, I was good enough, I was worthy and I definitely could help people to have more amazing lives, and I'm telling you right now, that if I can do, then so can you, because we all have gifts inside of us that we need to discover and embrace, even if people have told us that we are crap and not good. We need to keep going, despite any challenges that arise, and we need to follow our hearts and our dreams and those little whispers of guidance that we get to live a life that is truly fulfilling.

So embrace the journey, jump on for the ride, and fall in love with discovering yourself.

## **There's Nothing Wrong With You**

One thing that I do want to make crystal clear is that there is absolutely nothing wrong with you. You are amazing just the way that you are. The point of self-development and self-empowerment isn't to fix you because you are not broken. You are imperfectly perfect right in this moment, and no matter what you believe about yourself right now, you are worthy, you are deserving, you are amazing and

you are more than enough. Those are words that you don't hear very often, but they are true. You are not broken, and there is nothing to fix.

Self-development, personal growth, working on your mindset: it is all about helping you to have a happier, more satisfied and more fulfilled life, so that you can actually enjoy the journey while you are blessed to be on this planet. More joy, more laughter, more peace of mind, more love, more purpose... Isn't that what life is really about? And how much of that are you currently experiencing and letting into your life?

We all make mistakes. We are human after all, and none of us are perfect... even those that think that they are. We are, in fact, imperfectly perfect. We screw up, we hurt people that we love, we yell, we get angry, we break things, we say hurtful words, we let people down, but it is all part of the human experience, and it is an opportunity for us to learn, to grow, to improve and to evolve.

You don't want to be going around intentionally doing bad things, but if it does happen, then apologise, try your best to rectify the situation, learn the lesson and move on. You don't need to dwell on the past, and beat yourself up for making a mistake and being human.

Start to see just how amazing you really are. You have achieved some great things in your life right? You have

done some things that you can be proud of yourself for, maybe you have forgotten about those? Trust yourself, believe in yourself and know that you are an amazing person that deserves to be here and has value to offer the world.



## CHAPTER 11

### YOU ARE THE CREATOR

Most of us have been led to believe that we have no, or very little, control in our lives. We are raised to believe this false truth. Our parents, who believed it to be true also, tell us that we are at the mercy of what life is going to throw at us. We have no control over what challenges are thrown our way and most of life is based on luck and hard work rather than anything else.

The media has a great way of further ingraining this message into us as well, increasing the fear in people and not usually giving people the full story. So we go through life forgetting that we have a choice, forgetting that we can make choices that will change our current and future realities for the better.

We are not at the whim of the Universe and the people around us to determine our lives; we do have a choice. We have choices in every situation – of what to do, of how to

behave and of how to feel. Each of those is a choice that we have control over.

We can't always consciously choose what is going to happen to us... We might find ourselves in a nasty situation or surrounded by a massive challenge that we didn't want and were not expecting, but we do have a choice about how we react and how we let that situation unfold and affect us in that moment and in the years afterwards.

The truth is that we are very powerful beings and we have a lot more power and control than we believe we have. Just take the example of me gaining sight in my blind eye. I had the choice there to make a change in my life and heal my eye. I had no idea that doing that was a choice because my entire life I had been told that I had no control over it — it was impossible and I just had to accept it.

I can tell you though, that there are many people on this planet that would have known and believed that I did have a choice when it came to that eye, including that Native American medicine man that I had met ten years before I made the choice for myself. So I want you to question things in your life. What do you have choices about? What do you want to change in your current life that you thought you had no control over?

You are the creator of your life. You are here to create it and not get dragged along kicking and screaming!



You can create whatever life you desire, but remember that the Universe will then reveal to you what you need to work on in order to have what you want. It will be hard at times, it will stretch you, and you will question whether you can actually achieve the life that you want, fear and doubt will come up on a regular basis, but you can do it if you stick at it and continue to grow.

Challenges will come up, and instead of running away from them and living in your safe and comfortable bubble that you are not actually happy with, choose to be bold and brave instead and embrace those challenges and use them to grow and evolve into the person that you want to be, and have the life that you want to create.

## **Take Responsibility**

Part of being the creator of your life means that you do need to take responsibility for your actions and for your life. Because if you are to reap the benefits of being the full creator of your life, which you are whether you acknowledge this role or not, then you also need to take full responsibility for every aspect of your life, whether it is going absolutely amazing or whether it is going totally crap!

Taking full responsibility for your life and your actions is the first step of a really important transition into an

amazing life. But most people are *NOT* taking anywhere near full responsibility for their lives. They blame their flaws and mistakes on someone or something else that is out of their control, they justify their bad actions and behaviours on something that is outside of them, and they run from problems, or act like they don't exist, or pretend that their choices and actions don't matter or don't affect others.

If you believe that you are not in control and you don't take responsibility, then it's not your fault you don't have the life you want. You can blame and justify *why* you don't have the life of your dreams, you can blame situations or other people for holding you back. But that is, quite frankly, a cop out and will lead to dissatisfaction, unhappiness and a lack of fulfilment in your life if you choose not to take full responsibility for your life.

The responsibility for your life lies within YOU. Having a victim mentality, blaming external circumstances and people for your problems and what is happening to you, and having the belief that it is not within your power to change your situation no matter where you are right now is the surest way to avoid improving your life.

When you take full responsibility for your life, that is when you change your life for the better. That is when you can consciously choose the path that you are going to take and the actions that you are going to make.

At every crisis point in my life, I had the choice to look deep within myself and take full responsibility for the situation. It wasn't easy. It wasn't comfortable. It hurt and was painful to get real with myself and take full responsibility for the mess that was surrounding me, but in order to make improvements, in order to get myself out of each of those situations, that is exactly what I needed to do.

It is easy to blame others on situations in our lives — your parents screwed you up, or didn't look after you the way that they should have. Your partner or family doesn't treat you how they should. People at your work are horrible and make your life miserable. The government and politicians are doing a bad job and making bad choices to wreck the country. Most people are in this continual blaming and justifying mode as to why their life isn't how they want it, and it is not supporting or helping them or anyone else to move forward and improve things. Blaming others for your crappy life and how you feel is giving away your personal power to them, and you can't make changes when you have no personal power.

I gave away all of my personal power for most of my life, especially in the self worth area of my life. I blamed my parents on not accepting me and loving me the way I felt that I deserved, I made excuses and justified not being able to be better in life because of my upbringing.

I blamed my disability for holding me back, for causing me so much pain and suffering. I blamed the people that I worked with for making my life miserable, I blamed my teachers at school for criticising me so hurtfully and not doing a better job at helping me more, I blamed my crappy body for being so sick, and I blamed Andrew at times for not always showing me the love and attention that I desired. It wasn't until I took responsibility in every area of my life that I got my personal power back and was able to make better choices to create my future.

I took responsibility for my self-worth and started working on loving myself just the way that I was, I took responsibility for my health and well-being, made some extremely tough choices and got my health back from chaos. I took responsibility for my marriage and put effort into it to grow and nourish that marriage into what can only be described now as a phenomenal one. The funny thing is that as I stepped up and took responsibility, others around me followed too, and we made things better together. When you become a leader of your own life, you will likely find that people will start to follow your great example and step up in their own lives as well. Of course ,that will only happen if they start taking responsibility for their own life as well, and some will choose to do that, and others will not choose to.

Personalities are not set in stone, and people can change whenever they want. Sometimes there needs to be a big

enough, compelling reason, like a crisis point to get to that place, but in reality, anybody can choose to be who they want to be anytime with or without a crisis point to be that catalyst for change. There are people on this planet that were addicted to drugs, or have committed horrible crimes, and they have turned their lives around and gone on to do amazing things. They went from taking no responsibility and living a victim mentality of “poor me” to making a choice and starting to take responsibility for their lives, and then going on to make a meaningful, positive impact on this world.

So now is the time for you to take your own personal power back. Take back the control in your life and start to take full responsibility for your life and actions. To change what’s currently not working in your life, you must believe that you are the one in control. Don’t blame, complain, or criticise other people or the situation that you find yourself in. Accept full responsibility for everything in your life, whether you caused it or not. That’s right. I’m asking you here to even take responsibility for your part in a situation when you were not the one that caused it. Now I’m not saying that you should stand up and take the blame or say that it was your fault if it wasn’t.

Being at fault is different from taking responsibility. Although, if you were indeed at fault in a particular situation, then do stand up and take responsibility for causing it, but if you were not at fault, then you can still take responsibility for your part in any situation.

The drug dealers were at fault for making the P Lab in the house that we then moved into. I don't need to say that was my fault. It wasn't my fault that my daughter got so sick, but I have taken full responsibility for the situation. I could have done things differently. We could have got the house tested before we moved in or after we moved in when Zara started getting sick. I can take full responsibility for how I feel about the situation and the actions that I then take because of it. Do I want to hold on to anger and resentment against these total strangers my whole life? Causing myself even greater pain and struggle? Or do I want to release that and choose a different perspective, and move forward in my life without that heavy weight of blame and anger holding me back?

We moved out, we got help for Zara and we focused on moving forward in our lives, which included forgiving the drug dealers and releasing any negative emotions that I had about the entire situation. That was my way of taking full responsibility for the situation. I worked out what I could do to make the situation better and then went on to do it.

We often get so caught up in the fact that a situation is someone else's fault that we forget that we have choices to improve a situation. We can feel trapped and helpless, but that is not the case at all. A common example of this is when our partner in our intimate relationship is behaving in a way that we do not approve of or like. We get filled

with anger and frustration at our partner and try to get *them* to change so that things can get better in our own mind. We criticise them, we put them down, we try to force them to change.

Let me ask you a question: when people do that to you, are you inspired to change for them? Probably not, and neither is your partner. Instead, you can ask how can I take responsibility for this situation and what can I do to improve it? It might be that you can start to compliment your partner on the things that they are doing right instead of constantly criticising them for everything they are doing wrong. Maybe you could put systems in place in your house to help everyone in the household to follow a system that will work for everyone. Maybe you could look at the situation from your partner's perspective as well and get an understanding of where they are coming from. Maybe you could look within yourself and find out why the situation is making you so angry and frustrated. There are always plenty of choices and options that *you* can do to improve things.

Even external challenges, where you feel that you have no role to play in causing the problem can have internal solutions, where you can make the situation better. Taking responsibility for your part in a challenging situation will empower you, encourage a successful outcome, and heighten your self-esteem and self-confidence, all of which will lead to increased happiness and fulfilment in your life.

So I want to ask you another question now: where in your life are you currently not taking responsibility? What area of your life is not where you want it to be and how can you take responsibility and improve the situation?

## **Making a Committed Decision about Your Life**

Taking responsibility is also about making a conscious decision in your life. It is about you making a decision that you want a better life AND that you will take actions to work towards that.

There are very few people on this planet that are 100% happy and satisfied in every area of their life – their physical health and well-being their financial position, which includes their work or business; the relationships in their life including partner, children, family, friends, clients and work colleagues; and their spiritual path and connection.

It doesn't matter where you are currently at — you could be poor or wealthy, healthy or unwell, in an amazing relationship or in a crappy one. You could be happily single or unhappily single, you could be spiritually connected already or completely disconnected — most people want more from one or more areas in their life. The first step to getting more is simply to make a committed decision to do so and then taking the action needed to make it happen.



The great news is that you can make a committed decision at any time. No matter where you are in your life, whether it is going bad, or whether it is going ok or even if your life is going great, you can make a decision to take your life to the next level and make changes for the better.

So now is as good a time as any! What decision are you going to commit to right now? What area of your life are you going to commit to start changing today? And what action can you take today to start that change happening? It doesn't have to be a big action. It can be small, but by making the decision and then taking action on it, you will show the Universe that you are serious and committed to making the change.

When I was 20-years-old and was at my lowest point with my health, I made that committed decision to quit sugar and clean up my diet. I made that decision to improve that area of my life and then I took the action needed to make it happen. It was not an easy decision, it was extremely hard to make that decision, but it was the decision that was going to get me moving towards the health and well-being that I wanted in life. When I made that decision, I had no idea just how healthy I could be, I had no idea just how much energy I could have, I had no idea that I could live without any crippling pain. It was a committed decision that I made to change my whole life.

We have these opportunities presented to us every day to make different choices to better our lives, and most of the time we ignore these opportunities. In fact, we don't even see them as opportunities when they appear in front of us, and so we go on with our day making no new changes, no decisions to make a change for the better in our lives.

Every day that we were going deeper and deeper into financial debt, I had the opportunity to get real and look at the real numbers of what was going on, but I didn't. I ignored those opportunities, choosing instead to bury my head in the sand and fall deeper and deeper into crisis. I could have turned that situation around so much sooner, but I didn't because I didn't make a committed decision to improve my life back then.

So is there a committed decision that you want to make today? Is there a decision that you want to choose to make to improve an area of your life? Or even multiple areas of your life? And what action can you take today as the first step in that committed decision?

## **What are Your Stories?**

We all have stories running around in our heads, so what are your stories? What are the stories that are on repeat mode that you have about yourself and your life?

Stories are very powerful. They teach us in life, from a very young age, what is right and what is wrong. They teach us how life works and who people are. Throughout our life, we also create stories in our head about almost everything. From the people that we encounter to how the world works, from money, to love, to friendship, to our career path, to society, to the government... We form stories about everything. We also create a story of our own that runs around in our head about ourselves and our life.

Sometimes our stories are hard for us to admit to because usually they are pulling us down and holding us back in life, rather than building us up and encouraging us. Our stories can be quite embarrassing and shameful when we discover the truth of them because quite often it is our stories that are the reason that we have been held back, or why we are not as successful as we want to be.

People can want to hide them, deny them and even ignore them, but uncovering our stories is part of the investing in ourselves that I was talking about earlier — uncovering the layers so you can get back to being your true authentic self and being the creator of your life.

Most of us hold all these crap stories about ourselves: “I’m not good enough,” or “I can never make enough money,” or “Things never work out for me” – all of those are really just stories that we tell ourselves, and they come true and continue to show up in our lives because we believe them.

I want to share with you now a defining moment that I had a few years ago. It was when I discovered what one of my stories was. I haven't shared this with anyone except Andrew, but I know that by me sharing this with you, it could have a profound difference on your life because as I share the inner depths of my own shadows, it helps to show you that it is ok for you to discover your shadows as well. Then you can work through them to come out the other side towards a better life.

Just like everyone else, I've had unhelpful stories running around in my head throughout my life – the "I am not good enough" story is one of the big stories I have had that I have already shared with you, and I was well aware of that story that I was holding onto. The story that I discovered a few years ago shocked me and I had no idea that this story was even one that was running in my head. I had already been studying personal development for over ten years at this point, so had uncovered and worked through a lot of my own "crap."

Then one day, after having a particularly bad day with Zara a few years ago, I was exhausted and I was contemplating my life and where I was at with it. I wasn't happy with the constant challenges that seemed to arise in my life; if it wasn't one area of my life, it was another area that would be in crisis.

When I looked back at my entire life, and I was truly real with myself, it seemed like a constant and never-ending stream of challenges. Major challenge after major challenge and I overcame them all. But why was it that this pattern of crisis after crisis was happening for my entire life? Then the light bulb went off....

My story was that I was a “survivor.”

The hard truth was that I loved overcoming challenges. It was like I was this amazing and important person because I had all these challenges in my life and I overcame them to victory. It made me feel strong and special and important to achieve this.

With every challenge I would say, “I can survive through anything,” and I would because that was my story. I got attention from doing it as well. People would find it inspiring and amazing that I could overcome so much, and I loved to be an inspiring person, and so this story and this life pattern had some massive benefits that were serving me even though I didn’t realise all of this on a conscious level.

It certainly wasn’t fun. I felt like I had been on this constant path of overcoming one challenge after the next, sometimes dealing with multiple big challenges at once, and it was exhausting: physically, mentally and spiritually. There wasn’t much time to actually enjoy life because the next

challenge would start and off I would go again, not letting anything get me down and pushing forward to overcome the next challenge.

I had no idea that I was creating this for myself, but I was. I was creating all of it. I had this “survivor” story deeply ingrained in my subconscious and it was driving my life to create challenges that I could then live into this story that I had.

Can you see how powerful this story was for creating and shaping my life?

Of course, once I was aware that this was my story I then had the powerful choice to change it. I had the choice to make a new story for my life, one of inspiring people without all of the drama and challenges. If I weren’t willing to get real with myself and uncover this very uncomfortable truth about myself, then I would have gone through my entire life with this as my reality. So as uncomfortable and painful as going within and uncovering these patterns and stories can be, it is worth it to be able to then create new empowering stories for your life.

I want you to right now sit and think for five minutes or more about the stories of your life that you have running around in your head. What stories are driving your life right now? Be completely open and honest with yourself here. Take off those rose coloured glasses; be raw and

real with yourself about what stories you have that are creating the challenges in your life right now.

Do you want to continue those stories? Or are you ready to make a committed decision to now change those stories and embrace newer, more empowering stories? The choice is yours.







## CHAPTER 12

### THE ENERGETIC WEB

**Everything is energy.**

It is the foundation of the Universe. This has been solidly proven again and again by science, but is still a very “woo woo” subject because people don’t get how all this mysterious “energy stuff” works.

But what does this have to do with this book and what we are talking about? Well, it is extremely relevant actually, because vibrating energy is what creates everything in this world that we live in... Nothing is actually solid as we perceive. Everything in our world is made up of vibrating energy. We are made of energy, the chair you are sitting on is made of energy, the house that you live in is made of energy, water is made of energy, your thoughts are made of energy, your emotions are made of energy, even your dreams and desires, as well as your fears and doubts are made of energy.

Everything is a massive web of interacting energy.

I've already talked about Mindset and how crucial it is to the results in our life, and it is, but going even deeper, it actually comes down to one simple thing... energy. Your energy (and the energy around you) creates the results that show up in your life. Mindset is, again, just energy and is actually about shifting your energy to a higher vibrational frequency, and the higher your vibrational energy, the more desirable results you are going to get in your life.

Ever noticed how people who are happy and full of positive energy have all this amazing luck and have great things happen to them all the time? That is no coincidence! It is because they have a high vibrational energy and like energy attracts to each other, so if you have a high vibrational frequency, then other people and situations with a high vibrational frequency will attract to you.

Equally, if you have a low vibrational energy, then like energy will be attracted to you, and you will call in similar energy into your life. That's why some people are forever experiencing hurt, pain, fear, anguish in their life, because that is the energy that they are living in and so that is what they are attracting.

I have countless stories of what results and miracles I have created for myself and others using this knowledge of energy to create and manifest things in my life. Just

remember back to the chapter about my blind left eye... The reason I was able to heal that was because I started lifting the vibrational frequency of that eye and that in turn started the healing process in motion.

Energy is very powerful, and you can intentionally use that knowledge to create an amazing life for yourself.

## **We Are All Like Massive Radio Antennas**

Each one of us is like a massive radio antenna — we receive energy from our external world, and we also send out energy to the world, but unlike an actual radio antenna, we have no range limit.

Have you ever thought about someone, a friend or family member, and thought that you should call them but didn't get around to it and out of the blue they call you? That's because you sent that thought out into the world, and the energy of that thought went to the person you were thinking of. They then received that thought and took action and called you.

So what happens when you are in a prolonged low frequency state – you are angry, depressed, fearful, sad? Well, then you are sending that energy out to the world, and what comes back is people and situations that will match that vibrational frequency that you sent out, causing more reasons to be angry, depressed, fearful and sad.

This is really powerful knowledge that you now have in your hands, and you can now use this knowledge to your benefit to improve your own life and the ones around you. This is why you can affect and change your life with your thoughts, beliefs, emotions and actions: because all of those are energy, and all of those are constantly creating the life that is being created around you.

The more that you can live in the high frequency space – in joy, love, and gratitude, the more ease and flow you will have in your life, the more opportunities will arise, the more abundance will show up for you.

What makes the whole energetic web more complex is that everyone is part of it. So every person on this planet is sending out energy into the web and that can affect you – whether you know them or not. The energetic connection between yourself and the people that you know is stronger, but there is also a global energy that can have an impact on you. This is why you can feel extra sad or fearful when a global tragedy occurs, because the energetic web gets filled with sadness or fear, and we as connected beings feel that. The good news is that the higher your frequency, the more powerful you are and the less affected you become by other people's energy and the global energy web. You can be sovereign and have boundaries with your own energy so that you aren't affected by the web unknowingly.

## **So My Thoughts, Beliefs, Intentions, and Desires Are All Energy?**

Yes! Every thought that you have is energy: your beliefs are energy, your goals, intentions and desires are also energy. So if you want to create something in your life, say a goal or a desired outcome, what is the quickest and easiest way to make that happen?

It is to get in the vibrational energy of that goal or desire and it will then manifest in your life. You need to really feel the energy of that desire, you need to feel what it would be like if that was already in your life right now, you need to believe that it has already happened. How happy would you be? How content would you feel? How satisfied would you be? How proud would you feel? Feel that same way now.

So if you are looking for your dream job right now, then focus on the feeling that you already have that dream job, rather than the disappointment that you haven't found it yet. If you want more money in your bank account, then feel and imagine that you have more money now. Get into the energy of abundance and more money, instead of focusing on the lack of money that is currently in your account. If you want to find the most amazing lover and life partner, then feel it, know it as if it has already happened. Getting into that feeling energy is sending out powerful messages to the universal energy web and then

more of that energy is going to come back to you, creating it in your life.

Now you do still need to take action. Sometimes things will manifest really easily and quickly without much action on your part, and other times it will take time, effort and a lot of action... days, months and even years sometimes!

Action is important because that allows the universal web to bring things, opportunities and people to you. If you need to meet a certain person in order to bring a goal into your life because they are the key in making it happen, then sitting at home every single day and imagining you have met that goal now is not going to make it happen. You need to get out there and take action so the Universe can work its magic to create what you want.

I remember when I was writing this book, I wrote it in an extremely short timeframe, and I was looking for just a few people to write their own story of a dark time in their life and the gifts that they got out of it, which you will read soon in Part 3 of this book. So I was trying to work out who I was going to ask because obviously not everyone would want something so intimate and personal in a book. I was invited to a networking event, and I was tired and really didn't want to go, but I had this feeling that I really needed to be there, so I went. Well, the first person that I talked to at that networking event is now one of the people in the last part of this book.

It all happened so easily, and so effortlessly, but I did have to take action. I went to the networking event, even though I didn't want to, but the Universe then delivered to me this amazing person who was more than happy to be part of the book.

Action is important. That desire that I had to get someone to write for my book couldn't have manifested that night if I didn't take action and go to that networking event. Pay particular attention to actions that you have a gut instinct about, actions that you get an inspired feeling to take, because those ones are the ones that lead to magic opportunities, or meeting the perfect person at the perfect time.

## **Energy Signals**

Every thought, belief and intention is energy, but there is energy with weaker signals and energy with stronger signals. When you regularly put out the same energy signal, like a repeated thought, it gets stronger, and the stronger the signal, the more powerful it is in creating that in your life.

So you don't need to worry if you have a one off thought about something bad that could happen because the signal will be weak. But if you then continue to think that thought, or thoughts similar to it, the signal will get stronger and make it likely to manifest in your life.

Focused thoughts and energy are really powerful, so we want to be making sure that our focused thoughts are positive and supportive rather than negative and disempowering. You don't need to make every single thought and feeling that you have positive and happy, but if you can shift the balance and have more positive and happy thoughts and intentions than you have negative ones, then you will create mostly positive situations and experiences in your life.

So what are you focusing on in your life at the moment? Are you focusing on what you want to achieve? Are you focusing on the results you desire? Are you appreciating everything great that you have in your life right now? Or are you focusing on all the lack that is in your life: lack of money, lack of time, lack of love, lack of friends, lack of material stuff?

When I was a chronically sick teenager, I would lie there every day for hours focusing on everything that was wrong with me; focusing on how sick I was, focusing on all the pain in my body, focusing on how useless I was. I was sending out strong energy signals that I was sick, unwell, useless and in pain, so that is what I got more of!!

It is easy to look back on every challenging situation in my life now and see how I was fueling that and amplifying the situation with my thoughts and energy, but when you are in the middle of it, it can be difficult to see. With



this knowledge and new awareness, you can now start making informed decisions about what energy signals you are going to put out to the world, so that you can choose the direction that you want to head in, rather than being unconsciously dragged around by life.

When you understand that everything is energy, and that energy creates the world that you are living in, then you will be able to rise above any darkness and lead a truly extraordinary life.



# DO YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO EASILY LIFT YOUR VIBRATIONAL ENERGY... ANYTIME?

You have seen the power now of how your vibrational energy is creating your life and determining your happiness, but how do you actually lift your energy when you are feeling down? How do you easily lift your vibration when you are feeling flat? How do you use this knowledge of the energetic web of the Universe to create anything that you want in your life?

**I can show you exactly how to easily lift your vibrational energy anytime with the powerful and practical strategies that I have discovered from over a decade of research.**

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Find out how in a powerful bonus chapter that I have created exclusively for readers of the book.

**“How to Easily Lift Your Vibrational Energy,  
Anytime You Want”**

Grab Your Bonus Chapters Here:  
[www.GiftsFromTheDarkness.com/Gifts](http://www.GiftsFromTheDarkness.com/Gifts)

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## CHAPTER 13

### 9 ATTITUDE SHIFTS TO A HAPPIER LIFE

We all want to be happier, don't we? Actually, not everyone does; some people are pretty happy being miserable, but because you are reading this book, I'm sure you are one of the people that truly do want a happier life. So in this chapter, I've put together 9 key attitude shifts that you can make in order to bring more happiness into your life.

#### **#1 Change Your Perspective**

We can get stuck in our ways in life and forget that in every situation there are different perspectives. Even when you have two people in exactly the same situation, completely different stories can be told about the same situation from both of the people involved. That is because everyone

has a different perspective on things. Their perspective is made up of the situation at hand from their point of view, plus is also affected by each person's beliefs, values and past experiences thrown into the mix.

Often challenges or areas of unhappiness can involve other people that are in your life and are causing friction — parents, children, co-workers, family members, friends. Friction and tension can build up over time and cause a relationship to be filled with fractures, drama and bitterness. Both sides stay fixed at looking at the situation from their own point of view, and they never stop to think and even consider the point of view from the other person.

This was really the key learning in healing my hatred and unhappiness around the cosmetic surgery that my mum made me have on my ears when I was 8-years-old. From my perspective, it was a horrible decision on her part that led on to create so many self-worth issues and self-hatred. But when I took the time to look at it from her perspective, I saw that she was being a caring and thoughtful mother that wanted the best for her daughter. She was trying to avoid me getting bullied even more than I already was due to my disability.

When I looked at the situation from this new perspective, it was easier for me to heal this past wound because I could see that her decision was one that was coming from a place of love, rather than from a place of me not being good enough for her, which was my perspective.

So changing your perspective and looking at situations from another perspective can bring much more happiness into your life and allow you to heal past hurts that you have been holding onto with bitterness and resentment. You can also look at the actual challenges from your life from a different perspective as well. Why not look at challenges as if they are there to help you, to guide you, to show you that you are off course, or to tell you that there is a lesson you need to learn. Rather than looking at them as these horrible things that are there to hinder you and hold you back.

Changing your perspective on life, people and situations, looking at things from a different angle, can have a massive positive impact on your happiness level and the way that you experience life. Which follows nicely into the next shift...

## **#2 Heal Your Relationships**

Relationships form such a key part of life. You can get by in life with very few relationships, but it really isn't much fun – I know because I have isolated myself a number of times during my life to avoid people when life was getting too much. As humans, we really do need relationships, we need connection and love. It is one of the basic humans needs that we need to thrive.

Unfortunately, many people are surrounded by toxic and difficult relationships in their lives, and it has a massive impact on your happiness. If you have toxic or difficult relationships, especially in your key relationships that are close to you, it can make your life hell and make your life completely unbearable.

So many people are hurt and struggling because of broken and difficult relationships in their lives, and it causes so much unhappiness and pain. Again, you do have a choice. You can choose to either heal those broken relationships or to end them. The preference, of course, is to heal them, but sometimes in life, if you have done all you can to heal a relationship, then it can be time to let it go.

Once you have worked on healing and getting rid of toxic and unhealthy relationships in your life, you can feel a greater sense of happiness because the relationships around you will support and energise you, instead of creating friction, tension and draining your energy.

### **#3 Do Not Engage in Drama**

This one follows on from the last one because most drama is caused by relationships in our lives. Many people love to engage in drama — it is like some people thrive on it! The more they get, the more they revel in it. They live for drama, they create it, and they make situations worse

by pointing out drama to get other people hooked in and worked up. How useful is that for creating an amazing life? How useful is it for creating happiness in your life and for others? Can you think of someone in your life like that? Or maybe you are one of them! And if you are, that's ok. I certainly used to thrive on drama; I am a self-confessed ex-drama queen! I made a choice though, to create a different life for myself and the people around me, and in order to do that, I had to change my need to engage in drama.

Life doesn't have to be filled with drama; it can be mostly peaceful and calm. Drama is, for the most part, just a distraction to life. People get all hung up on the drama of a situation, focusing intently on it so that they don't need to deal with the honest truth and handle a situation with ease and grace.

The less you can engage in drama in your life, the better. Don't feed into other people's drama – be compassionate and empathetic when someone is going through tough times, but don't engage and add momentum to the situation.

You will find that the less drama that is in your life, the happier you will feel.

## #4 Stop Judging Others

Now, before you get all worked up thinking, “I would never judge someone else,” let me tell you a story.

When I went on that spiritual adventure in my early twenties and met that Native American medicine man, the very first thing that he said to me was, “Oh, you are so judgmental.”

I felt totally embarrassed, as this was in front of the entire group, and to me, I had a lot of really judgmental people around me in my life and I thought that I was one of the least judgmental people that I knew!

It completely took me by surprise and I was taken aback by his comment, but once I calmed down and took some time to analyse what he said, I found that he was right. I was very judgmental – not compared to some other people that I knew, but I was a very judgmental person.

This realisation hurt and it hurt bad. My ego was bruised because no one wants to be told that they are judgmental, but from this raw place, I had the truth, and from there I could make a choice to improve this area of my life or to ignore it and continue on as the same judgmental person that I was.

I chose to improve this area and worked on it for years to be better at not judging people. It is one of those things



that does take time because we are so conditioned to judge people as a society. As embarrassing as it was being told that in front of a group of people, I am very grateful that he told me that truthful insight about myself because when you drop the judgement, you then open up the space for compassion and understanding. That one shift for me has been profound in my life. You do become less attached to what other people are doing with their life and you focus more on your life and your happiness.

## **#5 Throw Out Your Need to Please Others or Get Their Approval**

To be honest, this is one that I have struggled with my entire life, and it really has only been in the last two years that I feel that I have got to the place where I can tick this one off, and even then, it still creeps in back into my life sometimes.

In order to increase your happiness, you need to throw out your need to please others or get approval because letting this drive your life kills your freedom. As I said, I have struggled with this one my entire life, so I know firsthand how much this need kills your freedom. I so desperately wanted to be liked, to have people be proud of me, to think that I was this amazing and kind person, so I would do things just to please others. I would change

what I wanted to do and compromise and do what I knew or believed other people wanted me to do. I would even sacrifice my own happiness to try to increase someone else's happiness.

I would fear criticism and run away from conflict. If someone had a difference of opinion to mine, I wouldn't speak up, but rather just stood there and nodded in somewhat of agreement – no matter how much I utterly disagreed with them. I just wanted everyone to be happy, and I tried to create that, but the weight of that on my shoulders was crushing my own spirit and holding me back massively.

Can you relate to this at all?

I see so many people going around with this same behaviour, and I see how much it is affecting them as well. Do you constantly make choices to avoid disapproval or criticism, rather than what is most valuable, effective or important to you? Do you hold yourself back from speaking your opinions or hide your true personality?

What I found was that often it wouldn't actually meet the approval of other people anyways! So I would go to all this effort to please someone and they would still have criticism to offer. What was the point in sacrificing my happiness for someone that seems to be unhappy with whatever I did?

In order to have more happiness in your life, you need to work on this area and become more sovereign in yourself. To find your true self and stand in your own power because the truth is, it doesn't matter what you do, there will always be some people that won't like you, that will criticise you.

Mother Teresa had haters, Nelson Mandela had haters, the Dalai Lama has haters, Richard Branson has haters. You can do the greatest things with the best intentions and you will still get people that dislike you and will criticise you and the way that you do things. So the best thing that you can do is to stop worrying about offending anyone, and stop worrying about the haters, and move forward in life as yourself, making decisions for you and what is best for you. This doesn't mean that you should be mean or abuse people; you can still be compassionate, loving and helpful while still being in your power and living as your authentic self.

The interesting thing that I found from living from my true power, and from not worrying about what other people thought of me, was that I now actually have a lot less criticism from others. I have fewer haters, I believe, and more people that truly respect me because they can see that I am in my power and living my life on my terms, which has been very fascinating to see.

So, if you are one of the many people that do struggle with this, then it is time for you now to stop doing things to please others, to stop avoiding conflict and criticism and to start living as your true awesome self.

## **#6 Shed the ‘Victim’ Mentality**

Victim mentality is when a person denies any responsibility for their life and their circumstances. It is always someone else’s fault for bad things happening to them. It can also be an expectation that things will go wrong in their life, because they have the view that ‘bad things always happen to me’.

A victim blames others for their circumstances — when something bad happens, they don’t take responsibility for their own actions and their own part in the situation. It is always someone else’s fault. This mentality does not help your happiness; in fact, it drives you deeper and deeper into unhappiness.

We talked about this already in the chapter on taking responsibility, but this is really important because if you continue to live in this space in any area of your life, then it is pretty much impossible to improve your life and get out of any challenges in your life. If you find that you fall into this trap of the victim mentality, then get out of it as

soon as you can. Take responsibility for your life and you will see how much happier you can be because of it.

## **#7 Don't Stress About the Small Stuff**

How often do you get caught up stressing about small things that don't actually matter? So many people are going around getting so stressed out about the smallest of things — the cellulite on their legs, the printer not working, a friend that hasn't called them yet this week, their husband that is running late home from work, how their kids are not behaving in the most perfect and well-mannered way, or how someone else's kids are not behaving in the most perfect and well-mannered way!

There are so many small things that people fret about and get so stressed out about when they don't have to. In fact, if you stay calm during those situations, you are more likely to find a solution and move out of the situation with ease and with your sanity still in check!

Let me tell you that when you almost lose your 15-month-old daughter and she is so close to be taken away out of your life for good, small things like worrying about the cellulite on my legs, or stressing so much for being late to an appointment by five minutes or getting angry at my kids for messing up the house really doesn't make sense to me anymore. There are bigger things in life to worry about than the stretch marks on my tummy and thighs!

Stress and worry causes dis-ease in your body, and when you have enough stress and worry, it does turn into disease and your body starts getting sick from all the stress. So if you regularly worry and stress about the small stuff, then it is a good time to think about the impact that is actually having on your life and your body, and then choose how much of that unnecessary stress and worry you want to allow into your life.

Is it actually worth the dis-ease in your body to worry about whether your husband stayed out an extra hour hanging out with his mates the other night? It is not necessarily the behaviour that you want to encourage, and if you really don't want him doing that, then bring it up with him, but in a calm and respectful way instead of yelling and nagging at him to change his ways in a burst of anger. The stress and worry is taking away your happiness, and you are giving your power away to those situations that are getting on top of you.

Most of us on this planet have lost someone that we love. We have also all experienced disease in our bodies... So is stressing over the small stuff worth it? It is time to let go of the need to control every little situation, and to let go of the need for it to be perfectly how you think it should be. Go with the flow more often and gain back your happiness.

## **#8 Embrace an Outlook of Gratitude**

Be happy now and be grateful. You don't need to wait.

Seriously, you don't need to wait until the conditions of your life are perfect; you can, in fact, be completely happy right now. You can embrace an outlook of gratitude for your life, being thankful for what you do have in your life, instead of always focusing on what you don't have.

Most people are running around through life unhappy and not grateful for what they have. They put conditions on their happiness.

"When I have a nice car, I will be happy."

"When I have a fancy house, I will be happy."

"When I reach my goal weight of 60kg, I will be happy."

"When I find the perfect partner, I will be happy."

"When I make \$100,000 per year, I will be happy."

"When I pay off my credit cards, I will be happy."

"When I get to have a holiday, I will be happy."

But why wait? Why do you want to wait to be happy? Why do you want to put conditions on your happiness? Why not choose to be happy now?

Because here is the thing: if you are not happy now with what you have got, then probably you will not be happy even if you had all of the conditions that you are putting on your happiness. You may think, “Oh yes I will!” But as humans, we are in this constant cycle of always wanting more, always wanting bigger and better stuff in our life. So what happens is when we get what we want, we then move the goal or change the condition and then we are not happy again!

So the trick here is to start being happy now, and start to enjoy the journey, because hitting the goal isn't nearly as satisfying as you believe it is. In the western world, we have so much to be happy and grateful for. The majority of us have a roof over our heads, we have food to eat, we have people that love us and we live in beautiful countries with stunning scenery and freedom to live mostly how we want to. This in itself is a luxury.

Yet most people are filled with complaints, moaning and whining about how crappy their lives are. In stark comparison, according to the statistics, over 3 billion people on this planet live on less than \$2.50 a day (2013). They live in extreme poverty and they would give anything to have even a smidgen of the life that you have right now.

We have so much to be grateful for in our lives, even when we are going through challenges, even when times are tough in our own life. I could still find things to be grateful



for when we were \$250,000 in debt, I could still find things to be grateful for when my daughter was sick and nearly taken from us, I could still find things to be grateful for when I had my massive health challenges. Even on the night that Andrew's dad passed away, my much loved father-in-law who I was very close to, we still found things to be grateful for on that night because despite the pain, the struggle, the heartache and the challenges, I still had things in my life that I was thankful for.

So it is time now to drop the moaning, whining and complaining and to start to be grateful and happy with what you have right now. Do you have a roof over your head? That is something to be grateful for! Did you eat today? That is something to be grateful for! Can you see, hear, smell or walk? That is something to be grateful for! Do you have a friend or family member that loves you? That is something to be grateful for. Do you have clean water to drink? That is something to be grateful for. I could go on for hours. There really is so much to be grateful for, and living in a place of gratitude opens up your world to show you more to be grateful for.

This does not mean that you need to settle for the life that you have now. You can still desire a greater and more amazing life, you can still have goals and big dreams, but take the time every single day to start appreciating what you have got right now, because that is where you will find happiness — in those moments of appreciation and

gratitude for the life that you already have. What is right in front of you that you can appreciate in your life?

Living from a place of gratitude also raises your energetic vibration to a high frequency and so as you appreciate what you have got, you will also start attracting and manifesting more amazing things in your life to be grateful for.

## **#9 No Failures, Only Lessons**

As children at school, we were taught that failure is bad, that making mistakes is wrong, that you are not good enough if you don't know the answer to a question, so most of us grow up carrying these same beliefs around with us in life.

The problem with this is that it holds us back from trying things because we get scared that we might make a mistake or that we will fail. A lot of people even have a huge amount of shame associated with failing. What would have happened if, when you were a baby, you were sitting on the ground one day and you stood up and tried to walk for the first time, and when you fell down and failed, you went, "Well, I'm not doing that again! I'm a failure and I'm not good enough for this walking thing!" If you did that, you never would have learnt to walk! Did your failure mean that you weren't good enough? No! Now that might be silly to think about because any child

that has the ability to walk eventually does, and along with that comes lots of failing down and “failures” to reach the goal of walking.

Like anything in life, things do take practise to learn and to master – learning to ride a bike, learning to ski, learning to drive a car, learning to be a grown up, learning to be in love, learning to be in business.... the list goes on. Everything we have to learn takes practise to get it right and master it, and along the way, we are going to make some mistakes and we are going to experience the feeling of failure. The problem becomes when this fear of failure stops you from starting in the first place, or stops you from keeping on going when the first or the thirtieth challenge hits. We need to embrace being like a baby again, where there is no fear about falling down and we need to just get up and keep trying until we get there.

The failures that we experience are not really failures; that is just something that has been programmed into us from childhood. When you change your perspective on failures, you can see that actually they are just lessons – lessons in what does not work and lessons about what you need to change.

So you try something and it doesn't work. Well, you got lots of lessons from attempting it, and now you know what doesn't work so that you are more likely to succeed when you try again. Was that failure a waste of time? No!

Does it mean you were off purpose? No! It was just part of the journey of where you want to get to. Changing this perspective takes the fear, doubt and unhappiness out of trying new things. Embrace the lessons in your life, embrace the learnings and embrace the journey. If everything we tried were easy to achieve, it wouldn't be as satisfying and fulfilling when we did achieve it.



## CHAPTER 14

### ASK QUALITY QUESTIONS

We all ask questions of ourselves every day, most of the time we are not even aware of the questions that we are asking, but asking questions is a key tool that we all use to drive our lives either forward or backwards.

You see the quality of our questions massively drives our lives, and so having better quality questions will help you get out of any challenging situation with a lot more ease and grace. It will also help you to have a happier and more fulfilled life if you ask better quality questions.

So what are some questions that will drive your life backwards?

“Why me?”

“What have I done to deserve this?”

“Why am I so stupid?”

“Why do I always muck up?”

“Why did I do that?”

“How could I be so dumb?”

“Why don’t I have enough money?”

“Why am I so lonely?”

“Why am I so fat?”

“Why can’t I do anything right?”

Have you ever found yourself saying any of those? I know I have! Those are all very disempowering questions that will move your life and current situation backwards, and remember that the language that you use and the thoughts that you have, have a massive impact on the reality that you are creating for yourself. So saying any of these questions or similar disempowering ones, whether you say them out loud to other people, or you say them in your head to yourself, is moving your life backwards.

From those questions, you are not looking for solutions, you are not looking to empower yourself or the situation, you are pulling yourself down and putting yourself into the victim mentality of not having the power to change the situation.

Instead, you can ask empowering quality questions to move your life forward. Like these ones:

“What can I learn from this?”

“How have I benefited from this so far?”

“Who else has benefited from this?”

“Am I ready for a different situation?”

“What do I want to bring into my life?”

“What can I do now to change this?”

“How can I make more money this week?”

“What is the best solution here?”

“How can it be possible to go on that holiday?”

“Who do I need to be to make my life better?”

“What would it take for me to achieve my goal this month?”

Asking questions is a powerful gift that we have as humans, and it is what drives us to evolve as a society, but the key is to make sure that you are asking empowering and quality questions so that you can move your life forwards, rather than backwards.

## **Where Do the Answers Come From?**

But where do the answers to these quality questions actually come from? In short, they come from the Universe or your unconscious mind, and the answers can appear in different ways.

Sometimes you will have an answer pop into your head randomly. It usually isn't immediately after you ask

the question; often it takes a day or so for the Universe to work out the answer, but some questions can come immediately, especially if you are consciously doing this on a regular basis.

Sometimes you may not even get an answer. The answer might just manifest in your life; other times you will get guidance around an action that you need to take, and sometimes you might just feel the answer. It shows up at different times in different ways, but if you start to practise this and listen, you will start to recognise when an answer has come to you.

## **What Do I Ask Questions About?**

You can ask questions in all areas of your life, and asking good quality questions can benefit you in so many ways. It can benefit and improve your emotional state in any situation. Asking “How can I get through this while still being calm, focused and positive?” is going to get you a great answer.

Asking quality questions also can help with what we focus on. If you are easily distracted and lose focus easily, then you can ask, “How can I be more productive and focused in this task?” You will find that even if you don’t get a direct answer to that question, you will still naturally be more productive because you are now focusing on being more productive and have set that intention.



Asking questions can help in your relationships, your finances, in your spiritual connection, in your physical health and well-being. In every area of your life, you can ask empowering questions that will change your life for the better.

## **When Do I Ask Questions?**

You can ask quality questions at any time that suits you. In the morning before you get out of bed, while you are driving, while you are waiting for an appointment, during lunch, at night before bed, right now! Pretty much anytime is a good time to ask a good quality question. Just ask it either in your head or, if it is an appropriate time, then you can ask out loud if you prefer as well.

There is no limit to the questions that you can ask, but to start with, just pick a few key questions that you want the answer to and ask them at multiple times during the day so that you start to get used to listening for the answers to come.





## CHAPTER 15

### FINDING YOUR OWN GIFTS

I'm sure you have already got lots of valuable insights out of this book so far, but let's get you going even deeper with this in your own life so that you can get the most out of this book. I truly want this book to have a transformational impact on your life, so this section is practical and focusing purely on *you*. You need to take action here and do the exercises to get the benefit out of it, and by doing so, you will get some valuable insights into your own biggest challenges and what they have meant for your life. So grab a pen and let's go through the exercises below....

#### **Look back at your past challenges**

This section is about challenges that you have experienced in your past, challenges that you are now out of.

*What are the biggest 5 challenges that you have experienced in your life?*

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Challenge #1:

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Challenge #2:

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Challenge #3:

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Challenge #4:

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Challenge #5:

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*What gifts can you see that came from those biggest 5 challenges?*

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Challenge #1:

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Challenge #2:

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Challenge #3:

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Challenge #4:

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Challenge #5:

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*Where did you not take responsibility for those biggest 5 challenges?*

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Challenge #1:

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Challenge #2:

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Challenge #3:

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Challenge #4:

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Challenge #5:

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*What are you grateful for with those biggest 5 challenges?*

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Challenge #1:

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Challenge #2:

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Challenge #3:

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Challenge #4:

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Challenge #5:

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*How did each of those 5 challenges help you to grow?*

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Challenge #1:

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Challenge #2:

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Challenge #3:

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Challenge #4:

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Challenge #5:

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*What great things have happened in your life as a result of those challenges?*

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Challenge #1:

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Challenge #2:

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Challenge #3:

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Challenge #4:

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Challenge #5:

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## **Your Current Challenges**

Are you experiencing any challenges in your life right now? They don't have to be big. Even small challenges are an opportunity for us to grow and learn from, and remember, often small challenges are the ones that we really want to pay attention to so that the Universe doesn't give us louder and bigger challenges to learn what we need to! I want you to pick just one challenge that you have right now in your life – it can be in any area of your life and can be a big or a small challenge. Then answer these questions to help give you insight and guidance into how you can handle it better and move through it faster.

*What challenge do you have right now that you want to work on?*

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*Describe how you are feeling about this challenge. Be open and honest here. Express your emotions as to how you are truly feeling about it.*

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*Where is this emotion coming from? What is causing this reaction in you? Is it actually arising from the situation or is the current situation a trigger for pain and hurt from your past?*

*What lessons do you see that this challenge could provide you with?*

*What is there to be grateful for around this challenge?*

*What actions can you take to make this challenge better or fix this situation in your life?*

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*What gifts do you see that this challenge could provide you with?*

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Answering these questions can give you massive insight into your current challenge and help you see what is going on and how you can move the situation forward.

If you are dealing with multiple challenges at the moment, then feel free to go back and answer those questions for all the challenges that you want help with, and come back in the future and do the exercise as well whenever you encounter challenges that you need help with.







## CHAPTER 15

### FINDING YOUR TRUE SELF

As you may have already established, this book isn't actually about having an average life where you just get through challenges. It is about truly embracing this gift that we have called life, because it is a gift.

Most of us have lost loved ones — we know of people that have died sooner than their time, and so we have this gift of life right now in our hands. The question is, “What are you going to do with this gift?” Are you going to appreciate it and enjoy it to its fullest? Or will you take it for granted and just cruise through life not really pushing yourself or discovering your true potential?

Wouldn't it be amazing if everyone on this planet were living an abundant life, filled with excitement, love and joy? A life where everyone is living their full potential. What a different world that would be to live in, and I believe that it is possible to achieve. The key to having

this amazing life and starting to live your true potential is to find your true self.... your real self, not one guided or determined by what others want you to be, or what you think you “should” be.

This is a journey, and not one that takes a day or a month to find, but an ongoing journey that can take years and even decades to find. Don’t let that turn you off though, because the journey itself is fun and exciting. So don’t worry about how long or short your journey is, just make the choice to take that journey. And you may be thinking. Well, shouldn’t I already know my true self?, Well, maybe you do. Maybe you are one of the few lucky ones that has already found your true self or done the work to reveal it to you, but most likely, the “true self” that you believe you know isn’t actually your true self. Do you have complete and deep awareness of yourself? Are you truly living a life filled with passion, purpose and joy? Are you connected to Universal Source Energy and guided from there? Are you aware of your gifts and are you serving the world with them? Are you fully showing up in the world as your true self, no matter what anyone else thinks?

As I have mentioned before, we have this build up of layers, of negative and non-supporting beliefs and stories, that hides who we truly are. Our past hurt and pain, our conditioning from society and from our parents, and our conformity to society’s “box” that we should fit in. Each one of us is an infinite being capable of amazing things,

but very few people realise this and even fewer embrace this and use it to its fullest. I achieved the impossible by starting to heal my blind eye after 34 years of it being completely blind. We are all special and gifted beyond what we could ever imagine, but we are dulled down to the max!! So what is possible for you? What are you actually capable of? Are you fully showing up as the unlimited being that you actually are?

## **How Do You Find Your True Self?**

Finding your true self is about breaking down all the boundaries, it is about peeling back all the layers, and it is about discovering who you really are... Your gifts, your joy and the amazing possibilities of what you are really capable of.

Have you ever watched a young child? They are so pure, they don't let constraints and limitations hold them back. They know who they are and they live from a place of pure joy. It is adults that then come along and change that and squish them into this imaginary box that we have created to limit them. It's generally not an intentional thing that we do, but that is very much what happens in society today. We don't teach kids to be themselves, we teach them how to "fit in," and this crushes the human spirit. That is why there is an epidemic of unhappy, angry

and depressed humans around the globe. We are infinite beings and we have been restricted and confined to this tiny box of what society has created to be “life”.

Being miserable all day, every day is not life. Even if you are not miserable all the time, are you experiencing the happiness and fulfilment that you truly want in life? So how do you even begin to find out who you are and discover your true self? Here are some strategies for going down the journey...

## **8 Ways to Find Your True Self**

### **#1 Self-Acceptance**

Wherever you are right now, don't beat yourself up. There is nothing wrong with you and you are an amazing person. In fact, you are exactly where you are supposed to be on your journey, learning the lessons you need to be learning for your growth as a person. You might not feel that way right now, but you are amazing just the way that you are. Learn to love and accept yourself for who you are right now, because if you fight that, or deny it, or try to run from it, you will not move forward in finding your true self. In fact, you will most likely move further and further away from it.

Self-acceptance and self-love are so important, no matter where you are on your journey, no matter what mistakes you are currently making, no matter what you are screwing up right now in your life. Accepting that you are who you are and you are where you are at in life is the first step to going deeper within to find your true self.

## **#2 Understand Why You Are Here**

Most people think that finding your true self is this joyous, happy journey, and it is some of the time, and at other times it is painful and hurtful and challenging. Finding your true self is not going to completely rid you of pain, frustration, fear and uncertainty for your entire life. If you find your true self, you are not going to be happy 100% of the time, and it is not going to completely remove negative and low frequency energy and emotions from your life.

We are spiritual beings in a physical body having a human experience here on Earth. The spiritual being in us is infinite and can experience infinite love and joy, but we are humans, and with that does come the duality of life: the ups and downs, the good and bad, the amazing and the heartbreaking. Duality is part of life and will always be. Even when you find your true self, there will still be challenges, there will still be pain, and there will still be heartbreak. But now that you have the knowledge in this book, you will be able to see duality for what it really is... an opportunity to grow, to evolve, to learn and to continue the journey towards your true self.

There is no “finish line” in finding your true self, no place that you get to where you are like, “Yes! I’ve made it! I am now living my true self 100% of the time!” It is a constant journey, a journey of lessons, a journey of opportunities, a journey of balance and a journey of growth. You get to the finish line when you die and turn back into pure spirit. So while you are alive, embrace the journey and don’t get fixated on this magical finish line that will fix all of your problems.

### **#3 Do What You Love Doing**

We find our bliss and joy in life when we do things that we truly love. We can all experience pure joy in our lives. The pure innocence of a child experiences it on a daily basis. Have you ever stopped and watched a child play? The average child laughs 300 to 500 times a day while the average adult laughs only about 15 times a day. Isn’t that interesting? Children let pure light and joy into their lives. They embrace it. It doesn’t mean they don’t experience the duality of life; they very much feel sadness and frustration and they express that very well! A child is a master at embracing the true essence of life; they embrace a life of pure joy and being their own true self.

Now admittedly, a child doesn’t have the stress and worry of where the money is coming to pay the bills, they don’t need to worry about their job or how they are going to serve the world. But we can still learn a lot from that

space that children live in and apply some of that to our own life.

One thing that kids are absolutely fantastic at is doing what they love. They live life to have fun and enjoy it. This puts them in a high frequency energy state and in a space to let their true self shine.

So what do you love doing? What brings you that feeling of pure joy? Take a moment to have a think about that now. What lights your heart up beyond words? What do you lose yourself in where time disappears?

It doesn't have to be work related, it can be, or it might be something that you love doing as a hobby. It could be something as simple as sitting and playing with your kids. There is no right answer here — the answer needs to come from you, and you can have multiple things.

Whatever it is that you came up with, do more of it in your life. Schedule in more time to do that, because when you are in that state of pure joy, that, is in fact, you being your true self.

#### **#4 Don't Restrict Yourself To "The Box"**

There are all these constraints in society that life has to look a certain way... It doesn't. You are the creator of your life and you can choose to live your life the way that you want. If you love being single, then don't feel pressured

into finding a partner and getting married. If kids aren't your thing, then don't have kids just so you follow what society expects of you. If you don't want a fixed abode and want to be a free spirit and travel to where life takes you, then do that! You can make your own rules in life.

Obviously I'm not saying to go around hurting people or breaking the law, but you don't need to live confined to the restrictions that society has placed on you. Follow your heart, dream about the life that you want to create and then go out and take action to move towards that. It won't always be instant. At times you will need to be patient and persistent in creating the life that you want, but the journey will be worth it, and if you persist and stay on course, you will get there.

## **#5 Follow Your Intuition**

This is one that I strongly feel is so crucial to not only finding your true self but also living an abundant life filled with joy and happiness. Following your intuition is the ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning. It is your gut instinct or this deep knowing of what to do in a situation without always being able to logically justify it. It is the guidance that you are getting from the Universe.

I live the majority of my life from my intuition; I make decisions using it, I steer my life from it and I trust it



wholeheartedly to support and guide me in life to exactly where I am supposed to be. The reason I do this is because I have seen how much it works, I have seen the results that it has brought into my life, I have seen how much easier life can be when you live from this place. In my experience, your intuition will always lead you to exactly where you need to be in life.

Now, again, that doesn't mean that life is always going to be sunshine and roses. Sometimes your intuition will send you down a path in order for you to get a lesson or gift in order to grow. So you need to hold a great amount of acceptance and trust when listening to your intuition and not question it at the first sign of challenges.

The stronger you can get your intuition though, the more you are going to be led towards your true path and your true self on this planet, so listen. Start to use your intuition in your everyday life – for big and small decisions.

It can be hard to hear it to start with, especially if you have never really embraced it. But start to listen and start to observe what it is telling you. You can start off by using it for small decisions in your everyday life—should I take this road or that road? Who should I call today just to touch base with? The more you listen and follow your intuition, the stronger it will become.

## #6 Still Your Mind

You may have noticed the persistent rise of people that are getting into daily meditation. Kind of like a new fad, where people are jumping on board left, right and centre. But I believe this is not a passing fad because the benefits are just so great, and people see that, so it is sticking and becoming more and more mainstream.

I learnt to meditate when I was 12-years-old. My mum sent me on a meditation course, and I hated it then. I gave it a go, but it was so weird and “out there” that it didn’t stick. I so value that my mum gave me that gift now because even though I didn’t value it then, it has served me so deeply in my adult life.

I meditate on a daily basis now. Sure, there will be the odd day that I miss, but generally, it is one of my “non-negotiable” rituals that I do for myself every day. It is *my* time, a gift not only to myself, but also to the world.

When you still your mind, when you calm that noisy thing down, magic starts to show itself. You become calmer and less stressed, you can handle challenging situations more easily, you become more creative and better at problem solving, and life becomes more joyful and easier. When you still your mind, you also tap in stronger to your intuition, the divine Universal energy and Higher Guidance. I’m talking the spiritual realm here, and from here, you can

get the truth about anything... including who you really are and what you are supposed to be doing.

The more you can still your mind, the more you can take “logic” out of the picture and get into what I call “The Bliss Zone”. The Bliss Zone is this wonderful place where life just flows – magic happens there. Where you meet the right people at exactly the right time, and you are in the right place at the right time, and things that you want just seem to manifest all over the place. The Bliss Zone is where I LOVE to be. When I am in this place, it feels like I am truly radiating my true light and my true self.

The more you can still your mind, the more you will get yourself into the Bliss Zone and the more you will find your true self.

## **#7 Be Thankful**

Gratitude is a very powerful energy. When you are truly thankful for what you have in your life, you are in a high vibrational energy and you will attract more to be grateful for into your life. There is so much to be grateful for, even when you don’t have everything that you currently want. But how does this help you to find your true self?

When you are grateful and thankful, you move yourself into the present moment. You take away the future, you even take away the past, and in that moment, you are present to the abundance in your life. This is a place where

your light shines brighter, where the true you emerges and where you shine.

When you are in this place, the worry and fear and doubt drop away and you open up to the possibilities of life, you become expanded. Gratitude is such a powerful energy for finding your true self, so take time to sit in gratitude every single day. Be grateful for what is around you, be grateful for the people in your life, be grateful for those that help you, be grateful for what you do have and be grateful for who you are and what you have achieved.

## **#8 Embrace the Unknown**

The unknown can be a scary place... Not knowing what is around the corner, it can be frightening to think about what *could* happen. I've had plenty of times where the future is totally unknown and scary... When I got the surgery for my right eye, when I was in my health crisis, when we were deep in \$250,000 of debt, when Zara was dying, the future was very unknown during these times and was very scary. Usually the scary stories of what we make up in our heads rarely happen, and so we spend all this time and energy worrying about something that never eventuates. What if instead we focused on the outcome that we *do* want, the pleasant surprises, the unexpected wins and good news, the accomplishment of our dreams and goals? If we focused on them we would be more likely to get there!

I know a lot of people have a tough time dealing with change, and embracing it because it can be scary to walk forward in life and trust that it is all going to be ok. I get that; I get how scary it is. But that doesn't serve you. It doesn't help you to be you, and it doesn't help you to lead the life that you are here to lead. Fear and doubt are very restrictive, and if you lead your life from that energy, you are not going to be living as your true self.

It is time to embrace the unknown, to embrace change and to walk forward in uncertainty. The Universe is supporting you in finding your true self, so let go of the control that you are holding onto and be in total trust that you are on the right journey, you are on the right path and you know exactly where to go.



## 3 POWERFUL BONUS CHAPTERS FOR YOU, COMPLETELY FREE!!

**As a Gift to YOU for reading this book, I am giving you  
the gift of 3 very powerful bonus chapters that deepen  
the teachings of this book.**

They are chapters that dive deeper into some of the  
concepts that we have already talked about, and they  
give you practical strategies and tips for implementing  
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The 3 Bonus Chapters are:

### **BONUS CHAPTER #1**

“How to Tap Into Your Intuition  
So You Can Know The Truth About Anything”

### **BONUS CHAPTER #2**

“How to Get Into the ‘Bliss Zone’ Where Life Flows”

### **BONUS CHAPTER #3**

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## PART 3

### MORE GIFTS FROM THE DARKNESS

*I have covered a lot so far in this book, revealing my own raw and real dark times and the gifts that I received from them. I also shared with you some really powerful strategies for finding your own gifts and how you can lead a more happy and fulfilled life. In this section, I wanted to invite a few special people in my life to share their own real life experience of one of their gifts from their darkness.*

*I feel truly honoured and grateful that these amazing people agreed to share their own very deep and intimate stories with you in this book, and it is my desire that you will gain much insight and inspiration from these stories for your own life and dealing with your own challenges and dark times that arise.*





## CHAPTER 16

### THE GIFT OF THE POWER TO CHOOSE

*“The last of human freedoms - the ability to chose  
one’s attitude in a given set of circumstances”*

~ **Viktor E. Frankl** ~

***By NATALIE CUTLER-WELSH***

*Natalie Cutler-Welsh is a Canadian-born mother of three living in New Zealand. She is an Author, Entrepreneur and Earthquake survivor. This is her story...*

Some challenges we invite into our lives and others just come our way. At 23-years-old, I graduated from University, left a boyfriend that I loved and moved across the world by myself to discover my heritage and adventure in New Zealand. I chose that challenge. Five

years later, I was part of a team that competed (and completed) the famous Multisport Adventure Race “the Southern Traverse”. For five gruelling days we kayaked, tramped and biked with only three hours of sleep. Crazy? Yes! Fun? Yes, and again... we chose and cherished that challenge.

Then came parenthood. Those sleepless nights made the Southern Traverse seem like nothing (every mother deserves a medal). In fact, I wrote a whole book called *If Only They'd Told Me* all about the “Joys & Challenges of Parenthood in the early years.”

Flash forward a few years and I faced another type of challenge, the kind that you usually see in movies or on the news. We actually made it on the news around the world for this one. On February 22nd 2011 we had our second huge earthquake (6.8) in Christchurch, New Zealand. 185 lives were lost, hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed, but we were lucky. We only lost a job. The next day, our third (and final) baby was born safe and sound—again we felt fortunate.

When the earthquake hit, we were all outside and we were together. I couldn't have asked for a better scenario given the circumstances. Ruby (then 4.5-years-old) was standing by our gate with her bike and helmet. Jonah (then 2.5-years-old) was in the garage getting his trike out, and as I ran to him, I got thrown to the ground then

crawled to him (with my pregnant belly) as best I could. As a parent, you know how scary it is when your kids are in danger and how easy it is to panic. Possibly as a tribute to my training as an Outward Bound instructor, I went into 'practical risk management mode' and was efficient and calm.

Liquefaction started bursting from the lawn and concrete, so with the help of our lovely neighbour, we got the kids in the car and I did a mad dash into the house to get keys, wallet and cell phone (always a good idea to keep these three key items together for a quick grab). We drove around the corner to "higher ground" and waited for my husband Matt to return from work. The phone lines were crammed so I couldn't contact him for a while. Luckily, Matt cycles to work, so despite the gridlock traffic, we didn't have long to wait until he arrived and we were all together and safe.

We went home to start the process of checking on neighbours, cleaning up, boiling water and cooking on the BBQ. That night, I went into labour and our darling 'earthquake baby' Xavier was born the next day. (We later found out that Xavier means 'owner of a new home').

Our house was damaged but livable, but with no power, water or sewerage, it was not the place for a newborn. In an emotional phone call, my sister informed me that she had bought us all one-way tickets to Wellington where we

spent the next three weeks being pampered by her and my parents. Matt's parents flew over from Australia to be with us and to meet their new grandson.

With the aftermath of the earthquake, we had decided to 'cast the net' very wide with Matt's job search and took a 'the world's your oyster approach'. He ended up applying for and getting his 'dream job' with the New Zealand Green Building Council so we packed up the house and began a new chapter in Auckland. We only knew a handful of people in Auckland, but it is amazing how you can 'start again' and build a supportive community around you with the right energy and attitude.

Our life went from having an Earthquake, losing a job and having a baby (all in a 30 hour period). And then in the weeks that followed, a new city, new house, new friends, new life...

People have been amazed by our positive 'glass is half-full' attitude. I think that's something that comes from the girl I was back in my Branksome Hall days in Toronto. I remember getting the 'Enthusiasm' award in grade 7. Sometimes life gets turned upside down, but you have to make the best of it! That's just what we did. The NZ Herald interviewed us after we moved. Sure we have a good attitude, but we also had great luck! We could have lost so much more than a job...

We miss our wonderful friends and our 'old life' in Christchurch, but with over 11,000 aftershocks, we are pleased to have moved on. The Geotech report classified all parts of the city, and our house was in the 'red zone,' meaning the land was not safe to live on. Our house has now been removed and a grassy field is in its place, but the amazing memories of our two-bedroom house (that we had recently renovated into our five-bedroom 'forever home') will stay with us forever.

It seems like human nature in a way, that we tend to re-appreciate and be truly grateful for what we've got (kids, healthy body, amenities etc) when they're threatened in some way. Scares like this act as a 'wake up call' for us to re-focus on what's truly important in our lives. A life lesson that I take from this is to 'keep appreciating' what you've got before it's threatened. Tell people you love them just because – don't wait until their birthday or their funeral.

Ironically, a week or so before the first Christchurch Earthquake (in September 2010), I said to Matt one night, "We should have an evacuation plan in case of a fire or break-in... how about you grab Ruby, I'll grab Jonah and we'll meet outside. If we can't get out the front door, then go through the lounge window and meet at our letterbox". So... at 5am when the earthquake hit, that's EXACTLY what happened. No words were exchanged. We both jumped out of bed (even though some of our friends in

their houses just rolled over and went back to sleep), Matt got Ruby from her bed, I frantically felt around in Jonah's cot and picked him out and carried him outside. We loaded up the car with our ready-to-go emergency bins and drove to my cousin's house. We didn't really expect it to happen AGAIN. But when it did on 23rd February 2011, we were prepared, and going through the 'what if' scenario was definitely a crucial part to us acting quickly and handling things well.

Having this 'attitude of gratitude' and appreciation also helped to make the transition almost easy, as we were very aware that things could have turned out so differently. One of the things that made it so easy to move and to 'move on' was that my husband Matt and I were on the 'same page'. We were both open to the opportunity that had been thrown at us. We absolutely loved our life in Christchurch, but that had all changed. Having lived in multiple different towns and cities, we were accustomed to packing up and moving. Our children were preschoolers, so we weren't really uprooting them too much. Our own parents and siblings lived in Wellington and Adelaide so it wasn't like we were 'leaving' them. We were free to follow, or more accurately create, a new path for ourselves.

And now, here we are four years later. Our 'earthquake baby' is an animated, confident and cheeky four-year-old. Ruby and Jonah love their school and friends in Meadowbank. Matt has made great contacts in sustainable

architecture and building, which is his area of expertise, and I've started my own business! I am the 'Go to Girl' for Social Media & Networking of all things – which my high school friends say is no surprise and is totally perfect for me!

Who knows if life would have led to this path if we had stayed in Christchurch? Life is a gift. Opportunities keep coming our way and it's up to us to embrace or battle them. I've had another 'challenge' since the earthquake, but this one was physical. I've slipped a disc (prolapsed disc) three times now and have had surgery once. After three completely 'natural' childbirths, I am no stranger to pain, but this is a whole different challenge. My heart goes out to those people living with pain all of the time, physical or mental. I could have lost a limb or a life in Christchurch, so back pain is something that I'm happy to handle. It makes me re-appreciate when I'm well and able to power walk or to kick a ball or to stand and cook dinner in comfort.

My husband and I admit to each other that we're still hyper sensitive to sudden noises or vibrations. When someone runs up the steps of our deck or a truck goes past the window or someone bumps our desk, we 'jump'. The earthquake experience will always be with us, but we feel nothing but grateful. As I mentioned on a post on my Facebook page on the four year anniversary of the Quake:

*"The pain in my back is N-O-T-H-I-N-G compared to the pain in my body and heart that I could be feeling if things had turned out differently for us 4 years ago in the February 2011 Christchurch Earthquake... We lost power, water, our home and our job but we walked away unharmed and got a beautiful healthy baby! We left behind wonderful friends in Christchurch and gained new ones in Auckland. Thank you everyone for such an amazing journey. Please take a moment to think of those who were not so fortunate... #forevergrateful"*

Whatever challenges come your way or whatever darkness seems to 'descend' on you, remember that you have a certain amount of power to choose your response. For us, preparation and even anticipation played a part, but it was our reaction and the fact that we almost 'embraced' the situation that helped us to thrive. Yes, sometimes we forget how lucky or 'blessed' we are... Like most people, we get caught up with day-to-day life, so I suppose my message is this: Don't wait for a big earthquake, illness or injury to shake you and wake you up to the goodness that surrounds you. Tell the people that you love just how much they mean to you, keep appreciating what you've got and when a challenge comes your way, embrace it (whether you chose that challenge or not).

~ Natalie Cutler-Welsh

You can learn more about Natalie on her business website:  
**[www.GoToGirl.co.nz](http://www.GoToGirl.co.nz)** and her Parenting blog and book:  
**[www.IfOnlyTheyToldMe.com](http://www.IfOnlyTheyToldMe.com)**





## CHAPTER 17

### THE GIFT OF LIFE

*"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."*

**~ Abraham Lincoln ~**

***By VANESSA LEWIS***

***Vanessa Lewis is an inspirational woman defying all odds. She lives in Auckland, New Zealand with her husband and has three gorgeous fur-babies. This is her story...***

I am strong. I am a fighter. I am alive! This has been the mantra of my life for the past few years after a medical emergency changed my life forever.

2009 – the year I was getting married! I was happy and healthy, and enjoying life. Not only was I planning a

wedding, but I also started a new job in a totally different field, which was exciting. I was finally working with a great bunch of people and I was learning a lot. However, I hit a bump in the road.

On the 30th of May 2009, the day before my 29th birthday, my mum and I were out for a girls, morning of shopping and then lunch when I was hit with sharp slicing pain from the top of my chest, down my front then to the lower back and upwards again. My first thought was wow that is sore and then fear crept in.

We went to the local medical centre to get assessed. My mum called my brother, who lived very close by, and he literally ran all the way to the medical centre to come in the ambulance to the local hospital Emergency Department with me while Mum met my soon-to-be husband Jeremy and they drove to the hospital together.

Hours of the most extreme pain were followed by tests and CT scans. About eight hours later, I was rushed by ambulance as a priority one to another hospital, where they have a specialist Cardiovascular Team. I was diagnosed with Type B Aortic Dissection. Scary sounding right?

A few days after being admitted to Auckland City Hospital, I underwent a long and gruelling surgery to repair my aorta and place a significant stent in it to help hold it open. I also was given a bypass to my left arm, as blood flow

was restricted during the dissection. Before the surgery, I remember the doctors letting my mum, Jeremy and my grandparents (Granny and Poppy) into the pre-theatre area. I thought this was normal – apparently it is not.

I was later told that they only do this in special circumstances where they think the outcome might not be good. I remember Poppy crying and myself getting upset about that; Poppy never cried! In the theatre I remember thinking, “This is nothing like on TV.” Then it was lights out, and next thing I remember is waking up with my mum and Jeremy beside me. My family waited what felt like forever for the surgery to be completed and to be given the good news that it all went well.

While I was in hospital, my family were constantly there supporting not only me, but my mum and Jeremy as well. I was probably the lucky one out of everyone, as I was on very strong painkillers and medications, and was not aware of everything going on around me.

Every day I had family visit – my wonderful cousins, aunties, grandparents and, of course, Mum and Jeremy were by my side the entire time. Family and friends would schedule their visits so that someone would always be around to keep me company and let me know I’m loved. I was so grateful for that! Hospitals are such lonely places.

I spent about ten days in hospital and then returned home for my recovery, which doctors anticipated to be speedy given my relatively young age. For me, my first month of

recovery was just as bad as the event. I had trouble keeping any food or water down for long due to the medications (even the anti-nausea medication didn't seem to help). I slept a lot and had no energy.

In the first couple of weeks, I needed help to simply walk to the toilet or to ensure I didn't fall over from exhaustion in the shower. Jeremy and I had to give up the house we were renting and move in with my mum, as we simply could not afford to live there on one wage. Moving in with Mum meant Jeremy had more help and support with caring for me, as well as looking after our dog Hillary.

Then things started to change. My energy was coming back and I slowly started keeping fluids and some foods down. I could walk around the house by myself and get my own drink or snack. I didn't have to rely on someone being with me 24/7, which was a great feeling. Then the mood swings and depression hit. I would cry for no reason and lash out at my mum and Jeremy.

I knew when I hit rock bottom – it was when I blamed my mum for this happening to me; it was all her fault I was born like this and I hated it, which was totally untrue, unreasonable and I think purely out of a desperate need to have something/someone to blame. I hated myself and I hated life in general.

I never thought about ending my life, but I was always thinking, "Why me, why did this happen to me?" Answers

I would never get. However, I now believe this happened to me to make me a stronger, more healthy person than I was before, and because I was strong enough to bounce back and live a happy life again.

I am not sure I can pinpoint the exact moment when things started to change back to positive for me. I eventually started back at work for a couple of hours a day in August, which totally drained all my energy, but it was so good to get back to a sense of normality. By September I was back to fulltime work and life “as normal”.

In November 2009 I had to have a stent placed in my right kidney as a direct result of the dissection to ensure that the kidney kept functioning as it had already shrunk in size. This was also the month that Jeremy and I got married!

I walked down the aisle with my mum beside me on the happiest day of my life. My eldest cousin had always said I would make it down the aisle, even if she had to roll me down it on a hospital bed! It felt wonderful walking down the aisle, knowing that a few months earlier I was on death's door, but I ran away from it and straight into the arms of my loving soul mate Jeremy.

Over the next couple of years, I was faced with many challenges that tested my strength and emotions. Being told I would never be allowed to have children broke my heart. I was newly married and we had planned on

starting a family of our own. Adoption processes and rejection because of my “life-shortening” health issues really tested not only my strength as a person, but my relationship with Jeremy.

No one can really know how hard it is going to be until you experience it yourself. There were also the restrictions on what I was and was not allowed to do for exercise and day-to-day living in order to help preserve the aortic stent and prevent another dissection, and these in turn caused ups and down.

This life experience has taught me so many things – not only for myself as a person, but also who and what I have in my life. I was so grateful for my family and friends who constantly supported my mum and Jeremy through the hardest and most emotional time. I learnt who my true friends were and who wasn’t a real friend at all – and that hurt. I learned a lot about myself too – what I saw as limitations or barriers before were no longer obstacles in my way. I am strong. I am a fighter. There was no way I was going to give up and let this medical issue destroy my life and who I was.

One part of my experience that I have always, and will always carry with me is the fact that the doctors gave my life expectancy a short timeframe. I was told that statistically I probably wouldn’t survive the first five years after surgery, and that if I managed to do that, statistically

surviving ten years after surgery was extremely unlikely. Gee, negativity at the start – thanks doctors! This scared me into the realisation that I needed to start living my life fully and enjoying each and every day as it comes.

Guess what, 2015 marks six years post-surgery! I will be making it to 10, 20 and 30+ years post-surgery. I will be around to watch my nieces grow up, get married and have their own children. At the five year mark, I celebrated with my mum and Jeremy, and it felt so good to “stick it to the doctors” by celebrating the milestone.

Over the last few months I have decided to focus on ME. I have the all-clear from the vascular surgeons that I now have only very minimal limitations/restrictions with regards to exercise, and so I’ve started at the gym with a personal trainer, and love exercise and working towards an even healthier me.

One of the biggest life lessons I got from this was to never give up. I changed my way of thinking to a more positive outlook. I learned to believe in myself more and push myself past what I used to think of as my limitations. I can do anything I want to do as long as I believe in myself. I was given the best gift of all, which was continued life, and I now thoroughly believe in grabbing opportunities as they come up and to not fear the “what if’s” of this world.

I encourage all people to take more time out for themselves. Do something nice for yourself; reward yourself for being healthy and alive. Live your dreams and make up new ones. The best gift that I now give people is my time; visiting friends and family and making an effort to keep that contact up in this day and age not only benefits your own well-being, but everyone else in your life as well. Never take anything for granted, as you never know when your last day on this wonderful earth would be!

My mantra to live by, which I have kept very close to my heart after all these years, is:

*Live every moment, laugh every day and love  
beyond words.*

*~ Vanessa Lewis*





## CHAPTER 18

### THE GIFT OF COURAGE

*"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear,  
but the triumph over it.*

*The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid,  
but he who conquers that fear"*

**~ Nelson Mandela ~**

**By CAMERON GALLAGHER**

*Cameron Gallagher has a Scottish first name and Irish last name, and is a New Zealander who was born in Australia. In short, he's very confused. When he's not being confused he is a high performance and business strategy coach who loves chocolate and nerds out on psychology. This is his story....*

There are many things in life you really don't want to have to go through. Experiences that are really only one thing: tragedies.

The unfortunate reality is that along the spectrum of a full and complete life, we will all need to experience tragedy. Whether we experience that at a young age, or when we are older, one thing is for sure: it is inevitable.

So the question arises – how do we deal with that when it occurs, how can we integrate that experience into our lives without feeling like our lives have been stolen or taken away, and how can we go further than even that – to use the energy of tragedy to transform our lives for the better?

It is my firm belief that in the heart of every tragedy lies a series of gifts, that if we integrate them – even if piece by piece – we will find greater love, compassion, peace, and harmony with life.

I believe life is an unfolding process where one increases the capacity to love – not just oneself and others, but all situations and indeed life itself. Since tragedy is very much a part of life, there is equal love to be claimed in the pain of tragedy.

The biggest tragedy in my life happened when I was 26-years-old. My Father – the rock of our family — finally died of terminal lung cancer, a disease he had fought for nearly four years. He died in December of 2011.

There are few things that can prepare you for an event like that, no matter how old you are; losing the rock of my family shook me to my core. There are suddenly so many parts, all of which seem huge, which now must be dealt with.

The energy of the fact he had to suffer for so long, the way he died – broken, frail, in immense pain. The injustice of it all, the burden of it, the agony and pain that this brings.

Then there is the future. What future. It appears like there is no future. It \*feels\* like there is no future. I would wake up and pray, just pray that this was a dream. I would refuse to open my eyes because to open them would be to acknowledge a reality that I swore couldn't possibly be happening. Not to me. Not in my life.

The pain was overwhelming. I just didn't know what to do with it. There's so much. It didn't seem like there was anywhere to turn. Each one of the people I love so much is overwhelmed with the magnitude of what has just happened. Everyone is just in shock.

Numbness. Making eye contact seems only to further acknowledge something you all are begging isn't true. The pain, the insanity, the difficulty and the agony of the situation weighed on me, crushing me.

I tried anything and everything to try and throw it off; I tried any story I could tell myself. Optimism bubbles up

for a brief moment before collapsing, as once again, the sheer magnitude of what I'm going through re-emerges. There are no words. I can't use words here. There is no word or words that will ever replace what has been lost.

The person—their spirit, the memories and their future dreams. The hopes and the challenges. Suddenly all of the vastness of my engagement with this person is the only thing I can experience. Nothing else matters, nothing else is even real. The only thing that is real is the loss. My whole world has collapsed, and I don't know how I'll ever get it back – I only know I will fight tooth and nail to do so.

So I fight. Fight and fight and fight. Screaming internally, externally, crying, clawing. Whatever I can to try and save the reality that is now leaving me. Guilt, shame, anger, self-judgment, hatred, any and all emotions are mobilized to try and find a resource, any resource, that can hold on to this, somehow turn this situation around.

Acceptance and denial – my mind fighting itself as the rational and emotional parts of me go to war. There can be no winner. Even when the rational part has won, I have still lost. And that's all I can see – the loss. The immenseness of it, the radical and unprovoked shift that has happened. Everything is in doubt – everything. The only thing I am sure of here is that there can be no upside, no positive outcome, no secret benefit to this agony. And yet, that wasn't true.

They say that time heals all wounds... I don't believe that.

I think some people become wounded – and they never heal. They never allow themselves to. They either don't give themselves permission to, they stay in guilt and self-judgment, or they simply hold on to the pain because it's the closest thing they can get to the reality that they had.

It doesn't matter if it is a loved one, a prize, a relationship, whatever was 'lost' – we desperately want to cling to it. It's understandable because the pain of letting go can be more than we are prepared to bear, or more than we feel we can bear. But one thing is true – life does in fact go on. And so it only makes sense to search deeply for the gifts hidden inside of the tragedy.

When my father died, all of the obvious things were true. My family was devastated, my mother was left alone, my sister lost her rock, and I lost my Father. It rocked our family, changed us, caused conflict, fear, anger, guilt, shame, horror — any and all emotions you can imagine. It numbed us all for a long time.

As I write this, it has been just over three years. It is still hard at times. It unquestionably impacts my family today. We are continually healing from this incredible rupture.

So where are the gifts?

There have been many. For myself – I have been forced to step up and grow up. The loss of my father shattered a type of naïve innocence that I had about life, which in reality

needed to be shattered. I did not take responsibility for my life back then – not in the way that I do now. Now — everything is my responsibility. I accept that and I appreciate that. I definitely don't always like it, but I acknowledge it and do my best with it. This is a sign of maturity.

I am now more compassionate than most people I know or meet. People even comment on this quality. I am acutely aware that life is brief, that it can be taken at any time or moment – and so I appreciate even the brief encounters that I have with other people. I take people a lot less for granted than I used to.

I am aware – that every human at any time is going through challenges, they have fears, they may be experiencing, going through, or dealing with the effects of a tragedy in their own lives right now.

The alienation I felt after my own tragedy has allowed me to create a space in which people can bring their own emotions, and have me simply be there for them – something I found was greatly lacking in my own immediate circle at the time.

I am more motivated now than I was before my father passed away. I realized two very big things – one was that life really was short. The second and biggest was that I did not want to compromise in my life. So if I wanted my life to be a certain way, I had better get on with it. Being

faced with my father's death really brought home my own mortality.

Rather than that being a negative thing, I believe it was a great thing. I think we hide from death in our western society, and I don't believe that is a good thing. It made me really ask myself what I was prepared to accept out of life – and whether I would be happy if I kept going the way I was going.

The answer was that I wouldn't, and so I had to make some very significant changes in my life. Fast-forward three years and despite the incredible difficulty of making those changes, they are the best things I have ever done. Period. I now travel the world working with incredible people. As sad as it is to say, I doubt this would be my reality had my father not passed away.

My connections now are more authentic, deeper, more accepting, nurturing and loving than they were before. I would tolerate superficial and largely meaningless acquaintances as a substitute for relationships mostly out of my own fears of rejection.

Which reminds me that I am about 1/10th as fearful as I used to be. This is not all strictly as a result of my father passing away, but certainly once you are faced with your own death, and thus the possibility of living life without ever overcoming those fears, other things suddenly seem a lot

more important. Also, once you go through an experience like this, you are now more resilient and other things just don't worry you as much. Fears of embarrassment and looking stupid now seem a lot more trivial.

Living life with less fear is one of the most incredible experiences I have ever had – and I get to live this every day. As I write this, I am in my bedroom in my villa in Bali, where I am currently living. Not vacationing – but living. It is incredible, and I love it. I would also never have had the courage to do what it takes in order to make this a reality without the type of fearlessness that originated in my father's passing.

I also live today with so much more gratitude because life is a beautiful, full, rich and diverse tapestry and I never know what the next moment will hold. It's often the little things that I am the most thankful for. Some words someone will say to me, a nice meal shared with people, a sunrise. The simple things can mean so much, if we allow them to, and so I try to allow them as often as I can.

I'm not perfect, but being grateful for the moments where things are great, or even when things don't seem great but noticing what is right about things, gives me so much peace of mind and makes me feel so good, I would be foolish not to.



Prior to my father passing, gratitude was not something that I practiced. I was a typical, entitled generation Y. Obviously, I still miss my Dad. One of the things I have noticed is that whenever I would hit an important milestone that I know he would have been proud of, I will feel very connected with him – and also really sad because I can't share it with him. I'd also trade all of the good stuff just to have him back, to have another hug. Because I can get all of the good stuff back, but I can't get him back. That is not the rules of the game.

At times I still grieve, I still get sad and it is still difficult, not just for me, but for my mother and my sister. However, those moments are rarer, and most of the time I am able to appreciate them too when they happen, as I am grateful to still have a deep and emotional connection to my father, which those moments re-stimulate.

There were a couple of things that really helped me in getting through the tragedy of my father's death. The first was speaking to a couple of friends who had also unfortunately had their fathers pass away. Having someone who could just empathise instead of try and mentally put that reality in a place in their head – which frankly, I think is impossible if you haven't experienced something like this before — was amazing. Each one of those people said one thing that really stuck with me. One was – tell your father you love him as many times as you can before he dies, which I did. The other was that it gets easier over time. It does.

The other thing I would add from my own experience is that you need to forgive yourself. We are not perfect beings, we aren't designed to be, and that needs to be ok. If you hold on to guilt or any other feelings as a result of your past actions, which don't serve you going forward, they will poison you. Letting go and trusting that a new beginning or a new future can ultimately be a place where you can feel at home, safe, cared for, loved and grateful is a powerful way to think. So give yourself a break.

Getting out there and doing things that will be part of your life going forward is also an important thing to do. It helps you acclimatise to the new reality and gives your brain some positive hope that things might one day normalise. Plus, being taken out of your emotions of the tragedy for a moment can be a welcome relief.

Ultimately, tragedy is unpredictable. When it hits, it is devastating.

Knowing that others have been here before can be enough to keep the flame of hope alive, and to know that if you look for the gifts, you will find them – I truly believe this.

*~ Cameron Gallagher aka Warrior Junior  
Proud son of Paul Gallagher, aka 'Warrior'.*

You can learn more about Cameron on his website:  
[\*www.EmergentEntrepreneur.com\*](http://www.EmergentEntrepreneur.com)



## CHAPTER 19

### THE GIFT OF FINDING PURPOSE

*"Your purpose in life is to find your purpose  
and give your whole heart and soul to it"*

**~ Gautama Buddha ~**

*By* **MELISSA MILLS**

**Melissa Mills is an international Psychic Medium based in Auckland, New Zealand. This is her story...**

From writing this chapter, I have worked as a Psychic Medium for three years and I am so grateful for this beautiful gift that has been bestowed upon me. I feel so privileged that I get to help so many people around the world and am able to get them inspired and empowered about their life as well as connecting them to those they miss so dearly.

I absolutely love being a psychic medium, however, it has come with many challenges in my personal life, some which have taken me to very dark places within myself, but have since been my biggest lessons.

Being a psychic medium means that I have to experience such feelings and emotions as loss, hardship and struggle to name a few. This is because I have to help many people when they are in their darkest moments, and I have to have these references of experiences for spirit to connect with me in order to be able to help my clients. I would like to share with you a particular hardship in my childhood that heightened and began to make me aware of my gift of being able to hear Spirit.

I have to start at the beginning, because from as early as I can remember, I have always been able to hear voices. Growing up as an only child, my mother never thought anything of it apart from my over-active imagination. After my parents separated when I was two and a half, my mother moved to Gabon, Africa to be with my grandparents.

While in Africa, I had a pretty extraordinary childhood. I grew up practically in the water. We would go to the beach and spend all weekend on the water, exploring the beauty of the ocean. Probably why I now find the beach so comforting and a place that I like to go to and recharge the batteries. In Gabon, my mother met my first stepdad;

we were very privileged to live in a first class community where we had maids. Life was easy and life was good.

I spent a lot of time with my over-active imagination ,playing dress-up and talking to all my imaginary friends. I did this all the time, and my mother just thought it was the performer in me. I was always singing and dancing, and having had a tuned ear from a very young age was probably the reason why I connected with spirit through my sense of hearing.

With my first stepdad we then moved to Tunisia when I was just six years old, where life kept being rather luxurious, and we continued to live the high life. I have very clear memories of travelling through the Sahara desert, exploring Africa in a hot air balloon and riding a camel just to name a few.

I would still connect with spirit, without knowing I was doing so by hearing voices. By then I was developing a rather in tune intuition, and I began to understand how to read people. I would be able to tell if someone's intentions were good or bad, never really understanding where this was coming from.

I'd never talked to anyone about it as I just presumed it was normal. By the time I was around 8 years of age, I started to know things about people, things that, as a child, I maybe shouldn't really know or be aware of. I

started to know things that were going to happen, little things like whether or not I was going to pass a test and whether the traffic lights would turn green. Once again, at that age, I did not really take any notice that spirit was communicating with me, getting me ready for my journey ahead.

By the time I was nine years old (1996), we were relocated to New Zealand. I remember it like it was yesterday, arriving in a country that was all green and full of sheep! Life for us in New Zealand changed as a family. That's when the beginning of the nightmare started...

My stepdad no longer worked for his oiling company, and the luxurious life we were accustomed to was no longer available to us. We were now just your average middle class family, and by then, the pressure must have gotten to my stepdad.

He had moved about six months prior to Mum and I, and could no longer hide his stressful personality, which made him rather abusive on a mental level to both my mother and especially me.

I recall it clearly, like it was yesterday. It was our second day in New Zealand and we went to a family lunch to Valentines, an all you can eat buffet restaurant. Now, I'm not a fussy eater, so I had picked a whole bunch of mussels that were huge! As I began to go for the mussels,

I remember being quite disturbed by the grass or seaweed that was caught in them, and I did NOT want to eat them.

I remember my stepdad just yelling at me, threatening me that I had to eat them or we were not leaving. I was just nine years old and in absolute tears. My mum did try to calm the situation, but wasn't going to win this battle sadly, and after what seemed like a lifetime, I finally ate the mussels in absolute disgust. The car ride home was rather hostile and this was a taste of the next three years to come.

As if trying to adjust to a new country, a foreign language and a different way of life wasn't hard enough, I now hated and feared going home. I never knew what was going to set my stepdad off and for the abuse to start. It could be anything, from my shoes not being put away to not having vacuumed under the parrot's cage.

There were some good days, but they were very few and far between. When it was a bad day, the yelling would be uncontrollable and I would be told repeatedly that I was a 'good for nothing', that I was 'useless', that I 'wasn't good enough', that I was 'stupid', you name it, I was called it.

For the first six months, I coped with it, both my mum and I thinking it was the adjustment to life in New Zealand. With no family and not many friends because of the language barrier, Mum and I were on our own on this one.

The darkest times began after a camping trip from Nelson, which is at the top of the South Island of New Zealand. Camping trips were something we did often. My stepdad didn't really like being too homebound, and from our lifestyle in Africa, we were so used to going out and about.

We drove all the way there, and took the ferry that separates the two islands, and I was so well behaved the whole way there, didn't say a word and just kept to myself. The lovely bubbly confident girl that people knew was becoming reserved, quiet and full of self-doubt.

While camping in Nelson, my stepdad had a go at me because I couldn't put the poles for the tent up properly, and then it was for not washing dishes correctly, the list goes on. He had left Mum and I one day, stranded by a river because he went fishing, and we had no way of getting back to the tent, and he thought this was ok.

The way home was pretty much the same: I kept quiet and to myself, and this is when it all escalated. In my mind, life now became unbearable, and I began having thoughts of not wanting to be here anymore and taking my own life. Of course, during this time I didn't really hear the voices anymore and my intuition was gone — well, let's say it was dormant.

After the camping trip, I began to think of ways to take my own life, and that's what I obsessed about. School was my



happy place, and I loved going there because it meant that I was away from the nightmare of home.

Because my English was not very good, my mum had put me in a lot of after school activities, such as drama and ballet. At least it meant that for two days a week coming home from school wasn't quite so scary.

Most nights, however, I would put myself to bed rather early, some nights even before my stepdad got home from work, and my sleeping companion was the big chef's knife that I would put to my heart and try to dig into my chest. If that wasn't the chosen option for the evening, it was standing outside my window ledge, ready to let go and jump. We lived in a two-story house, so in my mind, I thought that would do the trick.

I never shared with anyone these dark thoughts in my mind, though some of my writing at school became very dark, and I even mentioned suicide in one of my stories in my last year of primary school.

I remember one evening, my mum was cooking me dinner, it was some pasta, and I was outside playing with our dog in the backyard. I hadn't vacuumed under the parrot's cage and my stepdad was fuming!! He came outside with the pasta pot and tipped it all out, told me how useless and pathetic I was and sent me to bed.

That night, I had had enough. The nightmare had now been going on for years, and I just couldn't handle living in this fear. My mum and him were arguing and the only logical explanation in my mind was that their world would be much better if I was no longer here.

I still remember this moment so clearly; this was the moment that was going to change my life and my path forever. I was standing outside the window ledge — by then I must have been about 11-years-old — ready to jump and a male voice said to me, "Don't jump, go to church." I thought it was God talking to me, so I came back into my room and went to sleep. The voices had come back, and spirit was intervening. It was not my time to go just yet.

The next morning, I told my mum that I wanted to go to church, and we began attending the Catholic Church. During this time of attending the church, I didn't really feel a connection with God I was more interested in wanting to drink the wine and eat the bread, but at least the voices had started coming back and so had my intuition.

I remember walking home from school one day, walking past one of the local shops and had a sense of knowing that the shop keeper was having an affair with my stepdad. I didn't tell my mum because I had no idea if it was true.

The thought of taking my own life had stopped, the abuse was still there, but something in me knew that this wasn't going to last for long.

Just after I turned twelve, my mum sat me down in my room, crying, and told me she was going to leave my stepdad, as she herself could no longer live in this nightmare. She told me she had found a little house for us to live in and that we were going to be ok. We would have to go into hiding for a little while and I wasn't allowed to tell anyone that we were going to leave.

So one school day, after my stepdad went to work, we packed all our things and had moving trucks come and we were gone all before he came back from work. The whole day I was scared, just in case he came home early. But, we had done it, we had escaped, and Mum and I were safe in our new little home, ready to start our new lives.

I didn't go to school for a week, and we avoided all our usual places, such as the supermarket etc... He did eventually find us, but the voices in my head reassured me that he was no longer going to hurt me, and they were right. He never did; he and Mum sorted out their divorce and we continued on with our lives.

This nightmare was, however, the first of many in my life, and I have since had a life-long battle with suicide and depression, but it was the awakening of my gift. I knew that I was different and that I had a reason to be here. That my life had to have meaning and it wasn't until I was 17-years-old that I was made aware that these voices were actually spirit, and that one day these voices in my

head were going to guide me to help people all around the world.

I have since embraced these voices and my intuition and now use this gift daily in my profession as a Psychic Medium. It wasn't something I had ever imagined doing, but I know that this is my purpose and that this is why it wasn't my time to go when I was standing on the window ledge at just 11-years-old, ready to jump. My dark times and experiences have only heightened my gift and ability, so I embrace them, because I know that by me being here, I am making a difference to others.

*~ Melissa Mills*

You can learn more about Melissa on her website:  
*[www.MelissaMills.co.nz](http://www.MelissaMills.co.nz)*



## CHAPTER 20

### THE GIFT OF 'I AM'

*"Mastering others is strength.  
Mastering yourself is true power"*

~ Lao Tzu ~

*By RENÉE MAYNE*

Renée was on a one-way street to living an abusive violent life until she broke the cycle and created a magical life where she is living wholeheartedly. Renée lives in Australia and is an international speaker and mentor. These are the moments that break her and make her ...

Don't go out there, they said.

You'll only get hurt, they said.

Don't tell anyone, they said.

Just pretend it didn't happen, they said.

The message to my younger self.

*I wish I could tell you that it gets easier, but it doesn't.*

*I wish I could tell you that it doesn't impact your life, but it does.*

*I wish I could tell you that everything rolls out exactly how you intended, but it doesn't.*

What you see as a wall you will eventually see as a doorway.

The blows to face, punches in stomach, the slaps and being thrown from wall to wall, the bruises, the tears, the fear and the shame have nothing on the silence. I have been beaten so many times and I always said, "Get back up, Renée. All you ever have to do *is get back up.*"

It's human nature to mend and fix everything, to restore things back to the way they once were. The truth is, once it's broken, it will never be the same again. *You* will never be the same again. We try and fix it, but what if we're not supposed to fix anything?

One day I was beaten so badly that I could never be put back together again. What if we continue to smash the pieces, all the layers and all the “stuff”? Instead of trying to glue ourselves back together, to restore what once was... we need to continue to smash the pieces until all that is left is the real me.... the real you without all the conditions, the beliefs, the doubt and the fear. Remove all of it, until all that was left was you, like you have never felt before... no barriers, no glass ceiling.

People say, “Change your story,” but for me, when I think of a story, it’s an illusion or a fairy tale. Being beaten to the point where I thought I was going to die, the bruises were not an illusion and it was definitely no fairytale. It’s having the ability to work through our mess because it will eventually become your message.

The two most powerful words are “I AM.” What comes after that can work for you or against.

~~I am a victim of domestic violence~~

I am worthy and I am enough as I am.

I am love and I deserve to be loved.

Understanding the power of words and the power of thoughts is life changing. I am not, I was not, a victim of domestic violence it was not a story, it was an experience I had and one that I was about to change.

Five words that we often hear when we talk about domestic violence are, *"Why doesn't she just leave?"*

It's a valid question I have asked myself numerous times and it's the same question I asked my mother. Only this time I know the answer:

Because the shame, the embarrassment, the loneliness and fear fills every inch of your mind, body and spirit. You feel like there is no way out and it's what you know because you don't know any other road. Threats are made, and depending on the day, it might be a threat on your life or theirs if you leave... It's not always as easy as those five words that escape so freely when we are talking about the silent thing that happens in so many homes.

Why does it happen? How do women find themselves in this situation? It varies so greatly and all I can do is share my experience.

My parents separated when I young, and I didn't know what love looked like. I know they were happy at one time, but I don't remember that I remember the fights. My mum was then in a violent relationship for many years. We watched her get beaten and sometimes, when he had enough of her, he would abuse us.

I understand the question because I could not understand why my mum would allow this to happen, not only to herself but her children? But we all continued to live this



silent life that no one knew about. Family violence is so deeply seeded and the effect it has on children can be deadly. When it's not, it can take a lifetime to heal.

I attracted a man into my life and soon entered into a relationship with the very same violence that I thought I had escaped. The beatings hurt so badly, but nothing hurt more than the shame and embarrassment I felt. I was scared to leave and I was scared to stay. I felt like I lived two lives, I managed two successful businesses, but my home life was far from perfect. The silence continued once again.

The beatings went on and so did the threats I knew that he couldn't control his anger, so every day I prayed no one made him angry because otherwise I would pay. Until one day I could not take it any more, so I tried to break up with him. He came towards me where I was sitting down and he grabbed me by the throat and lifted me into the air, by the throat. He was squeezing and squeezing and I thought I was going to die, but the universe had other plans.

My roommate was at work and not due to finish for hours, but she walked through the gate. He dropped me and I fell to the floor and cried in the fetal-position for what felt like ages. Eventually I stood up and wrote the words, "I have to break the cycle and stop the war because I've had enough."

I still didn't leave. Women often see the good in men and we think, "If we can bring out the good side, then the bad side will disappear." These men have a gift for seeking redemption and you want to believe them so badly because you think this time it will be different.

But it's not... No one comes to your rescue, no one has the ability to look into your eyes and see what's really going on, as much as you long for them to.

We moved to Melbourne, and one night he didn't come home, and I knew that it was now or never. In that moment, where I didn't allow myself to think, I just followed my sense of knowing that, "Now is the time." I walked out and left everything: my well-earned money I had saved from working three jobs for three years, my "stuff," and I had a small bag with my clothes. I had *nothing*, but I felt like the richest girl in the world. It was one thought and one action. That's all it took, all these years.... one thought and one action changed my life forever.

For the first time ever, I felt like I could breathe.

I vowed to myself I would never allow that to happen again because I am worthy of more.

I was only 21-years-old, but I felt like I had lived a thousand lives. It's the cycle of once you go; nothing will change unless you take action and you are brave and create your own journey. Surround yourself with people who make

you feel good and they pep you up. They don't bring you down. We can do anything.

I smell their cologne or hear a song and it can bring you back. It can bring you back like it was yesterday. So I need to change and I need to do something about this because I not that girl anymore. I realise I was never afraid of the next beating; I was afraid of not living the life I had always dreamed about when I was a little girl. When you stop and look around, there is so much beauty, so much love, and in the richness of now, you don't yearn for anything. Don't worry about what happened yesterday, don't worry about what's going to happen tomorrow, just look within and reclaim your power and move in the direction that makes you happy.

When you find the connection within, it reflects without. The more acts of self-love you can give yourself, the more doors that will open.

For me, allowing myself to be myself, having that inner sense of peace and freedom, I attracted the most amazing man ever. His love, warmth, compassion and support are incredible. He makes me laugh everyday (most days) and he is so sexy... Who knew guys like this existed? I had so much baggage and everyday he helped me unpack it.

It's hard to see what's on the otherside when you're getting beaten, but for me, the other side was finding love

that I had only read about, and 17 years later, I love him more today than ever before. We have two gorgeous girls, I have a successful business, I am surrounded by the most amazing people and I have even found forgiveness.

I wouldn't change a thing, not one beating, because it has shaped me to who I am today. I know that every move, every choice, every decision, every thought and every action is a piece to the puzzle, and it's being rolled out like the best movie I have ever seen and I'm the director. It has brought me here to this very moment and it's exactly where I am supposed to be.

One thought, one action can change anyone's life at any moment. We have all had that time in our lives where fear consumes us and can paralyse us. It is my hope that I can inspire women to find freedom and live wholeheartedly.

All the rage, anger and hatred — I was so confused and angry, I didn't know what to do with it. You know when you just feel so bad, so angry, you feel like you're going to explode. I wanted to scream and I wanted yell and I wanted hurt someone. I was a kid, just a young girl. What is wrong with people? The anger just grows and grows and what am I suppose to do with it? I want to kill him... but I can't speak, I can't breathe because the shame, oh my god I am ashamed... I don't know who I hate more: them for doing it to me, or me for allowing it to happen...

I have to let this go because it is eating me, it's eating away at my soul. The void, the emptiness and darkness are consuming my life.

I am not the girl anymore... I don't have to be.

The moment comes when I say enough, this cannot happen anymore because I am worthy. The freedom and bountiful love of self-acceptance fills my soul and fuels my passion to make a difference to the world, entertain people because the world is going to know my name. It's something grand and something great and there is breathtaking beauty around everything I do because everything is amplified now, and I feel like I have never felt before because I am enough...

Once you remove the stories around "I AM," all that remains is "I AM," and that is all you ever need.

See the doorway and gifts beyond the darkness.

We all have fears, fears around everything, especially failure. What if we removed the judgment and the shame from failure? What if it is never about failing. Failing doesn't exist — it's our perception around it. What if it was some *thing* that happened and what was on the other side was a better way?

What if you embraced every opportunity to learn and grow and it was just a thing that happened? You wouldn't

feel or see it as failing. It's a chance to grow; it's a time to get excited about it.

We need balance and once we learn how to change the language and thoughts we have around everything, the better, more evolved we become. Our external world is a reflection of how we are feeling internally. Nothing is ever really wrong or right; it's our perception we have around it.

The only thing you can ever focus on is becoming a lighthouse and shining your light as far and wide as possible. You deserve the best, and that is all you should ever focus your attention on.

We say we need to shine bright like a diamond, but a diamond reflects light... Be the light, raise the light and that is what you reflect and therefore attract.

I have a dream

I am living the dream

I AM THE DREAM

I AM.

~ *Renée Mayne*

You can learn more about Renée on her website:  
*[www.ReneeMayne.com.au](http://www.ReneeMayne.com.au)*



## CONCLUSION

### OUT OF YOUR DARKEST TIMES COME YOUR GREATEST GIFTS

That has been the message throughout this entire book – that even when you are pushed right to your limits, when life throws you massive crap, when life is unbearable and you feel like there is no hope... there is actually hope. There are amazing gifts and valuable life lessons that you can get out of those dark times if you choose to take the time to see them.

It isn't just the big monumental challenges either, but inside any challenge or difficult situation in your life, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, there are gifts and lessons that you can take out of those times as well. In fact, if you listen to the lessons from the small challenges, you will find that you have less of the big challenges that will arise.

I hope that you have seen that you can change your perspective on how you see and approach challenges and difficult times in your life. Because changing that perspective is well worth it and can help you get through those times with greater ease and greater appreciation for what they are really about. I hope that you have seen that you have a choice and you are in control of your life.

Challenges happen to everyone, whether you are wealthy, poor, healthy, unwell, happy or sad; they are part of the duality of life, and so don't get caught up in the idea that there is this "magic place" where if you get there, you will have absolutely no challenges in your life because that place doesn't exist.

You can, however, use the strategies in this book to lessen the impact and occurrence of challenges in your life; you can look at them with a completely different viewpoint, one that is more helpful and empowering to handle those dark times.

Sometimes it will be tough, sometimes you will cry and feel like it is all too much. Feel that emotion and let that out, don't hold it in. Talk to someone about how you are feeling. This is not about forcing a happy and positive state 100% of the time. It is good to be open to your emotions and to feel and experience them fully. They are important in supporting you on your journey, and suppressing them will only lead to more challenges.



Remember to invest in yourself. Take the time to discover more about yourself, what your beliefs are, what values drive your life, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and peel off the layers of limiting beliefs and mindset blocks that have built up over the years that are holding you back from your true potential in this life.

Read books, attend seminars, watch videos that help to improve your mindset, because shifting your mindset is not an overnight process. Sometimes it is instantaneous, and sometimes it takes months or even years to truly uncover the depth and complexity of some of the mindset blocks and limiting beliefs that we hold. Embrace that journey of self-discovery because it is so rewarding in moving you towards your full potential. You are an amazing human being. None of us is perfect; we are here to learn and grow. Be ok with mistakes and stuff ups because there is nothing wrong with you.

Remember that you are the creator of your life. You are a powerful and limitless being that is capable of amazing things. You do have a choice with your life; you do have a choice about who you want to be and how you want to live your life. Now it is up to you to go and make those choices and take those actions to make it happen.

Ask quality questions to help you do this, and remember that it isn't just about surviving through the challenging and dark times, but also about embracing happiness and

living a more amazing and fulfilling life. One filled with love and laughter and joy, one where you are truly happy – not all the time, but most of the time.

I would love for you to leave this book with a new perspective and view about the world and about life and how it doesn't have to be how it is now. You can choose to make your life better, and you can choose to make your life amazing. That is a choice that you have the power to make.

I want to leave you now with this final message...

You are an amazing person, you are good enough, and you are worthy. It doesn't matter what your past has been, it doesn't matter what other people have told you, or where you are right now, because inside of you is such an amazing being that has untapped potential on this planet.

You are not even aware of the magnitude of the untapped potential that you have. What is possible for you? What is really possible in your life? What are you capable of? What miracles can you create?

There is nothing special or different about me that makes it possible for me to do something as impossible as bringing sight to a blind eye and not for you to do something as equally extraordinary. We are all humans, after all, and we can do amazing things – most of which we are not even aware of yet. I have no doubt that over the rest of my

lifetime I will achieve even more extraordinary things, and I'm so looking forward to seeing what greater possibilities are out there for me.

So I want you to go out there and start using that untapped potential that is inside of you. Don't worry about what others think. Let go of the fear of judgement and criticism, and go and live **YOUR** life the one that you truly desire, and if you don't know what that is, then start working it out. Take one step at a time to move forward. It doesn't have to be a race; you don't need to go from where you are now to where you want to be in a day. Small steps regularly lead to massive leaps forward.

I know that my stories from my own journey to the darkness and back again have already inspired and impacted so many. I wonder if your stories of your journey could do the same? We all have the ability to lift and inspire others to a greater life; we just need to choose to do so.

Bring light into your life instead of darkness and go and shine that light onto the world, and most importantly, be happy.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To sit here and write the acknowledgements for this book is really hard because this book has come together from so many key life experiences that I have had over my life. There really are too many people to thank, and too many people that have played such a massive part in bringing this book to life. I do feel that any person that has been in my life: from family, to friends, to my life teachers, and my mentors and even to all the people that caused me pain and suffering over the years, every one of those people had a part to play in bringing this book together. So for that reason, I want to say a heartfelt 'Thank You' to everyone that has been in my life.

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walk away, but you never did. Together we have become stronger. Our love and connection has grown deeper over the years to a level of love that I never even knew existed. Thank you for being the amazing human being that you are, and thank you for being such a massive part of my life.

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and honour your bravery in being the light for others in similar situations.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kim Baird is an inspirational speaker, author, transformational coach and entrepreneur. Kim has helped thousands of people to transform their lives and their businesses for the better. She has a passion for living life and absolutely loves helping others to do the same; helping them to consciously create the life that they truly desire.

Her skills at transforming others have come from vast training, and her own unique experiences in life. Faced with many challenges from being born with cataracts, nearly having to declare bankruptcy on multiple occasions, and being diagnosed with serious health problems, she has discovered how to thrive in the face of adversity.

Kim is the co-founder of Amazing Business with her husband Andrew, a business that is passionate about helping business owners and entrepreneurs to thrive. They offer online training programs, live events, and coaching and mentoring. Together they have helped thousands of businesses around the world to turn around their thinking and their results.

She is an accomplished author; as well as *Gifts From the Darkness* Kim has also co-authored numerous books on business, life and personal development including *Conscious Business*, *Grounded In Gratitude* and *Wealthy Web Women*. Kim is regularly featured in the media including digital, radio and TV.

An adventurer at heart, Kim loves to push herself out of her comfort zone. At the tender age of fourteen she did her very first skydive and fell in love with getting the adrenaline hit, going on to have many fun filled adventures, including swimming with sharks.

Kim is also devoted to helping numerous charities and causes, which comes back to her passion and dedication to making this world a better place for all, supporting them both financially and with volunteering her personal time.

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT KIM VISIT:**

**[www.Kim-Baird.com](http://www.Kim-Baird.com)**



## ARE YOU READY TO CONSCIOUSLY CREATE YOUR LIFE?

**Do you feel like there must be more to life than the one that you are currently living? Are you feeling stuck, like you have hit this invisible ceiling in your life and you don't know how to get past it? Are you ready for a better life, one filled with more joy, more happiness and more fulfilment so that you can truly feel alive again?**

I meet so many people every year that are feeling stuck. Feeling stuck in life and feeling like they want more. They have a yearning inside for more joy. They want to experience more happiness and they want purpose back in their lives, but they actually feel trapped because they do not know how to get there or even what to do next to move forward.

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- How to overcome self doubt, fear and all the obstacles that are currently in your way, stopping you from living a life filled with joy, happiness and fulfilment
- What is actually important for creating results in our lives that few people know about and how we can fast track the process to get what we want much faster

- How to have amazing relationships in your life, with not only your imitate partner, but also with your kids, your family, your friends and your colleagues
- Plus, much more!

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