

I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY

*An everyday guide to the
radical self acceptance of you,
life and everything else*

The lower half of the cover features a vibrant red background. Overlaid on this background is intricate black line art. The lines are thick and fluid, forming a series of interconnected, swirling shapes that resemble stylized calligraphy or abstract organic forms. Some shapes have small circular accents, and the overall composition is dynamic and expressive.

By Lisa Steingold

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Lisa's work is about unlocking the magic of individuals. For more information go to www.lisasteingold.com

I dedicate this book to everyone who is sick and tired of feeling bad about themselves. It is dedicated to those who are tired or worrying, trying to be better, working and just generally feeling less than.

I would like to thank my sister Lauren for being my best friend through everything and to my soul sisters Jocelyn, Jan and Daphna.

I would like to thank my parents who have always loved me despite my flaws and for being the perfect ones for me.

Last but in no way least, I would like to thank my mentor Silver Fox ~ you know who you are!

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Introduction

I remember some time ago listening to a podcast by a Buddhist trained therapist called “Accepting what is”. At the time, at the ripe old age of 32 I was living with my dad (actually I am still living with my dad now aged 34) having lost my money on an NGO that didn’t quite get off the ground. My vision of how my life was meant to turn out was shattered. In the podcast he was talking about acceptance of whatever comes along the path.

I was like *‘yeah right dude, that’s all well and good until life really falls apart’*.

It took me a few years of living with my dad and not being able to move forward, to understand that I really wasn’t in control. In the beginning I kept myself busy strategising, calling people and setting up meetings to ensure that my life and work went forward.

I wasn’t very successful and as time went on I realised I couldn’t force things to happen. There were days where I had no work and where my phone didn’t ring at all. Those days triggered massive anxiety within me. How would I get work? How would I survive?

I remember my sister saying to me once;

“Sis you’ve got to realise that the situation is just triggering anxiety that is already there.”

I thought she didn’t know how I felt but as time wore on I began to understand what she said was true. With little else to do I set

myself the task of embracing my anxiety. Little did I know I was doing the real work right there. Each moment I embraced my anxiety, I also embraced my fears. As I embraced my fears I began to realise how I'd been trying to run from myself and that actually I was okay just as I was.

I realised that for all the years I'd been struggling financially there wasn't a single day I hadn't eaten a great meal. I realised that there wasn't a day that I didn't have a place to sleep. I realised that whilst I had racked up quite a bit of debt, I was not my debt. I was not my debt because I was not my money. Sure there were fears that had been driving my behaviour with money but I wasn't my money. I had to realise the fears, I had to look into my patterns with money and I had to see what had been driving me and then? Well then I had to accept where I was and I had to accept myself and trust life. No easy task.

My value wasn't related to my life circumstance and if I continued to set my sense of 'okayness' in accordance with my external surroundings I'd forever be on an okay / not okay rollercoaster.

You and more specifically, your value is unrelated to absolutely anything. You are nothing, you are NO thing. What I mean is that your value is related to 'no' thing; not your house, not your work, not your money, not your relationship, not to your friends and family and certainly not to the way you look.

I've been a coach for some time and the thing that clients and I struggle with the most is when things go 'wrong'. This is because we see it as a reflection of ourselves. We think, if things

go wrong then I must have DONE something wrong. The thing it took me some 34 years to figure out is that things never go wrong; they might not go the way we'd hoped or wanted, but they never go wrong.

If we stick to the assumption that things have gone wrong then there must be someone who 'made' them go wrong. Someone must've DONE something wrong and more often than not, we assume that someone to be ourselves. We berate ourselves for not having done better, known better, and thought better; in fact we blame ourselves for not being better.

Assumptions are the mother of... know what I mean?

You're assuming that things, external people and situations are causing you suffering when in fact it is your assumptions that are causing you suffering. You see when you assume things; you create a context for a story that is to follow. When you assume something you have already created the story and just need a reason why to back it up.

You're assuming that things have gone wrong and that there is a definite way that things should have turned out. Secondly you're assuming, based on the first assumption, that someone, namely you or another person, must be to blame for things having gone wrong. Lastly you're assuming that things need to be remedied with immediate effect.

I remember, in the early stages of our relationship, whenever my partner was in a bad mood I'd automatically ask him "*what did I do wrong?*"

Just by asking the question I was assuming that things were wrong and to add to it all that I was the cause of it. It's funny now because it seems rather arrogant to have assumed myself the cause of someone else's troubles. Assuming I caused all his troubles, that would make me the one in control of his *okayness*, would it not? And yet I'm not really in control of anything really barring my response to life.

I understand that in recent times we are taught that we create our reality with our thoughts and our beliefs and certainly I do not deny that but can we say that we're 100% conscious of what we're creating? Can we say we're in control of our reality? We're in control of our perceptions and responses and even then only to the degree to which we're conscious of them.

Can you say you were 100% aware of creating your own retrenchment? Can you say you were 100% aware that you created a situation in which your partner left you? Can you say that you were 100% aware that you prevented yourself from losing weight? Of course not!

This brings me to my intention in writing this book. If we are going to engage in trying to understand what we're creating through our conscious and subconscious mind at any point in time then we're going to have to do it from a sense of "I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY" or at least the declaration that such a thing is possible. You see you cannot be open to learning about your subconscious blocks if you're still trying to get everything right. It's not that you won't be able to uncover the beliefs; you

will but unless you surrender your idea of right and wrong it will be immensely challenging to shift them.

One of my favourite authors Geneen Roth says you cannot separate your approach to something from the outcome of that thing. What she means by this, is to say you cannot hope to expect an enlightening result if you're trying to get something right or prevent yourself from getting it wrong because this is the antithesis of enlightenment. This is the path we take when we're trying to prevent pain we think might result. Right and wrong are essentially judgements of what merely is.

So perhaps you realise that your finances present a major problem for you in your life. As a result you work through a facilitator to find out what those beliefs are. Perhaps you uncover a series of debilitating beliefs that have contributed to your situation; for example 'only evil people are wealthy'. You realise that you've possibly prevented yourself from earning money in the hope of avoiding evil.

Perhaps your challenge doesn't lie in finances but in relationships. Perhaps you decide to see a facilitator and uncover a deep fear of intimacy that has prevented you from having a committed relationship.

Perhaps your challenge lies in your career or your weight or reoccurring illness or in family. No matter what the context is, we all face challenges of some kind and yes there's no doubt we hold the limiting beliefs that prevent us from unlocking our 'magic' as I like to term our potential for living.

It's great if we realise the limiting beliefs but what happens next?

Well if we've been trying to get things right our whole lives, we will quickly embark on trying to 'fix' the situation so that it 'rights' itself. This approach is unsustainable as it inevitably swings the pendulum to the opposite extreme. I know because I spent a good many years adopting such an approach.

When we approach the situation from a place of radical self acceptance, we firstly realise that nothing is ever wrong and as such there's nothing to fix. Instead we uncover the belief and become aware of specific behaviour that was triggered by the belief. Knowing that there's nothing to fix because nothing is ever truly broken or wrong, the awareness shifts the belief which in turn gives rise to a shift in context and we find ourselves on a different trajectory.

When we begin to understand that "I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY" then there isn't anything that needs to change. First of all whatever happened in the past served a purpose for our growth even though we might not realise it at the time. Secondly that a subconscious belief brought into awareness will itself create a shift without too much additional impetus needed from us.

Okay so I realise I've presented a rather interesting concept but what exactly does I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY mean? Fundamentally it means radical self acceptance. Radical self acceptance is acceptance based on the fact that;

1. You're human and allowed to make mistakes.

2. You accept yourself no matter what and even when you can't accept yourself.
3. Life will not go according to plan but it always works out.

So what do the three aspects of radical self acceptance mean?

1. You're human and allowed to make mistakes

It you've read my book "Carbs, curves and everything in between" then you'll know about my theory on Perfection Deficit Disorder (PDD). Just in case you don't, PDD is the desire to be perfect with the inability to do so based on the fact that you're human.

What I've realised and will talk about later in this book is that it's all ONE thing. Success and failure are different sides of the same coin. Divinity and Humanity are no different. You can only be successful to the degree to which you allow yourself to fail. You can only embody Divinity to the degree to which you allow yourself to be human and yes that means making mistakes. You can only shine to the degree to which you have embraced your own seeming darkness. So in embracing radical self acceptance, you are actually embracing your Self in every sense of the word.

2. You accept yourself no matter what and even when you can't accept yourself

Just what it says; you accept yourself. As you will know if you've read my other books I have dedicated my life to

becoming ‘better’. I laugh as I write this now as I’m not quite sure as to what ‘better’ means but you get the idea.

Recently just before writing this book I dedicated 21 days to prayer and to developing trust. As if just 21 days is all it takes to develop trust but no matter. At the end of the period I sat down and declared that I would trust my path no matter what; the next day all my data was erased from my computer. I was beside myself. I called a friend in tears and just sobbed. I felt angry, I wondered why, I wondered what it meant and yes I even wondered what I had done wrong. The day afterwards I felt such a sense of shame.

“After all” I told one of my dear friends

“I promised the universe I would trust”

“Yes Lisa but you didn’t promise you wouldn’t cry through it all and for goodness sakes you’re allowed to be human”

It dawned on me how self critical I was being. I realised I wasn’t accepting myself because firstly I’d assumed that the data loss was because of something I’d done wrong and secondly I didn’t allow myself to be human. See point #1.

I’d expected to get ‘trust’ right first time round as if it were part of some test that ultimately determined the rest of my life and possibly even future ones.

I realised I had to accept myself for not accepting myself in the form of my behaviour. I had to stop judging the judge in me.

It's the only way it ever stops you know; the suffering I mean. It's the only way I know how. Accept yourself no matter what even when you can't accept yourself just accept that at that moment you're not accepting yourself.

3. Life will NOT go according to plan but it always works out.

The grand fact of the matter is that life will NOT go according to plan because it is not designed to. Imagine how boring life would be if life went according to plan? There'd be no reason to do anything. We'd never be sparked into action. I bet if you look back over your life, the greatest turning points were taken and presented themselves at the most chaotic and challenging of times?

Life is a grand adventure, the cause and effect of which can never be fully known irrespective of how much 'manifesting' work you've done or how many times you've watched and read 'The Secret'.

The reason that life won't go according to plan is because no man is an island. If a butterfly flaps its wings in Japan, it has an effect on you and I'm not exaggerating. We're all in this thing together. When people die, it affects the planet as a whole just as much as when people are born. I'd like to take this from an esoteric concept to a more practical one. We all share the same universal fears, the same hopes, the same desires; they may come about differently but at the core they are the same. It's the reason that books offer themselves and appeal to a collective. In this manner everything each and every person is doing has an effect

on the whole. If everyone is having an effect on the whole how can we be responsible for it going according to plan according to our small perspective?

Perhaps you do not agree with this worldview and may have your own theories. No matter the worldview we all realise life does not go according to plan.

Life goes according to cause and effect, life goes according to our soul's specific reason for incarnation, life goes according to what is most needed for our sense of wholeness but never according to plan. Life never goes according to plan but it always works out.

So that's what I mean when I talk about 'radical self acceptance'. It's radical because it's acceptance that goes far beyond what can be seen by the eye into the unseen. It is a brave and courageous act that moves past our desperate desire for validation, measurement, understanding and goal orientation to a declaration of acknowledgement and acceptance of everything despite life's uncertainty and vulnerability. It's a declaration that we are more than our circumstances, more than our bodies, more than context despite what is seen, believed, heard, proved or experienced.

Whilst as a coach I believe it's essential to uncover our deep seated beliefs; those that prevent us from living 'Magic' in the world. I simultaneously believe that 'Magic' is only unlocked through radical self acceptance.

Some of you reading this book might think it's a onetime deal; that you declare you're okay and life's okay and get on with it. I

wish, however, to suggest that just as uncovering one's own inner Magic is the journey of a lifetime and a practice of engaging within, so too is radical self acceptance. It's not about getting it right or wrong; it's a slow uncovering of the Self and learning to see the ways in which we might accept and not accept ourselves, life and others.

You might be wondering why you need to read the book and what insight it holds for you. All I have to ask is aren't you tired of not being enough? Aren't you tired of trying to find new ways to prove yourself in the world? Aren't you tired of pretending to be what you're not?

This book is permission that you are okay as you are, that everything is okay as it is and that everyone is okay as they are. What I've alluded to but wish to point out before we proceed, is that, unknowingly, what you apply to yourself, you will apply to others. When you don't allow yourself a sense of okayness, you sure as hell won't be allowing it for others. When you don't allow your own mistakes, you certainly won't accept them from others. When you won't accept that life doesn't go according to plan, you will blame yourself as well as others.

This book has far reaching consequences not just for you but for those around you and yes even for those in Japan! If what we do has an effect on the whole then by taking the concepts in this book and applying them, you will be performing an alchemical process for all of us.

The last thing I wish to comment on before proceeding is the title of the book. I initially came up with the title "Radical Self

Acceptance” although subsequently found out that one of my favourite authors and therapists, Tara Brach had already used that title. When I thought of the title “I’m OKAY, Life’s OKAY” I completely forgot about the well known book “I’m okay, You’re Okay” by Thomas Harris. His work, based on transactional analysis, is brilliant and has been a popular self help best seller since the 1960’s. I was only reminded of it when asking my partner what he thought of my title. I decided to piggyback off his popular title and use the title “I’m OKAY, Life’s OKAY”. I feel that although our work is dramatically different, it is all with the intention of uplifting individuals to the point where they remember their wholeness.

My intention with the title and the book is exactly that; to remind you of what you already know; that you are already whole and that your value relates to no external thing, person or circumstance. As you proceed through these pages; take what works for you, discard what doesn’t and integrate it with your own life philosophy. Whatever you do, enjoy the journey!

Chapter 1 – Life’s not okay, I’m not okay

The ‘problem’ with living in the space of ‘I’m not okay’ is that it begins to affect all areas of our lives. When we feel we’re not okay or not good enough we don’t take risks, we don’t speak up, we don’t act authentically and we don’t allow ourselves to live what I term ‘Magic’. We get lost in an endless web of;

“I’ll be happy when...”

“It’s not use because...”

“I need to be this way because...”

And life becomes a series of stories we use to justify why we can’t. I know because I’ve lived this way for much of my life. I lived in a frame of reference that said *“I’ll be okay when life is okay”* instead of the other way around.

So what happens when life isn’t okay and you’re not okay? Well firstly if your sense of *okayness* is always and ultimately tied to how life is going then you’re in for one hell of a rollercoaster ride.

Life is cyclical in nature; seasons changes, the moon and sun come and go, the tides change from high to low and back again, the wind blows and stops, there are good years and challenging years and this is the continuous cycle of life. It is the way of all things and your life is no exception.

You will have good days and bad days. You will experience wondrous times and extremely challenging times and each of

these may last some time. Even within these times you will experience different ebbs and flow of emotions.

If you are waiting for life to be okay until you're okay, you may be waiting a while, forever even and sabotaging the all encompassing experience of it in the process.

Whenever I talk about relationships I say that if you can start off on the premise that all relationships are flawed, they will become much easier. It is the same with life. If you can start off on the premise that life is full of up's and down's and that this is nature's way. It becomes much easier as you cease fighting the downs or insisting your sense of value, worth and okayness is based on what's happening in life.

The flip side is that your sense of being okay is ultimately tied to life events. In "Get Real" I mention that it is only in the human realm that we expect an always upwards trajectory. When this happens and life doesn't go according to plan, it creates a massive sense of anxiety.

In "Carbs, curves and everything in between" I explained how stress creates havoc not only with your digestion but with your immune system.

The irony here is that the anxiety, over an extended period of time, creates a health challenge which further degrades our sense of worth because it's tied to life circumstances. As our health declines, our self value declines and so we continue until one day we hopefully have a breakdown.

Why on earth would I say hopefully? I say hopefully because the place of breakdown is also the place of break open. When our hearts break it is because they are literally breaking open to new realisations and a breakdown is typically the place where it occurs.

In addition anxiety usually offers a comfortable place for fear. The voice of fear will tell us that this situation needs to be fixed and that we need to be fixed and that others definitely need to be fixed. This quite ironically makes us feel better.

You may think it untrue and I implore you to investigate this for yourself but there is very little we are required to do in our lives except for show up; show up in our pain, our desires, our fears and our joy; really to own it all.

Some of us get confused in this because we've been taught about 'negative' feelings and so the minute we feel an emotion of intensity such as grief, sadness, despair or anger, we fear something is wrong and that it needs to be fixed with immediate effect.

Have you heard the saying that the best way to find something is to stop looking. It is the same with life; when you need help, ask for it and then let it go.

Most of us ask for help and then try to do it all ourselves. We end up in a fear based trap of control, manipulation and utter anxiety. This only serves to sabotage that which is trying to enter our lives.

For instance perhaps you've tried to lose weight in this manner. Perhaps you decide to go on a diet. You end up hating the food you eat and 'battling' that which you're not supposed to have. In the end you binge on all the foods you believe you shouldn't have had. So the very thing you wanted, you've ended up sabotaging because of a control based approach. Your body cannot be controlled; it is your partner and must be approached as you would a team mate.

When you approach your body through force, feeding it food it hates and trying to control how it looks and feels, you end up in sabotage and pain. Were you to embark on a journey WITH your body from a sense of nourishment and fed it whole nourishing food that it loved, you wouldn't see a need to binge. Perhaps you'd feel like chocolate but you'd have a bite or two not a whole slab. Further to that if you stopped judging food as good or bad, you wouldn't put on weight from the chocolate anyway because your body reacts to your beliefs.

It is the same for everything in life; whatever you believe is true. If you believe chocolate makes you fat, it does. If you believe the world is out to get you, it is. If you believe there's never enough money, there isn't. Your biology literally reacts to your beliefs and what you believe, you will experience to be true.

So if we look at the example of wanting to lose weight from the context of "I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY" then you might want to lose some weight but your body doesn't need fixing. You feel okay despite the fact that you may be carrying a few extra kilos. You decide to engage with your body in a partnership giving it

the nourishment it needs and allowing yourself to have the foods you love without bingeing. Over a period of time which may even be over a year, your body loses its excess weight. As you have stopped doing battle with it, it has stopped doing battle with you.

“But wait a second Lisa! I’d never be able to have just a piece of chocolate without eating the whole slab”

OR

“I’d never be able to stick to a budget without blowing it all?”

Or any example you’d like to use here. It isn’t just related to food; it’s related to how we sabotage ourselves because we feel we’re not okay.

My response to that is trust.

It may be a one liner but it’s no simple concept. My question here is why don’t you trust yourself? Don’t you trust that one is enough? Maybe you don’t trust that you’re enough so you find a way to fill up feeling not enough; in other words, not okay?

The main reason we feel we’re not okay is because we are trying to squeeze the magnificence of who we are into a ridiculous comparison against a life circumstance such as finances, work, our body or a relationship. One of the major reasons we do this is because firstly we haven’t seen or even looked for the magnificence of who we are and secondly we haven’t learnt to go beyond what can be seen.

Part of our quest in this life, I suspect, is to learn to believe what we cannot see; in other words to trust and to love and accept ourselves no matter what. It is no easy task and I think it ends up being a lifetime practice.

Have you ever had a gut feeling about something? Like you just knew you had to buy this house or keep away from a particular person or do a specific kind of work? If you think back to that time was there something physical you saw to give you that indication? My guess is probably not. You probably couldn't 'see' anything wrong with the person who you felt you shouldn't do business with. You probably didn't know why you had to buy that particular house but you just felt you did.

There was a level of trust in what you felt but couldn't see.

This is the practice needed most if we're going to stop judging our level of worth and self value by our surroundings. How are we going to know we're okay? We going to have to practice trusting that we are or forever be condemned to a rollercoaster ride of life.

This practice relates to our expectation of life too. Most of us believe that if life isn't okay firstly there's something we must have done wrong to make it so and secondly that it will never get better again unless we intervene on some grand scale.

What I'm asking of you here is to begin trusting that life will come around. I'm asking you to trust that you don't need to measure yourself on some improbable and impossible scale; you are already enough. I'm asking you to trust that you can stick to

a budget because you're okay with NOT keeping up with the Joneses, you're okay NOT shopping at a specific store and you're okay NOT having certain things because you realise that your self worth comes from NO thing, nothing.

The reason so many of us don't trust is because trust is, in essence, an act of vulnerability. Embarking on a path of 'not knowing' is one of the most difficult things for a human being because it means we could get hurt. It's much easier to control and try and manipulate the outcome because then at least we won't get hurt or that's what we think anyway.

It isn't the truth though. It's not that we think we won't get hurt; it's that we don't trust ourselves to be with pain or joy so we'd rather just avoid both.

Trusting ourselves, someone and eventually life means that we don't know what will happen and that's pretty scary. I'm asking you to come at this from a difficult angle; seeing as you're okay no matter what's happening, trust life to work with you in partnership to work itself out.

Trust that you are enough.

Trust that you give enough love.

Trust that you are loved.

Trust that life will work out.

Trust that nothing anyone does or says is really about you

Trust yourself to live joy

Trust yourself to be with pain

Trust others to be with their pain and to find their own way out

Trust that your body knows what it needs and when it needs it

Trust that you don't need a schedule or programme

Trust that you don't need a goal to keep yourself accountable

Trust that even if you don't fix things, they will be okay

Trust that your children are on their own path and are okay

Trust your children to know what their passion is

Trust that you'll always have enough money

Trust that chaos is a necessary process in finding clarity

In the summer of last year my relationship with partner was on a rocky path. Conflict was rife and eventually he called a time out to figure things out. I knew this was my test. My greatest fear had always been of being abandoned. Yes it could have come from my parent's divorce and then again one could say I was born with it and my parent's divorce merely magnified my fears in order for me to truly see them. It doesn't really matter why but it's been a biggie for me.

As such when my partner called a time out I nearly fell to pieces. My mind kept demanding how 'we' (as if my mind was

somehow separate from me) could possibly survive and kept throwing irrational answers as to how to fix it. Eventually and thanks to my practice of meditation I had a moment of lucidity where I heard a soft voice inside saying *let go*. And I did. I surrendered into the fear and into the anxiety and within a time it subsided. I found peace. I felt the feeling of absolute *okayness*. I was okay and I decided to trust that however things turned out would be the way they were meant to. I decided to trust that I had not done anything wrong and that things would right themselves. As it happened he called that afternoon and came over to apologise and discuss our recent conflicts. We had both made mistakes and we discussed how to learn from them and how we could work with each other during times of conflict instead of reacting to each other.

Our relationship grew in leaps and bounds from that incident. For once when the proverbial stuff hit the fan, I didn't rush out to fix it, I didn't call him to convince him to stay. I tried the trust approach.

Oh don't let my story deceive you; it was one of the toughest things I've ever done. I squirmed and cried and fought to get to the moment of surrender and trust.

If there were another way I would tell you but it's the only way I know. Know that you're okay enough to sit through the discomfort. Know that you're okay enough to handle vulnerability and that life's okay and will work out.

I've included the declaration of trust I wrote in my journal on that day and thought I'd share in case you'd like to use it or write your own.

My declaration of trust

I trust I am ENOUGH.

I trust I have enough friends, money & clients

I trust I have enough LOVE

I trust my path

I trust myself

I trust that I will know the answer at
the right time

I trust I give enough

I trust that I am loved

I trust that I am always protected

I trust that another's pain is not about me

I trust others to be with their pain

I trust my body

I trust that all is cleared and healed

I trust myself to receive

Chapter 2 – It's all just a game

I understand that you may find this chapter offensive at first, but hear me out and if you still find it offensive, just carry on with what works for you.

It's all a game.

Yes, life I mean. It's just a game that we're playing; not to win or lose but just for the sake of playing. Life is, in essence, an experience. We get to experience a range of things; loss, joy, grief, adventure, betrayal, friendship, love, death, kindness, fear, stillness, chaos, anger...and none of it is bad. There's no such thing as a 'negative' state because it's all part of this experience called 'life'.

"Well what about when I go through phases that are difficult?" I hear you say.

Sure there are times that are less preferable. There are times that are challenging. There are times that are chaotic and they're not comfortable; that I understand all too well. They're not comfortable but they're all part of the game. In fact, they're what make the game all the more enjoyable in the long run.

Many of us think life is about 'lessons' we have to learn in order to 'progress' and in some manner that is true but also not. You see the mere presence of lessons assumes that there is a teacher and that life must be 'The teacher'. Given a teacher we then might assume we are either failing or passing in order to 'progress'.

I have no doubt that this comes from eons of understanding that God is the almighty and we need obey lest we be punished. It is from this understanding that we assume we are doing things right or wrong and that there is a definite right way we should be proceeding in order to 'pass'.

I understand that I am not taking into account your worldview or view on religion and it is not my intention to do so. Worldview and religion are just part of the way we play the game. Please know it's not my intention to upset you or downplay your views, my intention is to share a new understanding and from there you can decide if it works for you or not.

What if we rather look at a position of 'cause and effect' as opposed to lessons? Let's assume for a moment, and I make no apologies for the fact that I am assuming this, that life is our partner. Let's assume that we are perhaps as powerful as God and dare I say Goddess or the Divine mother. Let us assume that by making certain choices we create certain consequences. Some of these choices we might experience as a negative effect and some we might experience as a positive effect but we cannot know without the experience.

For example I've had many relationships in my life. Many were fraught with sadness and conflict. I decided to look at how I was playing the relationship game and to shift a few beliefs. As a result I experience a delightful, although it is not without conflict, relationship with my partner. Choices I made, largely in my own behaviour previously resulted in an experience of sadness. After looking at my 'game' in relationships I now have

a more joyful experience even though we face challenges within the relationship.

One could say my lesson was to learn to behave differently in relationships and that I have ‘progressed’ because I have learnt my lessons. I understand this interpretation but it is largely unsatisfactory for me because it assumes I am only a student and that I cannot take full responsibility for my actions.

If I am a partner with life then life is shifting and playing along with me as opposed to passing or failing me. Life is responding to my choices. It’s a game where I get to figure out how best to play in order to allow joy and the fullness of being into my life.

I must at this point mention that we are not 100% conscious beings. Part of the game is to bring what is subconscious into consciousness. As such sometimes we might think we want something different but things don’t change. This is where we might wish to delve into the subconscious in order to uncover the game we’re really playing.

I often refer to the subconscious as the soul because the more I’ve delved into my own subconscious; the more I’ve delved into the matters of my soul. The conscious mind has one main agenda; more. More money, more power, more sex, more stuff...The ego is not as bad as it sounds because it represents the gateway in which we can enter the soul. The soul has another agenda; wholeness. This may sometimes result in less; less health, less money, less sex, less power...to make us realise that our value lies in NO thing but rather comes from us.

When we are looking to discover the particular game we're playing; we look at the conscious to see what it's asking for, we look into the subconscious to see what it might be holding and we look to life to see what is being presented to us.

So what do I mean when I say we're playing a game? Well firstly let me point out that this is my perspective and you may decide it's ridiculous or that it makes sense. I buy into the concept of reincarnation so I assume that we're born into the world with some of our past life or lives game still with us.

I have seen this in my own life. Despite having a loving family and a supportive childhood I have battled with the concept of being loved my whole life.

Up until a few years ago I battled in my relationships and wanted more love. So here we see that the ego wanted more love and kept leaving relationships in search of more love. The ego thought the only way to acquire more love was from an external source. All the while the subconscious had an agenda to become whole. Life as my partner helped me create circumstances where I was not able to engage in another relationship and my life came to a crumbling halt. It was in the 'halt' or the pause in my life so desperately needed to help me see my 'game'; my behavioural patterns, the beliefs that drove my behaviour, the life circumstances I kept drawing towards me...I saw it all and very clearly for the first time. I saw that I kept trying to be okay from someone else.

Just the awareness then shifted my game. Once things move from the subconscious to the conscious we will have created a

shift. We will always, through awareness, and I mean deep awareness, have alchemically shifted life. How then can life be a teacher waiting to punish or reward us if we are able to shift it?

How does all of this connect to “I’m OKAY, Life’s OKAY”?

Well if it’s all a game then it implies that life is of a far less serious nature than we might otherwise assume when we are attempting to pass and avoid failure.

If it’s of a far less serious nature than we might have first presumed, we might be able to have fun throughout the process. Not so?

The most important understanding of all of this is that if it’s just a game and there’s no passing or failing then we’re open to changing the game.

If we’re open to changing the game then life is not as static as we might otherwise assume. Whatever is happening today is okay because it’s just part of a game that’s bound to change because there’s no judgement created with regards to passing or failing.

One of my favourite women Iyandla Vanzant has this to say about judgement;

“Judgment is the process whereby we label and categorize situations and people based on what they appear to be, without full knowledge of what they are. Judgment prohibits true understanding. The minute we start thinking we know what should and should not be, or what we should or should not be experiencing, we are judging”

I'd like to add one more sentence to her quote and that is;

“And then we get stuck”

This is why changing my perception from ‘life is something I am getting right or wrong’ to ‘life is a game’ has been such a fundamental shift. There’s no pressure in a game, there’s no judgement and there’s no criticism; the very things that perpetuate crisis situations in the first place. There’s just fun and just like in the sandpit at school, sometimes tears, but everyone laughs and has a peanut butter sandwich at the end.

That’s the irony of it all! When we have to pass a lesson and we’re in a situation where we feel like we’re failing, the mere judgement of ourselves as a failure (because that’s what we do) perpetuates the circumstance and prevents us from seeing how we’re playing the game.

Shifting to the concept of life as a game means its okay no matter what happens. However we’ve been playing the game is okay which results in *“I’m OKAY, Life’s OKAY”*.

Think about the ‘consequences’ of this way of thinking for just a moment. No right way to eat, no right way to invest your money, no right thing to do, no right way to be a parent or a partner and no right way to exercise or jumpstart your career. No right way and by the law of equal and opposites, no wrong way!

What then?

Well now you get to decide what you want to do for the sheer joy of it and the beautiful thing is that if the game isn't working for you, you get to change it.

Now isn't that a more liberating way of seeing life?

What now?

Go play! Go play in your work, your relationships, in parenting, in friendship, with your money and if you don't like the game you can play different.

"Well Lisa doesn't playing with my money have serious consequences?"

Yes and no would be my response. Yes if you decide to go 'play' at a casino then you're most likely in for a painful ride. No because if you follow your intuition you're always guided to your highest good. It's when the mind comes in with its analytical qualities that are trying to weigh up right versus wrong that things tend to go wrong.

Even if things 'go wrong' then it's part of the game and you get to see how you might want to play differently.

I know I know; you want rules, a formula, and a 7 step process but then you're reading the 'wrong' book for such things and definitely engaging with the 'wrong' person.

I'm for play. I'm for game changing. I'm for experimenting.

I remember some time ago when putting certain programmes together wasn't working for me. I cried on the shoulder of my partner and burst into tears remarking how nothing I ever did worked and that my work was doomed to fail.

I was still in my 'life's a lesson' phase then.

He just smiled at me and said

"My angel I love you so much and wish you could see yourself through my eyes. You are awesome but if the way you're working isn't working, why not try something new. Then just keep trying new things until you find the thing that works"

I was gobsmacked to say the least. It was as if a little light had been switched on. I'd never thought of that before; trying something new. In times gone by I would have berated myself for not understanding what lesson I'm supposed to be learning and I would have caused myself considerable pain, misery and suffering for an extended period of time.

Radical I thought! Just try something new. For a moment I forgot about right and wrong and was captured in the adventure to try something new! Lone behold, it worked. I tried a new programme and a new way of costing it and it worked.

Now when things don't work I try to let go of berating myself, although sometimes it's a tricky habit to let go of, and I think about what I haven't tried. It usually lights a spark and off I go.

Sometimes it takes a while but it's okay because it's just a game. Sometimes I forget it's just a game and then it takes a bit longer but I've stuck a big sign on my mirror "it's just a game" to help me remember. So have fun, it's just a game!

Chapter 3 – You are here

The fact is that you are here.

What does that mean apart from the obvious?

Well don't you love those maps in touristy places or shopping malls that tell you 'you are here'? It's an attempt to orientate ourselves in order to gain perspective on which direction to take moving forward.

I had a client with whom I strongly resonated. She was single and although she said she consciously wanted to have a relationship, she remained single. She worked long hours and all weekend. She didn't go out and she didn't make an attempt to meet people. She said that she hoped a relationship would find her but her behaviour was sending out the wrong signals.

Her behaviour said *“don't date me because I'm already married to my work”*

So although consciously she wanted a relationship, subconsciously she blocked it but what was the belief holding her back?

When we probed a little deeper through our sessions she realised she kept herself from having a relationship because she was afraid she'd end up alone like her mother who got divorced when my client was just a girl.

Can you spot the irony here?

She was alone.

This is what I mean when I say you are here.

We often keep ourselves from doing things because we're afraid but the irony is that we end up living our fear. As Frasier once said on his TV show *"I'm alone because I'm afraid of being alone"*.

The only reason we don't accept ourselves and our circumstances is because of fear and usually a fear based belief. The irony is that the fear is usually fully present and manifest anyway. You are here!

You might laugh as you do this exercise but write down what it is you really want. Now write down what it is you are afraid of. If you need some assistance, seek out the help of a facilitator. Now look at your current circumstances and ask if your fear is present and manifest in your current circumstances.

If it is, sit back and have a good laugh because you've just spotted yourself on the map "YOU ARE HERE".

You now have an idea on which direction to take in moving forward.

You will be unable to move forward in life, or so I've found, without accepting where you find yourself and the choices that brought you to that place.

I remember being ill for some time. I went to healers and to doctors for over a year trying to discover why I was ill.

Eventually I went in for an operation and it took many weeks to recover. Whilst recovering I remember having a particularly bad day. I felt terrible. I didn't have enough energy to walk to the bathroom let alone anything else. I lay on my bed crying and after some time I surrendered. I prayed and declared that if this was how my life was meant to be then so be it. I prayed for guidance on how to accept my sickness.

The very next day I began to get better.

One might say this is total coincidence except for the fact that there's no such thing as coincidence and if it weren't for the fact that I had similar experiences in relationships. Every time I have surrendered and I mean really surrendered to a situation, it's changed.

After a series of gut wrenching relationships I declared to God, the universe, my cat and anyone else who was listening at the time that I was done with abusive relationships. I declared that I would no longer compromise myself. I declared that I would rather be alone than be in a bad relationship. I declared that I would wait for the appropriate man to show himself to me. (I'd always done the chasing before – that had been my game in the past). I declared that if it were my path to be single for the remainder of my life, so be it.

The next week I met my partner.

I have no doubt I must be of huge entertainment value to the heavens because it hasn't stopped me fighting current

circumstances. I still fight my current circumstances but the time I do so has shortened.

I fight and then I remember to accept where I am and inevitably a comical voice soon enters my head and says “YOU ARE HERE”. It is at the point that I know things will change and I begin to let go in the acceptance that I am okay and life is okay.

You are here.

What does that mean?

It means that you begin to accept the imperfection of life and where you might find yourself. Many of us consider surrender and acceptance a weakness afraid that if we surrender, life will somehow take us over.

We feel the need to ‘keep fighting’ as if fighting the grandeur of life might somehow mean that we are powerful, that we will be taken notice of and will come out victorious. Victorious over what? Life? We are life’s partner so how could we be victorious over it?

We fear that if we accept where we find ourselves, the very circumstance we fear may persist forever and yet the opposite is true.

The declaration of war is a judgement that somehow where we find ourselves is wrong and needs to be fixed or overcome. Nothing could be further from the truth. A declaration of war is above all a judgement and a judgement against anything will

ensure that the circumstance perpetuates itself. Why would an event perpetuate itself?

To answer this question, we must go back to the soul. The soul's intention is for wholeness; an acceptance of all things and of all aspects of ourselves, ALL aspects.

When we judge a situation we're actually judging ourselves. In this light I must put myself a little 'out there' by explaining how this is so. Life is a holographic game; in actual fact nothing exists and everything is created by our perception. More than this I do not wish to enter into. It is not important and should you wish to, you can read "A Holographic Universe" by Michael Talbot.

My intention here is to explain that when you judge a situation, you judge none other than yourself. It persists because a part of yourself is asking to be owned.

The acceptance of something is the declaration that you are whole and that the seeming lack of what is not present does not influence your sense of wholeness.

Acceptance does not mean that you don't wish for things to change. Acceptance does not mean that you do not have a vision for life and circumstances to be different. Acceptance does not mean not engaging in activity that might shift you forward. Acceptance does not mean letting go of a dream.

It means the full understanding that you are whole. It means the full acceptance of everything that life brings you. It means that

you trust life enough to know that everything is always in your best interests and that life conspires with you to bring about your greatest joy.

When I fully accepted being single, I began to have fun and lighten up. As such I was more open to engaging with people, not from the point of finding a mate but for the mere enjoyment of engaging.

When we stop fighting, we let go. When we let go, we feel relaxed. When we feel relaxed, we're prone to finding creative ideas that never occurred to us before. When we stop fighting, we ironically end up doing the things that take us forward.

The other reason that finding the YOU ARE HERE sign is because finding the sign signals a pause in the journey. It is a pause designed to help you look at your 'game'.

What game have you been playing?

What results has your style of playing been bringing you?

What patterns have kept you stuck?

Let me share with a story;

My partner and I were invited out to dinner by some well off friends and at dinner one of the friends told us of her sister who despite being extremely successful in their role as a CEO was battling drug and alcohol abuse.

As we drove home I chatted to my partner about it and eventually I finished the conversation off by saying

“You see, money will destroy you”

He looked at me with raised eyebrows as he does when he’s asking;

“Is that your story?”

I immediately recognised what I was saying. The situation gave me an opportunity to uncover my own subconscious beliefs about money. No wonder I was broke. I didn’t make money because I thought if I did, everything I loved would be destroyed.

I could trace the belief back to a time when I did some consulting work for an organisation. The MD was extremely manipulative and tried to seduce me on several occasions. At the time I felt afraid because if I let the contract go I’d have no money but at the same time I didn’t want to compromise my values. Eventually I let the contract go and sank into a life of debt. I had decided at that time based on the experience that money had destroyed me and would continue to do so as long as I made it.

Can you see how valuable this pause in my life was?

After accepting where I was, it became a lot easier to understand my game. Uncovering aspects of my game automatically changed the game; my game with money.

So has my landscape changed completely; not yet but I've begun to act differently with money. I've stopped seeing it as bad or myself as unworthy of it. It's given me a fresh perspective on what 'self value' means to me.

I had felt shame for so long over money; over the amassed wealth of it and at the lack of it. I continue to uncover subconscious prejudices I hold but it's all part of the ongoing game.

Accepting that you are here means you get a new perspective. It equips you with what's needed to walk forward and create solid foundations.

Look at your current circumstances. Instead of judging or asking *how can I move forward?* Rather ask *what is here for me to see?*

The last thing I wish to say here is that acceptance won't necessarily be an easy thing and might bring up a range of often so called negative emotions. There are no negative emotions and the more you allow yourself to feel all of what is presented to you, the quicker the discomfort passes.

If you need to journal, journal. If you need to scream, scream. If you need to cry, cry. If you need to write letters, write letters. If you need to tell someone your story, tell them. If you need to share, share. If you need to breakdown, break down.

Know that as you engage with the discomfort of what is presented you are accepting what is presented.

YOU ARE HERE anyway right?

I laugh as I think of how often I try to take myself away from where I am. As if by overeating or checking Facebook or by keeping busy I'm preventing myself from being here. I am not, the only thing I am achieving is robbing myself from the situation and what it is trying to present to me.

What's your thing that keeps you from being here? Work? Food? Sex? Drinking? Obsessive exercise?

Whatever it is, the master plan has a glitch. Inevitably what you do to keep yourself from being 'here' brings more pain than just being here so we may as well just engage in what's happening anyway right?

For the next few minutes and perhaps for a few minutes every day for the rest of your life, get into the habit of asking;

"Where am I?"

If you're worrying about your business in a few weeks or your financial situation or how well your child is doing or how you're going to pay off your debt then you're not here and the answers you seek to all those questions are here.

Be **HERE** and let the magic unfold!

Chapter 4 – Beliefs that block *okayness*

I've mentioned it in my previous books and I'm going to touch on it here quickly to give you some context. It forms the basis of my work as a coach and part of my 7 principles of magic;

“Magic exists when we change the structure of our beliefs”

What that means is that although you think you look at the world objectively, the complete opposite is true and all of us are constructing a subjective view of the world at any point in time.

We have a series of constructs called beliefs that dictate how we behave and more importantly perceive the world around us. These beliefs trigger thoughts which in turn trigger emotions which in turn trigger actions which, over time, become behavioural programs.

Read through the following pages of beliefs and take a moment to reflect on each one. Perhaps you may not have realised it before but perhaps it's actually part of your programming.

I'm not allowed to receive because I'm not allowed to be loved

If people are kind to me I will have to owe them

Sharing my feelings makes me weak

If I look after others at least I will be needed

If I play small at least I won't offend other people or make them look bad

Life will only give me what I want if I make it happen

Good things happen to other people

Life is a series of lessons

I have to work hard to get anywhere in life or be successful

I need to be a certain way in order to get what I want

If I please people then life will be okay and I will be loved

If I do what people want they will like me

I can't say how I really feel because I'll upset someone

I'm not allowed to do what I really want in life

If I let go control, everything will fall apart

I'm not allowed to have fun because someone has to be responsible

I need to make sure everyone else is okay then I'll be okay

Life never works out for me

I must get things right or it will mean I'm a failure

My dreams aren't allowed to come to life

Life is suffering

I must suffer to experience spiritual growth

Money is evil

Rich people are disgusting

I can't be spiritual and wealthy

Life is a series of challenges that have to be overcome

I need to be needed because no one will love me for who I am

There's no point in trying because I'll fail

Good things happen to bad people

Other people are idiots

No one understands me so there's no point in sharing

I'm all alone in the world

Maybe you want to add some of your own in a journal.

Now take a highlighter and highlight the ones above that apply to you. Don't be shy or embarrassed; rather own them than let them own you!

Now in a journal write down how these beliefs prompt your behaviour. For instance an easy one to see is

There's no point in trying because I'll fail.

If we don't believe that anything we do will be successful then we are not likely to start any new projects. We're not likely to engage in anything even if it is a dance class because we're already convinced we'll fail.

What happens next? We justify 'failing' in the world by our circumstances. For example in conjunction with this same belief perhaps people have stopped inviting you to events. Perhaps you're overweight. Perhaps you got passed up for a promotion at work.

In your head you're going;

"See! It's true! I am a failure so there's no point in trying"

And it all just becomes a self fulfilling prophecy in not okayness.

Let's try another one;

Life will only give me what I want if I make it happen

Perhaps in believing you have to make things happen, you spend your days running around, making calls, planning, having meetings but to the detriment of yourself, your family and your health.

When inevitably you suffer from burnout you have to take a break. During the break perhaps life quietens down a little. You then use this to prove your belief true and so the cycle continues.

I used to believe that I couldn't make friends because people would think I'm boring.

As a result when I went to events or parties I would shrink into the background hoping not to get noticed. Often, after seeing the same person at an event or party over and over again I'd feel obliged to chat to them. We would get talking and sharing and they'd say something to me like;

"Wow I never knew you were so interesting. You always seemed so shy and to be honest a little boring"

I always smile when I hear this because its confirmation that my belief was NOT true and that I don't need to prove it true anymore.

Which of the above beliefs are you trying to prove true? Are there any others?

Essentially these beliefs are a grand conspiracy by your conscious, or ego, to get you engage in a game of I'm not okay, life's not okay.

These are the beliefs that block okayness!

What now?

Well all you need to do is recognise them and recognise how they shape your behaviour. Once you know how they drive your behaviour then the next time you find yourself in the midst of the behaviour you'll think;

“Hold on a second, what belief am I trying to prove true?”

I know that when my anxiety is triggered by an event I move easily into a critical role. I do things like tell my partner he always uses too much salt. I look in the mirror and think how dreadful I look and I look around see how others could be doing things better.

It’s not a pretty picture but it’s okay.

Part of changing the cycle of a belief is allowing the behaviour to be okay in the midst of shifting. Our behaviour is driven from a neurological point of view. If we do something over and over again, it forms a neurological pathway in the brain. Ingrained behaviours are like big strong flowing rivers. When we’re trying to forge a new ‘tributary’ it takes many practice sessions to get our minds to ‘flow’ in a new direction.

It doesn’t help to judge the existing fast flowing river; it’s been growing in size and flowing in that direction for decades. Now, all of a sudden when you want to change it, you want it to change in a heartbeat? Be patient with yourself.

It helps to remember that people, situations and things only upset us to the degree to which we have tied our own sense of identity into them. So when we don’t feel okay, sometimes it’s about learning to ask ourselves *“what part of my identity is getting caught up here?”*

When we see our hardened sense of identity and the beliefs that have blocked our sense of okayness, we can soften into this and

allow ourselves to transition. These transitions sometimes take time and require that we learn to be compassionate with ourselves anyway.

Real okayness comes from being okay with the fact that you're holding beliefs that block okayness. I understand this might be quite a thing to wrap your mind around but it's the only way I know.

Be okay with the fact that you judge.

Be okay with the fact that you don't believe you'll ever succeed.

Be okay with the fact that you believe life never works out.

Be okay with the fact that you don't believe you're allowed to have fun.

Being okay in all of it! That's the start of it all.

Chapter 5 – Take off your mask

“Who do you think you are?”

This question is usually asked of us by others and sometimes by ourselves when we’re seeking to undermine our importance. It’s not a bad question but I prefer to phrase it a little differently and with a different tone;

“Who, do you think, you are?”

Asked with compassion and kindness towards ourselves, this question can uncover a wealth of hidden wisdom. If we think we are a certain way and have the need to be perceived a certain way then it’s a guide to the parts of ourselves we’re not okay with.

To answer this question we must reflect back on the question;

What is my game?

What’s your game? Are you a corporate mover and shaker? Are you a fiercely loyal mom? (Or dad for that matter). Are you a teacher? Perhaps you are the devoted partner or wife or friend?

You would be forgiven for thinking I am talking about your career or occupation but I am not. I am talking about the mask you wear. In other words how do you present yourself to the world so that ‘they’ will buy your story?

I once worked with a client in her thirties who battled in her friendships and with a particular friend. She was successful in her work but battled with setting boundaries within friendships.

She would often attract ‘broken’ people and end up taking on a therapist role for them in order to help them heal. She was dating a man whom she loved although she felt the relationship was unbalanced. She would often end up ‘helping’ him more than they spent time together. She would co-ordinate the maid at his house even though they lived separately and both had high powered jobs. She would help him out by stocking his fridge. She worked just around the corner from his place so if anything needed fixing, she’d offer to step out of work to open up the place for whomever needed to come in.

She wore the mask of both therapist and helper despite the fact that she worked in a corporate environment. She needed to be needed. Her story was that unless she took care of people, she wouldn’t be loved and as a result, this was her story.

Of course we have several masks and we use them for our protection, for our gain and to compensate for a sense of okayness. Masks are not a bad thing provided we’re aware of which one we’re wearing at any point in time and why.

They become detrimental when they’re used to such an extent that we forget there’s an individual hiding beneath the mask. We perhaps forget that the mask is a mask and we mistake it for ourselves; we get lost in a story.

Many people who meet me remark how warm I am and easy to talk to. I’m not a natural born networker and find social situations such as parties where I don’t know anyone somewhat intimidating. I am however very good at one on one

conversations and enjoy intimate interaction with others. This is, of course, the nature of my work.

I went through a period in my life when I became extremely introverted. I never went out and generally avoided social situations. This was a mask so I didn't have to face the world. I'm not naturally extroverted so in a sense this is my true nature but it became a mask because I used it as a means to hide.

I knew I eventually had to take off the mask and made an effort to make friends and to chat to people when I was out. I didn't suddenly become a party girl. I didn't suddenly love networking. I just brought who I really was into those situations. For instance at a party I might end up talking to just a couple of people but the conversations were engaging and interesting. By taking off my mask and allowing myself to be okay with who I was I managed to reveal my true nature.

I'm never going to be the person who goes out every night of the week because I'm just not that way inclined and I'm okay with that. What isn't okay is to judge others for whom that might be their favourite thing. The only reason we do so is because we project a disowned aspect of ourselves onto them.

To explain further let me clarify the definition of a mask.

A mask is an overexposed persona that is adopted to hide a true sense of self. For example many of us have an overdeveloped inner critic that 'runs the show' so to speak and ceases to allow any of our other persona's to be revealed or experienced.

A mask becomes ‘a shadow’ when we project it onto others and deny the existence of it in ourselves. In all of my work I delve into the shadow because it is a large and very important key to unlocking the magic as I call it, or one’s true self; that sense of okayness.

Let me give an example for some clarity. I had a client who was extremely successful in her corporate career. She worked in a large firm and had worked her way up from nothing. She became extremely proud of her work success and worked even harder. Work became a large part of her life and of her definition of herself. If friends asked her how she was she’d talk about how work was going. She’d begun to completely identify with work and to disengage with anything else.

Incidentally when someone asks us how we are and we automatically talk about a particular aspect of our lives, it’s a sure sign we’ve identified with that aspect and possibly adopted it as a mask.

She’d often describe how she’d wake up at 3am concerned that someone might have sent her a mail and so she’d check her phone.

She talked about wanting a relationship but made excuses as to how she’d never be able to fit it into her work schedule. She was extremely irritated by colleagues who left at 5pm to fetch kids or be with family saying they weren’t committed to her job.

She would say how lazy her step mother was not working and just being a house wife

She could not see that work had become her mask and ‘overshadowed’ the part of herself who wanted a relationship.

As so often happens when we adopt a mask and cease to allow any other aspects of our personality to be seen and have their ‘airtime’, the mask becomes a shadow. The way we know this is because we begin to project our disowned qualities onto others.

This is where I’d like to talk about balance. Balance isn’t so much about what we’re actually DOING but rather describes how much of ourselves we allow to surface. In this case the client had disowned any part of herself allowed to have fun, she’d disowned the part of herself that needed to rest, she disowned the part of herself that wanted to engage in relationships, the vulnerable parts...

Her sense of okayness began to decline more and more as time wore on. Why? Well the more we allow one personality type to rule the show, the more difficult it is to be okay. The personality type has usually developed as a defence mechanism and is trying to block out pain through a fear based dictatorship. Think of trying to live under the authority of a dictator; it’s rather difficult to be okay.

Yes, yes I know you’re possibly thinking “*okay so now I’m screwed?*”

The answer is of course, no. You’re not screwed. Just an awareness of the mask and why you may have adopted it begins to break the spell and returns the sense of okayness.

This client had seen her mom hurt by her father and she'd perceived that the reason for it was because her mother didn't have a job and therefore had no power. Even in her juvenile mind she'd decided it would never happen to her and so she worked extremely hard to build her mask along with her corporate career. In her mind she'd thought if she could build her mask strong enough, she'd never get hurt.

The irony (I know there are so many in this book) is that the mask we adopt usually ends up hurting us more. The more it hurts us, the more we project it onto others trying to block out the pain. This too, only works for so long. Eventually the only thing left to do is begin to see it in ourselves by asking;

- What mask do I wear?
- What am I using my mask for?
- Why did I develop this mask?
- How old was I when I developed this mask?
- What particular qualities do I always judge in others?
- What do these qualities reflect back to me?
- How is my mask causing me pain?
- Which part or parts of me are suffocating because my mask has taken over?
- What am I afraid of if I take off my mask?

This is an exercises guaranteed, however painful, to help you see you're actually okay as you are; you don't need a mask. Wearing a mask is just a reaction to a feeling of "*I'm not okay*".

The only reason you'd ever try to place the magnitude of who you are into one little tiny matchbox, which a mask is, is because you don't feel you're okay.

I would like to end off this chapter by giving another example and for those of you who think this only applies to women, let me share the example of Greg*. Greg came to see me struggling to engage with conflict. He wanted a promotion. He also wanted to do his MBA but was suffering from extreme anxiety. He woke up at 04h30am every day and went to gym. He'd then go to work and come home in the evening to spend time with his daughter and wife. His mask was that of the perfect employee and husband; the all round 'good' guy.

The problem was that this good guy was suffering from anxiety so palpable that he often described how he'd feel sick. Greg had managed to 'survive' that way for so long but he said that his anxiety was becoming unbearable and that all around him he kept seeing people succeeding whilst he felt stuck.

Unable to recognise his own success he projected it onto others. Greg believed if he was authentic and engaged in conflict he'd be ruined and humiliated. He had adopted this understanding from his father who had ruled the house hold like a dictator. Greg had learnt to become 'The good guy' in order to avoid conflict. The only problem was as the good guy he couldn't engage in difficult conversations and so was often passed up for promotion.

Can you see how adopting a particular mask inevitably becomes detrimental to our sense of okayness and even our operation in

the world? Whether we're denying social contact or checking emails at 3am or feeling anxiety that leaves us incapacitated, I don't believe it's the life we were meant to be living.

I'm not here to try and convince you that you are okay; I'm here to share the fact that you are and to present you with ways to begin to live it. Of course it remains our choice as to whether we live a life of authenticity and as a result *okayness* or not but it means a little stock take of where we're at.

It means asking what we want, what our current game is, what mask we're wearing, how our shadow is running the show and owning our fears.

In the end allowing other parts of ourselves to shine through is less painful than wearing the mask of one aspect so the way I see it is why not?

Chapter 6 – From forgiveness to acceptance

I wanted to write this chapter when I was having a tough day to show that what I'm talking about works and today is the perfect opportunity.

Today I woke up and I felt sad and angry at the same time. A retreat I had planned just hasn't worked out. I followed my inner guidance and collaborated with whom I felt to be the right people and it just didn't fly.

Why? I have no idea.

I've come to understand there's little point in understanding why things happen. Isn't it funny how sometimes we think that understanding why is going to make it all better? I had a client once with a debilitating disease who came to see me because he wanted to know why he had contracted the disease.

He wanted to know if and why he was being punished because he had felt he'd been a good person throughout his life and although he had done much wrong he didn't feel like he deserved that illness.

Working with his case brought me much insight into how we think there's some kind of points system and that we deserve things and don't deserve others. This is a faulty assumption of how things work. If we rather assume that some challenges are brought into this life with us and if we assume that the soul is always geared towards our wholeness then it's all a gift right?

Then there isn't so much to understand but rather much to be seen, to be felt, to be forgiven and to be accepted.

Back to my bad day; firstly there were the feelings of anger and sadness this morning and it was just about allowing them to happen.

I wanted to check myself; had I followed my intuition? Yes. Had I done all I could to bring the event to life? Did I believe in what I was doing? Yes. Did I see it happening? Yup

Well then there's nothing more I could've done. I did the best I could do and it didn't happen.

Then came the tricky part; forgiveness. I had to forgive myself but I also had to forgive God, the Universe...whatever name you might give to Divinity. I call it Divinity or The Universe. I had to forgive The Universe. This might seem extremely arrogant but I must be honest and say that there are times I have been angry that things haven't happened the way I wished them to, especially when I've followed my gut instinct.

I think we all naturally, from the way we are socialised have some warped idea of punishment and reward. If we're good little children then God should reward us right? Only that that philosophy works on the understanding that God is the teacher and we're just the students and we've already investigated the flaw in that understanding. Nonetheless it's easy to fall into that pattern of thinking at the drop of a hat and so in the case of my 'non' retreat I had to forgive The Universe anyway and most importantly myself.

I had to forgive myself.

I had to forgive myself for it not working out, for being angry with the universe, for the fact that part of me still believes in punishment and reward, for the fact that I'd tried my best and for feeling sad.

Forgiveness isn't some task you do; it's an internal permission that comes from softening internal judgement for a moment. You can 'say' you forgive yourself. You can 'say' you forgive another but unless it comes from the heart, the effects are somewhat like trying to soak up a tub of bath water with just one tissue.

I would like to pause here for a moment to say that IF you haven't yet felt forgiveness with all your heart and soul for whatever judgements you're carrying then forgive yourself for that! It doesn't help to say;

"Great I can't forgive with all my heart and soul so now I'm screwed"

This isn't so. Part of accepting all of you and everything else is accepting what is and if you can't forgive fully then so be it. At the right time you will. At the right time you will have a 'space' in which judgement is suspended and the heart's natural course of action, which is compassion and forgiveness, are naturally allowed to surface.

Forgiveness of another is really forgiveness of self. When we're angry with someone or hold a judgement against them we are

really projecting our own judgement or feelings onto them. They just become the object of our judgement. At the heart of the matter it's really ourselves we need forgive.

I often recommend to clients to write forgiveness letters. Often they need to do the exercise more than a few times to really feel the full effect. Often they ask *but what do I need to forgive myself for?*

Often the thing we need to forgive ourselves most for is our life situation and our choices. We need to forgive ourselves for being overweight. We need to forgive ourselves for being broke. We need to forgive ourselves for being sick. We need to forgive ourselves for events that didn't happen and for one's that did. We need to forgive ourselves for not being better. We need to forgive ourselves for not being richer, brighter, skinnier, more spiritual, healthier, prettier, more successful, and we need to forgive ourselves for our mistakes.

Some people might argue that it's not their fault that they're sick or broke or divorced and consciously they might believe that but subconsciously they're lost in thoughts such as *what did I do wrong* or *how could I have let this happen?*

It does not matter which comes first but without forgiveness of the others who contributed to where we might find ourselves, we will never be truly free.

Many years ago I was involved with a man who had a girlfriend. I convinced myself I had fallen in love with him but looking back I had fallen in lust and was still strongly gripped in my

pattern of hooking up with unavailable men. He kept telling me that he was going to break up with his girlfriend but when push came to shove he always had an excuse.

“She’s going through a rough time and she needs me especially financially”

Blah, blah, blah...

I bought the story because I wanted to buy it.

Eventually it dawned on me that he was never going to leave his girlfriend. I was angry and at first I blamed him.

“He lied to me” I thought.

I convinced myself that I was the innocent victim of a circumstance that I had been lured into.

I’d like to say it ended there but it didn’t. I was angry at him and remained that way. A few weeks down the line when I had ended our affair he told me he’d broken up with his girlfriend. I thought this was my ‘shot’ but instead he told me how he’d met another girl. I was devastated and felt rejected and abandoned. I told myself the story that what I was afraid of was all true; that it was better to be alone and that all men will hurt you and that I wasn’t loveable.

Of course the story caused me nothing but pain. Eventually the pain, as it is designed to do, broke me down to a place where I wept and as all the tears ran from my body I began to see how I had orchestrated a situation to prove my faulty beliefs true.

I realised I wasn't a victim but rather was a contributor to a situation in which two people came together to break down false illusions.

I cannot say what the experience brought out for him nor can I say if he was enlightened as a result of it for we never spoke after that but I certainly was.

I began to see how he had brought me a great gift; the ability to see my limiting beliefs in action. At first I was angry with myself for not seeing it but then I asked myself if I had known about my beliefs at the time and the answer was no. I didn't know that I was seeing a mirror of my own beliefs reflected back to me. I didn't know better so I had to forgive myself. I had to forgive myself for the experience. I had to forgive myself for all my beliefs. I had to forgive myself for believing his stories and for wanting to believe them. I had to forgive myself for lying to myself. I had to forgive myself for not knowing better at the time. I had to forgive myself my behaviour after all I certainly did everything in my power to 'make it happen' between us.

I had to forgive myself for all of it. I had to forgive myself for lying to myself, for believing his lies. I had to forgive myself for wanting to live in a delusion. I had to forgive myself for being the other woman.

Then I had to forgive him. I had to forgive him for lying to me and possibly himself. I had to forgive him for being seemingly trapped. I had to forgive him his behaviour. I had to forgive him for his own limiting beliefs.

Once I went through that process I began to see the gift. I could see how the experience showed me how to take my time in getting to know someone before jumping into bed with them. I could see how I had to create my own sense of value rather than asking another to ‘complete me’. I could see the gift in us NOT being together. I could see how we would not have been a good partnership. I could see how he wasn’t the kind of man I’d want to marry.

Forgiveness could not come without me looking into ‘the mirror’ to see what the experience had reflected for me. There were valuable insights to be gained. Insights are different to understanding why. Insights are those ‘aha’ moments that result in us waking up from a dream and in most cases, a nightmare. They are not related to understanding why.

Why did my experience with that particular man happen? Who knows? Perhaps the situation was a reflection for both of us. Perhaps we had karma to work through. Perhaps our souls conjured the attraction on a physical level to promote our wholeness. Perhaps like attracted like for us. Who knows? It doesn’t really matter why, so much as it matters what the experience brought to our lives.

To my life it brought an integrated understanding of my value. It brought up for me to see ‘the terms’ under which I would no longer compromise myself. It brought me a knowing of the desire that I wanted more. It brought up my fears.

During the time we knew each other, it also brought me joy. We laughed and we joked. We had some fun experiences.

So it all ended well and I came to a place of acceptance. I no longer waste precious energy on hating him or wondering why he did it or feelings of anger and resentment. I no longer waste precious energy blaming myself; after all, it was a fantastic experience that enhanced my wholeness.

I wished him well and that was that.

When we move into forgiveness, it naturally takes us to acceptance. It takes us to that place where it doesn't matter; things are as they are.

It takes us to the understanding that we're okay and that life's okay.

So back to my day today, who knows why my retreat hasn't worked out? Perhaps it's not the right time, perhaps I don't yet know the right people or perhaps it's just not meant to be.

It's okay. Is there anything reflecting back to me? Not that I can see yet and that's fine too. I've forgiven myself and The Universe, not that it requires my forgiveness. I've forgiven myself for being angry at the universe.

So I move on into my day thrilled to be writing. I accept that everything will be revealed at the right time.

Chapter 7 – Do the best with what you have

Everyone is doing the best with what they have, including you.

You might not think this is true.

“What about criminals and murderers?”

You might not even think this is true of your ex husband or ex wife. You might not think it is true of a friend who betrayed you. Maybe you don’t even think it’s true about yourself.

It is true.

What it is important to understand is that everyone views the world through their own eyes. Everyone has been shaped by their experiences.

One of my all time favourite women Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estes, author of *Women who run with the wolves* says that when she lectures journalists, she asks them to tell the whole story, the whole story.

She asks this of journalists so that we come to see, when reading the articles, how life has shaped people even those who we might deem as evil or less than. She asks this so that we understand the individual is doing the best that they can at that point in time.

She does not ask that we condone the behaviour. She asks that we see the pain that is behind another’s actions.

I went to therapy for many years trying to understand why my mom had forgotten me after school on many occasions. I wanted

to understand why my parents got divorced. I wanted to understand why my parents hadn't planned me.

I remember the therapist saying one day;

"Your parents did the best that they could do at the time."

She continued;

"It doesn't make what happened right but it's about coming to a place of understanding so that it stops causing you pain, do you understand?"

I nodded but I didn't. It took me some years before I could fully understand the depth of what she was saying.

I get that now. Everyone is doing the best that they can at that point in time. If we can apply it to others, we can also apply it to ourselves; to our work, to our parenting, to our bodies and to our friendships.

I remember the story a client told me about the first time he and his girlfriend took their two year old son on holiday. They were both excited in the beginning as it was just the three of them and they'd never spent so long as a unit before. As the days wore on, however, the couple became more frazzled. They both had little sleep and to add to it all the son was sick.

He told me the story and then with a sense of shame told me how at one point he just cracked. He left the house and went to run out his frustrations not telling his girlfriend where he was going, he just left.

He told me how it felt to just crack in that moment and how he couldn't think straight.

I asked him if he was allowed to be human and he looked at me with a sense of confusion.

"What do you mean?" he said.

I asked him if he thought he did the best he could do at that moment in time.

"I guess so" he replied unsure of himself.

He continued by saying;

"I felt I might have done something drastic if I didn't get out then"

He lamented the fact but thought he did the best at the time.

The thing is that doing the best you can do at the time isn't an excuse not to show up; it's about doing the best you can do.

How do you know if you're doing the best you can do? You reflect without judgement on your day or past situations seeing how you handled them and what the outcome was. You realise perhaps that you did your best then but perhaps now you might choose to behave in a different way.

I have a very dear friend who is quite possibly one of the most dynamic individuals I've ever met. She's dynamic. She's fiery. She's passionate. She's wise. She's very funny. She's knowledgeable in her field and yet by her own admission she's

consistently ‘underperforming’ or rather she feels she hasn’t reached her potential.

She says she often gets people wanting to invest in her business and to help her promote herself but inevitably she shies away from it.

She says in the past she wasn’t aware of her behaviour. She didn’t realise she was subconsciously allowing opportunities to pass her by but now she’s aware of it and she’s ready to make changes. She says she realises that her fear drove her into hiding in the past but she also says she did the best she could at the time.

During the past she admits to trying to get over her divorce and to trying to just survive.

If you’re in survival mode, of course you’re not going to be open to new ideas and possibilities. If that’s where you have been then do not doubt you were doing the best you could with what you had available to you.

In the same manner if you’re carrying hurt from past pain and interactions with others it might be helpful to go back and take another look. What did the other person do or not do? What kind of emotional state were they in at the time? What was their upbringing like?

This is not about making excuses for people, it’s about gaining a deeper insight so that we begin to see that each one of us, including ourselves, is doing the best that we can at that point in

time. We can't make decisions for others but regarding ourselves once we're aware then we can choose differently.

I didn't always have this philosophy. I used to think people got off too lightly. I thought that people needed to be punished so that justice could be served. After all what about those criminals sitting in prison; why should they get to just carry on?

My perspective changed when I went to the Buddhist temple for a week of silence. Every day we did about 8 hours of meditation which, at times was serene and at other times, excruciating. My favourite part of the day was after dinner when we'd sit down and listen to 'stories' from the monk.

One evening he shared a story told by Bill Clinton on what he learned from Nelson Mandela about forgiveness. In one meeting of the two men, Clinton asked,

"I wonder what you must have felt towards your jailers when you were walking out of that prison after those 27 years. Weren't you angry at them?"

"Yes, I was angry. And I was a little afraid," answered Mandela. "After all, I've not been free in so long."

"But," he added, "when I felt that anger welling up inside me, I realized that if I continue to hate them after I got outside that gate, then they would still have me."

With a smile, Mandela concluded,

"I wanted to be free, so I let it go."

That story touched me because I thought about the possibility of hating our beloved Nelson Mandela. My mind then wondered how many potential Nelson Mandelas were sitting in prison.

I thought back to my own life and how the greatest learning and 'light' had come from my ability to face my own darkness.

I've had infinitely many lessons on forgiveness and understanding that everyone including myself are doing the best that they can. I also have no doubt that I shall have many more.

Just a year into my marriage I had an affair. My story then was that I had no way to turn and no one to listen to me. Is an affair the only way to deal with such a situation? Not at all but in my head I saw no other way. In fact I can't even say it was a conscious decision. I was unhappy in my marriage (mostly I was unhappy in myself and everything around me just reflected it) and then I was on sales conference and had too much wine and that was the beginning of the end.

It took many years of meditation, self evaluation and therapy for me to understand that my husband did the best he could at that point in time. It took that long for me to forgive my own actions and understand I did the best I could at that point in time. Was it wise? No. Was it compassionate? No. Was it the right thing? Definitely not but it was the best choice I could make at the time. It isn't an excuse to do it again, it's an understanding of what happened and why.

It also showed me that one of my greatest times of darkness led to my becoming a coach. So why should I continue to lament the fact that my husband didn't love me the way I wanted (note, not that he didn't love me but rather that I couldn't acknowledge it). Why should I lament the fact that I got divorced and switched careers when it was the start of living my purpose?

We're all doing the best we can with what we have. To realise that we must also realise we're living life through our own set of lenses and the way that we see the world is not the way others see the world. We cannot hope to have everyone around us please us just as we cannot hope to please everyone. In the same manner we cannot hope to like everyone or the things they do nor can we hope everyone else will like what we do.

When we see others and we do not care for what they do, we have numerous options available;

- If we have a strong reaction to them or their behaviour then perhaps there is something for us to see. Perhaps they are presenting a disowned part of ourselves?
- We can just ignore it.
- We can have compassion knowing that everyone is doing the best they can.

When you begin to apply this concept with compassion, you become more compassionate towards yourself. When you overeat you cease berating yourself and instead begin a conversation with yourself where you enquire what's bothering

you. You realise you did the best you could at that particular moment and you look deeper into the situation to see what is there for you to understand.

When you are not kind to those around you, you cease punishing yourself for it and instead apologise to them and forgive yourself.

When people don't behave in the manner you might want you realise that they're coming from their own life experience and you begin to allow for differences.

Realising everyone is doing the best with what they have at a particular point in time means you stop trying to change everything. You realise that each person has their own journey and that you have no real idea what their journey is about even if it is your husband, wife, mother, father, son or daughter. As a result you allow others a freedom to express themselves. When there's no need for another to make you happy by doing something or by doing something a specific way, you grant liberation to both parties.

The irony is that when we cease to put so much pressure on those around us to be a specific way, everyone usually ends up happier. When we're happy and authentic in ourselves we usually tend to do a lot better with what we have.

Ironic isn't it?

Chapter 8 – Bless it all. Own it all

I want to start this chapter with an excerpt from someone I admire, Kris Carr. She was diagnosed with a stage 4 incurable cancer that she lives and thrives with every day. She is now a juice and health activist. In one of her 2011 blogs, she posted this excerpt from Erinn Selkis;

“...We are all everything in this universe. We are all light and dark, rich and poor, virtuous and evil, extroverted and shy. We are all one, and we all express the same qualities or have the ability to express the same qualities simply because if I am it and you are too. We are not separate. Remember this when embarking on this work to help you not to judge yourself?

You are a human being, and what is in you is also in everyone else. And, at the other end of it, at the heart of it all, we are none of it, because as our true authentic and enlightened selves, we are pure love, compassion and beauty. These qualities and emotions that we see as dark or evil are just parts of our egos, they are not who we are. But, it is important to embrace them and love them to become our authentic selves and clear away the darkness that gets in the way of our light.

Second, the goal of shadow work isn't to “get rid” of these parts of you; it is to see them, accept them, embrace them, and find the gifts in them so that you can use them to your advantage and not have them popping up at inopportune times. By loving them, you release their hold on you and allow yourself to love yourself more fully.”

After reading the chapter of the mask you may have decided to annihilate the part of you who is running the show. I wish to spare you many hours, days and weeks of frustration and energy and let you know that you cannot. You cannot ‘kill’ any part of you.

Let me explain with this excerpt from www.shadowwork.com;

*“The term "shadow" was first used by [Carl G. Jung](#) to describe the repressed or denied part of the Self. Robert Bly popularized this idea in *A Little Book on the Human Shadow*. Bly says that we were each born into a "360-degree personality." As infants we expressed the full breadth of our human nature, without editing or censoring.*

As we grew up, however, we learned that certain slices of our 360-degree pie were unacceptable to the people around us. Maybe we were shamed for crying or punished for being angry. Maybe we were ridiculed for wanting attention or acting proud of ourselves. So, we learned to repress those slices of our pie; the ones that got us hurt. According to Bly, it was as if we threw these unacceptable qualities over our shoulder into a bag, which we've been dragging around behind us ever since.”

There is no part of you that is unacceptable. There is no part of you that is any more or less than any others. That means that your fears are no less great than your desires.

This is a radical understanding especially in a world where ‘negative’ has become a swear word. Many of us secretly fear

thinking negative things because we've been told that these negative things will come to life. Codswallop! It's impossible that something will come to pass at the mere thought of it. Things come to pass when we act on it and even then to a limited extent because we're not conscious of everything.

So many of us have been taught that fear is bad. I however would like to present a somewhat different understanding. Fear is the gateway to your joy and the flip side of the same coin. You cannot, in my experience, step into joy without encountering fear and therefore, excuse the irony; fear is not something to be feared but rather to be embraced. It's only when we try to run from the fear that it goes all pear shaped for us.

Many of us have been taught that only love is real and that is true but we live in a world of either / or, black / white and good / bad so when we think of love we automatically assume that there is an opposite called fear and that if love is good then fear must be bad. The truth is that there is only love. What that means is that it's all in! Nothing is bad. It just is as it is.

Living in wholeness does however require that we own all of it.

What do you want?

What do you fear?

What do you judge?

What do you run from?

What brings you joy?

What many of us don't recognise is that the power lies in the acknowledgement, the true acknowledgement, of these aspects of self.

I remember watching a movie with Kate Hudson where she knocks her head and becomes unconscious and goes up to haven to visit God who is none other than Whoopie Goldberg (Gotta love how the director dispelled the myths of how God is presented with her character in the role!). Nonetheless Kate Hudson who is dying of cancer tells Whoopie that she is scared to death of living and of loving.

At that point in the movie every tear duct in my body exploded and flooded my sheets and my partner's jersey. It seemed that my monumental reaction didn't correspond to the movie.

Later I told him how that scene had made me realise how scared to death I was of living. I realised how I'd kept myself from moving forward because I was afraid of living with him. I realised that although I complained about being 'stuck' I was actually keeping myself there, in security, for fear of actually living. I was afraid that if I committed myself to living somehow it'd all fall apart so I never let myself go there.

After the tears and frank discussion with my partner I felt liberated. It was as if I'd uncovered something deep inside of me; something that hid in the shadows and in so doing had had

power over me. Now that it was all brought up to the surface it held no more power.

This is what I mean when I talk about owning it all. You don't really have to DO all that much. Just the mere fact of owning it changes 'The game'.

Now before you embark on some kind of quest to try discovering everything that's hidden inside of you; you cannot nor do you need to. Life will show you what you need to see if you allow it.

A friend of mine who is a particularly brilliant business consultant was going through a challenging time and during one of our conversations expressed how we was thinking he perhaps needed to do something more spiritual.

"Perhaps I need to go and study something spiritual" he remarked

The thing is that there isn't spiritual and non-spiritual; it's all one big thing called life. Whether you believe in God or religion or a specific path or not, life is spiritual. It is always presenting us with opportunities for wholeness, to be okay so there isn't any activity or experience that is or isn't spiritual; it's just life and life will always show you what you need to see if you allow it.

By seeing the deeper aspects of what is presented to you on a daily basis you will come to see what is trying to be shown to you. You will realise that the things you see that trigger great pain or great anger are things asking to be acknowledged within.

This brings us to permission; if everything is allowed then give yourself permission to experience everything. Anger is allowed. Crying is allowed. Joy and laughter are allowed. It's all allowed because it's all love; there isn't anything that isn't love.

This doesn't mean you kick the dog or scream at your kids because you're angry; that is acting out as opposed to owning. Owning whatever comes your way means realising that it's your experience and that there's a way to respond to things. If you're angry and you realise that you haven't expressed your needs to your loved ones, shouting at them won't further your cause. Begin to communicate from a sense of empowerment and you will find the world responding to you instead of reacting to you. If you want to learn then see a therapist or counsellor but my main point here is that everything is allowed. All things are allowed because by your very nature, you are all things.

What's the next step? Bless it all. If only love is real then the only action to take is to bless everything.

I hear you going;

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! I'm supposed to bless my misfortunes?”

The answer is yes, and more than that, bless your enemies and bless your judgement.

Your enemies are your greatest teachers. Challenge never comes without opportunity, never. Your judgements are an opportunity to see how you judge yourself and to transform them into love.

Irrespective of how you might feel about your debt, about your boss, about your partner, about your lack of work, about your son who is failing at school, about your butt, about your life situation or about anything, bless it. Bless your feelings for it. Bless your judgements.

Things only grow and only shift with love.

What is love?

Love is acceptance.

Love is gratitude.

Love is unconditional regard.

Love is letting go.

What does that mean? That means that we can love fear, we can love our judgements and we can love our challenges and by doing so they are irrevocably transformed.

A client commented to me how she would never and could never love her body. She'd read in my book that learning to love your body is the only way to change it. This only added to her exasperation and desperation as she then condemned herself for hating her body. The irony is that her judgement of her judgement just perpetuated the story. If you can't love your body then love the part of you who can't love your body. That is acceptance. It is an acceptance that there is a part of yourself who can't love her body right now and that's okay. This tiny little act will give rise to a greater sense of okayness.

At lunch one day, a dear friend of mine told me how she hadn't forgiven one of her old colleagues. This colleague had defrauded her of millions of Rands and she just couldn't forgive her for it. She told me she felt bad for not being able to forgive.

I shared with her how shame of being unable to forgive only made the whole story bigger. She felt she was a 'bad' person for not being able to forgive. Forgiving the other person wasn't the challenge, forgiving herself for not forgiving was. When she was ready and had processed all the feelings she would forgive but until then she had to forgive herself.

You might think that after many years of engaging with 'my stuff' I'm enlightened. You might think I don't judge or that I'm not hard on myself. This is not true; I will always be human and I am. I don't think as long as you're human, you get to ditch part of the fundamentals of being human. The only difference now is that I tend to recognise it pretty quickly. Some days I feel royally huge in my body. Some days I make lots of mistakes and call myself an idiot. Some days I can be a royal bitch. You know what? It's okay. It's okay because I'm human.

I'm not extremely talented nor do I have super powers; I have just put a whole of practice into learning to be okay. That's all it is you know; a practice. You may have practiced self hatred for many years and maybe you've become really good at it. If you've become good at it then it means you can become really good at practicing being okay and part of that practice is blessing all of it.

- Bless your debt because it means that you've been entrusted to pay it back.
- Bless those you dislike for showing you the parts of yourself you don't like
- Bless your judgements for they show you the parts of yourself you judge
- Bless those who inspire you because they're just reflecting your own brilliance in the world
- Bless your challenges because they bring you the opportunity to engage with yourself on a deeper level
- Bless yourself because you're doing the best you can with what you have available to you
- Bless your work because of your contribution
- Bless your future
- Bless your judgements
- Bless your past
- Bless your emotions
- Bless your present
- Bless your hang ups
- Bless your failures
- Bless your successes...

...Bless all of it. Own all of it and if you feel that you can't then bless the part of you who can't.

Chapter 9 – Go with the flow

You are always meant to be where you are. This can be a confusing concept for many of us because we begin to imagine that there's no point in making plans or in having a vision for the future. This concept does not imply that we need never make plans or that we need not have a vision for the future, it implies that we are not in control of when or how the vision manifests.

I laugh as I think back now but many years ago after a tumultuous turn of events in my life I decided to focus on coaching. I found an office from which to work and thought that within a matter of weeks I would have a client base. A few months down the line and everyday I'd find myself in tears because I had no clients. I wondered how come when I'd declared my intentions to the universe and followed up with action, things had not come together.

What I didn't realize at the time is that I was being asked to engage with the inner work I needed to do if I was going to be the great coach I dreamt of. I had to face my fears. I had to engage with my shadow. I had to find value in myself outside of circumstances. I had to address my behaviour in all aspects of my life including money and relationships. I had to learn to own all of my desires too. I had to take accountability for all my choices. I had to learn to be still from the inside out.

It's taken me many years to learn not to 'fight' what is going on in my external circumstances. In the past when clients cancelled I'd try to find more clients or other work to replace it. When

relationships ended I would try to convince the other party that they were making a mistake. When I lost money I'd get angry. If I couldn't connect to the Internet I'd make a plan. When I was tired I'd force myself to go to gym convincing myself that I was just lazy. When I didn't feel motivated I'd listen to motivational speakers or watch motivational videos in the hope that I could be willed into action. Of course all this served was to make me tired and leave me feeling worse about myself.

If we assume, as per the previous chapter, that everything is always in our best interests then we must always be in the right place at the right time. If that is the case then it's rather pointless fighting with ourselves to be other than where we are right? I imply this both from a physical point of view as well as from an emotional point of view.

And IF we're always in the right place then it must make sense for us to learn to go with the flow. Going with the flow means embracing what is presented to us at any moment in time. Before you take this out of proportion it does NOT mean staying in an abusive relationship because that is what is presented to you. No, not at all. Not does it mean staying in a job you hate. Quite the contrary, going with the flow is often about awakening us to what's an authentic experience.

Going with the flow is all about authenticity; wholeness.

When we encounter many blocks or obstacles in something we're trying to achieve, it usually means we're out of flow. We then have a number of questions to ask ourselves;

- *Do I believe in what I'm doing?*
- *Is there a part of myself asking to be acknowledged or uncovered?*
- *What is this situation asking of me?*

In the case of being tired and forcing myself to go to gym I might answer yes I do believe that I need to go to gym but if I'm honest there's a 'tired' part of me asking to be acknowledged. I might not want to allow it because if I'm chasing perfection, as I did for much of my life, then tiredness isn't allowed. What the situation is asking of me is to rest.

Let's take the case of an abusive relationship. It is an experience that many are unfortunately experiencing at this point in time. Do you believe that in order to be loved you need to compromise yourself? What part of you is asking to be acknowledged? Perhaps the powerful part of you is asking to be uncovered? Perhaps the part of you who stands up for yourself is asking to be uncovered and finally acknowledged. What is the situation asking of you? Well if you end up in hospital on an ongoing basis due to physical abuse, the situation is asking for a different response from you. If you end up completely devoid of self confidence due to a partner's constant criticism then the situation is asking for a different response from you.

Usually if we're encountering obstacles in the form of trauma or an unpleasant experience on an ongoing basis, the situation is asking for a different response. How is that going with the flow? Well when we flow with situations in terms of following what is being asked of us, things seem to magically fall into place.

I see it all the time. Last week I went to the stationers to have a chapter of a book copied for a course I was presenting. I took my iPad with me because I had mails I needed to get through. When I got the store, strangely enough my iPad wouldn't work. I tried and tried by turning it on and off and eventually following my rule of three's decided to turn it off. (If something doesn't work third time in a row for me I take it as a sign to back off.)

As I looked around I noticed a guy staring intently at the book in my hand. I said hi to him and we started chatting. As it turned out we were in the same line of work and he was excited to hear about the book. We ended up chatting enthusiastically for ten minutes before we left. Had my iPad been on and I had been engaged in my emails I would have missed this opportunity. I would have missed the opportunity to connect with someone. Who knows perhaps he's read the book and its contributing magnificently to his work.

In that manner I was living my soul purpose. My soul purpose as I have come to understand it is to unlock magic in others. It brings me to life! I'm living my soul purpose when I'm in flow, even though I might not be at work.

At the same time that day I got a chance to hear about the man's work and get ideas about how to add a new dimension to my work. It may have only been 10 minutes but it was an enriching experience with far reaching benefits.

I could have instead chosen to be angry about not being able to connect to my iPad and could have stood arms folded and sighing with disdain until the stationers were finished but that would have closed off all other opportunities and blocked the flow.

The ways I see it we had a 'meeting' orchestrated by the universe and didn't even have to put it in our diaries. We just needed to go with the flow.

The ability to go with the flow starts with the ability to spot an obstacle. In recent years, motivational speakers were famed for talking about smashing barriers and breaking through limitations and I agree they had a point but there's much to be said for working in the flow of the Divine as opposed to smashing through things.

I have decided and for no particular reason on the rule of three's. If something doesn't work three times in a row, it's time to do something else because it's not yet time for that particular event to occur. For instance if I'm trying to call a particular person and each time, for three tries, their number is engaged I let it go. It usually ends up that they call me back or I get a piece of information I needed to know before I chat to them.

If a client is keen to come to me but they cancel three times or can't make it for some reason I don't worry about it. I know that either they aren't ready for my line of work or I'm not the right coach for them or it's just not the right time for us to meet.

Going with the flow is a liberating practice because it relieves you of worry and anxiety. In fact the very reason I am writing this book is because of going with the flow. I get a large amount of bandwidth each month and it usually lasts me the whole month however at the beginning of this month I uploaded an assignment onto the Internet and ended up downloading a whole bunch of podcasts. By the 5th of the month my bandwidth had run out. I quickly raced to the store to purchase airtime but apparently because I loaded it wrong, it was used up in an afternoon. On the third attempt I had forgotten to check my computer updates and my computer was set to automatically load new updates which takes a large amount of bandwidth.

On a morning meditation my inner voice said *"sit down and write your book already!"*. It wasn't a harsh tone, it was more of a *"really, we've tried to talk to you three times already"* tone.

The rule of threes is my choice and probably because I usually need to hear things more than once. It's up to you what you decide but why not for one week try going with the flow. It means you'll have to be a bit more flexible around your routine and be ready for a little adventure but it's well worth it!

Is there a situation that has been presenting obstacles for you lately? Perhaps a business you've been trying to get off the ground but it just hasn't come to life? Perhaps there's been someone you've been trying to get together with but it just never happens?

The reason I ask is because perhaps you're overly attached? You may have heard of the Buddhist concept of attachment. Much of the Buddhist philosophy is about learning to detach from our emotions and from what happens. Much of their teaching is about helping us to die so that when the time comes we leave this body and life peacefully and with no attachment.

Whether we realize it not, we are dying and being reborn all the time. The cells in our bodies are continuously dying and regenerating. Life situations die when we get divorced, change relationships, move jobs, move house etc. and they are reborn through a new situation. In this light our sense of who we are is also perpetually dying and being reborn.

When we are overly attached, it is extremely difficult for us to let go of the old and so we hang on for dear life. We get stuck in limbo not being able to die but also not being able to be reborn. This manifests as confusion or depression or general stickiness.

When we are overly attached we are in a battle of trying to declare our self worth and okayness to the outcome of a particular thing or circumstance. As our souls are working

towards wholeness, a spanner may be put in the works until we remember who we are.

I had a pack of angel cards once and used to pick cards on a daily basis for guidance. When I was in the midst of chaos I would often receive the "Remember who you are". I used to get so angry and think; "We'll of course I know who I am. I am Lisa"

Only some time down the line did I begin to understand I wasn't just Lisa, the person, I was so much more. I kept trying to put Lisa in a box but the truth of who Lisa is cant fit into a box and neither can the truth of who you are.

Often when we encounter obstacles it's because we're possibly trying too hard to manifest that particular thing because we need it in order to validate our sense of self worth. It is not possible to validate self worth externally and so adopting a go with the flow approach is a confirmation that we're open to a multitude of possibilities and that our self worth is not dependent on this particular event or circumstance.

I know it gets pretty challenging at times especially when it's something big on the line. It's with the big events and circumstances that we're called to own our wholeness in its full.

At some point in this life, we must learn to walk without seeing otherwise known as faith. We must learn to trust that there is enough money, enough love, enough food and enough work and that all we need in order to receive it is trust that we will. Faith,

like all other practices in this book is not something to get right once off; it's a daily practice. The more faith we cultivate, the more our external circumstances seem to flow. That's the great paradox of it all.

I wish to suggest here that if you're having challenges letting go, read a book "*F**k it ~ The ultimate spiritual way*". It was a life changer for me in understanding how to let go.

Chapter 10 – Assume the best, assuming you know nothing

It's generally difficult for us human beings to cease all assumption all together so what I tell myself and clients is that if you are going to assume; assume the best.

Look back on your life. If you need to, take a pen and paper and write down some of the most significant events. Write down what you hoped would have worked out but didn't. Write down what came to pass but you never expected. Write down people you met who seemed inconsequential yet who came to be great friends. Write down your greatest enemies and what you learnt through the experiences with them.

What you might begin to realise is that things worked out for the best. That girl or guy you didn't marry, you realised was totally wrong for you. You realise that the job you didn't get took you along a different path. You might see that the person you never expected ended up being a dear friend. Or the time that you by mistake spoke to someone on the plane turned out to be one of the best times of your life.

Do you know what your grand plan for this life is? Do you exactly what your purpose is? Do you know why everything happens? Do you know why certain people or situations have come into your life?

My guess is that whilst you may be aware of your purpose in some degree you're not aware of it in its fullest extent. Perhaps you know why some people and places have been part of your

life but perhaps you're not aware of what your presence means for others.

We're not fully aware of what life has in store for us or what the full extent of our purpose is because we're not meant to know. Imagine if we knew when we would die or who we would meet.

Assuming we know very little about our existence, it's purpose, the in's and out's, the why's, the who's, the how's and the when's then I have found it rather liberating to assume the best.

We've all heard "everything all happens for a reason" and I have no doubt of the truth of that, however we must forget about finding out the reason if we are going to engage with all of what life has to offer us.

Life is a play ground, a series of adventures, a full emotional spectrum, a range of experiences sometimes challenging, sometimes joyful, sometimes fulfilling, sometimes earth shattering, sometimes mediocre, sometimes harrowing, sometimes exciting, delightful or scary. We cannot begin to experience what is presented to us until we let go of understanding why; why me? Why now? Why here? Why this experience? Why not then?

What do you mean not ask why or try to understand? Isn't this what our lives are made up of? Isn't analysis of what's happening in a determined effort to make sense of what is important? Sure it is and I'm not asking you not to be human. Understanding our

patterns, understanding our behaviours and what triggers us is what my life work is about. I do not wish to de-emphasize the importance of self awareness but rather what I wish to promote is that sometimes understanding why isn't necessary and can prevent us from experiencing what is being presented to us at a point in time.

I once worked with a client who had a debilitating and severe autoimmune disease. He would often be wracked with pain and he came to seek my help because he wanted to know why this was happening. He had been unhappily married for many years but had kept up a lifestyle of travel and parties. The pain put a stop to all of this as some days he could barely walk and it would take him 15 minutes just to get from his car to my office. He did not want help from anyone and made a point of making the journey himself and driving himself around. He had to stop work and his confidence was at an all time low.

He was angry with life. He kept asking why this was happening to him. He often remarked how he was such a good person and how he couldn't understand why he was being punished.

After working together for a few months, his father passed away. He was angry and asked why.

At one of our last sessions he broke down into a stream of tears. He sobbed and sobbed saying how he realized he had not allowed anyone to help him. He said he realized he'd spent years avoiding his marriage. He wept and opened up about the trauma

of his teens. He wept and wept and at the end of the tears, all that remained was a deep sense of peace.

Did his disease force him to a point of surrender? Was it a tool in bringing him to relinquish the pain of his past? Maybe it was, although I don't really know. What I do know is that from that point his body began to heal. Months later he found work again. I don't know what happened in his marriage as he did not speak of it to me.

All I know is that the breakdown signified a turning in his path. He stopped drinking and he began a process on introspection. It opened him in ways I saw and also those I have no knowledge of. I assume that he came to coaching at the right time. I assume that he was ready for the shift. I assume that the disease played a significant part of the healing in his soul. I assume that I asked the right questions at the right time. I assume that our paths crossed for a reason and that I will never know all the reasons why. I assume that our journey ended at the right time.

You could say its very easy to assume the best when assuming on behalf of someone else but what about when it's your own body that is falling apart or when it's your own job that's lost or when it's your own home or when it's someone close to you who dies. I cannot speak about all of these scenarios as I have not experienced them all but I can talk about divorce, I can talk about losing money and I can talk about long term illness.

In July 2010 I began, along with a dear friend, whose brainchild the idea was, an NGO. Some time before the launch of the NGO we hired a lady to work with us. A few weeks to launch our proposed sponsors, bailed. The weekend of the launch I was arrested for speeding and spent time in jail. A week later I had a car accident. At the same time my current clients suddenly disappeared and a major contract I had was cancelled. As a result I moved out my house and went to live in Magoebaskloof for a few months. I was lucky to be dating a man who had a house on the lake there.

I remember feeling extremely sorry for myself and that life was being rather unfair. I kept thinking I had done nothing wrong to deserve what was happening to me at the time. One part was right; I had done nothing wrong. The assumption that I'd done something wrong was firstly based on an assumption that I was in control of what happened in my life through doing right or wrong and secondly was based on an assumption of life working through punishment or reward.

In hindsight, where much wisdom is often delivered, I realized that I was exceptionally blessed at that time. Not only did the series of events serve to break down the identity of the person I thought I was or rather needed to be in the world but during the time period I had amazing incredible people who seemed to be miraculously delivered into my life to help look after me. Jose, the man I was dating, was incredibly kind and supportive both emotionally and financially. When I returned from the mountains

I stayed with a friend of mine, Viv, free of charge for just on nine months.

The period set me on coaching full time and encouraged me to be focused on my passion. It all happened exactly as it was meant to. I didn't know at the time and I didn't understand. I couldn't see that I was being helped and shifted into a new way of life. I kept berating myself for allowing such things to happen, as if I had any control over how events turned out, and being angry with God and life for interrupting my life and plans.

"There by the Grace of God, so go I"

I realized that it had all worked out for the best and thank goodness I wasn't in control because I probably wouldn't be writing this book now.

We cannot know what is in store for our lives nor the total meaning of what is happening right now but we must assume it is for our highest good and the highest good of all involved. This might seem somewhat naive to some but I ask what is the alternative? That we attempt to control life? That we assume that it's part of a lesson or that we're being punished or rewarded? I have investigated those alternatives and they are largely unsatisfactory.

I am not saying that we should not feel the totality or depth of the emotions that go with the experience; not at all. To do so would be to deny the entirety of the experience presented to us.

All I am saying is that we remember what happens is in the highest good.

I would not have been able to deconstruct my old identity without having felt broken, betrayed and abandoned by life. It was all part of the process. There have been many instances in my life I would not have been able to move through without feeling all that was asking to be felt for it was the embrace of those unwanted feelings that moved me through the experience into a new understanding. The thing I have come to realize is that it's all for good; there is no experience that is not for our highest good.

Some people might be very upset with such a statement and indignant as to how a rape or murder or betrayal or death could be for the highest good of all involved. Firstly let me say I am not here to defend such actions on behalf of the Divine; such an action would surely be blasphemous. I don't know the reasons such devastating events happen or why as human beings we do terrible things to each other. I don't know and my little mind cannot comprehend such things. This is when I must transcend my mind and move into my soul.

Our souls each have their own agenda on this little planet of ours in this experience called life. I cannot know what any other soul is here for and often I cannot even comprehend such things for myself. All I know is that no matter what events have transpired in my life, when I sit quietly and listen to the soft whisper of my soul, all is right and all is well. How many times, how many

millions of times I have been told 'all is well, don't worry". Of course I don't listen and end up feeling stressed or hopeless but the voice has been there nonetheless and always things have been okay. Even when I've had no clue on how to pay a bill and life has seemed impossible, it always works out. It always works out; perhaps not the way I wanted but it always works out and it always works out for the highest good.

How many things have you wished for in your life that didn't come true and you were sad or angry but in hindsight extremely grateful? I'm extremely grateful for not getting my wish of being an MD and running a large organization. I'm extremely grateful for not getting married to a man I thought I loved at the time. I'm extremely grateful for events that didn't work out because as it turned out, at the time, I was too exhausted to run them.

Life always works out in the wash. I don't know how or why but it always does. Things work out at the right time and place and with the right people and always in the highest good for all involved; not for the success of all involved but for the okayness or rather the wholeness of all involved.

Assuming the best, assuming that we know nothing, or very little, is a liberating understanding because it enables us to embrace all experiences. Of course it doesn't mean we should not pursue our greatest desires; on the contrary.

It means, however, that we don't need to berate ourselves if they do not come to pass in the timeframe we might have wished for. Then we can 'rest' in the knowledge that the best has transpired for all involved.

Chapter 11 – Learning to ask

What do you really want? Have you ever stopped to think about it? I don't mean the million bucks; I mean what has been calling you? What has been softly calling for some time?

I remember in school thinking *“I don't want to go to university; I want to travel and write books.”*

In school I got poor marks for English and just scraped through with a 'D' average. I was never a prolific writer or student and found academic life challenging.

As a result of people telling me what I could or could not achieve in my life I studied accounting at university and dropped out less than a third of the way in. It wasn't until much later in my life, and through tragedy, that I went back to writing. It took tragedy and loss of much of what I had clung to, to go back to writing.

I had never thought to ask for help in bringing my writing to life in any way, shape or form because I thought I just wasn't allowed it. I thought that what others told me but hold true and so there was no point asking for what had already been deemed pointless.

Do you ask for what you want or do you ask for what you think you can get? Or do you not ask at all feeling that you'll never get what you ask for or perhaps that you don't deserve it?

I remember when I first met my partner and we'd spend weekends together. He'd ask me what I wanted to do and I'd reply by asking him what he wanted to do. He'd tell me but I didn't express my needs. I would then get resentful, feeling that my needs weren't being met or I'd feel unimportant.

It took me a while to realize that I was responsible for feeling unimportant and for my needs not being met because I could not ask for what I wanted. I wanted to walk on the golf course. I wanted to have chicken salad for lunch. I wanted to read my book. These are simple things really, it's not even like I wanted a weekend trip; simple things but I'd never ask and then I'd be angry.

How many of us do this? We don't ask for what we want. Why? Somewhere along the line we were socialized to put the needs of others above our own. We were also told that asking for things was rude or arrogant. We were told to be grateful for what we had. We were made to feel ashamed for our desires. As a result there are very few of us who actually ask for what we want. If we do ask, we ask only for what we think we can get?

My father taught me that if you don't ask for a discount, you'll never get one. It seems strange that I didn't apply this to the rest of my life. For example, I never asked for a raise when I worked in a corporate career. I spent a whole bunch of time and energy working late, trying to prove my worth in a desperate attempt to get someone to notice how great my work was.

“Perhaps if they notice I might get a raise.” I thought

This, of course, was based on a whole lot of assumptions that led to one mother of a ... Well you know. The first assumption is that people are paying attention to you all the time. The truth is most of us, pay attention to ourselves and our own lives and concerns. There's nothing at all wrong with this; it's just generally how we operate. So acting in the hope that someone else just might notice what you're doing is rather ludicrous. In addition to this most people pay attention when the proverbial 'stuff' hits the fan; not when things are going well. People are far more likely to respond in the face of crisis than they are in the good times.

Once again this is how our brains have been wired and unless we consciously choose differently, this is largely how they stay. Our minds search for what's wrong rather than what's right. This is why when you look in the mirror you will see your butt, seemingly large enough for their own name and personality, and yet will most likely not see how beautiful you might be looking on that day.

So as you can see my whole desperate attempt to get a raise via a myriad of methods other than actually asking for one proved rather fruitless. Looking back, had I actually had the courage to ask for one I most likely would've felt guilty and if the conversation with my boss had become difficult, I would probably have abandoned the whole thing. The reason; I didn't actually feel I deserved a raise and so despite much hard work in

order to secure one, I actually sabotaged the whole thing by my belief of not being worthy.

We can apply this example to many areas of our lives; relationships, finances, weight and health and even day to day activities. I remember a friend of mine was looking for a car recently. He was rather desperate as his old car had just packed up. He borrowed my car and drove across town only to arrive to find the place he'd driven to, closed. It was closed, despite the fact that he had called to the manager to confirm. He grew frantic and looked on the Internet and made lists and called friends. Eventually he was becoming so exasperated that I asked him *"Did you ask for help?"*

He said *"What do you mean?"*

I said *"From God or the Angels or the universe or whatever you believe in"*

He burst out laughing and said no, it had never occurred to him. He then sat down and wrote a letter to whomever he believes in and asked for help. The next day a guy called him with the car he was looking for. It worked out that he could see the car in between clients and after test driving it, he called me to tell me he'd bought it.

It might sound ridiculous but try it. The next time you need help with something; ask. If you would like a relationship then write a letter to your concept of Divinity and ask. The same goes for

help in your current relationship, at work, in finding a new job or home or even a car, anything.

You might say *"Well I thought you said in a previous chapter that we were partners to Divinity?"*

My response is that I believe we work WITH Divinity by asking for what we want. All that is generally required from us is to own what we want and actually ask for it. If it is not in our highest interests, I do not believe it comes to pass but we are always shown the way by life.

"Okay, so we ask what then?" I hear you say

Then you wait.

Yes my friends this is where we approach the particularly uncomfortable 'action' of waiting. It doesn't mean we don't take action. In the case of my friend with the car, it didn't mean he just stopped looking for a car, turned off his phone and sat on the grass waiting for one to drop out the sky. It means he realized he didn't have to work that hard and he certainly didn't need to stress about it. We rarely have to stress over anything.

So there are two levels of asking; the first is on the physical level and the second is through your own spiritual belief system. If you don't believe in God or the universe or a form then ask on the physical level. Then? Then let go.

If I wanted a raise, I couldn't just say prayers at night but then not have the conversation with my boss. This is where many of us might stumble. We're happy to ask God but asking our boss is another thing entirely, after all, he could say no! What then?! Well we'd risk embarrassment, vulnerability, potential rejection, shame....oh hell no. Think I'd rather just work overtime in the hope that someone might notice. Sound familiar.

If you want more out of your physical relationship you're going to have to ask your partner. If you want to work less hours, you're going to have to talk to your boss. If you want your clients to pay you on time, you're going to have to ask them. If you want a discount you're going to have to ask the retailer or seller. If you want a date you're going to have to ask someone out. Yes ladies this includes you because the gender stereotypes of our parents went out with bell bottoms and dot matrix printers. Welcome to the new world! No rules, so who says women can't ask men out unless of course, you prefer not to and then that's cool too.

Asking God is one thing, asking a fellow human being is quite another right? Well if you're familiar with my work and the 7 principles of Magic then you'll know that Magic exists at the point at which your greatest desires and fears meet. In other words if you want a raise, more sex, a relationship...etc. you're going to have to face your fears of vulnerability, rejection and abandonment.

How?

Well you never really have to conquer or overcome a fear; that is impossible. The only way is to embrace them and just be with them. I learnt this from a very talented channel Angela Deutschmann. If love is the ability to be with all things and if love is the only way to transform anything then surely fear is no different?

This requires of us to feel uncomfortable. Most of us think if we're uncomfortable, something must be wrong but the practice of learning to be uncomfortable can help us in many situations. Often, when we feel excited and uncomfortable at the same time, it means we're in the right place.

You cannot conquer the fear of rejection but you can feel the fullness of the lump in your throat and your pounding heart as you ask your boss for a raise facing the possibility that he or she might say no. This is what I mean by embracing fear.

Can you see the irony in this grand picture? Maybe you're too afraid to ask for more intimacy from your partner so you end up feeling resentful and this ends up closing off your partner to you even more. Perhaps you're too afraid to ask someone for a date so you end up feeling alone and depressed which leaves you less likely to go out and meet people. Perhaps you're too scared to ask for a raise so you end up feeling resentful and changing jobs which causes massive upheaval in your life. It could have perhaps been avoided if you'd just asked.

You might think you ask but really go through a day and reflect on whether you're able to ask for even a little thing. For example if a friend says let's go to dinner and she asks you where, you answer her with a question of where she'd like to go like;

"Well what suits you?"

Can you ask for the time you want? Can you ask for the money you want? Can you ask for your needs to be met in a relationship?

Then can you wait and allow it to unfold?

If the answer is yes then the response begs another question; once you've asked for something, can you allow yourself to receive it without feeling guilty? So let's say your partner says yes to more intimacy. Then what? Do you kill the experience with thoughts of how maybe he or she doesn't actually want it and maybe you shouldn't have asked and how it wasn't really important enough to have brought up? Or do you allow yourself to experience it and enjoy it?

To give an example let me paint a picture. You've been working like a dog and you're feeling exhausted. Eventually you take a day off to just take time out for yourself. Perhaps you go for a massage or meet a friend for lunch. What happens? You don't enjoy it. You end up feeling guilty all day and as a result you don't relax or enjoy the time out. You go back to work feeling just a frazzled as when you left.

If you've had this experience, don't feel bad, it's happened to all of us. That's why I'm writing this book; because I want to speak to the experiences that we all have but think we are alone in.

We're not taught how to ask and on the flip side, we're not taught how to receive either. Learning to receive is just like any other skill; it becomes easier with practice. When I first started working with clients, I couldn't ask for money and sometimes clients didn't pay me. Perhaps they forgot or perhaps they decided to wait until I asked but I never did so I never received the payment due. I began to grow resentful until I saw that I could ease my own pain by learning to ask. As I began to practice I got better. Now I ask for payment upfront. If clients choose not to come, that's okay because I know things always work out for the best but I no longer harbour any resentment and as a result my work with clients flows much easier.

Okay so you feel guilty and you haven't yet learnt to receive, what now? Well first of all forgive yourself for not asking or for being too afraid to ask or for asking for only what you think you can have or deserve. It's okay and whatever happened in the past was meant to be. It happened for your highest good and now you get to choose differently. Then forgive yourself for not knowing how to receive. Actually none of us are taught how to receive; compliments, silence, money...etc. So I'm not surprised that we don't know. It's like many of the concepts we're not taught in school; we have to begin practicing them to learn.

So maybe start with something small; practice receiving a compliment. Practice receiving, really receiving your change at the store. Practice receiving stillness. Just practice.

Now put down this book and go and write a letter to whomever you call Divinity. Maybe it's God, maybe it's Mother Mary, maybe it's the universe, maybe its consciousness, maybe it's Christ or Allah; they are all just names for the same one, the source of all things. In the letter ask for what you want and yes even if it sounds silly! Ask for help in your studies or money for a holiday or a promotion or help in starting your own business or for more energy or for help with approaching life differently or for forgiveness or for a new iPod or car or dress or client or anything that you desire.

“Then?”

Then also ask for help in allowing it to unfold and in receiving what you have asked for with gratitude.

“Then?”

Burn it in a little ceremony.

“Now what?”

Well now starts the fun part. What fears do you need to embrace in order to allow your greatest desires to come true? This might correspond with an action and it might not. In my case, I spent a

life time making things happen. The message to me when I asked was to stop working so damned hard and to trust life. That was my greatest fear! Just trust that what I've done is enough? Just trust my body? Just trust that my partner and I will find a house at the right time? Are you nuts?!

That has been and continues to be much of my process. How do I know if I'm in the right place? I'm uncomfortable!

What do you need to do right now that maybe isn't your typical approach and that might cause extreme discomfort in order to allow your desire to come true. I suspect that for many of us; it's wait and trust that in its perfect time, it will all come to pass.

In an age of iPods, drive through and express couriers, why would we wait? Well you may have noticed by now that you're not really in control. You're not in control of the weather, other people and often even your body so why would this be any different? The irony is that once you make peace with the fact that you're not in control, life is a whole lot more fun! Why? Well there's not all that much to worry about. (I still have to practice remembering this by the way.)

This, then turns the common *"I'll be happy when..."* story right on its head. Be happy now. Why? Because you can choose to be miserable but it really isn't all that much fun and it usually ends up making the whole situation worse. If you want to lose weight and have asked for help, be happy now. If you want to move jobs and have asked for help, be happy now. If you want a

relationship and have asked for help, be happy now. I know it isn't always that easy but with practice it becomes easier. I was without constant work for years and in the beginning I thought I would die! My anxiety was off the charts; I was often sick and wasn't enjoying life. As time wore on I began to realize that despite my best efforts, I wasn't really in charge so I may as well lighten up about things. As I did, life seemed lighter and opportunities seemed to pop out the woodwork. Funny isn't it?

The funny thing is that anxiety has become a pattern for many of us in the West. We can't receive because we can't let go of our anxiety; it's our 'go to place'. What I mean is that many of us are actually really afraid of being successful, of being happy, of letting go, of being soulful. Sounds crazy but it's true. Well what we actually get the promotion or the relationship or the money but we're still not enough. Besides, it's all going to end up in a mess right so we may as well cut to the chase and use anxiety to prevent the pain right?

The irony is that anxiety IS pain. When we don't allow ourselves to receive what we've asked for, we're anyway in pain.

The truth is it all comes to an end; in a way. I mean we die, we lose loved ones, we go through tough times, jobs end and we change but also we're continually reborn. When something ends, something else begins and so it's a continuum. When we try to avoid pain we're refusing the continuum of life. We're denying

our 'right' to enjoy life to its fullest; complete with everything it has to offer.

So if life is a continuum and ever changing and you can't actually prevent the pain and in doing so you actually avoid joy, what the hell, take a leap of faith and ask for what you want. You never know; it might happen! Oh yes and read chapter 14☺

Chapter 12 – The life cycle of life cycles

Everything, in nature works in cycles; the days, the seasons, the months, the years and even aspects of life such as birth and death. It is only in the human realm that we expect to be on a continuous upward trajectory.

We want to be skinnier, healthier, happier, more successful and definitely richer not even than just the year before but preferably than the week before. It is not only ridiculously unsustainable but extremely arrogant.

At this point I would like to take a moment to talk about Biomimicry. Biomimicry is the imitation of the models, systems, and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems. It is typically used for looking at more efficient ways of manufacturing products or using processes for design and engineering. I, however, would like to look at nature as a means for optimal human functioning and as a guide for human behaviour.

As nature is always in optimum flow and perfect design then there must be something to be said for her cycles. Why then do we insist on upward trajectories when nowhere in Mother Nature do we find examples of such things?

I would like to offer a different model upon on which we might begin to base our lives. I have experimented with it in my own life and find it a very helpful way to approach life.

I'd like to start by looking at the seasons. There are, of course, four seasons, which seem to me, to have definitive corresponding themes. For instance spring is the time of planting seeds and in psychological terms corresponds to setting intention. Summer is the time for action and by association for activity related to our intentions. Autumn is the time for harvesting and by association it is the time of reaping, allowing and receiving. Winter is the time for introspection and renewal.

The understanding of life as a continuously cyclical pattern also must put into perspective our understanding of 'balance'. Many of us perceive balance as a static state for example getting eight hours of sleep every night or exercising every day but this is not balance, it is rigidity. Anyone with children will tell you that eight hours a night is wishful thinking. Anyone busy on a project or writing a book (yes myself included) will tell you that exercising every day is not possible, not because of time, but because of the energy consumption of the project. The balance comes when the cycle restores itself. So once the children are sleeping through the night, you can sleep again. Once the project is through you can exercise every day, if you choose.

The point I'm making is that balance is a fluid and dynamic concept as opposed to trying to fit everything in together at one time; that is just another attempt for perfection, in a socially accepted manner.

How 'balance' is integrated is up to the individual. When I write a book I only exercise about three times a week and when I don't

I exercise five or six times a week. This keeps me functioning at optimum level. Optimum level is different for everyone.

How much you eat, sleep, exercise, work and spend time with family, friends or work is completely up to you and you decide on the optimal amount of time for each activity. The time where we believed in experts above our own intuition is over. The understanding comes in knowing that the times for each activity will shift with the changing of 'the seasons'. I don't mean the actual seasons although it might apply but rather to the season of where you find yourself.

We can apply the understanding of seasons and cycles to our lives on a daily basis, on an annual basis and in the grander perspective of our lives. First we must understand what the corresponding themes actually mean.

Spring is about planting seeds which corresponds to setting intention. Intention is the starting point of every dream. It is the creative power that brings about change. It took me years to understand the power of intention. I'd run around frantically doing but without any firm intention.

According to Dr Deepak Chopra, the sages of India observed, thousands of years ago, that our destiny is ultimately shaped by our deepest intentions and desires. This might sounds rather esoteric and unrelated to your life but essentially everything you do from call a friend, to go to work, to picking something up begins with intention.

When you begin to work with the power of intention, specifically authentic intention or rather heart centred intention, you begin to realise there's very little hard work you have to do. I understand that working hard for what we want is ingrained in our universal psyche, and it's a tough nut to crack, but the more we practice letting go, the easier it gets.

Authentic intention is intention aligned with our deepest values. It's intention that comes from the heart. It's intention that says "*I choose to do this because it's part of who I am*"

How often do you begin a project with an intention? How often do you start your day with intention? And yet we run around like bodiless heads, a coin I termed, trying to make things happen through being very busy. You may choose to continue this way but it's not necessary.

Of course some activity follows intention and this is what I refer to when I talk about summer. The activity, whatever it might be doesn't need to be hard work and it doesn't need to feel like suffering contrary to what many of us believe. It means, if my intention is to write a book that reaches millions of people, such as this one, then I need to sit down and put pen to paper or rather hand to keyboard, so to speak.

It's not particularly difficult for me to write because actually I just feel like I'm downloading. I feel like I'm transcribing what's been put in my mind. It's effortless and divinely soothing for the soul.

Once we have finished with activity and move into Autumn we harvest or reap what we have sown. This is where many of us get stuck. Firstly we've built up great discomfort with receiving and secondly we don't feel valuable unless we're 'doing'. As a result we 'overwork' and never reap the rewards of our labour. Often we work 'the soil' too much and it becomes burnt out needing much time to recover. Such an example is when we get sick or just feel completely burnt out and exhausted.

Winter is the time for stillness. It comes when we leave a job or relationship, when something 'dies' or changes form in the external world. It is a time for stillness, introspection and regeneration; all of which are essential if we are to plant good seeds in a fertile soil in the season to come.

Spring and summer are relatively easy concepts to relate to but its autumn and winter that scares the living daylights out of us. The thing is if you're okay, and what I'm saying in this book is that you are and that life is okay and that you're not in control then sit back and allow yourself to receive. When something ends or when your body requires it, you can also allow yourself to rest.

The two operative words in the above sentence are 'allow' and 'receive'. My intention with this book is to put it on the internet available for download and for over a million people to read it. I cannot make that happen and nor do I need to. At the right time it will happen and I will just have to allow myself to receive the harvest of my work in whatever form.

If it doesn't happen, at first I might think that it's not the right time. I might get upset but that's also okay. Eventually I will settle down into the 'withdrawal' or 'death' phase and be still until a new project comes to light.

And so it is with our work and our relationships and our bodies and our lives in the grand sense. We are born and begin as the seed. We take action and grow. Through age and living, we become wise and allow life to bless us without trying to control it and eventually we die.

It is the same with our days. We might begin by having an intention of how we'd like our day to go. We then take action. As the day wears on we might allow whatever pops up to present itself to us. As the day closes and turns to night so we switch off our lights and turn inwards for rest to begin anew the following day.

How do the cycles of life as described above relate to your sense of okayness?

Well approaching life with a sense of okayness means you begin to embrace the cycles instead of doing battle with them as I did for much of my life. Life becomes a series of ebbs and flows as opposed to a war ground. As you begin to work WITH the flow of life as opposed to it, you become more intuitive with regards to your own cycles. When your body asks for rest, it is no longer a question of "*Why am I so tired?*" but rather "*When and how can I make time to rest?*"

When relationships end it's not so much a question of *"What did I do wrong"* but rather *"What am I being asked to see here?"*

It may be that when 'things' end we may even surrender the need to see deeper into it. We might reach the point where something ends, we let it go and allow whatever is being birthed to present itself. I use the word 'might' here because I haven't necessarily mastered this art as yet.

When finances dwindle into nothingness it's not a desperate enquiry of *"Why or how did I make this happen"* but rather *"How can I maintain a sense of self worth without money"*.

There ceases to be panic when things aren't quite right but rather inquiry as to the nature of the cycle and what it is asking of us.

Sometimes I get this and other days I push, push, push to a total state of exhaustion and that's okay too. My cycle then becomes lengthened as my body, mind and soul take time to rejuvenate and strengthen.

I understand that what I'm saying might not make 'sense'.

"I mean really Lisa, how am I supposed to explain to my boss that I'm on a rest cycle?"

I understand and recognise that this type of approach to life is not the norm. If it were, perhaps society might be a radically different place.

My response might sound uncaring and that is not my intention but my question here is, are you here to play safe or to come to a

sense of okayness with life? Are you here to become so OKAY with who you are that other's opinions no longer matter and as such your presence and effect on the world is great and one of revolutionary change or are you here to please others?

I understand this book might not be for everyone and that's okay. My intention is to present not really a new set of ideas because the wise ones amongst us have known such things for an eternity but really to present these old ideas in a different way. My intention is to present these ideas for you to decide whether to take them up and live them.

I must return to the point that okayness or wholeness is not about making a specific choice but rather being conscious of the choice, its consequences and being okay with that.

My suggestion with this chapter is that there is an easier way of living and we need only look to the wisest amongst us all; Mother Nature to see that there is a different way, an easier way that we might live and derive the fullness of what we seek from life.

That is, after all, the irony; living in harmony with our life cycles promotes peace, energy, creativity, innovation and joy, the very things we seek when we're attempting to ride a continuously upward trajectory.

Interesting don't you think?

Chapter 13 – Play like a child and think like a scientist

My favourite mental exercise when I'm running and my legs are tired is to imagine what things would be like if I won the lottery. I imagine where my partner and I would live and I imagine how we'd decorate the house. I imagine buying us mountain bikes and where we might go cycling. I imagine different holidays; mountain biking around Bhutan, culinary trips to Italy and island holidays to Greece. I imagine us decorating Amelie's room. I imagine what gifts I'd buy for whom. I imagine getting my mom a real holiday because it's been so long since she's been on one. I imagine sending my dad to the bush for the very same reason. I imagine a family holiday with my sister. I imagine buying a car for our gardener. I imagine publishing all my books and getting them done professionally and employing an agent to help me market them.

Once I've finished the exercise I ask myself what of my imagined reality could I bring to life now? There's usually some idea I have; even if it's an idea on recycling or on baking something new or on a gift for a friend.

I love this exercise because it unlocks my imagination.

The beautiful thing about forgetting your problems is that you start imagining a range of possibilities.

For example I could choose to focus on my financial problems during my run. I could choose to budget and plan and focus on how to curb spending. I'm not saying don't budget; there's a

place for focusing on the pragmatic matters of life. All I'm saying is give yourself room to imagine.

A couple of years ago I learnt a technique called Mindscape. The technique basically offers your imagination a chance to get really creative whilst at the same time unlocking the wisdom of the subconscious.

Jacques' daughter Amelie has she taught me that life is one big game. It's a game of imagination, possibility, authenticity and joy! There's no such thing as time in the life of a four year old and as a result life is lived entirely in the present moment. There's never any need to worry about the future because there's only an awareness of the present. For example if we're going somewhere after lunch I might have a sense that we need to hurry, I eat faster ready to jump up and go. Amelie, on the other hand, is making balls with her pasta and has made a spaceship out of her mielie and is imagining that the mielie is flying to land on the balls of pasta which are, of course, not really balls of pasta but far off lands waiting to unravel new adventures.

A meal, much like anything else for a four year old is just another opportunity to play and imagine. For an adult, mealtimes are things we have to shop and plan for and often stress about. Mealtimes are generally quite hurried because we're always off so we here else and they can also be a source of stress as we have to clean up afterwards.

Can you see the benefits of living life like a four year old? I'm not suggesting you go to dinner with your boss or potential

clients and start flying your chops over their 'sea' of mashed potato all the while making flying sounds. It might not be great for your career. Rather I am suggesting 'play'.

Some of my work is about encouraging clients to use their imagination as a tool for unlocking subconscious guidance. Many times the guidance the client receives is to play more. Inevitably at the end of these sessions, the client looks confused and somewhat afraid as they ask; "But I don't know how to play?"

I'll admit it's pretty scary in the beginning and I'm extremely grateful for the help of Jacques and Amelie. She will be sitting in the car on a journey and suddenly her fingers become different characters who have conversations with each other in a role play exercise. Sometimes she will spontaneously spring into a run or series of jumps. Why? Just for the fun of it.

I've taken, after much initial coercion, to playing imaginary games with her such as imagining our dogs are really dragons as we have to run around the garden when they come so their fire doesn't catch us. In the beginning my mind would tell me how ridiculous it was but as I played, the one thing I couldn't deny is how fun it is.

On a more practical level I had to ask myself the question;
"How can I allow myself to have fun, in general?"

I realized I never dance, I always try to go to bed early, I don't drink, I eat healthily, I do my study assignments ahead of time, I make healthy meals for my family...boring!

My partner and I both used to be extremely sporty taking part in many races but just this year we decided to introduce more 'play' time into our schedule. We booked to go to music festivals and came back after midnight from more than a few of them. We decided to go watch comedy. We decided to have pyjama days. We decided to play catches whilst shopping. We started playing an 'imagine' game where when we drive, we imagine places we'll travel or how our careers might go, or what our future kids will be like or where in the world we might like to work. These are games that help us to stretch our imaginations and keep us in a sphere of possibility.

In my own capacity I allow myself, since my revelation that I'm allowed to have fun, to have a good helping of dessert and I really sit down and enjoy it. Sometimes I make 'ice cream soup' which just means I mash my ice cream until its smooth which is just as much fun as eating it. I also decided after years of running, spinning and gym that I wanted more joy in my exercise and so I started weekly dance classes. I also decided to turn on my iPod whilst showering so I could sing along to the songs.

Why all this play and how do you get things done when you're playing? The irony and paradox is that things usually flow much easier when approached with an attitude of play because it helps to eliminate attachment. Attachment can disrupt the flow of

things when we've tied our identity and sense of happiness to how they must turn out. When we play, we're also loosening the strict boundaries of our identities.

Play also gives rise to possibility thinking and most importantly helps us to stop taking ourselves and life so seriously. I mean we do have a tendency to over dramatize the circumstances of our lives placing most things into a life or death category when really, it's just another opportunity to look at a range of possibilities. I do anyway.

One of my all time favorite books is *"The Art of Possibility"* by Benjamin and Ros Zander. In chapter 6 they talk about 'Rule No 6'. Even if you don't get the book, Google 'Rule No 6'. It's very funny and so very true.

When we stop taking ourselves so seriously, our senses are opened and we're more like to perceive the possibilities available to us. This has been a difficult practice for me to adopt especially since my case of 'Perfection Deficit Disorder' has been so severe. If you're not sure what I'm talking about here then please read my book *"Carbs, Curves and Everything in Between"*.

One of my favourite quotes is from Alice in Wonderland;

Alice laughed *"There's no use in trying"* She said; *"One can't believe impossible things"*

"I daresay you haven't had much practice" said the Queen.

“When I was your age I always did it for half an hour a day. Why sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

Think about how many things you do every day. Now think about how often you think about what you do. In other words think about how often you think about the ways you respond or rather react to events. Probably not that often. Why? Because we’re creatures of habit. We like to drive the same roads, eat the same foods, talk to the same people blah blah blah. It’s called a comfort zone.

How often do you believe in the possibility of things instead of the impossibility of things? If you’re prone more to the former, don’t worry, you’re like almost all of us. We have to learn to practice thinking about the possibilities.

In any situation there are AT LEAST ten choices, so say The Zanders in ‘The Art of Possibility’. Think about some of your current challenges. Think about how you typically respond to these challenges. If you keep doing what you do, you keep getting what you get so how could you respond differently? If you always work late in response to stress, try taking a walk in the park instead. My guess is you’ll be more productive with more ideas. If you always get irritated by a certain circumstance or person try asking yourself why, the REAL why, not your projected story, and see what happens when you take a different approach. If you always watch TV, try turning it off and reading a book. See what happens.

This brings us to scientists and how they think. Scientists are inquisitive by nature and are typically involved with trying to see the pattern in something. The word experiment is synonymous with the 'art' of science because it's all about experimenting to see if the methodology has a certain impact on the outcome. I don't mean to use the word scientist as synonymous with trying to prove a theory but rather in trying to find new information. Scientists, in my view, are like information gatherers, always looking for new information to understand the world better.

I think we can take a page from their proverbial book and begin to think like scientists instead of like army generals. The army general is concerned with three things; safety, hitting targets and precision. The army general does NOT have an attitude that says; *"Well let's see how it goes and let's gather information"*

The army general is concerned with getting things right, getting them done in a specific time and getting back to the home base safely. I think if we're truly honest with ourselves, many of us are more like army generals than we are like four year olds or scientists. The thing is it's never too late to turn it around.

How would your world look if you played like a child or thought like a scientist? Would you take more time to do things? Would you sing in the car on your way to work? Would you play with the dogs? Would you paint? Would you ask more questions?

Have you ever heard a child between the age of three and five? The most widely used word in their language at that time is ‘why’? We sometimes get annoyed, I know I sometimes do, but we can learn from them and learn how to become inquisitive.

Would you have more creative ideas if you played more or asked more questions? I suspect yes.

What effect do you think it’d have on your work life on your relationships or just on your overall sense of *okayness*?

What the heck, try it, you’ve got nothing to lose.

Chapter 14 – Compassion and courage under fire

Some days on this little planet of ours are tough and much courage is needed to take a leap of faith; like just getting out of bed. Sometimes that leap of faith is facing our deepest fears; doing what we might otherwise never dare to do.

I was once asked to speak at a large leadership summit. I had to submit a paper and was chosen amongst hundreds of submissions to present. In the months leading up to the summit I felt increasingly uncomfortable as the organisers had made no mention of payment. A while prior to my submission I had made a declaration that I would no longer work for free unless for charitable organisations. I had been doing free talks for years and had decided that it was time for my work to go to the next level in terms of value.

I knew I had to summon the courage to mail the organisers and ask about remuneration and so I did.

My fears came true in the response.

"Dear Lisa

Thank you for your query. We are however only paying the international draw cards and are offering all local speakers the opportunity to attend the rest of the summit free of charge. This is valued at R7000 per person.

Kind Regards

What a dilemma!

I had promised myself I would not present for free and I knew I wouldn't be able to present despite the offer to attend the rest of the summit. I was devastated. I was extremely excited to have been chosen and had told my friends and family. Instead I would have to decline and tell everyone I wouldn't be presenting.

No doubt there were perhaps more possibilities I did not see at the time but I declined speaking at the event. In the same week a course I was due to present at, was postponed for three months.

I felt like I was failing. In this time I had to have faith that things would work out. I needed courage to move forward and I needed compassion for where I found myself. It wasn't at all easy. It took a few months of saying no to free work, outside of my mentoring, and eventually saying no became easy. I no longer needed courage. It was at about that time that I began to be offered paid speaking events. I realised that saying no to certain things meant saying yes to myself and my value.

What most of us don't understand is that courage and compassion are daily practices and the reason we find them so difficult is because we haven't practiced them. I find I have to practice them on a daily basis. The more we practice, the easier it gets and the easier it gets, the more life works in our favour.

I sometimes marvel at how vulnerable we are in the world; just travelling down the highway at 120km's per hour with hundreds of cars around is a scary thing and yet we do it every day. We're

not scared of driving down a 6 lane highway at 120 km's per hour because most of us do it every day.

The same can be said for courage and compassion; it's a matter of practice. Every time we make a mistake it's about practicing compassion for ourselves.

It's strange you'd think after so long I'd have this under wraps now but even as I sit here writing I'm wondering if I should be writing this book and why but then I realize that the voices are just trying to protect me against possible criticism.

What if I write the book and no one reads it?

What if I never live in my dream house?

What if people think what I have to say is useless?

I must however, choose to decline believing them and carry on writing anyway despite their incessant claims. I have to have compassion for these sub-personalities and yet be courageous and continue to venture forth through writing.

Let's speak here, once again, to intention and action. Many of us want to achieve certain things in our lives. Perhaps we've come to understand that it's important to set intentions and so we set intentions. We even follow up our intentions with action and even then things might not go our way, or at least not in the manner and time that we'd like. This is when courage and compassion under fire come into play. We need courage to

continue with our path and at the same time compassion for the parts of ourselves who are afraid.

Sometimes we just need courage to do simple things such as rest. We live in a society where value is largely judged by our achievement. It may not overtly be said but it's surreptitiously implied. From childhood we're measured by marks, accoladed with trophies and rewarded for being good; not for being authentic but for being good. On the flip side, we're punished when we're bad and often feel that love has been withdrawn from us as a result. It's no wonder even into adulthood we're still striving for achievement. The irony is that if we don't reach a level of self validation and so the external validation is never enough.

We've mistakenly come to understand that validation and belonging are one in the same. If, as Brene Brown says, we're hard wired for connection then of course we're going to avoid anything that results in rejection or being thrown out of the 'tribe'. Whilst we may not, consciously view our lack of achievement as a threat of rejection, subconsciously, this is exactly our interpretation.

In our minds is a story along the lines of;

"If I don't ... I'm going to be abandoned and rejected and no-one will love me forever"

It's not true but it's incredibly powerful. Of course then, in a society, that values achievement, we're going to find things such

as rest incredibly difficult. Who would've thought one needed courage to rest but its exactly what we need. We wear 'burnout' as a badge of honour as though it says '*look how hard I work and how valuable I am*'

Think for a moment what you say when someone says 'describe yourself'? Do you go into a conversation about what you do for a living? Do you tell them what sports you do?

It's not often we might mention, our favorite books or how we love to walk in nature or lie on our back and make shapes out of the clouds?

Why not? *Because we might be embarrassed by such a response.*

Why? *Because we're geared to achieve not to 'be'.*

Why else? *Because when someone asks us to describe ourselves, we subconsciously think we've got just over 10 seconds to earn their approval.*

I remember during what I term 'the motivational era', it was all about saying YES! Say yes to life! Say yes to work! Say yes to money! Blah blah blah...

I'm not admiring of people who can say yes to more work, more pressure, more social engagements ... The real question is can you say no? Can you say no to what you don't want? Can you say no to a night out to rest? Can you say no to extra work or working after hours?

That's real courage and cannot be persuaded without compassion for the parts of ourselves who want to be more, loved more, have achieved more. Those parts never die and you cannot kill them but the more compassion you raise for them, the less you'll find yourself saying 'yes' when you mean 'no'.

What's the question most often asked by those who don't always feel a strong sense of worth or okayness?

"What's wrong with me?"

I'll often hear from clients;

"I'm so tired, I don't know what's wrong with me?" or "I'm not feeling motivated, I don't know what's wrong with me" or "I don't feel excited at the moment, I don't know what's wrong with me" or "I feel so chaotic, I don't know what's wrong with me"

It's a rather large assumption that something be wrong with us because we might be feeling something other than what we judge to be okay or 'right'. What if nothing is wrong? What if our deepest self is transitioning and the process is taking up energy. What if we've encountered illness in order to take us inwards? What if it's not actually natural to be motivated 100% of the time.

As I'm writing I get the image of a lioness continuously on the hunt, never stopping to rest. She's just attended the elephant's motivational speech on 'saying yes to all opportunities' and

she's determined to keep on hunting. At the end of two days, she's exhausted. I bet you're laughing but look at us; that's exactly what we do.

Nowhere in nature do things remain in a perpetual state of action. There must be rest. There must be play. There must be eating. There must be healing. There must be cub raising. It is the same with us, and yes, even the men.

So next time you're sick, have courage to rest. Have compassion with the part of yourself who doesn't enjoy being sick. Next time you're tired, have the courage to rest and have compassion with the part of yourself who feels worthless for doing so. Know there's nothing wrong with you, apart from being human, of course, which contrary to popular belief is not a curable disease. It's not a disease at all but part of the condition is getting tired, sick or sad and that's okay. The irony is that the degree to which we allow ourselves to feel those emotions is the degree to which we will then feel joy.

Brene Brown talks about the concept of foreboding joy. She talks about how we will often not allow ourselves to experience the fullness of where we are especially in joyful moments because we're afraid it's all going to go down the drain. It's all going to fall apart anyway so we don't enjoy it.

She's a beautifully talented and quirky woman and tells the story of how, when on her way to do her Oprah interview, the plane couldn't take off. She says all of a sudden she imagined the

plane crashing and the fact that she'd never be on Oprah. She laughs as she explains that is was the perfect example of 'foreboding joy'.

We prevent ourselves from truly engaging with joy because we think it'll all end badly so why be happy. Ironically, we also try to prevent ourselves from feeling the fullness of pain because we think it'll tear us apart. We think if we stop for a moment to cry, we'll just cry for the rest of our lives.

The end result is that we end up somewhere in the middle; not allowing joy or sadness. This, my beautiful friends, is the beginning of depression.

Brene Brown goes on to share a story of how an old man she interviewed felt much regret over the passing of his wife. He said he'd spent his whole life not allowing himself to get too happy and then when his wife died, the only thing he could think about is the fact that he should've enjoyed his time with her more. He should have appreciated it. He should have let go. He should have told her he loved her more.

There's a part of this old man in all of us; holding back until the perfect time but the perfect time never comes because the present is the only moment that exists.

The most shocking discovery to me was that enlightenment didn't necessarily mean everything went right; it meant you were more present with everything and as you were more present, you felt the full impact of everything in greater intensity. The joy filled moments feel like you might explode with fullness and the

moments of sadness feel like they might tear you apart but you're fully there through all of it.

The strange thing is that you stop fearing the sad moments and hoping for the joy filled ones. Life becomes a series of moments that present themselves much like the waves in the ocean.

That's the moment when you're all in. You're all in fully present engaging with all of it.

The moment I first realised I was all in with my career was when I sat at home not able to yet bring my coaching work to light and yet despite being broke and decidedly unhappy I chose not to look for a job. I was all in.

I had to have courage during that time but also compassion for where I found myself. I was broke and that is a humbling experience in anyone's books. I had to have compassion and kindness for the part of me who felt 'less than'. I had to have kindness with the part of myself who didn't want to be there.

Thanks to my mom I inherited an ability to just get things done. I have always had a plan and had the ability to bring that plan into action and make things happen. The most challenging times in my life and where I've needed the most courage weren't the times I needed to 'haul ass' and make things happen, they were the times I couldn't and needed to sit quietly on my meditation cushion and just sit with the feelings that arose as a result of that.

Some of you reading this might think, as I used to that people who don't succeed, in any aspect of their lives, don't work hard

enough and need to stop being weak. I ask you here to possibly take a different perspective. Sometimes the greatest courage we need is just to allow. Sometimes the greatest strength is in being still. Sometimes it takes great, big, huge guts not to fix something, not to launch into immediate action but rather to allow the solutions to unfold.

I don't know another way to be brave than without courage and compassion.

Chapter 15 – Radical Self Acceptance

This was the original title of the book until I discovered that one of my favourite 'heroes' in my field, Tara Brach, had already written a book by the same title. If you can, I suggest getting your hands on a copy as she has such a gentle yet way of working with this topic.

I am going to use the radical self acceptance for this chapter with thanks to Tara Brach and start in my favorite way; with a story.

A very dear and enlightened friend of mine and I were having coffee. She was in tears and through the sobs explained how she'd acted like such a bitch pertaining to a friend of hers. She'd arranged a hen's party for a friend of hers. The friend was upset because at 1am in the morning, my friend said she was tired and wanted to go home. My friend said this girl just lost it, she was so angry and she got angry in return.

Her tears were about the fact that she felt so badly about how she had behaved. She couldn't believe she'd lost her temper and said she should've been above the situation. She was crying because she felt she'd never be enlightened.

I shared that I didn't believe enlightened people never get upset, I just believed that enlightened people never judged themselves for doing so. In fact I remember monk at a Buddhist temple teaching us about emotions and non-attachment. He told a story about how he'd got angry one day and then he left the situation feeling angry because he got angry. About five minutes later he

burst out laughing because he had realized that his anger was still keeping him captive through his attachment to not being angry. When he laughed he left the anger behind.

I'm introducing this chapter with this story because I think it has something to reflect for all of us. In my book *"Carbs, Curves and Everything in Between"* I talk about 'perfection deficit disorder' which is the desire to be perfect with the complete inability to do so. Enlightenment is not about perfection. It's not about meditating six hours a day and only eating vegan food. It's not about doing charity work and praying. It's not even about being good or nice. It's not even about so called spiritual work. Enlightenment is about radical self acceptance; it's about accepting who you are in ALL situations not just the ones you like.

Radical self acceptance is about accepting yourself even when you're tired, even when you've over eaten, even when you're overweight and yes even at times when you wish your kids could just disappear. Most people feel immense shame over feeling overwhelmed when their kids are sick or crying. Most people feel immense shame when they feel angry. We feel ashamed because we've been told and have chosen to believe in 'positive' and 'negative'. There's no such thing as positive and negative. Being angry isn't negative; it's part of being human. Being overwhelmed isn't negative; it's part of a range of human emotions.

I knew that I was on the path to practice radical acceptance when I went through a few years of financial struggle. In the beginning I'd tried exceptionally hard to get clients. I marketed, I wrote proposals, I did advertising and I met with all sorts of potential clients. When that didn't work I tried to get a job. That didn't work either. I remember the day I decided to go to my office and format my CV in order to send it out. When I got to the office I had a crack down the centre of my laptop screen. I was beside myself and wondered how it happened as I had used the laptop just ten minutes before.

I had R500 left in my account and R20 000 worth of expenses going off a week later. I decided, in that moment, to either start drinking or painting. As drinking didn't really appeal to me I drove off to the Herbert Evans art shop to buy paint. I'd never done art before but there's never such a glorious time to try something new as in the depth of crisis. I ended up going to the park and painting a set of oracle cards. Some of you reading this might even have a pack.

What happened next?

That very day a friend of mine called me, whilst I sat painting in the park. He said; "I know how busy you are but I'm running a project and desperately need your help. We'll pay you R80 000 for six weeks."

I asked for a deposit upfront and went from there.

There have been many times since then I have been on the brink of desperation financially and I have learnt 2 major things; it always works out and my worth is not linked to my monetary value.

Can you imagine feeling valuable when you're broke and only have debt to your name? It's at times like these that you begin to realize your level of self worth has nothing to do with anything. Not money, not a relationship, not how well your career is going, not your body; nothing.

There have often been times when I literally did not have R1 in my account to spend. I learnt to deal with these days very differently from how so did in the beginning. Inevitably something happens; I get a new client, I sell a few books or I get invited to speak somewhere. In the three years I have experienced massive financial loss and what one might call dire straits financial positioning I still ate well every night. I was and still am unbelievably blessed.

If I had continued to rate my worth by financial position in life I would have been a minus, a big red one.

How do you rate yourself? You see if you continue to go after something, weight loss, financial success, career success, being a perfect mom or whatever else, you are doing so in pursuit of worth or acceptance and it will never work out. You cannot, in any way that I am aware of, derive self worth from an external reality.

I battled with my weight and body for some time. Even when my weight stabilized, I battled with my body. I love chocolate and would berate myself for having chocolate but eventually the self flagellation left me so pained that I decided I either wouldn't have chocolate or I would start accepting myself. No contest there; I started accepting myself. The interesting thing was that I wanted less chocolate.

It's very tempting to try and be everything but really who are you doing it for? I see clients at the point of breakdown because they just can't do it anymore and I love it because that's the point they usually realize they don't need to.

Many of us try to be everything to everyone because we're so desperately trying to get some kind of validation. We need others to tell us we're okay and that we're doing well and how amazing we are. Why do we need it? Well firstly we don't give it to ourselves and secondly we don't believe it so we need constant reinforcement.

Stop for just a moment and think about the things you're doing in your life. Who and what are you doing them for? Are you doing them to be described in a certain manner? Are you doing them to get validation? Are you doing them in an attempt to secure self worth? It's not that these are wrong; they're just unsustainable and unsatisfactory. The only sustainable way to do something is to do just because you want to.

Magic exists beyond the outcome. It means you can't eat a certain food because you're going to lose weight. You can't date someone because it will lead to marriage. You can't work because you need validation. Well actually you can but it won't work. Trust me, I've tried!

So what then?!

Well do things because you absolutely love it and because it resonates with you. Go out to friends if you want to. If you don't want to, don't go because you will resent it and end up being miserable. If you want to do a certain type of work then do it because you feel you want to but don't do it with an expectation of how it needs to be.

Radical self acceptance and total authenticity are like inseparable twins. You cannot have the one without the other. Let's say you decide to go out to friends even though you don't really want to go. You force yourself to go for a number of reasons. You end up having a terrible time but on the way home you realize that you didn't really want to go and resented being there and ended up having a terrible time. That's 100% authenticity. It's accepting your choices and being totally okay with that.

If authenticity is part of radical self acceptance then it also means look at where you're being inauthentic. Do you hang out with people you don't really like but do so because you think it will make you popular? Do you work at a job you hate? Are you in a relationship that you rather wouldn't be in? Do you say yes to

things just because you feel guilty saying no? Do you know deep inside your heart what you should be doing but never allow yourself to do it?

All of us compromise ourselves in a myriad of ways. Compromise of self is a vastly different concept from the act of compromising. Sometimes I don't really feel like going to see a certain movie with my partner but I know he'd love it so I compromise. It does not, however, affect my value system. When you compromise yourself, you negotiate away on your internal values. For example you end up taking a dodgy job because you feel you need the money. You have essentially prostituted yourself even though you might not have gone into prostitution.

The irony, yes there are so many in this book because there are so many in life, is that the more radical self acceptance you allow yourself, the less you will compromise on your values thereby being more authentic. The times you are inauthentic, you will accept it or decide that it's just not worth it and so not do it again. Either way you win right?

Radical self acceptance is not about making the right choices and doing the right things. It's about accepting yourself when you don't. It's also about beginning to own who you are in the world and being okay with that.

I am a home girl. I like evenings out with friends and restaurants and shows but fundamentally I am a home girl. I don't enjoy late

braai's and big parties. I don't like clubs and places where there are loads of people. Even in school I didn't like them. For so long I thought there was something wrong with me but now I realize that that's just me, it's just the way I am and that's okay.

In this day and age of cosmetic surgery and facelifts, we're geared towards changing things instead of just accepting them just as they are. It's taken me many years to get to this understanding. Things I used to detest in myself include; the fact

- I don't like clubs
- I love food and eating
- I'm not good at small talk
- I don't like competitive events
- I will never be a skinny ass
- I speak to animals and trees
- I like my stuff neatly packed away
- I don't like movies with violence

And so much more!

I have not only come to accept these things in myself but love them. I love the fact that I love food because it means that even if I'm alone, I'll do a roast lamb for one. I love the fact that I don't love big parties because it means I get time and space to write. You catch my drift.

You don't even HAVE to get to love certain things about yourself but if you're going to walk this road then you will learn to accept them. Accepting these aspects means not trying to change them.

My mentor always tells me 'forget the outcome Lisa, it has nothing to do with you' and I think she's right but there are some things that I am attached to. For example; my relationship. If I had to part from my health, it would be extremely challenging for me. Knowing that I can try to become more unattached or I can just accept my attachment and no doubt leave it to life to show me when that becomes inappropriate.

I often think the WHOLE point of life especially for those of us living now and in our society is about pure acceptance. Accepting that we don't know which way the world is going and it scares us something crazy. Accepting that we are afraid of rejection and abandonment and all the ways in which we try to avoid it. Accepting that we aren't perfect and neither is anyone around us. Accepting that we're not really in control and it's damned uncomfortable. Accepting that we're not where we are in our work or bodies or relationships and that's okay. Accepting that relationships go through ups and downs and that they're not always fun. Accepting that our butts or abs or boobs don't look like the swimsuit model in the magazine and its okay. Accepting that every single person around us has a different point of view and that sometimes sucks.

That's radical self acceptance; accepting you just as you are knowing that your worth comes from no one and nothing external to you and that you're in a body, relationship, life, career, state of health and financial position that's perfect for you where you are right now.

Chapter 16 – Life is what you practice

Okay fabulous, excuse the pun but now that you've gained some insight into what "I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY" means now what?

Well the first understanding is that life is a series of patterns or habits. We respond in a certain manner to certain incidents because of how we've been socialized and because of beliefs we've developed over time. What this means is when a certain situation is presented to us, we respond in a habitual manner not considering that there may be other options.

I've talked in depth about habits in previous books so I won't go too much into the theory but basically we think approximately 80% of the same thoughts which means we pretty much keep repeating our beliefs, perceptions, assumptions and actions.

In a sense, we keep doing what we do so we keep getting what we get. Often when obstacles seem overwhelming they may be asking for a different response.

I remember once when I received a call from a lawyer demanding payment for a cellphone I had not used in over a year. I had filled in all the necessary paperwork transferring the phone to someone else but it seems they had never received it despite the confirmation I had received informing me that they had.

It would have been a simple matter of sending them my proof of confirmation had my computer not died a mysterious and sudden

death the week before. It was the same time as my laptop screen cracked down the centre. As a result I'd lost all my documents. What a predicament!

I tried explaining the situation on the phone but the lawyer must've thought I was pulling a fast one and began shouting at me demanding payment. The fact was I didn't have the ten thousand Rand she was demanding nor did I feel that I owed it because I had followed procedure. I felt angry that the situation was extremely unfair. I tried numerous times to sort it out eventually contacting the debt collector at the cellphone company. She tried to listen but never came back to me and was no doubt extremely busy.

I had a lucid moment with her on the phone one day when I suddenly realized how sad she sounded. I got the impression she felt overwhelmed with her job and personal life. My heart softened and all of a sudden I offered her a few sessions in coaching with me. Ironic but true. She couldn't accept them but all of a sudden she began to listen to my story.

A week later I was still feeling anxious about the whole thing but I'd asked for help and had surrendered it to the powers that be. I decided I would face whatever I needed to and call her the next morning but I never got that far. That afternoon I received an email saying the case was clear and that I had no need to worry and that the case was being scrapped.

What a miracle!

I couldn't believe it. I knew something changed in that moment but I had no idea just how much!

Marianne Williamson says a miracle is a shift from fear to love and if I look at that incident I most certainly agree!

Since then I've tried to practice shifting from fear into love as often as possible. What does that look like? I try to practice listening. Strangely enough considering my role as a coach, it's been a skill I've had to practice a lot and often I don't get it right. I've had to practice remembering that life is a game and something that I don't have to get right. I practice joy; this has been an incredibly challenging practice for me to instil because my natural tendency is to look at how things were inevitably going to fall apart and what I need to do to fix it.

In order to practice joy I practice cooking new things. I practice having cake with friends when I go out and not feeling guilty. I practice having a glass of wine every now and then which was also challenging at first having had a strong resistance to alcohol. I've learnt to practice letting my partner having a bad day, or me for that matter, without needing to fix it.

Gratitude is another quality that I've had to practice and to be honest it's been tough for me. I've always been secretly jealous of people who just seem to be grateful for anything and everything. It hasn't been part of my natural make up.

I have moments of gratitude where my heart is so full it feels it can break but often my mind is focused on what has gone wrong, what is going wrong or what has the potential to go wrong. In order to counteract the habit I started meditation to practice 'stilling' my mind.

I practice a technique called Mindscape every day which has been life changing. I can seriously recommend doing the course when you're ready for life to take on a whole new perspective but basically it takes you into an 'alpha' state of mind which takes you into relaxation mode.

Out of all the things I've learnt to practice, just being okay with where I am in life and whatever is happening is the biggest of them all. When I don't feel okay, I try to be okay in not being okay. Sometimes it's great and sometimes it's messier than a house full of four year olds. Sometimes it's downright hilarious.

What I'm trying to say here is that it doesn't matter what's happening, it's an opportunity to practice something different. So many of us judge but then we judge ourselves for judging. The challenge here is that we live in a practice of judgement. We all judge so the next time you do it, instead of criticizing yourself practice compassion. Perhaps you judged because you saw an aspect of yourself in another. Perhaps you judged because you were tired or felt overwhelmed. Whatever the cause, the effect will not be altered unless a different approach is used.

The Buddhists believe that life is a process of cause and effect and so if we seek to change the effect and we cannot change the cause then we must change the approach.

How do you change what you practice? Well first look at the small things. Whenever a client first sees me I ask them to write down all the things that they do on a daily basis over a 'typical' week. Most people check their phones within the first 3 minutes of waking. I know I got into a habit of this at one point but I changed it by turning off my phone so then I couldn't peek. Write down everything you do over a week including what you eat, what types of people you see, how you spend your free time, what time to leave for and arrive back from work and start to make small changes. Play with different 'practices' and see what the effect is for you. When you've found things that make you feel inspired, energized, free or joyful, practice doing those activities often...

...until they don't anymore and then practice something different. It's all a game and it's just about learning how to play.

Enjoy!

Epilogue

It's inevitable that we will go through times not even over the span of our lives but the span of our days when we don't feel okay. We feel that it's just all too much and we forget it's just a game and we just feel like sitting down and crying "*I want my mommy*"

What took me a long time to realise is that that's okay. It's okay because at the place that I'm OKAY, Life's OKAY all things are allowed.

In fact the point of breakdown, such as that described above, is usually the point of break open. It's usually the point where life begins to turn around.

I can't say there's just one thing that works when you're swimming in a stormy ocean of not okayness. Sometimes you just have to sit down and have a good cry. For women this is easier than it is for men. Sometimes you just need to clear your diary and go and be somewhere in nature. Sometimes you just need to talk to a good friend; someone who will allow you to be vulnerable and not try to fix you or the situation. Sometimes you've just got to breathe. You've got to just close your eyes, find the pain in your body and breathe into it.

Even when you feel like you're dying and all alone in the world; yup I've been there, know that things are happening for your highest good that whatever loss you might be feeling is opening the way for something new and that you are loved.

I love the story one of my favourite Buddhist teachers, Pema Chodron tells about when she met her teacher Chögyam Trungpa. She asked him some version of “My life is falling apart, I’m totally miserable, and what should I do?” and his reply was,

“Well, it’s like being in the ocean when the waves are really rough and high. They knock you over and you find yourself on the floor of the ocean with your face in the sand. The sand is getting in your nose and your mouth and your eyes and the waves are holding you down. But then the wave recedes and you stand back up and you walk until the next waves comes in and knocks you down and the same thing keeps happening. And each time you just stand back up and after awhile it seems to you that the waves are getting smaller and smaller.”

It’s not as we hope; that the more aware we are, the less the waves we experience. Rather it’s that the more we grow okay with ourselves through the process, the less impact the waves have.

I cannot explain it because I don’t fully understand but I had to write this book. I got the idea and within three weeks, the book was done. I did not do any research for this book unlike some of my other books; I just had to write it. I wrote it based on stories and based on what I call higher guidance. I can’t say that it’s altogether my work for these are the very concepts I’ve battled with over the years but it was like I finally started understanding what they meant.

I have been influenced by many brilliant teachers over the years; Brene Brown, Clarissa Pinkola Esta, Tara Brach, Dr Kristen Neff, David Whyte, Pema Chodron, Geneen Roth, Daniel Pink, Marianne Williamson and a little closer to home Angela Deutschmann and Dale Fox.

Please click on the resources below to hear them speak, buy their books or just follow their work;

www.angeladeutschmann.com/

www.brenebrown.com

www.clarissapinkolaestes.com/

www.danpink.com/

www.davidwhyte.com/

www.dnaexpress.co.za

www.geneenroth.com

www.kriscarr.com

www.marianne.com/

www.pemachodronfoundation.org

www.self-compassion.org

www.tarabrach.com

And there are infinitely more who have influenced my work.

I also subscribe to the weekly podcasts on www.soundstrue.com and can seriously recommend them as their focus is on gaining a deeper understanding of life.

As I'm driving I'll often listen to a podcast of one of the above teachers' talks and it instantly brings me to a place of okayness.

Their work and voices have inspired me to share my stories and eventually this book.

For many years I have wanted to share my messages with the world and have always thought that some big publishing deal would make it possible. I felt sad after every rejection letter not solely because of the rejection but because I felt my work was being prevented from being shared. I had an epiphany recently one morning on my run when I realized that in this day and age, that of the digital revolution, we can share anything! I decided I was going to publish this book on the internet free of charge for all those who desire to read it. If you're reading this then my intention to share has worked!

So now that I've preached about asking for what you want, I would like to ask you something. If you've enjoyed the content of this book, please share the link for others to read. Please also free to join the [Facebook](#) page and follow me on [Twitter](#).

One thing I do know is that we always teach what we most need to learn so if you've read this book thinking that I've been writing from some angelic realm far removed from the challenges of life, you are gravely mistaken. I've had to learn the above concepts precisely through the challenges that have come my way. I've had to learn to go with the flow instead of being a control freak.

I've had to learn to assume the best despite my natural disposition to assume the worst. I've had to learn how to play because I think I stopped playing when I was six; around the

same time my parents separated. So it's been a lifelong journey for me and the reason I'm so passionate about sharing is because it's been an amazing experience for me to realise that life can be different.

It's so funny when I think about the first time I met a friend of mine for coffee and she started talking about 'living in flow'. She spoke about waking up and just letting her day flow. I left thinking it was a nice notion but that it was ridiculous. I mean really, how could you just go with the flow? What about life? What about meetings and payments? What about scheduling?

Well life has a funny way of showing you things and in the months following that when I tried to enforce things, in accordance with my personality, they went pear shaped. When I stopped interfering, they 'flowed'. It was like one big universal joke except I felt like the joke was on me.

"This is ridiculous, I remember thinking. So I can plan but I must just go with how things turn out?"

The answer in my morning meditation was pretty much YES!

After being a solid runner and cyclist for much of my life, my body woke up one day and asked to go to yoga and dance class. I tried to push back for a while but I just exhausted myself so I just went with it. The first time I went to dance class I cried with tears of joy it was like being set free. The first time I went to

yoga I felt royally uncomfortable but in a weird way really enjoyed it.

After planning for so many years what I would eat, when and how and how much exercise I'd do, my body just said no more. I had to let it go through its cycles. I had to forgive myself for not looking like a supermodel and accept the fact that I was meant to look how I did and my body was beautiful.

I discovered that my body, just like the other aspects of my life, went through cycles. Sometimes I was really hungry and sometimes not. Sometimes I felt really energetic and other times not and so I stopped fighting. The interesting thing was that although I still had challenges, life seemed not quite as 'hard'.

When life DID feel hard, I had to forgive myself for that. So life seemed to become this 'dance' of playing, surrendering, fighting, letting go, assuming the best, owning all of my stuff, having compassion, practicing the good stuff and just accepting that I'm OKAY. I say 'did' as if it's past tense but it's still the same for me; play, surrender, cry, let go, own it, uncover it, forgive myself...and so it goes.

So if there's just one thing I can leave you with from these 170 or so pages, it's that YOU ARE OKAY. Imagine for a moment if you woke up today with "I am enough. I am okay" as your mantra. What would life look like for you? Would it change the way you conducted your day? If so then I'm guessing that this

one little concept might change your life. Awesome don't you think?

I asked myself the same question; *what would life look like for me if I accepted I was okay?* I realised that if I really was okay with me, I;

- Would only take one multivitamin a day instead of taking an overkill of vitamins. You know, for just in case.
 - Wouldn't eat the entire chocolate pudding because I could have more whenever I wanted and besides it ceased being a punishment or reward.
 - Wouldn't take on any work or social engagements I didn't want to.
 - Wouldn't judge myself for making mistakes.
 - Would let myself paint just for the sake of painting.
 - Would do more pilates...even though my brain tells me it isn't a 'real' workout
 - Would sleep in more
 - Would play more and worry less
 - Would laugh more
 - Would take life less seriously
 - Would tell people what I thought
 - Would put my work 'out there' despite my fears
- ...etc.

So recently I decided to do these things. I feel liberated not perfect, just liberated. And after these pages that's what I wish

for all of us; to be liberated from a world of 'should' and 'shouldn't' and 'must' and 'it's the right thing to do'.

Thank you for listening and allowing me to share. I would love to hear your stories so if you feel like it, please write to coach@lisasteingold.com

I'm open to your thoughts, to your experiences and to your feedback.

Wishing you Magic Unlocked and lots of love

Lisa

www.lisasteingold.com

About the Author

Lisa is an executive change coach and author. Her approach to mental, emotional, physical and soul change within individuals is revolutionary. Books she's authored include;

- *Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places*
- *Get Real*
- *Carbs, Curves and Everything in Between*
- *And Learning to Love Lisa*

Her work is essentially about the unlocking of Magic which is about learning to uncover our subconscious beliefs in order to transform our lives. She believes compassion to be the essential component on the journey.

She's learnt the process not through text books (although she is currently studying psychology) but through her life experience. She began professional life in a corporate career until one day she resigned and took a sabbatical mountain biking around South East Asia.

She's had interesting life experiences that include being arrested, climbing literal and figurative mountains and losing all her money...twice.

She's contributed to various publications including The Star Workplace, Psychologies and The O Mag. She dreams of travelling to France. She finds joy in painting, writing, cooking, adventure and time with her family.

The End.