

# COMPLETELY HUMAN

*How Authenticity Leads To Personal Freedom & Meaning*

*By Heidi Cornelissen*

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Freedom & Meaning*

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***“My effort here is to help you become aware of all your pretensions. Once you are aware they can be dropped, they can be dropped very easily – the whole thing is to become aware of them. They have gone deep; their roots have reached very deep into your bones, into your very marrow. So one has to be very alert, very aware, to find all the roots. Once you have found all the roots of your false pseudo love, you can uproot all the weeds and you will become again a child and you will start afresh from the very beginning of innocence, and then there will be spontaneity, naturalness.”***

***Osho: A Must For Contemplation Before Sleep p.225***

## PREFACE

This is a book that doesn't help you improve – but gives you permission to be yourself. And love yourself, warts and all. You'll learn that you're not alone or different to anyone else. It's easier to let go and just be who you are, once you understand who that is. And that's how your world changes magnificently.

This book has been a journey in and of itself, and I feel strongly that it's time is now. Oprah Winfrey released a few pages of her personal journey to the public recently and I got excited that celebrities are starting to share more and that audiences are ready to receive this truth. I believe the world is searching for real truth and honesty. Seeing it in others helps us feel okay about who we are.

A rapid amount of headway has been made in the self-help arena in the past decades especially regarding the Law of Attraction models. These models have also evolved and changed over time, but were the opening of a new drive to meet the average man on the street, encouraging personal or spiritual development work. The largest benefit is that so many of these concepts and principles are familiar to people all over the world who have started on journeys of personal transformation.

But - I think we're now ready for the next step in creating self-empowered and meaningful lives. I think it's time to get honest about who we are during our individual processes of change. This book provides that. It includes raw honesty, even in the form of real, original journal entries that I have recorded over my journey so far. I've included excerpts from my own feeling-space. I trust this level of vulnerability will resonate with you, the reader, and ignite a spark that says, "Oh, that sounds like me. I also feel like that!"

It **is** like you. And like most others. My story is one of a 'normal, average' person (me) who had a seemingly perfect life on the surface, but carrying an empty, nagging feeling that there must be more to her than this. Many people believe they have no choice but to live like this. There is no huge tragedy or life-altering crisis that changed my life, but rather just the soft, gentle call of my soul for change. From the inside out.

***So it's now the time to take all the head knowledge you've accumulated over the previous years of self-growth work and take ownership of who you (really) are by personally understanding the concepts to reach full self-acceptance. This is what it means to be Completely Human.***

It's time to truly feel your internal personal transformation as opposed to focusing on external manifestations.

It's time to stop trying so hard at your growth work, trying to be something that you're not.

It's time to stop trying to be good, be better, be spiritual or be enlightened.

This book shows the journey of the reason why we all feel the need to pretend, but then goes beyond that, to demonstrate how it can all be dismantled. This is not a book on positive thinking or affirmations. Nor is it about being bad and mean. It's about getting real and understanding your authentic self. Once you accept yourself authentically, your positive, loving self-expression radiates through naturally. No more trying.

This book could be the story of just about anyone. I simply journey with you through various events in my life from a feeling-perspective. That's what connects us, after all.

Some of the feelings may sound brutal, childish and selfish. But they're honest.

By me being open, vulnerable and honest, I trust you'll give yourself permission to do the same. Own your own story through a feeling-state and see where this takes you.

I started off writing this book as a tool for self-healing. I was putting my own pieces back together again as I had very limited memories of my childhood, let alone how I felt about any of it. I desired a deeper understanding of what made me who I am and also of how I found myself repeatedly facing unhealthy situations.

As I developed closure on a number of hurtful experiences, I felt the urge to share the simple stories and messages. I hope that the simplicity and ordinariness of what you'll read here will open your heart, spirit and consciousness to enable you, also, to set yourself free.

I encourage you to answer the Personal Review questions at the end of each chapter – don't merely skim over them wishing you knew the answers. They are all questions I worked through. This may be exactly the right time for you to stop glossing over things and move out behind the mask you show the world. Remember that the quality of your life is a reflection of the quality of the questions you answer for yourself.

I trust that by reading some of the real life encounters, journal entries and answering the questions provided (and some of them are not that easy!) – You too will find an intense pleasure and freedom from being nothing else, but just exactly who you truly are.

Completely Human.

And finally, because the reconnection of ME is an ongoing integration of my past, my present and my future (of who I'm still becoming), I've divided this journey into these three parts for you to enjoy and understand in your own life.

Enjoy the journey within!

Much love,

Heidi

November 2011

**To Helen –**  
**Who helped kick me out of the comfortable nest,**  
**giving me wings to fly.**

*Happy is the man who knows what to remember of the past;*

*What to enjoy in the present;*

*And what to plan for the future.*

*A Gibson*

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## INTRODUCTION

"How did I get to this point?" I wondered staring up at the ceiling, unable to move.

As I surveyed the paintwork of my running partner's apartment the pressing thought of, "How am I going to get to work today?" nudged me.

Otto was getting ready for work after our usual morning run, weighing up the options of leaving me on the floor for the day. But I managed to flip myself over and crawl to my car in a bent-over position. After driving myself home, hunched over like an old lady, I heaved myself onto my comfortable bed at home and relief washed over me.

This humbling experience reminded me of my original question, "How did I get to this point?"

The simple answer is easy in that when I'd started running years earlier, my orthopaedic surgeon had said, "Sure, you can run. But just know this. You'll never be pain-free and you'll only continue running as long as you can handle the pain. Because pain is something you'll always have."

He was right – today I was feeling that pain. Acutely.

As always, the opinion of others on my predicament, was easy to come by, "Just stop running!"

"Do something else."

"Take up cycling!"

But these weren't options for me. Something else was driving me to run. And run. I just had to figure out what from and where to.

I'd taken up this (younger) training partner, who pushed me to run. Both faster and harder. He introduced me to the unadulterated joy of long-distance running and all that is involved. I'd become addicted to the early morning runs with the crisp air on my face and ragged breathing that comes with exertion.

Naturally as time progressed, I challenged myself to do longer and longer distances with the Comrades Marathon (ninety kilometres) being the ultimate test of both my pain threshold as well as my endurance.

I ran for the love of it – for the personal satisfaction of being able to – and especially for how it made me feel. It opened up something inside of me.

My life turn-around happened when I started running. Major shifts, many initially inexplicable, started to occur.

And yet here I lay today, whilst preparing for the Comrades again, immobilised in excruciating pain wondering what it was all about. This type of back spasm took three days to release. And this only happened by lying on my back doing nothing. Absolutely nothing, which was torture for a "busy-busy" girl like me.

This was my first taste of stopping dead in my tracks in order to get my life going again. Although on this occasion I'd been stopped, literally, from running, it gave me pause to refocus and recollect.

I felt trapped. In my life. In my world. I was tired of repeating patterns.

Running provided an escape from it all. It gave me the freedom I so desperately craved and I was willing to suffer for those glorious moments of it.

My story covers the surrender of a "False" me to the revelation of the "Natural" me through a process of self-discovery. I now call this "Natural" me, my Authentic Self. And I find her interesting, engaging and spirited.

Learning to live from a place of my Authentic Self has taken me away from the 'running' of my life to a place of 'resting' in the pure abundance of it all. This comes from me, as long as I am fully present and engaged.

But, yes, I had a long journey ahead of me, needing to discover what was within me, before anything changed.

I learned how to reclaim who I am and within me found my Meaningful Existence (ME) and Completeness.

My life story isn't one of sex, drugs and rock & roll. (Sorry!) But it includes pain, denial, suppression, disappointment, loneliness, manipulation, depression, rejection, anger and even hatred. How about some disillusionment, loss, despair but also love and success as well?

Sounds like things that should never be spoken about, right?

"Ooh ... we don't talk about those things! It's important to keep focussed on only positive things. The power of positive thinking, the Law of Attraction and all of that! Right?"

Wrong.

Real-life feelings need to be expressed. And I've learnt how.

The writing of this book has felt like a marathon. It's one thing to acknowledge things about yourself and own your own story, but it's quite a different matter to share it.

I've fought with it along the way, but feel it's honest enough and simple enough to give you the inspiration to allow yourself to be you.

Just you. Completely You.

**PART I**  
**“WHAT TO REMEMBER OF THE PAST”**  
**Me and Fear**

*The task of the first part of life is initiation into outward reality.....  
Carl Jung*

## CHAPTER 1

### THE CHILDHOOD YEARS

#### On Being Bad ...

"What a good little girl!"

These words summarise my childhood.

I was the kind of annoying child that makes all the other children look 'bad'. I would put a bucket by the sink, climb onto it so that I could reach the basin and then proceed to dutifully wash the dishes. I was only four at the time! We holidayed as campers which meant that the kitchen area was communal with everyone able to see me doing good things. This was a great strategy for receiving positive feedback from the adults. I felt more important than the other children and was liked.

But not so much by the other kids. They were a different matter completely, as I continually 'showed them up'. On holidays (but not exclusive to holidays) spirited kids prefer to run around playing, having fun and very often, just being naughty together, but I was no Amelia Jane as I preferred to receive praise from adults than waste effort on silly play-time.

#### On Anxiety ...

Despite having a seemingly care-free period at nursery school, anxiety crept in. I was scared a lot. Fear has been a constant companion for me throughout my life. I was scared of letting go and enjoying myself!

But more than this, I continually experienced weird fears such as being locked out of the house naked.

I hated sleeping with my hands outside the duvet covers as I felt unprotected. I was convinced they'd be chopped off during the night. I could only sleep on one side with my back towards the brick wall in my bedroom, facing the door. This way I avoided the chills down my spine in anticipation of anything happening during the night. I felt prepared for any event hoping to see anything before it happened. I felt the need to be alert at all times.

I was a clingy child hanging onto my mothers' legs in unfamiliar territory. She struggled to get me off her when she attended functions.

Our exterior existence was carefree as our nursery school was on a 'plot' (a mini-farm). We played all day, ran in the open area and even milked cows. More importantly, however, was prayer time. We were exposed to the Christian doctrine from an early age and this ritual became an important part of our days.

Needless to say, during this nursery school experience, I was as always, the good child. My sister, Andrea, was the rebel. The owners of the farm liked me better (probably because I washed all the dishes!) and Andrea probably seemed harder work for them. I was best friends with the farm-owner's daughter and this gave me special privileges at nursery school. The other children were not allowed in the house but I was treated with special deference.

The lifelong competition and love-hate relationship between Andrea and me had already started. She didn't share in any of this unique treatment. My relationship with her became my beacon for right and wrong and "good" and "bad". Whatever she said or did that landed her in trouble (which was a lot!) was automatically 'bad' in my language. It was, therefore, imperative to train myself to do the opposite in order to be good, acknowledged and liked.

My anxiety levels increased as I was constantly on the lookout for what she could be up to, to make sure I did the opposite, (or even better... to report her!)

Andrea, being a year older, started school before me and I hated this. She was "ahead of me" and seemed to get all the attention with her new school requirements. I demanded to also go to school. by banging my head against the wall.

With me being only a year behind her, Andrea felt tormented by her little sister continually "snapping at her heels". This feeling continued for thirty years, when it (fortunately) came to a head.

I eventually (with a collective family sigh of relief) started primary school in a different city to where my sister had been at school. By now my parents had split up and we'd moved away to live with my mother and start a new life.

I enjoyed primary school, because I was blissfully unaware of what was really happening in my world around me. The divorce was going through with my mother trying to land on her feet despite all her life-dreams being shattered. My father was not around much, but then, never really had been before that anyway. My mother tells the story that it took us three kids a week to ask where he was after they'd separated. We'd become immune to his absence.

School was easy for me as I quickly made friends. Our new life of flat-dwelling also proved fun with all the other kids in the block. We played in the gardens, in the streets, learned to ride bicycles, swam in the complex pool, climbed walls and even hosted tea-parties for all the other kids in the area!

With cornerstones of fear and anxiety, school provided a sanctuary for me. It was an easy place to practise control and perfectionism. I could easily define right from wrong here. Teachers were right and everything else was wrong. Doing homework was right. Forgetting to do it was wrong. Life was easy to define in black and white and I always knew which side to choose.

As I grew up the opinions of my peers also started to matter which gave me some episodes of personal confusion. One day, a teacher asked us what our music preferences were. As the teacher worked her way, one by one, through the students, my anxiety levels increased. I was in a total panic trying to work out the "right" answer.

"What answer will serve me best?"

I eagerly listened to each classmate's answer, carefully watching the teacher's response. Pop music seemed to be frowned upon and classical music admired.

"What can I say?!" My heart rate quickened as my turn arrived.

"Country Music!" I blurted out, as this seemed a safe, middle ground option. That somehow seemed neither nerdy nor rebellious.

What was I thinking?

I hoped this answer would keep the teacher happy and wouldn't alienate my class mates. I spent so much time, anxiety and energy preparing what I perceived was the "correct" answer to and for others. I never at any point had considered what I really liked or enjoyed.

### On Self-Procrastination ...

I had a white-haired friend who lived couple of doors down from us and for one of her birthdays, she invited me to go and see an "Extravaganza" with her at the then-popular casino which had been built outside South Africa, for tax reasons. I 'responsibly' turned down this generous offer giving into all the self-talking happening in my head.

"But there are almost-naked ladies in it!" I heard my mother's voice.

"It's not appropriate for young children to go and see!" More of the same. And the most powerful message of all, "What will people think if you go?"

The decision was easy to make as I didn't want to disappoint my mother knowing what she thought of this particular family's habits and lifestyle. My mother hadn't actually said I couldn't

go, but at the next parent-teacher evening, I heard her (very proudly) tell my teacher that I'd done a 'responsible' thing, by declining the offer.

"I'm so proud of her for doing the right thing," she boasted.

### **Voice of the coach:**

As our childhood is the preparation for our adult life, so is the training phase preparation for any race. How you race will depend on how you trained.

The pre-race preparation period can feel very long and trying at times. It can take months of preparation, sacrifice and discipline. You need to have worn-in the right shoes and socks, have tried the right energy gels and accumulated the correct mileage per week to peak at the perfect time! Many of the longer races require that you pre-qualify with both distance and time in smaller races before the big event. You'll therefore have plenty of practice, ingrained habits and a particular routine and style that races with you every time.

It's the same with beliefs, fears and desires that you bring from your childhood into your adult life. The saddening truth behind this "good little girl" that I was, is that all she wanted was just to be noticed. She wanted acknowledgment and needed approval for being good, because she felt invisible. So, therefore, helping out and being a goodie-two-shoes got her what she so desperately wanted.

Logically therefore, looking at your childhood years is an important part in your understanding of who you are today. Childhood years form how you think and behave in almost all ways - in both conscious and subconscious ways. The unwitting irony in all of this is that the things that are unconscious are the things that tend to run your life. You're just not aware of it.

I never rebelled. The good little girl could never do such a thing! Rebelling would mean I was bad and would've provided a huge risk to people potentially not liking me. I couldn't afford to have others disagree with my behaviour. I hated being wrong and was fearful of getting into trouble. If I was receiving praise, I was visibly accepted and acceptable. These were the things I felt I needed for survival. And survival is paramount to continue living.

Unknowingly, however (or perhaps just unable to admit), I rebelled covertly, but this only revealed itself (to me) later in life once I'd reached some form of self-honesty. This type of rebelliousness is far, far crueller and leaves deeper, long-lasting scars.

My biggest focus was to manage people around me in an effort to get as many as possible to like me. This involved a lot of hard work and increased my anxiety levels. I'd carefully consider everything through my continual internal dialogue. I'd re-evaluate everything said and done to figure out how to do it differently next time, if needs be! I spent more than thirty years with this behaviour, putting perceived expectations from others ahead of my own desires for myself. This kind of self-imposed pressure is exhausting, but ironically at the same time caused me many, many years of sleeplessness. I spent many nights tossing and turning, busy rehashing the previous day and anticipating any outcomes for the following day. I couldn't allow myself to be caught unawares!

But nonetheless, I walked around with a continual nagging feeling that I was about to get caught out and that something terrible would happen! Being so unsure of myself caused havoc with my self-esteem, especially during my career-building phase when it ran amok.

Julia Roberts, in the movie "Runaway Bride" shares a similar trait. Richard Gere, the determined reporter trying to expose the true person behind her public story, asks her at some point, "How do you like to eat your eggs?"

Being surprised by this unusual question, she avoids answering it. In an argument later he returns to the discussion, highlighting its relevance, "You don't even know how you like your eggs. You just choose to have them in the same way as your current boyfriend does. Why don't you make up your own mind?"

She gets the point as later in the movie there's a wonderful scene where she has all types of cooked eggs laid out on her kitchen counter. She systematically works her way through them to decide on her personal favourite.

It took me a significant portion of my life to figure out my metaphoric "favourite cooked eggs".

Anxiety more often than not, is a constant companion into adulthood. As a child it was completely unknown to me, of course. I never felt safe, particularly emotionally and later, as an adult, also physically as I was living in a crime-riddled country.

Anxiety is defined as "distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune or an earnest but tense desire: eagerness."

Unrelenting anxiety has the power to cripple you. You're not free to move, think and feel for yourself. You're trapped within your fears and your limitations. I now call the behaviour of putting other people's needs and desires ahead of your own, "self-procrastination". I was an expert at putting myself on hold. I never answered anything truthfully. Instead I approached everything from a desire to feel in control of the situation and a need to be right.

This anxious little girl who stood on buckets to wash dishes spent her life clueless and disconnected to what she really wanted, to what she really liked and to what her own opinion was. She was completely removed from the biggest person of all - Who she really was. My childhood fears about the way I slept were early messages about my lifelong fear of exposure. I was always protecting myself.

When you don't know who you are, or if you're afraid to be who you are you're basically betraying yourself. You're *pretending* to be who you think you should be. If you're honest, by continuing with the façade, it often feels like a constant nagging that you're disappointing yourself... yet again.

"Self-procrastination" brings with it nothing but constant anxiety and fearful anticipation. I was always afraid of what could happen next. I was terrified of being found out. I'd always try to be one step ahead of everything and everybody in order to feel okay. Caroline Myss says, "... the single greatest fear mankind has is the fear of being humiliated." Humiliation is the debilitating and often crippling fear that prevents anyone from being spontaneous and carefree.

Now, as an adult, having experienced some good doses of reality, I understand the power behind a universally accepted 'Law of Averages, which states that - One third of the world will absolutely love you; one-third will hate you; and one-third won't care about you either way. That's quite a sobering reality. Sobering, yet liberating. Being all things to all people is simply an unattainable goal.

## Your Personal Review

How did you prepare for your race called 'life'?

.....  
.....

What is your earliest memory as a child?

What does this tell you about you?

.....  
.....

What were you looking for, as a child, from your parents and/or teachers?

*Love, attention, acknowledgement, affection, praise, recognition, presence?*

.....  
.....

What behaviours did you develop to receive this? (Think of these as survival mechanisms)

*Perfectionism, Neediness, Rebellion, manipulation, anger outbursts, disengagement etcetera.*

.....  
.....

How and where are these behaviours playing out in your adult life?

.....  
.....

What fears did you have as a child? How safe did you feel growing up?

.....  
.....

Who were the people of influence during this period? What were the influences?

.....  
.....

Whose opinions matter more to you, than your own?

.....  
.....

What have always been your expectations of yourself?

.....  
.....

Where do you currently put yourself first?

.....  
.....  
.....

Where do you currently put yourself last? And what are you hoping to achieve by this?

.....  
.....

**Carl Jung says that the first seven years of life are the most important time. Those first seven years are going to be decisive for all your life. You will repeat the same pattern on different planes. Without developing an understanding of this however, you may just end up 'pretending' throughout your life.**

Is this what you want?

.....  
.....

What are you still denying about this period of your life (Ages 0 – 7) and how is it affecting the adult you?

.....  
.....

On a scale of 1-10 how connected are you with what you want? (\*\*)

.....

What can you do to change that?

.....  
.....  
.....

*(\*\*) A connected person feels peaceful and grateful for their childhood. You've recognised and accepted your upbringing, by understanding your role and how it has brought you to this place. You'll appreciate how being you (fully connected to your past and present) can create your life as you wish to see it. You experience a sense of self-worth, completeness and passion living your desires.*

## CHAPTER 2

### THE START ... FORMAL EDUCATION

The start line of any race is abuzz with excitement and nervous energy. The smells of vaporubs, transact plasters, Chinese remedies, deep heat, gels and early morning breath fill the air as the crowd closes in around you. Those that aren't chatting nervously about injuries, training issues or anticipated running times are checking heart-rate monitors and watches.

"Why's the satellite not finding me?"

"I'm aiming for a PB (Personal Best) today. How about you?"

Some are merely bouncing up and down on the spot. The more enthusiastic runners are running sprints in front of the start line to warm up their muscles.

The loudspeaker music stops suddenly as the countdown begins. Silence descends as the cages holding the runners fall, just before a gun-shot signals the start. The elite runners are the first under the start banner and the more average runners take a while to get from where they lined up to cross the start line. The supporting crowds start cheering and the glorious sound of feet on tarmac rushes up to greet me. I'm home. I'm running and I have nothing else to worry about for hours but to get to the other side. It's all about me from here on.

***Being a runner means you are now "free" to win and lose and live life to its fullest.***  
**Bill Rodgers**

Wouldn't it be great if every day of your life could start like this? Being able to take off and only worry about yourself?

### On Being Unimportant ...

I'd started school and was managing quite easily. I also fell into Christianity and Sunday School like a fish drawn to water. The rules were simple. Right and wrong were easily identifiable. I didn't really have to think too hard or make my own decisions. My little 'boxed-in' life was safe and understandable. It was small with only four sides, a bottom and a lid. These parameters and limitations protected me from the perceived scary world where I couldn't cope.

A man (from our church) volunteered to take us three children to Sunday School every Sunday. My parents were both Scientologists but when they split up my mother thought it better that we be exposed to Christianity instead. My father remained entrenched with the 'Organisation' for many years using some of the teachings and methodologies to help me with my asthma.

There's no faulting my education. It was an education probably better than most. My mother never being happy with us merely able to read our class books, pushed us from an early age to go further. She'd get us to read our readers backwards and spell every word in the book! Reading quickly became the great love in our lives. I could spell words like Mississippi, Czechoslovakia and liquorice from Grade 2. I learnt the alphabet backwards and drove everyone mad reciting it like a stuck CD.

We joined the public library and loved our Saturday mornings there with many happy hours spent amongst choice and opportunity. The library eventually banned us from the competitions as we won them all!

Naturally with a background and value system like this, academic achievement became a competition in our household. The mark or percentage that we received wasn't as important as our ranking in the class. I always knew where I lay in the academic scheme of things. I was continually encouraged to 'beat' certain other children in the same grade. I had a friend who attended Gifted School with me and it became of paramount importance that my marks were higher than hers.

"Ah, congratulations on that result – but where did Abby come?" my mother would always ask.

At high school I had a friend who was in the 'Red' group (the less academic group) and my mother asked me, "How can you be friends with her? She's not at your intellectual level. What can you possibly have to talk about?"

***"About the ground rules, .... You know, 'paying your dues,' 'opportunity only knocking once' and 'early birds getting the worms'... Well, they were all made up by loving parents, who wanted more for their kids than they ever had, yet who knew absolutely nothing of life's magic, conspiring elements, and other sundry woo-woo."***

**Mike Dooley**

The academic highlight of my primary school was winning the standard four Spelling Bee. I won the joint first prize in this regional competition and was awarded a certificate in front of a special school assembly. It was a unique event only held that once and it provided honours for the school. I felt visible, special and acknowledged.

For many years I kept this certificate hanging on my wall because it reminded me of all the pomp and ceremony involved. Despite having received many further academic honours over my school and university life, this award always felt different.

Continuing with the academically-driven life, I finished High School with seven subjects as opposed to the usual six. This involved having extra classes after school-hours and sitting additional exams. We had these as co-ed classes with pupils from other schools and I befriended a guy from one of the more rebellious schools in town. He was refreshing to talk to as he was honest, bright and philosophical for his age. I'd spend hours talking to him waiting for my mother to fetch me after work. Despite studying computer studies together, I learnt a little about life from a rebel's point of view.

My mother, at some point explained to me that all she had ever wanted in her life was to be intelligent – or rather, to be thought of as intelligent. This was her biggest desire and I felt her need for this and strived ever so hard for academic excellence to please her.

***"The greatest burden a child will bear is the un-lived life of the parent."***

**Carl Jung**

### **On Being A Burden ...**

Besides the academic conditioning being part and parcel of my childhood, I also had health conditioning. I was a sickly child, permanently in and out of doctors' rooms and/or hospitals.

At times after being raced to hospital during the night, my mother would frantically track down my father at a girlfriend's house to look after my brother and sister as I lay waiting alone in an oxygen tent for her return.

It became a part of life living between specialists, natural therapists and a variety of elimination diets. There was always some sense of drama surrounding my health.

Coinciding with the divorce of my parents, our move, me starting school and the remarriage of my father, I was eventually diagnosed with asthma. We thought the long journey of not knowing what was wrong with me was finally over!

My mother was referred to an excellent lung specialist who recognised the nature of my ongoing illnesses. This doctor helped me through diagnosis and provided ongoing treatment over many years. We formed a long-term relationship and she watched me grow up.

Now that we knew what was wrong with me, I couldn't partake in much exercise for fear of an asthma attack. I couldn't eat what others ate. I couldn't play in the dirt and dust. I had to take medicine all the time. Wherever we went my mother would warn teachers and parents how to take special care of me. Everyone was made aware of my special dietary needs and 'circumstances'. I stood out like a sore thumb as teachers made special arrangements and considerations for me after and during school. The larger the issue my mother made about my illness, the more embarrassed I became and increasingly denied the reality thereof. I went to the

opposite extreme pretending nothing was wrong with me, but all the time feeling like everything was wrong with me.

I pretended so well that nothing was really wrong with me, that I surprised everyone (myself included) when I ended up in hospital for ten days as an adult from asthma!

### On Being Forgotten ... and Rejected

The divorce, which was not an easy process and put my mother under enormous stress as she continued to fight for financial support from my father. But both his financial and physical absence continued for most of our childhood. He'd quickly moved on and married his girlfriend once she fell pregnant with my now half-brother. He often 'forgot' to fetch us when it was his turn – either from school or for his weekends with us.

Our hearts broke as we sat and waited for him to fetch us on Friday afternoons. Excitedly we'd count down the minutes until his imminent arrival. We'd do this using the large clock on the wall above our dining room table. We'd stare at it, in anticipation. But as the due hour came and went, we'd realise the inevitable had happened.

Life had gotten in his way, again.

### On Seeking Love ...

I spent most of my life seeking my parents' recognition of my existence because this felt like love to me.

I'd rush home and shout with excitement, "I got 73% in maths!" to a response of, "Good, but what happened to the other 17%?".

Desperate for some recognition, I'd try a different approach, "I came in the top ten!"

"Oh – were there only ten people taking part?" came the reply with a laugh.

***Denying or refusing to deal with some unpleasant fact in your life is the source of most stress and unhappiness.***  
**Brian Tracy**

### On Being Weak ...

One of the biggest lessons of our childhood was that emotions were weak and were never to be shown to anyone.

"Being strong, independent and intelligent will see you through. That's what people respect. Showing emotion and falling in love makes you do silly things and you really don't want to appear silly, do you?" my mother would continually remind us of her personal philosophy.

"Don't allow any emotional attachments to get in the way of your achievements," she'd warn, "Your education and schooling are much more important and more reliable."

Despite all this being fed to our intellect, we experienced a confusing paradox growing up in this kind of emotionally constipated environment. I was taught to shut down emotion by being reprimanded and mocked if I did show any. She'd make cruel jokes about friends who had crushes on boys at school, reminding us how weak emotional displays were. She made light of our friends' heartbreaks and heartaches and this prevented me from ever admitting to any crushes of my own. Of which there were a few!

On the other hand I confusingly witnessed my mother's frequent emotional outbursts when she felt overwhelmed and without control. She'd sulk with us, punishing us with silence for days on end. Her temper tantrums included breaking plates and crying to evoke reactions from us. It was hard to know where we stood with her from day to day.

"I don't understand your mother," a friend once said to me, "Why does she keep changing her mind at the last minute?" Once again, literally moments before taking me to a party, she'd

without any real reason suddenly refuse to take me. Very embarrassed and without understanding why, I'd phone my friend to apologise for not being allowed to come any more.

I naturally felt like it was something I'd done wrong and wondered what made me so bad. And because I didn't want to admit to my friend what a bad daughter I was, I made up some fabulously outrageous excuse about what had happened.

"I can't tell my friends what's really going on," I'd explain to Andrea, "What will she think?"

### **Voice of the coach:**

My health from early on was a great example of a limiting belief actively at work in my life. My mother inadvertently taught me the words, "I'm sick, therefore I can't..." I allowed many experiences and opportunities to pass me by, choosing instead to believe "I'm sick."

Carrying all of this with me, I internalised the belief that I was a burden to my parents. Everything always seemed so much harder in our family than elsewhere! I generalised this belief system into a fact that all children are burdens to all parents. This burdensome belief came into play much later in life with a (very) deeply seated belief system that children ruin your life and are burdensome.

Metaphysically speaking, our bodies carry our emotions and these are rooted into the cells memories which result in an illness, disease or condition. My infertility became a reality in my mid-thirties.

I adapted my behaviour into being an 'easy' child so that I'd be wanted by them and they'd keep me around. I believed that the more contained I was, the less of a burden I would be. Containing myself meant that I didn't express myself or my desires, I was always considerate and good. I helped, I achieved and as an adolescent I started supporting myself as soon as I could.

Receiving sufficient recognition reinforced this 'burden-less' behaviour for most of the rest of my life. Life, therefore, continued to be very black and white, very right and wrong for another twenty five years. With this extremist behaviour emerged a judgemental and holier-than-thought person playing as a super nice, friendly being.

Strangely I look back on my life with a warped sense of pride. I feel like "I survived". I was loved (in my mother's own way). I was fed, clothed and educated. All my basic needs were provided for. I remember being asked one day about my mother and I responded with, "She's done a wonderful job. She managed to raise all three of us on her own. She's put all three kids through a good tertiary education."

I'd answered this question from the viewpoint of my mother's values! This is what had been important to her and how she'd chosen to raise us. With my response, I acknowledged her for this and didn't want to appear ungrateful or critical. But, since then, I've realised my own values are vastly different to hers. Mine include things like love, freedom, spirituality, affection, emotional honesty and respect. These are the things I'd liked to have received from her, but they weren't hers to give me. They were mine to give myself.

The anxiety and anticipation involved in tiptoeing around my mother trying to get her to speak to me after upsetting her left an indelible footprint in me having to always say the right thing to help others feel better about themselves. I grew up feeling like I walked on egg shells most of the time, living on a precarious emotional rollercoaster. Being a child meant I didn't have the perspective of seeing what was really going on, and instead I'd rally around trying to make my mother feel better, less emotional and less angry with us.

Often overlooked is the fact that it's a parent's role in any parent-child relationship to be the parent. That sounds obvious, but very often the roles are reversed and children end up with the

responsibility of making the parent feel okay about who he or she is. Parents' functions include providing love, safety, boosting self-confidence and encouraging the child to be who he or she is.

The days of teaching a child not to brag are over. Children need to be taught to own their accomplishments and achievements. These are important parts of self-esteem. But, on the other hand, the ownership of mistakes and failures need to be encouraged as well. This in essence is true ownership of all aspects of your being.

For many years into my career, I followed the philosophy of 'emotions cause weakness' and 'weakness won't get me ahead'. I then usually refused to back down or show emotion. I believed I had to be strong and independent to be taken seriously ... so I had to ditch all emotion.

What I see in the world now, however, is that the strongest women are those who can show their emotional vulnerability and know that this in no way changes the job being done. They are stronger in allowing themselves to feel first and go ahead anyway. It's not the denial of feelings that makes you strong. It's understanding and moving through your feelings that makes you strong.

I'm slowly unravelling the memories attached to my childhood because, as an adult it served me well to forget it all. Pretending seemed much easier and pain free. Denying the truth created an immediate, perfect reality for me. But I couldn't shake the feeling that I was a fraud.

With clients today, I see adult children still feeling the need to be strong for their parents. We protect and make excuses for our parents. I did the same, aware of the sacrifices my mother had made all her life to raise us. I was also terrified of the intense hurts and rejection that lay beneath the surface of my feelings, but unwilling to own it. It's far easier to repress emotions than to admit that our biggest fears about our parents could actually be true. Parents aren't the perfect beings you wish them to be. They are as fallible as you are, but for self-preservation reasons you need to place them on pedestals. But when they inevitably fall off, you're not sure how to deal with it.

The conflict you feel is that you've spent many years craving approval and wanting their love so badly, that admitting to anger, disillusion and resentment doesn't seem possible. Being angry at them would mean you're worse than bad - and what kind of a person does that make you?

Understanding all of this is part of the process of forgiveness and compassion towards parents and the hurts you've felt. But you can't get to the forgiveness part until you've gone through the angry phase. This is a natural part of these core relationships. To forgive your parents for what you believed *they did to you* is an important part of growing up. Despite only being a perception; it feels like reality to the wounded child who carries the scarring into adulthood.

The continual cycle of anticipation and disappointment formed a large part of my relationship with my father. There is a psychological term called 'finding the missing father'. Having a missing father (either physically or emotionally) causes fear and confusion in the child which becomes very well masked into adulthood. The adult, however, seeks these 'missing elements' elsewhere, external to self in order to satisfy needs and longings. I spent many years looking for many, many things: Affirmation, acknowledgment, achievement, acceptance, love, visibility, success, meaning, power and importance.

I thought these things were missing from me and needed to be 'found' and 'earned' to mean I was loved. This became my definition of love which I carried into all my relationships. But upon taking my inner journey, I embraced that ultimately peace, joy, health and wellbeing were to be found within me. More so than I'd thought possible.

On Self-Pity ...

My final years of primary school were difficult as the overwhelming teenager crept in. I wasn't part of the "in crowd", or the "Gang" as they were called. Being a library prefect in Standard four meant I spent a lot of my spare time in the library. Although I enjoyed this opportunity, it may have been one of the many reasons I wasn't considered "cool". Go figure.

Cool or not, I was elected a prefect in Standard five (the final year of primary school), but shied away from the limelight. I watched the "cool gang" from the sidelines enviously, desperately wishing to be their leader... or at the very least, just to be included. I spent a lot of time thinking, "Poor me" and "I can't do that ... I can't be like that".

***There is no such thing as can't, only won't. If you're qualified, all it takes is a burning desire to accomplish, to make a change. Go forward, go backward. Whatever it takes! But you can't blame other people or society in general. It all comes from your mind. When we do the impossible we realise we are special people.***

***Jan Ashford.***

The parents of the Head Girl's (leader of the Gang) also went through a divorce during this period. Her mother remarried as she'd discovered she was pregnant. Despite being a 'sin' this was somehow okay with everyone and never detracted from the Head Girl's immense popularity. Although my family situation was less 'scandalous' (in my eyes) I'd built our divorce up to be an issue that reflected poorly on me. It was easier to hide away and pretend it wasn't true.

But here, in reality, right in front of my eyes was a divorced, but COOL family. Veronica's friends would run to where her mother waited after school for her each day. She'd bring the baby to show them all. There appeared to be no shame around the family break-up and everyone treated them excitedly and animatedly. Instead, I chose to carry my shame with me through High School and beyond.

In case I didn't dislike myself enough, I rubbed salt deeper into my own wounds by being acutely and painfully aware of how little money we had. I watched enviously as Veronica's mother gave her friends rides in their Porsche. I hated our family car, a little mini which could hardly fit us all in. Veronica's mother invited the gang over for fun times and lavish parties at their large house. I loved finding things wrong with Veronica and the gang.

"She didn't do her homework!," I'd notice gleefully and "Oooh. She and Lucy are having a fight."

Every little thing I found wrong with her made me feel better about my life. I also decided to put more emphasis on my academic results which would mean that the 'real' authority figures, namely parents and teachers, would like me more and be prouder of me than her.

### **On Self-Sabotage ...**

I started playing netball in Standard four. I'd taught myself to catch a ball by standing for hours throwing a tennis ball against a wall. I played a game called 'Sevens' which involves a countdown of different throws and being able to catch each. I started netball much later than most other pupils, but, surprisingly in standard five, I was chosen as "Centre". The Centre position is the most active position in the game and this player needs to be fit, quick, agile and able to move around the entire court. The Centre is often captain of the team as well. I was glad that I'd tried something different. Something sporty! I was a library prefect, remember?

But this achievement brought with it a couple of experiences. Firstly, I replaced Veronica's best friend as the Centre position. She'd originally been a good friend of mine before migrating over to the "Gang" and the increasing distance between us was made final.

Secondly, and very surprisingly, is that I was good at netball. Quite easily and effortlessly it seemed. I'd had no previous sporting training, let alone support from the family. Sport wasn't something our family did. But, even more surprisingly, I loved Netball and was the only one from my school selected for Provincial trials.

Provincial Selection took place on a Friday afternoon. There were good netball players from all the schools in the region competing for places in the Provincial Squad. My mother'd even told my father about this big event, and I kept looking through the crowds, anxiously hoping he'd remember and arrive. He didn't.

### Voice of the coach:

My lifelong habit of comparison to others was well underway alongside the ever-nagging question "What's wrong with me?"

In coaching circles today, this "What is wrong with me?" question is called *the rogue thought* from where everything starts. This is an underlying plaguing question that disturbs self-esteem. Everything you feel about yourself starts with this negative foundation.

I actively looked for other people's flaws making me increasingly judgemental and holier-than-thou. I'd then deliberately behave in the opposite manner. I did what I knew best - I became more of a nerd, more righteous and more withdrawn. Not aware that this was simple jealousy, I created an entire fake persona living from values that weren't really important to me. I convinced myself that my path was the 'higher path' and I'd be better off long-term.

Justification is a powerful tool that you use to protect how you're really feeling. Justification is a reason, a fact, a circumstance or explanation that defends or justifies something. You may need these to understand or accept things. But this often includes assumption.

How often do you assume what's happening to others and why? Despite what you may think, you have no guaranteed way of knowing what is going on in someone else's mind. But nonetheless, so often you behave or react to something that you think is 'real' but is, in fact not.

Do you find yourself implementing the good versus bad scale to people and situations to make you feel better about yourself?

"As long as I'm the good one, I'll be okay."

"It's alright for her to have an untidy house, but I could never have one"

"It's alright for her son to fail maths, but I'd never allow mine to fail"

This is merely justification and false thinking. You're applying inequality and using this to make yourself feel better about who you are. How about just letting things be?

My self-sabotage and self-pity played out in my script of it being easier not to try than to try and then fail anyway. At least this way I had an excuse and a reason to justify the failure.

Due to the increase in pressure with regard to the netball trials and my insecurities about it all, I was overcome with a sudden lack of desire to play well. I felt ill-equipped, out of place and inept so I performed dismally to protect myself from disappointment. It was a safer option, using justification, to play badly and feel that I deserved the rejection than to have tried hard and be rejected anyway. Using this logic, the ultimate rejection was far easier to handle.

Many years later, my husband once summed this up with, "If you don't believe you can do something, you don't even try!"

### **On Being Poor ...**

With Primary School being over, High School didn't bring forth happier times. With the combination of teenage emotions, hormones and peer pressure, I became miserable and probably depressed, not that I ever would've admitted to it!

My French teacher called me aside one day and said "You'd be so much prettier, if you just smiled. I'd love to see you smile!"

Why would a teenager smile anyway? Life felt hard for me and I clearly wore it on my face and in my posture. The inspecting school nurses diagnosed me with scoliosis, which would later turn out to be the enemy of my running dreams.

With all three of us growing up, we moved to a larger flat in the adjoining suburb. I still wore the millstone of divorce around my neck, and now being at an exclusive all-girls school I became even more acutely aware of our 'broken home' living in 'Sunnyside'.

Our suburb (Sunnyside) was officially out of the zone for this prestigious school. My ever-resourceful mother had called the school with the information that I attended "The School For The Gifted". The proud head mistress of Girls High couldn't allow a gifted child to attend another school and I was therefore granted admission. "She belongs with us," my mother was informed.

This school was good for Andrea and me academically but triggered all my social insecurities. I felt reminded throughout high school that a special concession had been made for us being there. I understood that more was expected from us, than from others. Many of our friends lived in the good suburbs with nice houses. Their parents drove nice cars and bought them modern, fashionable clothes.

Our family on the other hand continued to struggle financially. It's one thing to attend a "good" school that provides a superlative education, but another to be able to keep up with the financial commitments involved in all the accompanying opportunities attached.

I was often invited away with a friend for holidays. Going away on holiday was not part of our world. But unfortunately, staying over at friends' houses proved tough for my mother to accept. She took the invitations to be pity and didn't want others thinking we needed help or charity.

Many invitations to holidays, sleep-overs and parties were therefore declined for fear of the reflection they had on her. Once again, this was embarrassing to explain as I didn't quite understand the variety of superficial reasons she actually provided at the time.

### On Justifying My Existence ...

At High School, bearing the weight of my own "need-to-prove", I continued with my nerdy activities. I joined both the chess and bridge clubs. I also took a seventh subject after hours.

My academic achievements served me well, as I felt useful with a purpose. My homework would often be copied by other students and people came to me with questions as I always knew what was happening in class. Of course I did. I prided myself on this.

Girls High was renowned as a rigidly disciplined and high performing institution. This meant that my academic achievements were easily acknowledged but, because of the school's fierce reputation it instilled in me a deeper fear of ever breaking the rules or stepping outside any boundaries. We had a strict dress code which included wearing a beret every day. I never lost mine during the five years of high school. In fact, I still have it today – with my name neatly stitched inside.

One day in my first year there, we ran late to catch our bus to Girl Guides. Andrea and I arrived out of breath at the bus stop in the nick of time, but our friend was crossing the road trailing behind us. To hurry her up, I yelled (loudly) at her to run! Although she made the bus and the Girl Guides meeting, there was an aftermath of this innocuous event.

On Monday morning at School Assembly, the headmistress, (a formidable, authoritative, domineering woman with purple rinse hair) announced, "This weekend, I received a call from an "Old Girl" who was appalled to see one of our very own Girls High Girls shout across a public road. As you're all well aware, young ladies don't behave in this manner and I expect to see the guilty party in my office straight after this assembly."

Naturally, with this school being a disciplined institution, I reported to her office afterwards. Had she really given me a choice?

Protective Andrea joined me and we both took the scolding. The headmistress, without missing a beat, took the same opportunity to remind us both that we'd been accepted at the school as a special privilege - to us. "It would be in both your best interests to remember that," she warned, before dismissing us.

Once again I felt like an imposter. She'd raised the already high bar of performance expectation. I'd have to comply even further to justify my stay there.

So, dutifully I earned academic colours for the rest of my schooling years.

### On Being Passive Aggressive ...

The perfectly successful academic wheels fell off in Standard nine. I developed a stubborn attitude with regard to studying things that didn't make sense to me. One day, uncharacteristically, I asked a question during calculus, as I felt totally lost. I received the inspiring response of, "Don't worry about what it means. It doesn't matter. Just go ahead and learn the formula off by heart and know where to apply it."

Appalled at this, I dropped down to a C mark from my dutiful A. I'd dug my heels in and stubbornly refused to learn maths like a parrot, "That's just stupid. How can I learn when I don't understand?"

My mother was, of course, called in by the teacher who was concerned about this unacceptable C. Extra maths was proposed (and, unbelievably, a suggestion to chew on calcium tablets to ease my nerves before a test). I didn't want to do extra maths and made this point clear by studying (off by heart) for the next test. I got ninety-something per cent for this and was asked to stay behind after class.

"Did you study for this test?" Mrs Coetzee asked me.

"Yes."

"See. You can do it. It's just your attitude. You need to study." And that was that.

I hadn't successfully made my point, so never worked hard at maths again. My final school-leaving symbol remained a C, which disappointed both teacher and my mother alike.

But at least I'd felt like I was in control. They weren't going to tell me what to do!

#### **Voice of the coach:**

Passive aggressiveness breeds passive aggressiveness. I learnt it from the resident expert in my life - My mother. If I wasn't in agreement with something I found it terrifyingly difficult to just come right out and say what I thought. Instead it seemed easier to covertly (and negatively) influence the outcome to my liking through manipulation.

Passive aggressive behaviour develops from an inner conflict of not wanting to disappoint, but simultaneously with a deeper inner urge of wanting to get your own way. Simply put, it's the result of a person with a low self-esteem trying to get a sense of power over others. But, sadly, the only person that suffers is the one behaving in this manner, as others tend to see straight through it.

A passive aggressive individual tries very hard not to exhibit outward anger or appear malicious in any way. They're the 'nice guys', with unassuming behaviour, they're ever-gracious, being benevolent, but they have a latent, more manipulative way of being. It's often thought that the passive-aggressive response to life comes from parents who exercised complete control, preventing their children from expressing themselves.

My passive aggressive behaviour allowed me to express my many negative feelings and resentments in an unassertive and passive way. I, of course, would never have admitted to this behaviour. In fact, I would have vehemently denied it. I was "perfect", remember?

My passive-aggressive traits eventually took over my career. Unable to effectively stand up for myself, for what I believed and felt I deserved, I sabotaged an organisation, my career, and the staff. But that comes later.

### On Jealousy ...

I started working at the age of sixteen and held down a number of jobs in the retail industry. I even had one in an ice-cream parlour. Andrea was turning into a "typical teenager" and started mixing with a popular crowd. Being the little sister in the wings I watched as her dress sense became more risqué and her social life blossomed. For self-esteem preservation, my little green-eyed monster resorted to mocking her for the teenage romances she read, for the soppy pop music she listened to and for the fact that she always had to go out somewhere, with someone.

"You know you're making yourself just like everyone else, don't you? Why aren't you strong enough to stand up to peer-pressure?" Such 'wisdom' from a jealous younger sister.

Andrea seemed to fly through school effortlessly. I worked so hard for my results. I was strapped to my desk, always studying (seven subjects and all). She partied, played and yet still cruised through.

Nothing flourishes with this kind of resentment and any iota of trust and acceptance there could've been, dropped into the ever-expanding abyss between us. I would tattle-tale on her to my mother when she was relentlessly questioned on her whereabouts.

"Andrea is reading Mills and Boon!" I'd whisper to my mother. These were taboo in our house as not being considered 'real' literature.

"Andrea has a boyfriend!" Naturally I didn't know this, as she shared nothing with me, but it caused a row nonetheless.

The TV show "Family Ties" (with Michael J Fox) was banned in our house because Alex, (Michael's character) lost his virginity at seventeen in one of the episodes. My mother was scared of the influence this would have on our morals and we were no longer allowed to watch this, despite being one of our favourite shows.

This banning summoned a feeling of uncomfortable conflict within me. I'd always managed my mother's approval by siding with her against my sister. But this Family Ties debacle however also affected me. I'd enjoyed it as well and her logic didn't make sense! I had to contemplate the possibility that perhaps my mother wasn't being reasonable? But that would mean that Andrea was right? Surely not!

Needless to say there was continuous fighting during this period. Andrea chose to move into the school hostel despite us living only about five kilometres from school. The household was tense and unhappy and I chose to alienate myself from Andrea as she'd caused this public embarrassment in the first place.

"Why can't you just be good? Why must you fight all the time? Mommy's crying, you know!"

The 'wise' younger sister again. I just wanted my mother to be okay and it was my job to look after her. "What will everybody think? You've moved out of home and hurt your own mother!"

During this period my sister caused another ruckus as she wanted a blue-haired doll as a present. We all found this a little strange.

"Why do you want a doll at your age, let alone a blue-haired one?" I asked, confused.

"I just want one," she replied adamantly.

"They're very difficult to get. No one makes them because they're so silly," I wasn't giving up the fight.

Andrea eventually managed to find one for herself but our criticism didn't end, "Who'd want a blue-haired doll?" my mother continued to quiz her, "What's the point?"

"There's no point," Andrea argued back, "I just like it. And I want it."

"That's just so weird," my mother rolled her eyes, "What will people think?"

### On Social Inadequacy ...

A very good friend of mine was raped during high school. She was abducted from a bus stop on her way to school. I was shocked and didn't understand.

"What did she do to provoke the attackers?" my mother asked me.

Feeling my friend must have done something wrong, I didn't speak to her again as I didn't really know what to say. It was easier to just ignore the whole thing.

The final big event in a schooling career is the matric (year twelve) dance. And mine was an unmitigated disaster. This is the formal ball that is held in our final school year. I recall no redeeming events to this evening. I'd been casually seeing an older guy, already out of school, for a short while before this fateful evening and naturally asked him as my date. The double whammy was that the ball shared the day with my eighteenth birthday, which naturally brought with it its own set of expectations and pressure. I wanted it to be a night I wouldn't forget!

But just as all the planning was going according to plan, my boyfriend gave me the famously cowardly break-up line a week before the dance. "It's not you, it's me," he said.

It was, in fact, a girl named Shelley.

Feeling devastated, but being desperate without other options I still took him as my partner! Being eighteen and feeling rejected, I wasn't about to appear desperate and admit to another guy that I'd been dumped days before my dance! I chose to endure awkward suffering instead.

And I'm not sure which was worse, the awkwardness or the suffering.

The other challenging aspect of the dream-night was my dress. As Mel Gibson learns from Helen Hunt in the movie 'What Women Want', "It's all about the Dress!"

I'd had mine especially made by a colleague of my mother. I'd wanted a short skirt to show off my legs and all seemed good to go. But Murphy struck whilst I was getting dressed and putting on my pantihose. As I pulled up the leggings I ran out of sheer nylon at my knee!

The carefully selected, perfectly matching stockings were, in fact, knee highs! They didn't reach my hemline! I wasn't brave enough to don a Madonna- look and instead, attempted to cover this faux pas up by pulling and tugging the short dress down towards my knees.

So I filled the ongoing, lengthy awkward silences between my partner and me by relentlessly groping my dress down to cover the flesh-filled gap! This kept me busy, almost as busy as my resolve to sulk throughout the entire evening.

#### **Voice of the coach:**

I took my mother's belief on board about something being wrong with my friend to have caused her circumstances. This type of belief system leads to a limitation in that whatever happens to you it's your fault and you've deserved it somehow. This means that you believe that everything is somehow about you - or about something you did, which may not be the case at all.

Sometimes things just happen as experiences. You're not being rewarded or punished. It's how you deal with circumstances that reveals more about you than what may or may not have happened.

I was ill-equipped to deal with my friend's pain and with the realities of the world. I became more intent on keeping myself safe and uninfluenced by avoiding uncomfortable situations. I've always been skilled at running away from conflict and awkwardness. It's easier to make up an elaborate excuse about something and then head for the hills.

Plain, simple compassion would have been a good skill to have used in this situation. But how do you give compassion to others, when you're so hard and uncompassionate towards yourself?

The story of my Matric dance is actually a silly story. Ironically, I'm probably the only one that remembers this entire devastating event at all and realistically - What on earth was I so humiliated about!? It was another waste of time, effort and energy, that could've been avoided so easily with a bit of perspective (from an adult figure) and self-acceptance (of myself).

### On Meeting Boys & Relationships ...

Church became a safe space for me. Midway through high school I joined the youth group and became part of the committee. This meant I instantly belonged and everyone knew who I was. I'd earn my place in the limelight, but in a safe, good and acceptable format. Also, as a bonus the church environment was "good" and, being at an all-girls school, this was a place where I could meet some boys.

Despite receiving notes and gifts from a couple of interested parties, I never quite knew how to respond. And therefore, nothing ever materialised.

I loved these years at this youth group although many emotional ups and downs presented themselves. I was amidst raging hormones with many girls liking a select few boys. One particular family was the most popular with all the girls liking the three brothers. Just the degrees of infatuation varied. I liked the youngest one. We had many fun times with this group and with the Church. Every Easter weekend we had a camp for four days. Four days of shaving cream fights, midnight raids, secret letter-passing between boys and girls.... Many a relationship started at Easter Camp and ended shortly thereafter. Short periods of intense emotion!

My first 'real' relationship was with a gorgeous and talented singer from Boys High (our brother school across the road). We dated for a very long nine months, mostly as a friendship, due to my naivety. To add fuel to the non-burning fire, his father was a minister and his upbringing was even more conservative than mine! It was really a case of the blind leading the blind. Our nine months were spent writing letters (almost daily) backwards and forwards for which my brother played courier. My boyfriend belonged to a charismatic church and we used to meet up on Sunday nights when we were allowed to go out. We did some fine juggling to get there and back but managed to enjoy the few hours together amidst all the praise, worship and singing in tongues.

I'd been working since I was sixteen and one of these part-time jobs included working at the Scientific Research Institute (CSIR). I continued to work there on a semi-permanent basis once I completed High School. I felt that I had months of nothingness ahead of me, causing some consternation to my mother. I'd previously decided that I wasn't going to study straight away, but hadn't made much of an effort at finding a job yet. As everything was up in the air, I agreed to work in the canteen area of the CSIR. Preparing food and sandwiches on a daily basis was by no means my forté, but it became exciting as a number of other students joined to work on a civil engineering project in another department. A couple of the guys seemed interested in me. In fact two of them vied for my attention – or so I thought. I was happy enough to be included in the invitations to their after-hours parties, but unsure of what to do at them. I'd had minimal exposure to alcohol, and naturally with these being typical student parties drink flowed without end. My strategy was to save myself from embarrassment and hence I steered clear of any interaction. I was named an Ice Queen and Andrea reported most of the gossip back to me. Although neither of us had been taught social skills, my sister somehow had stepped outside herself and adjusted easily. I merely bumbled forth trying my best to adjust.

One of the 'hot' students who I'd developed quite a large crush on - I anxiously waited for his arrival every day, watching him walk to his office - actually asked me out on a date one day. I'd been waiting for this, but with an overdose of excitement and stupidity, I responded with, "Yes, sure. But only if I can bring Teresa with me!"

My friend, Teresa was roped in and joined us for the evening. She was there to make sure I didn't do anything that I *shouldn't*. I'd invited my own chaperone along!

The relationship with this 'hot guy' is a story in itself as we tried for many years to start a real relationship, but with my fears and continual running away and his fear of expressing himself, it all proved frustrating and eventually impossible.

Amidst all of this, unsurprisingly, Andrea eventually flew the coop. She moved out of home to attend university in another province. This was her attempt to get as far away as possible. She ended up living in Cape Town for the next ten years. Without her in the house, everything seemed to settle into a calmness. The fighting stopped and I was no longer consumed with my jealousy of her. I now had no older sister to learn from (albeit resentfully) and I was in the 'real outside world' on my own. So I retreated and became more withdrawn, unable to talk to my mom about anything as I feared her disapproval or rebuke.

I often felt like I was being teased for growing up: for using or wanting to use make-up, for liking boys, for talking non-stop on the phone or for wanting to hang out with my friends. I, therefore, didn't really embrace the experience and explore these things. I started believing my 'girlish' desires and behaviours were unnatural and I put them aside to keep the peace. Instead, I retreated to my room to read or write letters. The 'hot' guy I still had a crush on had moved off to the Army and had become my latest correspondent.

After this Christmas holiday experience in the canteen, my uncle fortuitously got me a part-time job for my "gap year" at the Armaments Corporation, where he worked. Going travelling and seeing the world were never in my radar. I chose the responsible, safe and planned-out option – and that was work.

My gap year provided huge learnings and was liberating in that it felt like my first taste of adulthood. I worked with "real adults" in real relationships talking about real issues and 'important' challenges. I was exposed to adults other than my mother.

My immediate supervisor, a wonderfully genuine lady from a small town in the Cape Province, was in a long-term relationship when I started working there. Her relationship had, however, been through many on-off phases. Her boyfriend had been married before and he had no desire to do it again. But she desperately wanted to settle down and for him to make an honest woman of her. This brought with it emotional upsets and drama for her, and sharing an office meant I was privy to the inside scandal.

I paid close attention and got to see another side of divorce with its related struggles. I observed the amount of work and communication involved in relationships. Amazingly, it was possible for people to "break up", come to an agreement and then get back together again. And when he finally proposed, I saw that Cinderella had indeed won her prince over.

I witnessed a lot of raw, honest emotion first-hand. I saw what being in love was about, and witnessed some of the highs and the lows involved. This relationship was "gritty" and involved maturity, honesty and communication to work through things.

### On Fun-Filled Days ...

I finished my contract at the Armaments Corporation and having saved enough money, I stepped out into the wonderful world of University. University life was a dream come true for me. It was my first taste of freedom! I felt less restricted than in my working year. Here I made some

fantastic friends, who I still have today. I experienced unconditional friendship and love, although it took me fifteen years to realise that this is what it was.

My friends came from all fields of study and with myriad backgrounds. Being at an Afrikaans university the English speaking students tended to stick together. We had our designated spots where we'd meet up and do... well... nothing. Inside the larger English-speaking community, I was part of a tight-knit group of five who did almost everything together, except exercise. They were pretty sporty and I avoided it at all costs. Until I got my pink bicycle. Which made me the laughing stock, but gave me my own set of 'wheels'!

***Fate chooses our relatives, we choose our friends.***  
**Jacques Delille**

One of my greatest achievements to date is that I paid for my own university education. This started with determination because I was too proud to ask my father for tuition fees.

"I'd rather suffer than put myself through that!" I objected when my mother suggested I ask him as my sister, and later my brother did.

And suffer I did, working a number of part-time jobs and studying towards distinctions because these provided me with bursaries towards the following year. I exercised enormous financial self-control during this period. Not having sufficient cash to open a bank account I lived out of little brown envelopes. I'd take my salary from the various places I worked at and divide the amount into seven days. I'd put a fixed amount into each envelope and that would be my limit for each particular day until the following weekend when I worked again. It was a primitive budgeting system which worked. When the cash ran out, it ran out.

Using the above-mentioned budgeting technique included an arrangement to pay my tuition off on a monthly basis, for as long as I was at University. That helped me significantly and I managed to leave university almost debt-free.

If it's true that time flies when you're having fun, these years whizzed past! I had fun and even survived mini bouts of recklessness. I laughed. I partied. I connected with people, did silly things and had a prolific social life.

Having no money to buy a car, I had no incentive to get my driver's licence. I eventually managed at 20 to pass on my third attempt. My nerves killed the attempt both previous times with my foot jumping right off the accelerator whilst reverse parking! My friends got their licences one by one, and they'd drive all the way out to fetch me on the other side of town. This was easy as driving was still a novelty for them.

My rebellious side discovered the art of skipping class – yes, really! I also discovered the art of writing tests on a hangover. University's largest contribution to my education involved the introduction of alcohol. I learnt to drink. Lots.

My boyfriend at that time, and a very close male friend (Miles) both worked as bar-tenders and we spent many hours 'bar-flying' our days away. Good times. Young and irresponsible days.

Miles was always there, looking after me. He'd plonked himself next to me one day in first year Economics, with the words, "Hi. I'm Miles." And we started talking – and haven't stopped.

We'd often pack up our bags on a Friday and head off down to the coast for a weekend. Five of us would squash into Miles' VW Citi Golf with our luggage packed in large black plastic bags on the roof. A trailer was too much of an investment, as we'd rather spend our money on Spiced Gold and Coke! Many weekends involved a haze of spas, card games, drinking and laughing.

My boyfriend's parents part-owned a private game farm where we'd spend some long weekends. Many hours were spent in the middle of the bush enjoying deep and meaningful, alcohol-induced conversations, listening to the calls of hyena and the grunts of hippos. One year Miles celebrated his birthday on the game farm. I had an accounts 'sieketoets' (make-up test after a car accident) pending which I wanted to study for. I bravely fought off the enticement

and begging from the group and stayed at home studying. I got twenty four per cent for that test! And never heard the end of it from Miles and Libby.

The English people tended to stick together and developed a 'clique' with regular meeting spots. The sixth floor of the library, for example belonged to the English crowd. On days I wanted to socialise I'd hang out here, but on days that I wanted to study, I'd hide out on the first floor with its morbid silence. I got banned from the sixth floor for a period due to excessive talking and laughing. Our little group developed quite a reputation there!

University was a great permissive period for me. I worked, I played, I partied and developed a personality, socially. I let loose – and life felt okay.

### On Being In Denial ...

I changed my study direction after my first year at university. I'd originally enrolled for Personnel Management (Industrial Psychology) but switched over to Accountancy. This therefore meant that my undergraduate degree would now take four years instead of three. Turning twenty one was a big occasion and with my studies now taking longer, this fell during my University stint.

My friend, Libby's parents very generously offered to host my party at their house. Oozing excitement I jumped at the opportunity with budgets on spreadsheets and started the necessary planning immediately. And what a party it was! I went to bed just before six in the morning after a visit from the cops. All good indicators of a decent twenty-first.

But, during the pre-planning arrangements one evening, sitting in the living room, chatting and laughing, I unexpectedly burst into tears. "I don't know if I should invite him or not," I sobbed into Graham's white shirt watching mascara run down it. I was referring to an unexpressed conflict I'd kept buried about inviting my father to the party.

If my friends were surprised by my unexpected waterworks, the fact that I had a father left them almost speechless. They looked around at each other and someone bravely asked, "But, isn't your father dead?"

"What? No," I responded confused.

Apparently I'd never spoken about him. Ever. He was my best kept secret. And I wasn't even aware of it. Apparently, he'd never come up in any conversation as I hadn't seen him for many years. Out of sight. Out of mind.

And that's a great analogy of how I coped with things my entire life. I denied their existence.

I'd naturally bottle everything up inside me and then suddenly when under a bit of pressure, to make a decision the volcano would erupt. This eruption would then seem disproportionate to the event and so I'd feel the need to magnify the issue to not look stupid for over-reacting. It all became a tiresome vicious circle.

Naturally, being a 'good' girl, I did the "right" thing and invited my father to my party. He arrived, albeit a few hours late, slightly drunk and with a new girlfriend in tow. And as usual, I denied my anger and embarrassment and showered him with gratitude instead.

What else does a good girl do?

He gave a forgettable speech in many aspects except one part where he said, "I can always tell lots about people by the friends that they have. Looking around this room, with the number and calibre of people here - I know Heidi will always be okay."

I've always been fortunate to be surrounded by good people. That has made all the difference. People love, teach, care, encourage, make me laugh and continually change my world.

***Friends are God's apology for relations.  
Hugh Kingsmill***

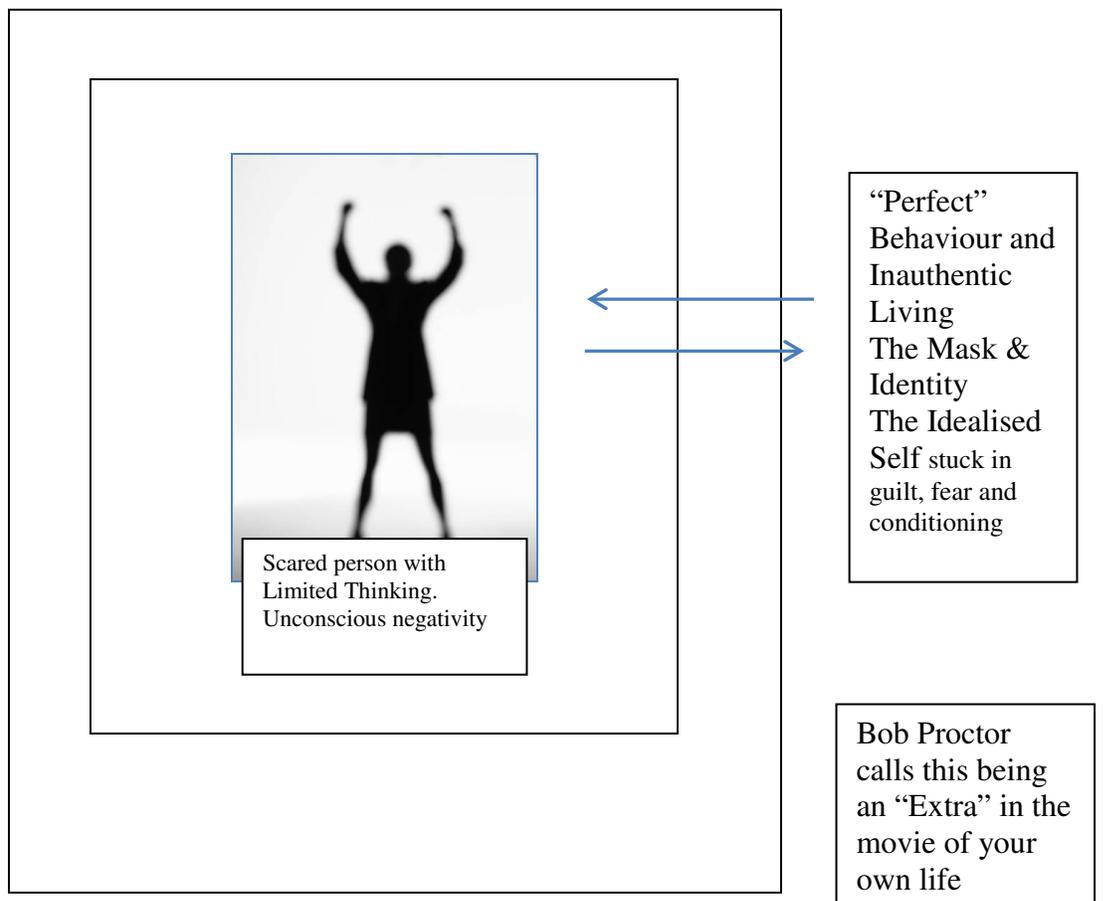
**Voice of the coach:**

Although I always had many friends I always worked hard at being a good friend. I hadn't yet realised I could stop the trying (the hard work bit) and just "be" a good friend. The truth is that my friends saw through me. They knew I wasn't perfect, and it didn't matter to them.

I always believed at some level that I was liked because I followed the rules, did the right thing, was easy to have around and didn't rock the boat. This kept me behaving in a certain way believing that others could give and take away their acceptance depending on how I'd 'behaved'. With this particular group of friends at University I started expressing myself more freely. I was different in a number of ways, one of them being socio-economically - but it all dissolved into acceptance.

I couldn't afford to pay my own way on one particular holiday, but it didn't matter. The others clubbed in extra to pay my portion. I just had to stop the noise in my head and accept that I was liked. Just as I was.

## HOW WE BEHAVE IN DENIAL



This diagram represents an individual at the centre of his or her life with many layers or walls between this and the external world. Now - Consider how you behave with your external world.

If you can consciously move in and out through all the layers in this interaction, you're experiencing "Fully-Engaged Authentic Living". This means you're hiding nothing of the scared person with limited thinking from anyone else.

You're open, exposed and vulnerable, but okay with that.

But – the truth is that you most likely believe it's easier to win security, love, freedom and happiness by building walls around yourself. This keeps you safely tucked away inside. The bridges you build to your fellow-men are across all the layers of fears, anxieties, limitations and lies you tell yourself. The worst irony is that the more you hide yourself away, by building thicker walls around yourself, the more anxious you become to keep them there. And naturally the more anxious you become, the higher your walls become.

***The walls we build around us to keep sadness out also keeps out the joy.***  
***Jim Rohn***

A vicious circle leading to total disconnection with yourself and within your relationships.

This is called Inauthentic Living.

## Your Personal Review

What are your school memories? Who were your greatest influencers here?

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.....

What do you still carry with you from these days? Eg 'I can't', 'I mustn't', 'I'm not allowed to'

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.....

What were your early measures of success in life?

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.....

What made your parents proud?

.....  
.....

What were your early fantasies as a child? How did you express them?

.....  
.....

What embarrassing things did you get up to?

Have you made peace with some of your more humiliating moments?

.....  
.....

Where have you felt 'left out'? As child, early adult and currently?

.....  
.....

What are you currently beating yourself up about?

- What values did you take from your parents that aren't really your own?
- What beliefs did you take from your parents that aren't really your own?

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.....

What did/do you consider to be weak?

.....  
.....

What are your beliefs about weakness?

.....  
.....

What values and beliefs can you choose to let go of now, as an adult?

.....  
What emotional attachments/rules do you have associated with wrong versus right?  
.....  
.....

What are your beliefs about parenting – can you see where they come from?  
.....  
.....

What were your early adult years like?  
.....  
.....

Who were your best friends at school or college? And where are they now?  
.....

What would they say about you? How do they see through you?  
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What does this era of your life say about you? What have you allowed to change?  
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What do your friends (old and new) still not know about you?  
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Where do you still fear rejection?  
.....  
.....

What is the biggest achievement of your life?  
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.....

Can you recognise where you're still behaving inauthentically?  
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What walls do you still have around you to protect yourself?  
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What do you still keep bottled up inside? Where do you still feel 'What's wrong with me?'  
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If you could totally rebel in your life, what would you give yourself permission to do?

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## CHAPTER 3

### THE EARLY ADULT YEARS

After University, I got the "perfect job" quickly and easily. I interviewed well because of my string of part time jobs.

"We're looking for someone with no accounting experience so that we can train them the way we'd like to," my future boss said, "and the fact that you've already worked extensively shows a good work ethic."

I worked at this first job for thirteen months and learnt the basic accounting ropes, involving some good, solid fundamental skills and techniques of superior planning, organising and reconciliation, which have served me well.

But, working in the real world highlighted my struggle with authority. My passive aggressive personality was deeply conflicted. I couldn't stand up for myself and fell victim to emotional abuse and power-play.

#### On Feeling Inadequate ...

My insecurity and desperate need for approval and acceptance combined with a conviction that "everyone is better than I am" proved to be a fiery combination with a rude, disrespectful, over-achieving and insensitive supervisor. The rest of the accounting department comprised twelve mature women who'd worked there for a while already. I felt like a young upstart flaunting my degree, as my academic qualifications had naturally ranked me higher on the apparent hierarchy.

Being eager to please and to prove myself to the bosses, I upset the apple cart with changes and requirements I needed from the support staff to assist me in my reporting. My work performance was important to me, and to perform meant I needed information regularly from them. Practising my diplomatic skills to their maximum, I broke through the initial resistance and "won them over" by continually making them feel good about themselves. This often meant however that I had to work twice as hard: first stroking their egos and then getting the data I needed from them.

But, the larger challenge lay with my immediate supervisor, Trisha, who, quite frankly, terrified me. I was physically scared of her. She had no issues with conflict and would regularly yell and scream, pointing out all my mistakes, loudly and in front of everyone. The anticipation of this humiliation cost me many anxious weekends nervously waiting for feedback on Monday for something I'd submitted on Friday.

I'm not proud to admit that one day I, in fact, *ran* away from her. I heard Trisha leaving her desk heading towards mine. I bolted. I ran down the passage and held my breath hiding in the Registry Department behind filing cabinets. I stayed there until a colleague came to tell me all was okay. I snuck back, breathing again, having merely delayed the inevitable.

My lifeline during this period was that every day I'd listen to the Abba song, "I have a dream" on my drive to work and back. I'd play it loudly and repeatedly, singing at the top of my lungs. I wanted out – that was my dream.

One day, due to increased complaints from the staff, the Financial Manager asked me what the issues were. I suggested that Trisha presented the staff morale problem and didn't treat us well. This situation blew completely out of control with external consultants being called in and all staff interviewed and grievances formally lodged. I felt guilty as I'd been pivotal in the process. Trisha was removed from permanent staff and re-employed as a contractor.

It was during this time that I had the near-death experience with asthma. I worked in an open-plan office with the majority of the women smoking at their desks. My lungs didn't handle this very well and I got sicker and sicker, but ignored the symptoms. I didn't allow myself sick-leave or even the admission that I felt less than one hundred per cent. One evening I got home and told

my mother I was going straight to bed. Because she'd noticed something wrong with me, she'd recently given me a bell to keep next to my bed in case I stopped breathing. Paul, my then boyfriend arrived to visit me just as I was trying to ring this bell for help. I was raced to hospital where I was admitted immediately with doctors trying to get me breathing again. My lung specialist arrived and kept me there for ten days! The people at work were naturally shocked at this unexpected event, but this turned to anger when they were told they were no longer allowed to smoke in the open plan office because of my asthma. A separate smoking area and smoking times for the finance department were created which did nothing to repair my relationship with Trisha who was one of the smokers.

Naturally during this period, Paul was regularly accosted with my stories of this 'bitchy' boss, Trisha. He spent all thirteen months of my employ listening to me whine and moan about her. Many years later, after Paul and I had broken up and I worked elsewhere, I attended one of his birthday parties where he introduced me to his new girlfriend ... Trisha.

Seeing her again, I had an urgent panicked need to flee again. But I took a deep breath, sat down and put on my happy face. I even attempted nonchalance before she leaned forward and loudly (of course) asked me, "So Heidi.. What's this I hear... apparently, you never liked me and thought I was a bitch?"

Life goes in circles and the world can sometimes be very small.

***"You can't give away your self-worth and expect it to come back"***  
***John-Roger***

#### **On Being In Control ...**

A couple of years previously I'd bought a Mini. A disastrous purchase as Miles spent more time under it, trying to fix it, than I spent driving it. I'd borrowed money from my mother at her mortgage rate of prime plus one per cent, to get it.

Because the Mini proved unreliable, as soon as I'd got my first real job, I bought a decent car namely a Toyota Corolla, which extended my limited finances. Paying this off, combined with repaying Mr Mini (as Libby affectionately called it) to my mother made me cash strapped, for a few years.

To stretch financial matters more, I wanted to move out from home. So the conservative, risk-averse side of me systematically saved for a couple of years to try and move out. I'd started my "trousseau" by buying bits and pieces of household goods at monthly "HeyDay" sales. Owning even the smallest things like crockery, plastic-ware and even a potato peeler ensured I wasn't going to be unprepared. I did everything in my power to ensure I'd want for nothing.

I was therefore easily lured into my next job with the promise of "big bucks". I was offered double my current salary. This was at the beginning of the cell phone era with network providers being established and frantically recruiting staff. I leapt at the opportunity to join one of them.

More money meant I was immediately able to move out of my mother's flat. Yay! I felt great relief.

My mother couldn't accept that I wanted to leave and forced me to store all my newly bought goodies at Libby's parents' house (where I'd held my twenty first). My mother wanted no involvement in this process and couldn't find a way to help or support me through it. "I don't want to encourage or help you, as you may feel that I want you 'out' of home," she explained by way of justification.

***"There is no prison more confining than those we don't know we're in."***  
***Shakespeare***

So – with all the preparation, fine tuning and planning, Libby and I moved out into a lovely flat on the sixth floor of a large block of flats. Using my pension payout from the Trisha-job, I bought my own Queen-size bed! And a fridge! And a microwave!

I was wildly excited about this experience. It would be like house-sitting (which had been some of my holiday jobs), but permanently! I'd made it. I'd set myself free. Although my planning and preparation process would have made a fastidious army general feel incompetent, I'd successfully wangled myself out of home. I could live on my own terms, feeling safe and secure, earning a decent salary with sufficient 'stuff' to make me feel comfortable.

I loved our little flat and our many experiences there. I have a special place in my heart for the small, round dining room table where friends would gather over a meal spending hours idly chatting away about nothing in particular and everything in general.

We had a large entertainment area downstairs with a swimming pool. I celebrated my twenty-fifth birthday there. And this was the first social function Roelof attended when we were 'just friends'. We played silly-buggers in the pool and he dunked me under water. Paul, my then ex-boyfriend still wanting to get back together with me, pulled Roelof off me with the words, "Now you've done it. She hates being underwater and can't handle being dunked."

This is still true – I get hysterical under water.

Both Roelof and Paul visited until late that night, each wanting the other to leave first. It was a fun game of testosterone to watch. But Roelof and I weren't to get together for another six months.

But, at work, reality eventually set in and my new highly-paid job that provided my home came with a price tag. The roll-out of the cell phone network was happening much faster than anticipated and I'd inadvertently stepped onto an accelerating conveyor belt. I seemed to work 24/7 with many of these hours wasted travelling. The haul to work and back was 120 kilometres per day.

Starting this job opened my eyes to the beginnings of corporate politics and games. There was an endless stream of red tape to get through to achieve anything. At one point the full cheque approval process alone took nine signatures! And this was *after* the requisitioning and ordering procedure! I discovered my grit, determination and a backbone. It was a tough environment to get ahead in, with people, procedures and policies changing faster than the weather in Melbourne. I received a couple of promotions with a growing team under me. Despite being competent, I was never part of the inner circle. I became acutely aware, for the first and only time in my life, that I was a woman with all the perceived associated limitations. Although when the employment legislation changed in South Africa and women counted towards the relevant statistics, things changed. But being a statistic and actually joining the boys' club were two different matters.

This kind of ongoing work pressure brought out aspects of me that I *had to* eventually unlearn. I had staff that I only communicated with via sticky notes. Unbelievably (in hindsight) I was too busy to talk to them. My brother who temped for me during one of his holidays, called me up on it one day with, "You're impossible to work for. You're just plain horrible because you scream, shout and perform when you get upset."

I reeled back feeling hurt and defensive. Did I mention it was a stressful environment?

Shortly after my brother had shared his view with me, my creditor's clerk did the same,

"You're very inconsistent," she remarked, more diplomatically, "That makes it tough sometimes."

I had a number of students working for me at this time for which I had a very low tolerance. I didn't accept anything less than a professional dress code. Lynnette, one of the more diligent but harder-partying students arrived at work one day wearing jeans.

"What do you think you're wearing?" I queried.

"I didn't have any clothes to wear. They're in the wash," she replied.

"Well, you have two choices. Go home and fetch something else to wear or go home and stay there," I offered. She drove the long distance and returned to work in borrowed clothes.

I also made Lynnette work till six o'clock both on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve one year. We were doing archiving and I held her 'hostage' until it was all complete.

"You're being paid for these hours, you'll work them," I demanded from her despite all the other staff members having left at lunchtime.

Although I may have been delivering results, I wasn't competently leading my team or the people around me into any greater heights. I had no real influence and was making no difference to their lives. But after having received the unflattering feedback I decided I really wanted to understand what leadership meant and how to do it. This part of my job was going to be tougher than mere reconciliations on a spread sheet as I was unfamiliar with these types of variables. This people-pleaser had a long way to go to become a people-influencer.

The biggest question to do with any feedback you get is – what do you do with it?

Well... I took mine on board and decided I needed a different approach to management and I wanted to learn how. A number of training options for leadership development presented themselves which I took on, wholeheartedly. I learnt that although on the odd occasion natural leaders may be born, the majority are taught. Leaders learn to be successful, through self-awareness, feedback and often failure. And I'd already had some failures.

I've always had the ability to devour information through reading. Many a weekend day would be spent plonked down on the floor in the business section of Exclusive Books (a large bookshop chain) pouring over new ideas and strategies to implement. I learnt new philosophies and applied new approaches – which actually worked!

The more I learnt, the more I read. A future managing director would later commend this slightly bizarre behaviour at my next job.

### **On Co-dependency & Breaking Up ...**

As I'd closed the door on my relationship with Paul the previous year and had been focusing on work, another door started opening up. In the form of Roelof, who'd been in the background as a friend, but now stepped up to play a more dominant role in my life.

The first clue I had of this was on arrival at the Cape Town airport. I'd spontaneously booked a flight down after being hauled over the coals for something not my fault at work. My immediate supervisor had let me down by letting me take the rap from the Chief Accountant. I'd escaped to visit Andrea who lived in Cape Town. As we drove out of the airport's parking and I switched my mobile phone on, plenty of text messages beeped.

"What's all that?" she asked.

"Just smses from Roelof," I answered scrolling through them.

I hadn't reached the end of them when the phone rang. "Have you landed?" Roelof asked, "Safe and sound?"

"Mmmm," my sister nodded, "JUST Roelof. Oh, I see."

Roelof and I worked together reporting to the same boss, sitting on opposite sides of the same partition where you can't keep many secrets from each other. We'd progressively grown closer as friends since my birthday party and after some attempts to go on a date, we eventually got it right. It became a bit of a scheduling game with me working such long hours and Roelof finishing up his honours degree.

Libby, however was becoming progressively ill and showed the beginnings of a severe depression. Her emotions were conflicted with regular ups and downs. I felt torn between my increasingly stressful job, my new boyfriend and Libby's escalating demands on my time.

But, unable to say no in any assertive manner, I spread myself incredibly thin to please all parties. I'd rush home from work in Johannesburg, make her warm milk and collect whatever she needed and take it to her in hospital.

Many of the first 'dates' with Roelof were spent around various hospitals in Pretoria visiting Libby. Luckily for all our sanity, Roelof finally drew the line and I had to make a choice.

"I'm not going out with you to visit her in hospital," he said, "When I come with you, she asks me to wait in the corridor. I may as well not be here. You need to decide what you want."

Once again I recognised the feeling of the walls of my life starting to close in on me. With both work and home life becoming too much I had to move out. And move on. I just wanted to be alone. I was overwhelmed and had that 'need to bolt' feeling again.

A financial manager at work was looking to rent out his little townhouse in Centurion (halfway between Pretoria and Johannesburg). I grabbed it with both hands! I had a place to myself. All mine. Just for me!

This was a tough moment of standing up for myself despite feeling awfully selfish. The 'break up' with Libby was emotionally turbulent. I felt responsible for her wellbeing and very guilty that I'd deserted her in her hour of need. But her hour of need had started feeling endless. And my well of supply had run dry. I was desperate to detangle myself from her dependency and what felt like manipulation of my needing to be needed. Despite bruised egos, honest words and a cruel reality, I knew it wouldn't end our friendship. We'd remain friends forever. I told her as much. And we have. We've moved through some murky waters and kept healthy distances to sufficiently give each other space, but still remain friends.

My new little townhouse provided me the 'out' I so badly wanted and needed. I was finally free with only a responsibility to myself. A friend's mother helped me start, design and plant my first garden. She spent a few days teaching me. I fell in love with both my home and my tiny burgeoning garden!

Gardening quickly became my new hobby and almost an obsession. True to form, out came the books! I read anything and everything I could about it and tried a variety of new things – loving and enjoying watching all new seedlings grow into flourishing plants.

I'd actively created some space in my life and started spending some time alone, doing something seemingly meaningless. This allowed me to be more present in my new relationship with Roelof and it wasn't long before we celebrated our engagement party in my new flourishing garden!

***Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another***  
***George Eliot***

### **Voice of the coach:**

Dependency is a pattern I repeated my whole life. I subconsciously created situations and relationships where the other person would feel dependent on me and need me. His or her neediness would inevitably have to come to a head before I would realise and want to disengage myself from the relationship. And, naturally, as a gurgling volcano finally erupts, when I couldn't take it anymore, I'd over-react to something and flee the relationship, albeit only emotionally. I did this with my first job, my first couple of boyfriends and with Libby.

This may be called a form of 'seeking the other'. With my fundamental relationships of both mother and father being far from safe and warm, I'd continually seek a place of belonging and safety elsewhere. And this is where being needed came into play. When my friends needed me, I felt present, wanted and important. To me, this meant that I had to be available to them constantly. I hated to disappoint them, because if I did, they wouldn't need me anymore.

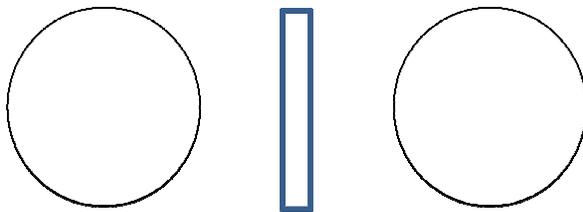
Although I enjoyed being needed and wanted, my free spirit didn't enjoy the beholden-to-others feeling that appeared alongside it. My spirit wanted to soar, to be creative and live its own life. But at that stage, feeling safe was more important even if it meant crushing my inner self.

These inner exploding volcanos are a symptom of not fully engaging with and understanding your spirit. Keeping things bottled up builds the pressure and makes the eruption spectacularly dramatic.

Understanding how to honour yourself sufficiently at the beginning of any experience or relationship is important. It's also important to establish what feels right for you. I was expert at giving of myself until I had nothing left to give. But this left me feeling drained, empty, angry and even worse, resentful.

Resentment feels like you're carrying a slowly unravelling piece of barbed wire inside you. It spreads out and starts to cut into everything around it. Unsurprisingly then, angry words begin to seep out. Honouring yourself and what you want assists with the development of fundamental skill sets such as assertiveness and boundary-setting. These are two important self-honouring attributes.

I often use the picture of circles to depict people in relationships. Each person is a whole person in their own right, taking up their own space in the world and living within their own individual boundary.



Person 1 (half  
of court)

Boundary  
(tennis net)

Person 2 (half  
of court)

I often describe relationship and interactions with others as a game of tennis.

As a singles tennis player, you have half the court to yourself. From your side, you hit the ball over the net and it travels to the other side. You have no control over how your opponent is going to hit the ball back at you. He may not even hit it back and merely walk off the court! That would be his choice.

It's the same with any interaction with others, you cannot control what they'll think, feel, do or say. How they respond is their choice, lying within their domain and personal responsibility. Your choice is to trust yourself to handle their 'return-shot' regardless of how it comes to you. That's resilience and self-empowerment.

But so often we find ourselves metaphorically hitting the ball, running and jumping over the net to help the other person hit the ball back to us. We then have to race back to our side of the court to once again, return the shot to them. This kind of control over relationships becomes exhausting and frustrating. Isn't it easier to let others take responsibility for their own half of the tennis court? Once you've hit the ball, let it go allowing the other person to respond as they see fit.

Yes, you may or may not like the response, but you will be able to deal with it should you choose to. Sometimes just giving way is also a response.

Stay authentic within your own boundary and know where you end and where the other person begins. Respect yourself enough to stand up for yourself on your side. That's all that counts in the long run.

### On Loss & Grief ...

Soon after Roelof and I got engaged, my phone rang one typical morning at work. Expecting someone to be asking for payment or worse, yelling at me for their cheque, I was surprised to hear the voice of my great aunt. It was the one and only time she ever phoned me.

"Heidi, it's about Ouma."

My heart sank.

"She had a fall this morning. She's okay, but she's in hospital. They've taken her to Morningside Clinic."

I dropped everything, grabbed my bag and ran into my boss's office.

"I've got to go. I'll be back later." And I was out the door.

The upside of never being away from work or taking time off is that when something like this happens, nobody asks questions. I got surprised nods and "Bye. Good Luck."

We gathered at the hospital anxiously awaiting my gran's hip replacement. Roelof and I took turns visiting a few times a day. My gran had fallen in love with Roelof since they'd met. Moreover, he with her. For many years we'd had breakfast every Saturday morning together. We'd go out to different places to eat and then take her shopping off a detailed, neatly-written list. She only ever bought what was on it.

My gran was a vibrant, intelligent and sometimes outrageous character. She kept our family together. My mother's parents had died before I was born so we only had one set of grandparents. Despite my parent's divorce with my mother being my father's first wife (out of three), my gran held her dear, like a daughter. We remained a part of the family and saw Ouma often. She'd organise the Christmas parties and have a big birthday bash every year. Our family was at least guaranteed two family gatherings every year, thanks to her.

My family heralds a long line of broken relationships. My mother was raised by her father alone and my father's parents split when I was very, very young. My grandfather left my gran for a younger woman whom he later remarried. But my Ouma forged on keeping the family together. I always had the sense that she tried very hard to forgive and forget him but carried the proverbial torch for him forever.

She taught me how to cook, how to knit, how to eat and behave like a lady. I'd excitedly prepare large roasts for her visits for Sunday lunch. But much more often and more preferably, we'd go to her cosy flat which smelt like home. She 'magic'd' up three-legged chickens to prevent us kids fighting over the drumsticks. We'd tinker through her old display cabinet, taking out bits and pieces from bygone eras to amuse ourselves. She had a lovely old rocking chair that we'd fight over sitting in. At Christmastime, our stockings were handmade from orange carrier bags, which she started sewing months beforehand and fill with treats. She was a distinctive lady who still has a huge place in my heart and whose photo has a large place on my wall.

I felt blind panic being called to her hospital side that day. Alarm bells rang and I sensed her time with us was nearing the end.

"People always say that old people only survive for six months after a hip replacement," I provided some silly statistics trying to justify my panic, "What's going to happen to her?"

We stayed close to her bedside for a few weeks and once her recovery was underway she was moved to a frail-care centre which I despised. It looked depressing and smelt revolting.

"I'm sure I smell urine," I'd complain every time we visited her.

I saw her spirit slowly dissipate the longer she stayed there. Her spontaneity disappeared and she became increasingly anxious about small things. We still visited her regularly and took breakfast to her but saw her already-frail frame disappear even more. She'd worry about the noise we made and how many of us would visit her at a time.

"There are rules here," she scolded me one day after I'd organised a surprise with some friends all arriving together, "We can't interfere with the other sick people. I think we must rather be quiet."

"She's not herself," I explained to the others, hating seeing my bouncy grandmother hide herself away in a tiny lime-coloured room with minimal furnishings.

Just before her birthday in May that same year she asked to go home to celebrate it. That was to be her last birthday she shared with us.

And being back at home, we got into the family routine of lively Saturday morning breakfasts again. But, during a not-so-lively morning, a couple of weeks before she died, I called my mother in tears.

"Ouma is going to die soon. She doesn't look well at all." I sobbed, despite the crowds milling around me. Roelof was sitting with my gran helping her catch her breath in a nearby cafe.

My mother immediately called her doctor who wasn't too sympathetic.

"I'm sure she's fine," he patiently explained, "Very often, young people don't understand illness and thus overreact like your daughter is."

My instinct was confirmed the following Friday night. As my mom's number appeared on my mobile, I felt a coldness wash over me and I knew. I rushed over to sob my goodbyes as she lay on her bed where my mother had laid her. I stood back, feeling dead myself as I watched the mortician carry her out.

### On More Denial .

Work continued to engulf my life. I still fought the odds daily and moved up the corporate ladder. Hard work is part of my genetic makeup and core belief systems. I have a more than committed work ethic. At the extreme, it's a self-sacrificial work ethic. I poured myself into everything I delivered and found ways to deliver results despite the obstacles in the financial procedures. My work days were long, often until ten pm. If I wasn't behind my desk by seven am, my boss would phone to find out if I was okay. That's how routine it had become.

So, the way I coped with my gran's death was to jump right back into work pressures, escaping from- and forgetting all else.

"I can't help with the clearing out of Ouma's flat," I told my mother, "I need to be at work."

With this escapist plan, I forwent the joy of sifting through her belongings and reliving memories. I arrived at her flat on the Monday evening to see most of her precious stuff in boxes already.

"What are you all doing?" I asked the family members there, "She hasn't even been dead for three days! How can you do this to her?"

My mother tried to comfort me, but I wasn't easily consoled, "It's not right, she's hardly gone. What's the big rush?"

"We need to sell the flat," my uncle told me, "and you'll need to have the panic system you installed removed as soon as possible, please." Since she'd moved back home, I'd given my gran a panic button to call for help should anything happen to her.

I sank to the floor, on one of her precious Persian carpets, watching family members mill around me arguing over the food in the freezer and how to divide up her string of pearls.

### **Voice of the coach:**

Most of my friends took leave (even some ex-boyfriends!) to be at my gran's funeral. Just being who she was, she was a huge influence in many, many people's lives. What a great privilege to know someone who's made such a difference.

I often ask the question these days with my clients, "What three words would you like to be used to describe yourself one day?" It's a powerful question that helps you connect with the essence of who you wish to be and how you wish to live your life.

I'd say my gran's words were *love, fun and quirky*.

I regret not grieving her loss properly. Instead, I ran away from any emotion and buried myself in being busy - as I was so good at doing.

### **On Increasing Anger ...**

The death of my gran brought with it the death of my mother's ties to the family. My gran had four sons with my father being the oldest. Her will however was split into five people with my mother (my father's first wife) included for an equal share. This was unusual by normal standards, but totally understandable considering their relationship.

As my mother had found my gran dead in her flat she jumped in to help arrange the funeral. This brought out overdue resentment, bitterness and cruelty between my mother and father. My father's cruel behaviour towards my mother included an excuse that he couldn't contribute towards the funeral.

"I can't contribute to the funeral," he told the other family members, "as I have Heidi's wedding coming up." His brothers believed him, although he had no financial obligation to it at all. Roelof and I paid for it ourselves. But this lie lit a spark of anger in me.

The following Christmas was the first Christmas my mother wasn't invited to the family Christmas party. My father made that clear. So, being stubborn and protective towards her, I refused to attend his sixtieth birthday party in the following January. I said I'd go, but didn't. I'd even agreed to provide the birthday cake which I organised for delivery instead. Instead of attending the big bash, Roelof and I went away for the weekend. Avoidance and running away solved another conflict for me.

Roelof has never come in the way of my feelings and dramas with my family. His role has always been to support me, "Are you sure this is what you want to do?" he asked me.

"Yes - I can't face him. I want to go away." And we did.

### **Voice of the coach:**

Anger is a great indicator emotion. What does your anger tell you? Feeling angry is not wrong, if you understand what it means. It's then what you do with your anger and how you communicate it, that will honour who you are and create the life you want.

Many people still hide their anger because it's considered another 'bad' emotion and thought best left to simmer, preferably being denied and unacknowledged. But, rather, give yourself permission to express how you feel - even if it is anger. Anger is a great motivator. It pushes you in a direction, which is often forward. Make friends with anger, learn how to express it constructively and you'll be surprised that it supports you rather than hinders you.

All anger comes initially from an impending sense of loss or even an actual loss. All loss is a security issue, which affects your ego in some way. Repressed anger builds up from continued frustration and

a sense of dissatisfaction with yourself and your world. By carrying the anger around with you, you send a message to yourself that what you feel is wrong and the rest of the world is right. "I'm not allowed to show my anger. Anger is dangerous."

This gets you nowhere, never understanding what it was that made you upset in the first place. If you don't understand this, you'll never be able to deal with it or change your circumstances to make you happier.

Being angry at your parents is indeed, a large part of growing up. It's an essential part of growing into who you are. Most of your life however is spent doing the opposite. You spend the majority of your life appeasing them because 'they raised me' and 'they did the best they could' and 'they're my parents after all'.

Yes - that's all true, but you're an adult individual in your own right. With your own ideas, your own desires and your own way of doing things. It's important for you to remember that - and act on that.

Part of the process of reuniting and reconnecting with the real me, was to cut the illusionary apron strings completely. All my ties were severed with both parents on separate occasions, although not always by my doing. These were painful experiences making me doubt the core of who I was, but very necessary to start the process of setting myself free.

Imagine shaking up a bottle of coke and keeping the lid on. The pressure inside the bottle builds and builds. Eventually when the lid pops off there is a sickly, sweet and sticky mess everywhere. Everyone gets caught in the spray. Bottled up anger is like that. By regularly expressing it to yourself, you're able to get clarity and perspective. Even Shrek uses the words, "Better out than in!"

Expressing anger in an adult way is an important part of self-expression. Being able to express anger, in this way, at your parents and others, is therefore an imperative part of growing up. Bear in mind however, that you might never directly be able to address your anger at them. Situations vary and not all parents would be able to deal with this, but just being able to acknowledge the anger and express it is incredibly healing. Work through it with yourself in a journal or talk to a coach or therapist about how you feel. All of this is part and parcel of an important passage into establishing your personal, unique sense of self and identity. Cutting the dependency on the need to please and appease helps with liberation from some of the old ingrained, limiting beliefs and patterns subconsciously entrenched in your psyche.

Do a simple exercise and write the following words in your journal, "I'm angry at..."

Complete the sentence and keep writing. Whatever comes up for you, just keep going and get it out on paper.

***We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses.***  
***Carl Jung***

The more you make friends with your anger, the more you'll realise there are some things that are worth getting angry over and there are other things you cannot change and won't ever be able to. But you have the choice. Being clear about what it really is that upsets you, enables you to better communicate to the relevant parties. And more importantly, your inner self. And that's how fruitful change happens.

### **On Taking a Chance ... And Magic ...**

"There's nothing about him that I wish to change," I explained to my mother when she asked, "Why Roelof? Why do you want to marry him?"

After my gran's funeral, life seemed to move on. We got married in the most traditional way, with everything perfectly planned and executed.

We'd moved into our first 'owned' house a month before and loved the domesticity. We'd bought it at a discounted price as it needed extensive renovating. And cleaning! It was uninhabitable when we'd looked at it as a show house originally. But looking beyond the obvious deterrents, I saw a lovely home available at a bargain price.

I'm not sure who was more surprised when we made the offer: The Estate Agent or the son of the current owner. Nonetheless, we had fun with the filing, painting, cleaning and more cleaning.

Our home was a great place for entertaining – and we had numerous functions there. Without much disposable income (being newly-weds with a first mortgage), going out was not always possible. We therefore made up for this with "braais" (barbeques) at our new home. As long as we had meat, drink and some eighties music, we were okay!

Despite my quickly evolving personal life, my evil nemesis, namely work, still taunted me, wanting me to be unhappy. Becoming increasingly miserable there I threw myself into my new hobby of gardening. The garden of our new home was desolate when we moved in. It had been ravaged by two adult German Shepherds. I undertook the project and redid it from scratch. Eventually I had a huge, beautiful rose garden, a vegetable garden and a 'secret garden'. People gave me cuttings, plants, gardening books and many other bits and pieces to get me going.

I kept an album of the progression of this garden: Cuttings, photos, seed-packets and dried flowers.

This is where I found solace and peace. Watching the plants grow and spread along the ground gave me a sense of serene, unattached accomplishment. There was no push or pull towards anything or from anything. My role was to water and the rest was up to nature. The plants merely got on and did what they knew best. They grew and the flowers bloomed.

Everything in it was a new creation, a magic that unfolded right before me on a daily basis.

I planted them with love, talked to them (about the troubles of my day mostly), and nurtured their growth. The creative longing of my soul witnessed the beauty of nature becoming what it's meant to be. Actually, just becoming what it already is. My spirit had encountered "magic", but had a long way to go yet.

### **Voice of the coach:**

With hindsight I now know that we as humans also grow and develop just as beautifully and naturally with an equally loving hand tending us. Growth is a natural process because it innately happens. It's an organic part of life and you can't really resist it. Plants become strong and fully mature (blossoming) by fulfilling natural requirements and often look after themselves.

But as humans, our tendency is to struggle against things. Wanting to grow and develop has the preconception that something is wrong with you now. It's more liberating to understand that it's a natural part of your life cycle. Self-improvement is a misconception – there is nothing really to improve on. It's more about accepting and making peace with what's already there.

### **On Being Unwanted ...**

Naturally being a new, innovative and rapidly expanding company the internal and financial systems rapidly became insufficient and ineffective as workload regularly exceeded resources.

The "old boys club" became more and more prevalent. I knew I was nearing the end of my tether the day I walked in to the General Managers office to get a signature and he said, "You can't bring this to me to sign. It has to come from your Chief Accountant, not you."

"You mean I must walk upstairs, give it to Mark and then ask him to bring it back down here again?"

"Yes."

I had to leave. I had to get out of this environment. I was no longer keen on the politicking, bureaucracy and game-playing. I wanted to get a job done, without the shifting goal posts!

Roelof and I were now working in different divisions. He was doing his articles towards becoming a Chartered Accountant and really enjoying the experience. Driving backwards and forwards to work together proved tiresome for him as I ranted and raved non-stop about how unfair everything was. With no love lost between work and me, tension grew in our household.

"If you're so unhappy, why don't you just look for another job?" Roelof prompted me to make the change.

My next job was a gift from heaven. Initially anyway as it turned into both the best and worst experience of my working career. In one.

I was deliriously happy to be offered a position as Financial Manager of a South African branch of a Fortune 500 (USA) company. Ignorance is bliss, and during my resignation month before starting here I drove along the highway glancing longingly at my future new workplace building. This emotional relationship had already started and was eventually to become a crossroads for me. But that lay five years further up the yellow brick road and for now I was still happy in Kansas.

My direct boss worked from Regional Head Office, Munich, Germany. He was a wonderful man: someone with a healthy, balanced, caring and sensible perspective on life. He falls onto my short list of people whom I truly admire. He made me feel safe in an otherwise unsafe workplace.

My first day at MME got off to an inauspicious start with the local Managing Director greeting me on arrival with these words, "You know that I didn't want to hire you. But, welcome on board and good luck."

As I'd taken the career leap from a specialist creditor accountant to a financial manager he'd echoed my feelings of being unqualified and inexperienced. This position was a fully-fledged one, responsible for all functions in the Financial, Human Resources and Information Technology areas. It was also a manufacturing company of which I had no experience. Nothing really boded well.

On being appointed, I'd been promised a handover period between the current Financial Manager and me. But the note I found on my new desk explained otherwise.

*"Welcome Heidi. I'm sorry I had to go overseas suddenly.*

*But take your time to acquaint yourself with the people and the procedures.*

*I will call you to explain the reporting deadlines and requirements.*

*The best thing to do is to ask Kath for anything.*

*Cheers."*

My first thought was "What is a Kath?"

My second was, "What have I done by moving here?"

This should have been my first warning. But I jumped right in, put on my big girl panties and went to find out what a Kath was.

This was how it worked for the next five years. I was pretty much left to my own devices, figuring out everything as I went along. It was both stimulating and challenging as I came to realise how competent and problem-solving I really am. I loved and, of course, being me, later hated this job in its local setup.

The five years I spent at MME were the beginning of the end of life (and of me) as I'd known it up to then.

## Your Personal Review

Where are you feeling inadequate in your life?

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Where are you still holding the reins tightly?

.....  
.....

Why do you think you need the reins?

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What is it you actually fear that you need to control so tightly?

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What causes feelings of excitement for you?

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What things made you happy?

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What things made you sad?

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What are you looking for?

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Do you have a sense of continual striving? And how will you know when you've arrived?

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In which areas do you try and grow your external world around you, instead of learning to nurture a magnificent blossoming from within?

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What would this blossoming look like if given sufficient care and nurturing?

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Can you identify any co-dependent relationships you may have in your life?  
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How are these meeting your needs?  
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Where have you felt or do you feel unwanted or like you don't belong?  
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What has been your biggest loss?  
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What are you still angry about?  
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How do you handle anger?  
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Have you admitted anger with your parents? (to yourself, at least)  
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Have you experienced magic in your life?  
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Can you identify pivotal change points (beginnings of ends) in your life?  
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What were these changes the beginning of?  
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## CHAPTER 4

### HITTING THE WALL

In the running world a phenomenon called 'Hitting the Wall' happens at approximately thirty two kilometres. This happens in a variety of ways – people have been reported to see black spots or even purple elephants!

It happens as a result of not having enough 'fuel in your tank' to see you through the next ten kilometres. Physiologically speaking your fuel is provided by carbohydrates. Without sufficient 'fuel' not enough energy is created to keep your muscles moving. And when your muscles give up, everything feels like it's crashing around you.

Fortunately I only experienced this once over the years, and found myself sitting on the kerb with tears running down my face. The over-riding thought was "I can't go on. I just can't go on..."

But you do. You recover, continue and finish.

I took another energy gel, waited for its absorption, heaved myself back up and continued the race to finish. The rest of the race was fine once I got back into my stride and I finished without any major side-effects.

I had the same experience in my early thirties – when my life seemed to hit the wall. Nothing was as I'd thought it was, and I was forced to review the state of my life. I started journaling in bits and pieces.

#### Journal entry

*'I'm feeling cornered and trapped for some reason; too much going on; too many expectations and balls in the air. I'm waiting for something to clasp onto; Everything seems out there; but what's inside?'*

### On Trying Too Hard ...

My new work environment at MME was controlled through very strict deadlines. The reporting dates due at head office in the USA were non-negotiable. I'd receive a call from Chicago if I was a mere five minutes late! I had a lot to learn and in very little time.

I quickly put in models, structures and processes to ensure I received the relevant information in time to present the financials, budgets, comparisons and commentaries by the due date.

To make matters more interesting, company restructuring was continually part of the game plan. Many of the other branches presented opportunities to South Africans. I was offered a transfer to the Chicago head office, which I didn't take up and my brother got employed by the Ireland manufacturing plant, where he worked for six months alongside our ex-quality manager who'd also emigrated.

For me this presented great exposure to globalisation. South Africa was pretty isolated and still coming out of the Apartheid regime. Nelson Mandela had been president for little over three years and many things were new and raw. Many South Africans were flooding the global work market in attempts to leave their country unsure of the stability of the 'New South Africa' as it was being called. Many international organisations were actively recruiting skilled resources providing the promise of a new life elsewhere.

Ironically at the same time MME laid off staff. A decision was made to close down our factory and retrench more than half the workforce. It was cheaper to import than to manufacture locally. I felt awful about this, sending unskilled people off into the world an unemployment rate of almost fifty per cent.

The South African Rand was a weak currency at that stage. Despite South Africa being my whole world, I learnt that not many other countries were even aware of who we were, let alone where

on the map we were! South Africa was a pinprick on the multi-billion dollar cushion of the global MME organisation.

One of my more humbling experiences was attending a Financial Controller's meeting in Germany one year. I left for the trip feeling very important. It was my first trip overseas! And a business trip! And I was going alone!

My insignificance in the grand scheme of life was evident as I sat in a board room full of the other Financial Controllers. Now these were really powerful and important people! They discussed their entities with their 'large' revenues, staff contingents and profits and I totally disappeared into irrelevance. Although "my" entity was my pride and joy, our dollar-converted revenue didn't even appear on any of the consolidated graphs. It was too small to make a difference.

This may have been my first inkling of the question, "What is the point of all I do?"

If I'd been a more self-reflective person, I could've starting asking questions like "How important is this really in the grand scheme of my life?" or "Why am I putting so much energy into my work if this is what it really is?"

Instead I returned from that trip with a heavy feeling of nothing-ness hidden within a greater need to achieve more and prove myself. And as always work was there to help me escape. I threw myself deeper into it, determined to make more money and the entity more successful. That way my life would become worthwhile and I would become more relevant.

As long as I reported directly to Europe I was away from the scrutiny of the local Managing Director and I loved my (perceived) independence. My boss from Munich would fly over a couple of times a year for my performance review. I loved the weeks I spent with him. He'd spend quality time with me, reviewing what was happening with suggestions to help. He had the most nurturing management style I've ever encountered (to this day). He was honest, practical, relevant, encouraging and inspirational. My performance reviews were always good. I consistently received 'Exceeds Expectations' which meant I was rewarded and acknowledged for my ongoing commitment to this job.

Being the Human Resources Manager as well, I had the freedom to continually try new initiatives building morale and team-cohesion in the workforce. I experimented with team-building activities and social-events. I implemented strict performance reviews with rewards based on performance and development. I'd spend hours reading business and leadership books and implemented as much as I could. I'd developed my skills in this area and resonated with the truth of only being as good as the team around me. My brother could never accuse me of being a bad manager again!

### On Disillusionment & Disappointment ...

My newly created little world started toppling a few years into this adventure when the current Managing Director transferred to Chicago and a new Managing Director, Warren, arrived to take over the reins. And as a new broom always sweeps cleaner, the myriad of changes began almost immediately. New people, new structures, new procedures and a new culture. He'd arrived with decades of experience of running a large, successful manufacturing plant elsewhere in the world and now wished to run things the same way. Our cosy, almost family-like operation was severely threatened. I no longer reported to my Munich-based boss and I felt alone.

Besides the culture adjustment, I felt angry and resentful that my turf had been invaded. He questioned everything and this threatened my belief that I'd been doing a good job. But, true to form, despite these feelings, I presented a sweet, supporting and competent exterior to him. But naturally, took every opportunity I could to moan about him behind his back! He'd been transferred on an expatriate arrangement and this meant 'my' company was paying his rent, utilities and a huge dollar-equivalent salary! I was horrified that all our profits could potentially be sucked dry by one individual.

Because of the skilled game I'd learnt to play of being indispensable at work, Warren and I became friendly colleagues. I learnt how to speak to him and created an extent of freedom within his more regimented structure. He was an accountant as well by profession and had increased his control on things. We spent many hours bonding while drinking in pubs and er... strategising.

Drinking became a large part of our relationship. Being eager to please and make a good impression, shortly after he joined the company, I organised our annual Christmas lunch. For us, this turned into a twelve-hour event.

I got home at midnight, having neglected all the other obligations and prior arrangements I'd had. Andrea and Roelof had been phoning continuously to find out where I was as we'd had a dinner planned. They eventually stopped calling and went ahead without me. Naturally I faced Roelof's anger when I got home, but justified my behaviour and I'm sure I found a way to make it his fault anyway.

I have many examples of this kind of behaviour during this period where for no apparent reason, work functions took absolute precedence over everything else. I had to be involved in everything, organise everything and see its completion. I was never away from the office for long.

These events coincided with our first two years of marriage, when Roelof was finishing off his Chartered Accountancy qualification. With working full time, all his spare time was dedicated to class and studying and when he wasn't at the office, he was behind his desk. This, therefore, gave me plenty of time to do other things. We lived pretty much separate lives with some work colleagues having no idea that I was in fact, married! This pattern needed to change, and did a few years later when we got to a point of impasse in our marriage.

Once Roelof qualified, I decided to take the next step in my qualifications. As I was enjoying the more general managerial roles, I enrolled for a Master's in Business Administration (MBA). Warren agreed that the company would pay for it and I signed up for the two-year university commitment, part time. Going through the tough selection process proved easier than the actual orientation day. It had merely involved skills testing and some leadership evaluation through group work, but the orientation was a different kettle of fish and fairly daunting! Arriving at a resort with crowds of people I was left to network for an hour or so! I didn't have the security of the staff at work or friends to help me. I wanted to crawl up and disappear. Desperately I sought out someone who was standing alone and then made a beeline towards her. Surely she must be in the same boat as me?

Her name was Lesley and she quickly became a close friend, living near us. We saw each other through the tough times which were to follow in a program like this. Lesley is a dietician and was the initial catalyst into my later running phase.

Part of the team building requirements for orientation involved tight-rope walking. I had to walk on a rope which was suspended between high beams while only leaning on Lesley for support and balance to get me to the other side. I was relieved it was all over until I heard about the next event. I'd been too scared to move during the first obstacle and had only managed to do so with Lesley egging me on, step by step. And now there was another event that we needed to complete in order to win! I felt compelled to do it for the team, although I stood petrified to the ground before being helped onto the first beam. I crawled over the relevant sections, not looking down and, ashamedly, descended in a flood of tears to a happy team who'd moved from second place to first!

This day was certainly a good indicator of what was to come for the following two years. The group needed each other and we couldn't get through some of the courses unless the whole group passed. The philosophy is that each individual needs to partake and get marked. This requirement unravelled in an ugly way during the last part of the second year. And I ended up holding the key to the decision of a couple of our group members passing or failing. I'd had

enough of slackers and was tired of being taken for a ride. I, passive-aggressively fought back and refused to sign off on a key group assignment towards which not everyone had contributed. I wanted to punish two of the 'slackers' for not pulling their weight and kept them on tenterhooks until the last minute where I announced from my high horse, "Okay. I'll sign off. But just be thankful to Jesus because he says to turn the other cheek!"

Doing the MBA course was difficult and time-consuming. I spent many hours with Kath, hiding on work's fire escape crying my eyes out. I was permanently tired. I couldn't see the finish line of any deadlines - work or studies. The minute one would be done, another would kick in. My edges were frayed and I tried even harder to keep things perfectly in control everywhere besides at home. I had very few resources left to also be a good wife and I didn't invest much time or energy into this part of my life. Roelof and I ended up moving further and further apart as I was out all the time, between MBA class, group-work, entertaining overseas guests and my actual paid job. All this left him to retreat further into himself pulling our marriage onto rocky ground.

### On Alcohol Addiction ....

Drinking with the idea of getting drunk crept into my routine. It was only when I was drunk that I was able to express myself. I complained incessantly, spoke my mind and inevitably ended in a heap of tears. The song, "It's my party, and I'll cry if I want to" could have been mine!

Many of our home parties ended with me sitting on our kitchen counter, sobbing and boring everyone with repeated stories of my woes about work and about Warren. In fact before our parties I would make a list of all the entertaining requirements and planned courses. I'd hand this list to Kath before each party saying, "Here's everything that needs to happen - for when I'm too drunk - to keep the party flowing." Getting drunk was inevitable.

Of course I'd feel remorse and shame the following day, trying to remember exactly what I'd said and trying hard to 'take it back'. But the cycle would merely continue at the next function.

Alcohol helped ease the gnawing emptiness and pain. Everything was funny and nothing felt real when I was under the influence. I did many irresponsible things and often wondered how I'd gotten home. I wasn't a pretty drunk as the ugly side of me came to the fore and I felt free to express what hadn't been allowed to be expressed earlier.

A large group of us when to the Kruger National Park for a long weekend. We were divided into two smaller cliques, one being regular churchgoers and ours not. I'd stopped attending as regularly and had developed some resentment towards those who did. Being in the bush meant our drinking could start from seven o' clock in the morning on our first game drive! It then continued all day. One evening when the barbeque was in full swing I found everything funny and started mocking our neighbours across the way.

"I can see right into their chalet," I repeated, louder than I realised, "All their clothes match and are lined up in size order! They only have a selection of khaki clothes all neatly hung in a row." There is nothing particularly funny about his, but I keeled over laughing. Again.

"Heidi, we've heard what you think. And so have they. Repeatedly. " Miles warned.

"So what? They should know then to lighten up and find a variety of clothes to wear, don't you think?"

The neighbours then closed their door on us which I found funnier. Miles turned round to me angrily, "Just shut up will you. Do you have to upset everyone around you all the time?"

Ignoring him, I persisted, "Let's go find the others and see what they're conjuring up for dinner tonight! Who comes to the Kruger and cooks stuffed peppers?! I ask you. Stuffed peppers! It's taken them hours to prepare them!"

The other group had taken their catering for the weekend more seriously than we had and they enjoyed lavish meals every night compared to our meat and potatoes-in-foil offerings.

As I walked over to the other group I squatted behind a small tree, which I thought was larger than it was, for a wee-break. This tree being in the middle of the camp didn't provide much protection and Roelof arrived to save me from myself, "Let's get you to bed. You've upset enough people. Libby overheard your stuffed peppers opinion and is going to stay with the others and not with us."

I tried to explain to Libby the following day that drinking was how I coped and it made me feel better.

"You're just playing the victim. Get over it and do what you need to do," she responded.

"That's easy for you to say!" I was outraged.

"She doesn't understand me," I whined to Roelof, "She doesn't get how hard things are for me."

And things didn't feel easy for a long time yet. Working at an international company meant we regularly received visitors from Europe and the United States. Effectively being the second-in-charge and more than willing, I entertained these visitors after hours. This included restaurants and pub-crawling. Knowing no boundaries, I met all obligations and attended functions leaving Roelof to fend for himself, regardless of what hour I came home. And this could be the early hours of the morning.

"I have to do this," I explained to him, "It's work. Who else is going to take them out? They can't just look after themselves. Hic."

### **Voice of the coach:**

Years later when I started understanding the concept of 'Shadow work' as part of my personal development journey, I named the unliked parts of me "Horrible Heidi". Horrible Heidi was the person who came alive when I'd had too much to drink. She was loud, brave, critical, judgmental and mean. She said what she thought even if they were bad things. She behaved badly but didn't care what the results were or what people thought.

Even once I'd acknowledged this darker part of me, it still took a long time to forgive Horrible Heidi. I moved through some of the things I'd done and said, and even started to understand how much she was actually hurting. How could she be hurting as her life seemed fantastic from the outside? Look at all the things she had! Look at how great her life was! She is blessed and fortunate - what on earth can she be miserable about? How dare she be ungrateful?

The shadow aspects of you are there, even if you try to hide them. It's just often harder to hide things when intoxicated. Making peace with these hidden aspects is a first, vital step to self-acceptance. As long as you are ignoring parts of yourself, you'll feel incomplete. When you feel incomplete, you'll always be looking for something to resolve this for you.

The truth is that I spent far too long on futile, compulsive *external* searches for things that were actually lacking in my *internal* world. I expected an 'other' to fix or heal me. For example, loneliness was a swear word in our household (alongside unhappiness and boredom). These emotions weren't tolerated as they were considered weak.

But the truth is that a large part of society carries the fear of loneliness with them. This reflects a need for security that people don't have within and of themselves. Looking down the barrel and hanging onto the fear of loneliness blocks out your own courage, insight, personal truth, self-love and freedom that already resides within you. Because you're locked down on fear, you're unable to start acknowledging what's already within.

On growing up I realised that I'd often been lonely, despite never being alone. Eros and Pathos explain this behaviour with, "I seek to overcome the burden of being myself by being with you." We seek out company, people and relationships to take us away from ourselves. I used to hardly ever

spend time at home, for example. I believed the more times I was out during the week indicated how popular I was. Being at home meant nobody had invited me out and that meant I wasn't wanted. But I've come to learn and love that the proper cure for loneliness is, in fact, solitude.

James Hollis explains why with, "the better the quality of your relationship with yourself, the more you'll have to share with others.' Make yourself your own, honest, true, best friend. Forever.

James Hollis, PhD further explains that any addiction is an anxiety management system. It provides a distraction and helps numb things out. What we're really feeling overall seems to dissipate in the haze of unreality and we choose to feel this way instead of the real way - hence we become prisoners of the addiction. It makes us feel better about ourselves. It's merely a defence against feeling what we really feel.

Addictions can show up in your life in some pretty 'normal' ways for example:

- Permanent business,
- Constantly changing relationships,
- Exercising religiously,
  - Any hobby that fills up time that you'd rather not have
- Work and perfectionism,
- Compulsive-parenting,
- Over-indulgence in food or drink,

To break an addiction it's important to face what it is that you don't want to face. It's challenging to go to that place that seems so scary and to admit that you think and feel those things that are unthinkable and unfeeling. But, if you go through to this place, you'll release the hold the unknown and feared has over you. You'll break free from the grip and realise that all is okay on the other end.

David Deida, author of '*Way of the Superior Man*' encourages this further by suggesting you "live with your lips pressed against your fears, kissing your fears, neither pulling back nor aggressively violating them."

### On Needing To Prove ...

I carried an impossible agenda with me. This was a loooooong list of expectations and requirements about who I needed to be and what I needed to achieve in order to be successful and okay. Naturally I was unaware of this and if you'd asked me about it, I'd vehemently deny it all. It was a subconscious need which drove me to keep trying.

My marriage, study and work dramas continued. My marriage saw out the MBA (even my thesis!) and I graduated within the minimum two years, winning the prize for Organisational Behaviour. My natural interest and passion for people became evident. My thesis was on career anchors and motivational factors of employees.

By now I'd been promoted to Sales Director and was often on the road. I had to learn quickly about customer service, let alone about electronic connectors. I'd taken the sales team under 'proper leadership' (me), supporting them and reviewing performance targets regularly.

They became motivated and trusted me to solve issues, making me feel slightly vindicated after having moved from the enemy territory of Finance. And we all know that sales and finance can never be friends!

I continued the burdensome task of managing my illusionary importance at work. Despite having closed manufacturing a few years previously we now expanded into harnessing. This included

building new, larger offices with a factory attached. Because I was so 'important' I had a large, glass corner-office to watch over the minions.

I continually went the extra mile for the sake of the organisation. At one stage I even offered to take a salary sacrifice to increase profitability! I streamlined systems in all departments and was heavily involved in driving the business forward. I saw the fruition of all my initial years spent creating a united team with a single-minded vision. I believed us to be passionate and driven employees!

But as the new factory started to get up and running, my power dissipated as Warren started to get more involved and hire staff himself. One of these new staff members was his completely inexperienced (in this area) brother-in-law who was employed to run the entire factory! I struggled with this decision as he had no electronics experience and heaven-forbid, he couldn't even switch on a computer. The materials controller and I had spent years designing and nurturing a fully-integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to manage the production process. And now we were back to working around a paper system merely because someone didn't want to embark into the world of technology!

Being unable to change any of this I realised with a thud into reality who actually ran the show. And it wasn't me.

### **On Resentment ... & More Anger ...**

With me becoming increasingly resentful at work, two sets of 'followings' in the organisation slowly emerged. The factory staff supported Warren and the administrative staff supported me, although the sales team weighed up where their bread was buttered. It became a school yard setup with gossip-mongering and 'he said-she-said' stories abounding. We had meetings outside office time to discuss what to do and how unfair things were. I'd encourage my inner circle to meet for breakfast at seven o' clock in the morning and we'd sit and rake the others over the coals and decide on our daily plan of action. We rehashed gossip stories about Warren and fuelled each other on in our antagonism towards him. This breakfast get-together would sometimes cause us being a few minutes late for work.

Warren became suspicious of us all arriving at work at the same time and things escalated to a level of absurdity. He waited at the door from eight o' clock pointing at his watch as we made our entrances. Previously he'd never started work until it suited him. Now he shamelessly clock-watched for us despite all the overtime we worked. He instigated clean-office inspections walking around the building pointing out anything that wasn't tidy.

"Seeing that orderliness is taking precedence over meeting our deadlines and increasing revenue, I'm moving out of my office," I declared. I moved out of my corner office and joined the internal sales pool. I left my office to gather clutter. He'd repeatedly warn me about the state of it, but I made empty promises to sort it out when I had time.

So, an evolutionary process of one-upmanship between Warren and me developed. He called in all the key staff, individually, asking them to choose a side. One side was with him. The other with me.

At this point one of our sales engineers, John, came under performance review. He wasn't reaching his targets and we'd previously decided on going through the process for his termination. When asked, John had chosen Warren's camp as he'd recently got married and his job was important to him. John, Warren and I had an awkward business trip down to Durban to meet a problematic client of John's. Warren and I were no longer 'drinking-buddies' and we shared a few pleasantries over dinner before I excused myself, knowing that I'd be the topic of their discussion. The two of them continued to drink a while longer and I discovered at breakfast the following morning, that John was no longer under performance management.

I'd been appointed as Director before the situation had started to deteriorate. I increasingly felt uneasy about this responsibility towards an organisation that was slipping away from me. The

decision was made for me one day when an internal sales person raced up to me, "There's a line stoppage at Ford. They've run out of harnesses and we can't make any more as we're waiting for a connector from Japan!"

"So now what?" I asked.

"They're implementing penalties for each day that there is no production. And it's thousands of Rands!"

"Get Ana to sort it out with Japan. They must send an urgent shipment."

"That will still take a week with everything that's involved."

"Then we'll fly over there ourselves and fetch them."

I looked into purchasing air tickets and discovered that the visa process to Japan took a couple of weeks. "Unless you have a British passport, of course, then no visa is required," the sales lady added in helpfully.

"That's perfect, thanks. Our Managing Director has one. We'll send him."

But, when I asked him, on one of the rare occasions I entered his office these days, Warren had other plans, "I can't go unfortunately. We're going to a cricket game this weekend. Why don't you go instead?"

I stormed out and called Roelof, "Guess what? I have to fly to Japan to fetch some connectors. Can we celebrate your birthday next week?"

Fortunately Richard, the senior sales engineer who'd become a very good friend during the past months volunteered to go instead. But that didn't solve the Visa issue. We then performed a miracle by getting the visa application through and ready for collection in one day and Richard and I stopped in at the Japanese embassy to collect the visa on the way to the airport the next day. I walked to the counter feeling flustered at the process and still seething at Warren.

"Hi there, I'm here to collect the special visa that we've been discussing telephonically."

She smiled at me and casually replied, "I'm sorry, but there must be some misunderstanding. I thought I'd explained that we aren't able to do this. As I told you on the phone – visas take at least seven to ten days."

I found myself mounting the counter to attack her, "That's not what you said! We need it NOW!"

She jumped back with her hands in the air, "I'm just joking! We all thought we'd see how you'd react and tell you that story!" They certainly hadn't expected the intensity of my reaction. Neither had I.

Richard returned with the relevant stock by the end of the weekend.

So, filled with hostility and out of control emotionally, I spitefully resigned my Directorship.

"I can't be part of the directorship of an organisation when I don't agree with how it's being managed," I explained to Warren on Monday, "I'd prefer to return to employee status".

Bruising my ego, Warren accepted my resignation without so much as a flinch. I emailed the previous Managing Director, the previous Financial Controller and my Financial Directors overseas to win some favour against Warren.

"Everything's changed. He doesn't see the big picture and focuses on the small, unimportant things. In fact – he plays Solitaire on this computer all day!"

Sympathy, but no support was forthcoming.

As part of the new factory setup we'd enrolled in implementing a quality management system which was a stringent process that needed regular auditing and eventual qualification. My brother (Toby) had been appointed to run the quality department. But now due to the tense

relationship between Warren and me, Toby received no support from Warren, his brother-in-law or the costing manager who were all pivotal functions in the quality process. Sabotage became clear when Warren neglected to tell Toby about an interim external quality audit which had been moved ahead of schedule. Naturally Toby was surprised when the auditors arrived to check out the documents and systems which were a couple of weeks away from completion. Warren then used this opportunity to fire my brother. I'd had enough and was at breaking point.

"I'm leaving too!" I phoned Roelof stomping around the car park, "I can't take this anymore."

"Calm down. You know you can't leave. You need to stay until you find another job."

"This is crazy. What about Toby? They're making him pack up now. I'm not allowed to even go near him. I'm leaving. I tell you now, I'm out of here."

"You know you can't do that. Rather start looking for another job first." Roelof had been reasoning with me for months to do this.

"You know I can't do that. He has me over a barrel. He watches my every move! How can I get out for interviews? Don't worry – I know what I'm going to do!" I disconnected, returned inside to collect a box of matches.

Richard followed me outside watching my hysteria grow.

"Leave me alone. I'm ending it all now," I yelled, "I'm burning this damn building down!"

"You can't burn a building down with a box of matches!" Richard tried to calm me down, "We'll find another way to get back at him."

"He just fired Toby. I can't believe he just fired Toby." I sobbed into his shoulders feeling helpless.

I, after a long discussion with Roelof, resigned the following day, with no job to move onto. I only had to survive my notice period.

Still playing games, Warren organised a farewell party for me on my last working day at a lovely venue in the country. But I hadn't stopped playing either and rallied all my allies around and said, "Okay, let's go to the party but stay for only thirty minutes. Then we all get up and leave at the same time."

And that's exactly what we did, leaving Warren and his allies with all the prepared food and drink. That was the last time I spoke to Warren for five years.

The lives of the rest of the management team who'd been 'on my side' were made unbearable during the next few months and one by one, each of them moved onto greener pastures. I may have left MME, but I took my bitterness, disillusionment and career exhaustion with me.

### **Voice of the coach:**

One of the toughest parts of growing up is being able to let go of your attachments to everything. And ironically we're never really taught this. You're taught about controlling yourself and your life, namely protecting your domain. This comes from a huge need to defend your ego because it believes that if you're not in control, you'll never get anywhere.

Being so insecure meant that the illusion of power I had, held me tightly in its grip. This meant (to me) that I had to work harder and know more than anyone. I had more to prove because I had more to lose. It was paramount that I kept my role in the organisation tightly under control.

It was at work where I felt I mattered. Until I didn't. I'd tried so hard up until then to find my little piece of sun in the world. And at MME I thought I'd finally done just that. So much of work was about me feeling important. I dominated with an influential say about what happened to whom, when and how. My reaction at the threat of losing all of this was a protective reaction from my little forgotten girl. She fought tooth and nail to hang on to what she'd always wanted! She wasn't letting go without a fight!

Therefore, losing all of this ultimately was akin to losing me. Everything had gone wrong which meant something was horribly wrong with me. Unable to deal with this however, it was far easier to blame the environment and the person who'd caused my downfall. Warren was to blame!

The healthier mindset says "I am not my work and my work is not me". As a coaching tool now I divide your life up into nine areas:

1. Career
2. Finances
3. Relationships (intimate & family)
4. Social & Hobbies (including friendships)
5. Diet, Beauty and Vitality
6. Exercise
7. Mental
8. Spirituality
9. Community

Not one of these areas defines who you are and what makes your life important. Each area is ONE aspect of your life and deserves its singular place in your perspective.

Have a look at each of these areas of your life and give yourself a rating of one to ten about how satisfied you are in each one, with one being a low level of satisfaction and ten being a high level of satisfaction.

- Which areas get too much attention and have you identifying too much with it?
- Which areas could do with some attention to create some balance in the overall scheme of your wellbeing?
- What kind of attention are you focusing on each area? Negative attention with a lack mentality or positive energy from an abundant mentality?

I see many clients who carry a 'How to Be Perfect' script with them. They've accumulated a list of rights and wrongs of how to live life and they try to follow this religiously. The often unconscious result however, is that they impose these rules on others in their life as well. Living like this is hard work, can cause you to be continually disappointed by others and often means you're holding yourself to an impossible standard.

Your expectations of anybody or anything creates an attachment. This means you're hoping for the future to turn out a certain way and you believe you have control over delivering that. This takes away your peace of mind as you weigh up everything against your preconceived mindset of "that's the way it's supposed to be..."

Expectations keep you feeling insecure, trying to keep an uncertain and imperfect future in control. You'll find yourself trying to ensure your emotions, your judgements and often your actions fall into line with your pre-set expectations. But what happens if your reality turns out differently? It may just do that, which then ends in disappointment.

Wouldn't it be easier to just let go of some of these things and realise that making mistakes doesn't make you any less perfect? Or any less good?

Susan Jeffers says in her book, "*Embracing Uncertainty*" that true wisdom is realising that you actually know NOTHING. That all of life is MAYBE. Maybe I'm right. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe she's right. Maybe she's wrong. Maybe it's right, maybe it's wrong.

Letting go is so hard because you don't know what lies on the other end. You no longer know how you'll navigate or exist without what you've always known. It's about allowing yourself to believe that you'll be okay despite no longer having to control the outcome. The terror of letting go is that you fear you have nothing left to hold onto. Your ego is threatened and fights for its survival.

All my meaning was attached to what I was holding onto, namely my work and my sense of importance. And letting go of that felt like I was letting go of everything.

Autumn leaves drop off the trees to make room for the new buds in Spring. As the old falls away, it's natural for the new to fall in.

***Life is about rhythm and response.***  
**James Hollis, PhD**

What are you still holding onto:

- Past grievances?
- Love?
- Material attachments?
- Fears?
- A false sense of identity?
- Children?
- Beliefs that don't serve you?
- Excuses about how you grew up and why you are as you are?
- Resentments of past disappointments?
- Security?

Ask yourself the following question with regard to each aspect:

- What would it mean about me if I could never get what I'm seeking?

This will highlight what exactly it is that you're clinging to. Wouldn't it be easier to face this truth, decide differently by letting the attachment go?

### **On Moving Through ....**

When I left MME, I started up a small business intending to offer Practice Management at medical practices. I cashed out my pension and lived off this money. My small business idea was more of an excuse than a reality as I just wanted time off, but felt the need to justify my time with something productive. All I really needed to do was recover and regroup as I felt like an intense emotional relationship had ended, akin to a divorce that I needed to 'get over'.

So, whilst setting up the half-hearted new business I jumped into something else with both feet. I went to the opposite extreme of work-addiction and joined a gym. But since my short-lived netball days at primary school, exercise had been completely off my radar! These four months of not doing much started me off on my gentle healing journey. Swimming is a great meditative activity – once you're fit enough to not focus all your energy on staying afloat!

My friendship with Lesley had survived the MBA and one day during this period, whilst walking through an outdoor market I pulled a sundress towards me.

"Isn't this nice? It's so summery," I asked.

She paused for a second and looked at me, "Why don't you reconsider buying that when you've lost five kilos?"

Perhaps I should've been hurt, but I wasn't when I responded, "Okay. Will you show me how?"

Lesley then gently nudged me into a new eating regime (including no more take-aways!) and introduced me to race-walking. So swimming and race-walking became regular features in my life. This meant (horrors!) that I started spending some time with myself, as I had to regularly walk during the week in order to race over the weekends.

I gently started allowing myself to just 'be' every day, with each day's highlight being the cooking channel with Ainsley Harriott's "Ready, Steady Cook". I drove Kath mad, phoning her at her new job to share new recipes every day!

With the new business never taking off I did some contract work for a while, to help make ends meet. After four months my next full-time work opportunity actually landed in my lap, completely out of the blue! It started with a sarcastic voicemail from Miles.

"If you actually do want to work, answer your damn phone won't you?!"

He worked at a recruitment advertising agency who's Financial Manager had recently absconded. They needed someone to jump in and help them out. And back into Finance I went, despite all my previous protestations to the contrary.

But, unknown to me then, unlike my soul-destroying experience at MME this was where my soul would come alive! Human Communications would take me to the next level of who I was becoming. And more importantly probably, was the birthing of Completely Human: both for me and the business.

I attended the interview at Human Communications with the firm mindset that I wasn't going to do this permanently or full-time.

"I'd like to be paid per hour that I work and to decide which hours those would be," I requested upfront.

"Sure, but can you start tomorrow?" Helen asked.

This Finance department was a complete shambles as a comprehensive Financial Audit hadn't been done in four years. Despite the chaos, I enjoyed the mental stimulation and worked daily with the auditors to clean it all up. The audit team moved into my office and it felt good to have something solid to sink my teeth into - with the necessary help.

I worked on a contract basis for three years, keeping my flexibility and the peaceful life I'd enjoyed over the previous four months. Exercise-wise, I'd progressed from race-walking to running and now, being paid by the hour meant I could leave the office to run in evening races when I wanted to. My priorities had changed somewhat. Who'd have thought!?

### **On Insecurity ....**

It didn't take long for my all-to-familiar authority issues to resurface and to make matters worse I felt intimidated by the business owner. Helen was already successful in her own right, having made it on her own. She naturally brought me face-to-face with my own failures. I wanted more than anything to be like her, but believed I'd already failed at my chance. Facing her was too confronting to my self-esteem so, for many months, I took the coward's way out and conversed with her using yellow 'post-it' notes on her desk.

Despite all the initial feelings of insecurity that Helen brought up for me, I called Miles aside one day saying, "I may be scared of her and never talk to her, but I feel I know her from somewhere and we're together for some reason."

A spark in me recognised a spark in her. And this would only reveal itself years later. In ways I was yet to imagine.

It goes without saying that life seemed easier to me in this stable, challenging and ultimately rewarding work environment. I was encouraged to explore and create work-life balance and (eventually) managed to separate my own identity from my work. But I was to be challenged first. By a large trigger in the form of Miles.

A number of months into sorting out the backlog, he stormed into my office in front of everyone and yelled at me.

"You may be able to change the person in this office, but nothing really changes. It's all still a mess. Nothing works!"

And he threw the company credit card down on my desk. He'd been to a shop and tried to use it, but it had been declined. He'd jumped to the conclusion that it hadn't been paid, as was the habit of the previous Financial Manager.

I was gob-smacked by his public criticism. This was *Miles*, my friend since our first year at University! How dare he speak to me like this!?! And in front of everyone! I was hurt and humiliated and scrambled around to find out what had happened. He left my office while I opened files finding an explanation. Being terrified of getting into 'trouble' this felt like a travesty to me.

The truth of what had happened is that I'd paid all the outstanding bills that I could, using the credit card to gain voyager miles. Although the limit had been reached, a debit order had been put in place for automatic payment on due date. All a good system recently put in place, by yours truly.

When he returned to my office that evening, oblivious to how I felt, to say goodbye I gave him the explanation and more.

"I don't want to speak to you, ever again. I can't believe you doubted me and treated me like that, with people in my office."

And I didn't speak to him. For many, many weeks. I felt that I hadn't deserved his outburst and he'd struck me where it hurt the most: at my belief in my own incompetence. I'd been working incredibly hard at a monumental task with ongoing complications and challenges. And just as I thought we were making headway, he'd compared me to the previous thief who'd caused it all!

The following morning and on a number of occasions thereafter Miles asked me if I was ready to talk to him. I said no, but acknowledged to Roelof that I missed him in my life.

"Miles has always been there for me. Through varsity and all my upheavals since. He knows me inside-out and that's why he's hurt me so much. He should've known better."

Miles tried hard to close the gap between us, by bringing me coffee in the mornings with a friendly smile, but I was resolute in punishing him. He was ready to give up and sent me a last attempt email saying, "Just a last note on this matter. I'd like to resolve this as I think you're throwing away a very special friendship." Which I was.

### On My Monsters ...

I wrote him a letter bearing all my inner demons. I opened the doors letting him know what I really believed about myself. I shared all my feelings about being not good enough, being incompetent. I explained that one of my biggest fears was to be found out as stupid. I'd spent my life working harder than other people to cover up any potential mistakes and I hated being exposed! I was terrified to be found out as a fraud who couldn't actually do her job.

And he'd proved all of that and betrayed me at the same time, with one sentence in front of my staff and the auditors!

My monsters kept hidden in my closet that I shared with him included:

- Instability

- Not being successful
- Not making a difference
- Being invisible
- Not counting
- Not having enough
- Disappointing people who matter
- Being considered stupid
- Not being needed
- Losing control/the upper hand
- Not knowing the answer when needed
- Not being appreciated
- Being taken for granted
- Not being respected
- Not having security
- Missing out
- Being caught off guard
- Being found out

Having all of this out in the open changed Miles and my work dynamic (let alone friendship dynamic) from then on. The emotionally charged friendship changed as he became more sensitive and I became less sensitive, ironically. I'd been honest about what really was going on for me and he understood my fears better. We could then both tease, yet support each other as and when needed. We worked cohesively and dynamically as a management team for the next five years. And continued with our friendship.

Once my fears were set free, I could see the manipulative, calculating, power-hungry, overly-sensitive, bossy, controlling, selfish, confused and angry side of me.

I carried the burden of the MME experience with me for a long time and I felt the need for closure on this with Warren. I met up with him and had an adult discussion about what had happened. I set some of my hidden, angry monsters free and both of us had plenty of apologies.

"I realise now that I was emotionally entangled with my work," I confessed, "It was an emotional relationship that wasn't healthy. When I thought I'd lost control, I felt I'd lost everything. I know now that a job is a job. It's a part of my life. It's not my entire life."

Warren apologised for firing my brother, admitting he'd been wrong. That went a long way towards me being able to forgive myself for what had happened and let go of the guilt I'd carried for my brother's pain.

### **Voice of the coach:**

Because it's true that your subconscious holds a greater power over you than you know, it's essential for your personal freedom and self-empowerment to have a look at what lurks below the surface.

"How we behave as individuals in regard to our inner world is just as important and may even be more important than how we behave in regard to our outer world."

Jung's psychological theory is based upon the primary assumption that the human mind has both a conscious or outer realm and an unconscious or inner realm. Because we tend to live and function in

our conscious world, it is here that we try to resolve our individual and societal problems using the same behaviour patterns over and over until they no longer fit the situation. Because of this, Jung believes that the resolution to conscious problems lies in the unconscious realm and as long as humans deny the contents of the unconscious they are also denying a fundamental part of themselves and society." (<http://www.academon.com/lib/paper/1061.html>)

From Carl Jung's "The Undiscovered Self"

You may be surprised to discover what monsters lurk beneath the surface. These are those characteristics and thoughts that you've been hiding away from yourself and from others. And often, so successfully that you'll fight this concept with denial!

Your monsters can include any of the following:

- I am incompetent
- I am Stupid
- I am Not good enough
- I am Unlovable
- I am Unacceptable
- I am Weak
- I am Dependent
- I am Needy
- I am Lazy
- I am Disorganised
- I am Bad
- I am Imperfect
- I am Vulnerable
- I am too Sensitive
- ..... Add your own

This list is endless - you'll have some of these plus plenty of others. These are those 'sensitive' areas that get you really upset when mentioned. Take some time out and see what triggers a reaction in you. Make friends with this part, remembering it is just a part of you - not the whole of you.

***It takes a long time to grow an old friend.***  
***John Leonard***

The reason why these things are 'triggers' is because at some level you believe them to be true. So, if someone else mentions it, it means you've been 'found out' and they also believe that particular negative aspect about you. You may need to be brutally honest about these monsters as some may be hidden under overcompensating behaviours.

For example:

Perhaps you studied three degrees to cover up your stupid monster?

Perhaps you never cry to cover up the vulnerable monster?

When you find yourself triggered by an event, before criticising the other party, ask yourself, 'What can I learn or understand about myself from this experience?'

If you're continually finding people around you rude, check-in with yourself how you're overcompensating by being overly polite and never truly expressing how you feel? This is a monster. What's in it for you to be so polite? How is this limiting you instead of liberating you?

How often do you try to squeeze others into your mould of life? How often do you expect others to behave as you believe they 'should'? How often do others disappoint you because they've done something 'wrong'? These, once again, are hidden monsters.

It's important to let go of what you THINK is important to you - and connect with what really IS important to you. Is it really so important how punctual Joe Bloggs is, or that Sally Snowflake was rude this morning? Really? Allowing these type of things to upset you reflects more on you, than on the person.

Does being on time make you good? Does being polite make you good?

If so, what does that mean about someone who is late? About someone who is rude? Are they bad?

And - Who's the judge?

You react to situations based on your own preconceived ideas, beliefs and learnt 'rules' of life. The truth is that how you react to other people's experiences or relationships has nothing to do with you. The only experiences that concern you are yours. Projection is a limiting facet of our lives. You project because you believe that others share your subjective thoughts and beliefs. But this isn't always true, is it?

I was actually brave enough to sit with Roelof one day and ask him to point out all my triggers.

"I can't do that," he objected, "you'll explode!" I promised to be resilient and open, despite feeling vulnerable.

"Being incompetent, that's a strong one," he replied not being wrong. He continued with a list that was thankfully far shorter than it would have been years previously, but some of which are listed in the list above.

So, if you're really feeling brave ask your nearest and dearest what your trigger points are. Ask them:

- What things they're not allowed to say to you,
- What things they're not allowed to do for fear of being judged by you
- What names they're not allowed to call you
- What topics are not safe to talk about?
- What are people not allowed to tease you about?
- What are you overly sensitive about?

Those off-limit topics are still your unowned, shadow elements. This will highlight where to start on understanding your triggers and monsters. Good luck!

Many clients feel they've disappointed people in their lives, as well as themselves. This disappointment comes from a long list of expected behaviours arising from long-standing 'rules', judgements and beliefs about how life *should* function. This is the cause of perception and projection.

These rules often include hiding your monsters and pretending to be perfect, kind and caring all the time. Whose rules are you applying in your life? How possible is it for everyone to live up to your perfect expectations? How difficult is it for YOU to live up to your own high expectations? These are hidden monsters in your closet.

Your life can be very exciting, meaningful and fulfilling if you move beyond your limited perceptions. Appreciate your own values and philosophy - without a need to impose them on others. Life doesn't need to be black or white. Let differences flourish. Give others permission.

But start with giving yourself permission first. Let go of the irrelevant rules and constraints that limit you, bring forth your monsters and focus on things that will truly change your life.

Choose to make your own choices. Say the following words to yourself, "I am allowed to ..."

Enjoy making a long list!

***The easiest person to deceive is one's own self.  
Edward Bulwer-Lytton***

### **On Comparing Myself to Others ....**

As time progressed, I felt drawn to study a metaphysical diploma part-time. Something from a completely different realm! It was during one of these classes, being taught an NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) process that the dynamics of Helen's and my relationship changed.

The powerful process had me look at myself through Helen's eyes and have a conversation with myself from this perspective. Very enlightening indeed! My perception and belief around the situation changed and I no longer felt threatened by her. I'd somehow put her up on a pedestal and carried her large, looming presence with me to continually compare myself against. Naturally I was inferior through this window. Having this NLP shift enabled me to see us as two separate human beings, with different lives, both making our way through the world. I'd manufactured a huge personal power struggle inside of myself that really didn't need to exist. At all.

Ironically, and yet again inexplicably, she came into my office first thing the following day and said to me, "Heidi, although I have never said this to you. I just want you to know that you're doing a great job and I really appreciate you being here."

Our ability to communicate had changed overnight. Just due to a change in my mindset.

With my increase in exercise came a complete lifestyle turn-around: rewarding and much-needed weight loss. Running became my passion. More like an obsession, probably. I wanted to run the furthest I could within the shortest possible time. I ran my first ultra-marathon within 18 months of starting to race-walk! That was crazy and needless to say, irresponsible towards a body that had enjoyed a sedentary role for most of its life.

Long distance running is a tough sport and with everything involved, I developed an awareness of my body. Why would I have cared what a hamstring was before this? But because of my previous patterning around being sick I was embarrassed to admit to any form of allergy, pain or ailment for fear of someone swooping in and taking it away, effectively rendering me powerless.

So, I continued running despite carrying ongoing injuries. I suffered with a torn ligament, Iliotibial band syndrome (ITB), sciatica, debilitating back spasms, an inexplicable nagging hip pain, loss of toenails and bursitis on my knee (and that's all I can recall right now!) I went through ordeal after ordeal (dragging loved ones down with me!) but only to become more and more determined to keep at it. My poor body was trying to tell me something, but I wouldn't listen.

I underwent surgery to repair the ligament and had cortisone injections in my knee for the ITB.

Despite my mother continually worrying about my asthma with running, it was the least of my problems. My scoliosis was the bigger enemy. I'd been born with a genetic fusion of two of my vertebrae and lower back pain continued to plague me. An orthopaedic surgeon warned me about running, saying, "Sure, you can run. But just know this. You'll never be pain-free and you'll only continue running as long as you can handle the pain. Because pain is something you'll always have."

I took up individual Pilates sessions three times a week and I swam two kilometres most days. This was to strengthen my back to support me through all the kilometres.

"As long as I can move, I'll run," I told Roelof.

I loved my exhilarating marathons and ultra-marathons. I enjoyed watching the sun rise while out on the open roads, with the crisp air on my face and white mist of my breath. I loved the sound of all the runners' feet on the ground at the same time. It was music to my soul. The sound of freedom. I was always transported to a different world.

I'd often be asked, "But what do you think about for four hours on the road? Don't you go crazy? It must be the most boring thing!"

Not for me. It was mine. My space and I had nothing else to worry about. Nothing mattered besides seeing the next board marking the finished kilometre. No one in my family had done this type of running before and no-one would ever have believed I would do it.

Libby laughed with me one day and said, "If we'd had a bet at University about which one of us would eventually do Comrades, it most certainly wouldn't have been you!"

Comrades is the ninety kilometre ultra-marathon that is run once a year in South Africa. I finished it in under ten hours. I was ecstatic and loved the run, despite being a long day in the sun! I had some friends come down to support me during the race. I vowed to do the race again the following year in under nine hours.

### On Opening Up ....

Helen started sharing her metaphysical beliefs with me and she somehow, seemed to ask me the 'right' questions about what was happening for me. The start of my spiritual journey still seemed surreal to me as I was pulled along within an unknown flow.

During this period of my life, everything I needed for my next step arrived in my path at exactly the right time. Perfectly divine synchronicity! These things were in the form of people, books, courses and opportunities. I just needed to be open enough and brave enough to take the next step forward.

***"Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe***

During this metaphysical spiritual resurgence, my running dreams came to an abrupt halt when my previously-set goal to break the nine hour barrier at Comrades was to be no more. My nagging hip pain had become immobilising and there seemed to be no medical explanation. I became desperate. And upset. And angry.

"I've trained for this. I know I can do it," I cried to Roelof. He was due to run his first Comrades that year as well.

"Why does this always happen to me? I'm well on track with everything going well and now it's falling away – and with no real medical reason!"

I went for an MRI, an x-ray and no reason for my pain was found. The doctors merely suggested I rest and take it easy, "Just go for a five kilometre run. You'll be okay."

"Five kilometres? What good is five kilometres? I need to be running eighty kilometres a week!" I argued back.

I'd hit the wall of another dream. And had no idea why.

### **Voice of the coach:**

Ignorance, and by this I mean lack of self-awareness, is the source of all our suffering. We make life harder for ourselves and we spend far too much energy and time on things or people that go against the grain. Self-awareness helps you to understand who you are and what you're truly about, which as a result helps you engage with the flow of life detaching from all the drama.

Working with things that are "in the flow" is so much easier. Being in the flow doesn't mean that everything goes your way, it merely means that you feel connected to what you're doing and who you are. There is none of the struggling-feeling we seem to believe is necessary for success.

I describe this as riding your own horse. You sit firmly on the back of it and hold the reins. The horse (flow) takes you in the direction you want to go, but you are fully able to steer it. But being on a horse just makes the ride easier. You have free will in the decision-making and able to guide the horse to jump over obstacles or find an alternative route around them. Being in the flow does not mean there are no obstacles, it just means you trust yourself and feel connected to the journey around them.

I've had clients describe this exact feeling to me since, "I feel like I'm being pushed and pulled along. I don't know where I'm going, but I can't stop it. And don't want to. I trust myself and the process."

### **On Facing Family Issues ....**

For all the years since moving out of home I'd been meeting my mother dutifully for breakfasts once a week. But as my world had started changing and I'd started exercising more self-awareness and personal responsibility, I started looking at my relationships differently and saw things through new eyes. I'd taken the time to understand how I actually felt about things and people.

I developed a niggling feeling that these breakfasts were actually always about my mother. All the time together was spent talking about her and three topics she conversed on religiously: bridge, her townhouse complex and the internet editing work she did. For as long as I could remember, she'd repeated the same stories every breakfast. This annoyed me at a deep level as I felt so inconsequential that she couldn't bother to remember that we'd already had a particular conversation. She even asked me for the same advice on the same topic on regular occasions.

"Didn't she hear what I said just last week? Is it really that meaningless?" I'd moan to Roelof afterwards, "Why does she even bother to ask when she really doesn't care?"

But, unlike my sister, I said nothing to her, too afraid to hurt her feelings. I let it go, holding my tongue for many years. She was my mother after all. But one bright morning, listening to her ramble on about the same old thing, something burned inside me and I asked,

"Mommy, can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

I paused, "Do you know where I work?"

She was taken aback, caught off guard, "No. You've never told me."

Perhaps I hadn't – but I had been working for Human Communications for a couple of years already by this stage.

And the penny dropped for me. Her life and interest had never been about me. She really had no idea about my life. She enjoyed having me around and talking at me, but that was as deep

as our relationship went. Feeling hurt, I discussed this with Roelof, who shrugged saying, "But that's your mother. It's who she is. She's always been like that."

But this was no longer good enough for me. I stewed on this for a while, and after a few more breakfasts, unable to take it any longer I went to see her at her flat. I wanted an adult relationship with her and took the opportunity to ask for it.

"I'm no longer the seven year old girl in an oxygen tent that you need to look after. I'm now a 35 year-old adult woman who wants adult relationships in her life."

Her reaction was unexpected, but perhaps I should've seen it coming. She burst into tears as was her pattern when confronted.

"If you're going to put conditions on our relationship, then I'd rather not have one with you."

"What conditions do you think I'm placing on our relationship?" I was bewildered.

"I can only have this kind of relationship with you. It's all I can do."

"But this isn't working for me," I continued, "You know nothing about me or my life and surely there's more to a mother-daughter relationship? I've seen other relationships between mothers and daughters and they seem to be *friends!*"

As I was hurting her she became defensive and more adamant, "I'd rather not have a relationship with you, if I have to do anything differently. It'll just be easier."

"Are you sure you understand the implications of what you're asking me?" I persevered, "Because if this is what you decide and really want, I'm going to respect your wishes adult-to-adult and honour them."

"Yes. I don't want a relationship with you if anything has to change."

This short conversation had marked something monumental in my life. My world had been rocked. I hardly believed that my own mother had ended our relationship.

"Don't I have any say as to how I'd like my relationship with her to be?" I cried to Roelof. Clearly not - as my mother and I had no contact for 12 months after this disengagement.

In this one, seemingly self-assertive conversation, I'd managed to cut the apron strings and 'orphan' myself. I had no mother anymore and I'd never really had a father. My father had had a stroke that same year and was left unable to speak, read or write.

His condition left no room for developing a relationship with him of any form. Although we'd all jumped in to help him when the stroke had occurred, it was more from a form of duty and obligation than of any real sense of mending the relationship. That particular relationship-horse had bolted many, many years previously.

### **Voice of the coach:**

I've heard before that the only place for a label is on a can or a bottle. You need to have it there to know what is inside. You need to understand the specifics of what you'll be eating or drinking. But with a human being there is no need to label yourself as that merely limits you. You are so much more than what you think is inside of you. Using this limited labelling mentality you lose the room to grow. You lose the space to be free and evolve naturally into your full self.

Most of your initial labels and role-playing comes from your family dynamics. You can choose to continue with these where you keep yourself confined to the specifics of that character.

For example, just because you're an accountant doesn't automatically and always mean that you're boring and intelligent. Those are merely labels.

So, fortunately for me, I started the next phase of my life with no obligation towards my family which gave me the much-needed space to really start the painful process of figuring out who I was without all the previously defined roles, labels and obligations.

Mixed up in all the family and ego drama, my personal boundaries were indistinct. It was hard to work out where I ended and where others began. This resulted in my over-sensitivity and hyper-criticism that I'd defended myself so well against.

Family always has a way of bringing out the worst side of us - and for a while at least I was free from that!

***We meet ourselves time and again in a thousand disguises on the path of life.  
Carl Jung.***

Your Personal Review:

Have a look at the role that fear still has in your life.

What are you currently avoiding and scared of?

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.....

What are you addicted to? This could be any small thing?

.....  
.....

How is this addiction serving you? What anxiety are you managing with this addiction?

.....  
.....

Where are you being rigidly resistant to change?

.....  
.....

What have you always felt called to do, but felt you needed permission to do?

.....  
.....

Whose life have you been living up to now?

.....  
.....

Where are possibilities still lurking in your life?

.....  
.....

What new life wants to emerge through you into this world?

.....  
.....

What ideas/beliefs/behavioural patterns are still holding you back?

.....  
.....

Where do you still need to grow up and be yourself?

.....  
.....

What do you believe you are not:

Allowed?

.....  
Capable of?

.....  
Able to?

.....  
What is the momentum that keeps you moving forward in your life?

.....  
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.....  
What relationships/friendships can you declutter as to give you more energy and space?

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Where are you feeling overwhelmed?

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What monsters are you brave enough to face?

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What makes you feel important?

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.....  
Who do you compare yourself to? What are the aspects/qualities that you feel inferior/superior about?

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What family issues still lie, buried?

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What do you want resolved?

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**PART II**  
**“WHAT TO ENJOY IN THE PRESENT”**  
**Me and God**

*The task of the second half is a so-called initiation into the inner reality, a deeper self-knowledge and knowledge of humanity, a yearning back to the traits of one's nature that have hitherto remained unconscious or become so. By raising these traits to consciousness the individual achieves an inward and outward bond with the world and the cosmic order.*

*Carl Jung*

## CHAPTER 5

### ON COURAGE TO CHANGE ...

As my spiritual world was starting to open up to possibility, the physical world was starting to nudge me in another direction, namely Australia.

I dropped a friend off at her house one evening after a function. I drove into her driveway and stopped. As we said our goodbyes, I, with central locking, unlocked all the doors for her to get out. As she touched the door handle, she turned round to me to say one more thing. But I never heard what that was. Both our doors were pulled open and two guys stood ordering us to get out. Their stances suggested they had guns in their hands, but I think in hindsight it was a scare tactic. Which worked.

Instinctively I screamed very loudly. Lesley had been pulled out from the passenger seat but I held my ground facing the hijacker. I screamed louder and Lesley joined me. The neighbours' dogs started barking with some babies crying and joining the commotion. Some curious people came into the street to see what was happening and scared the novice attackers away. Lesley's husband and a neighbour jumped into a car and tried to chase them down.

I was a bumbling idiot still frozen in fear, but very relieved that the car hadn't been taken off us. It was Andrea's V-Tec Honda Civic which she loved! This was the first incident in a series of three to take this vehicle.

Luckily I didn't get too attached to the zip-mobile as a few weeks later the thieves were successful in their goal and it was stolen outside my beauty therapist's office during my facial. All I found was broken glass where I'd parked.

"Roelof, I'm too scared to drive now," I discussed with him that night, "It's been a smash and grab, the attempted hijacking and now the car theft! What else is going to happen?"

The answer came a few months later when I was startled awake in the middle of the night. I sat bolt upright and murmured, "There's somebody in the house."

"I know," whispered Roelof, "I've been awake for a while listening to them."

I couldn't say anything else with fear shutting my voice down. Roelof moved to the ensuite bathroom to call our security service from his mobile phone.

"They're on their way. I'll call the cops as well, just in case."

The softness of his voice was chilling. We lay and waited in silence. We both remembered but didn't verbalize the fact that we hadn't locked the bedroom door or our interlocking security gate down to the living area of the house. We were exposed and vulnerable to the potential danger from the muffled sounds we could hear as things were being carried outside.

"What if they find us here?" my voice was a squeak.

"They won't, if we're quiet," Roelof was calm and reassuring, "Help is on its way."

Help did arrive but only after the thieves had escaped over the neighbour's wall. Some of our electronic equipment was recovered as they'd been interrupted. But we were left physically unscathed.

"Roelof, this is it. No more. Let's move to Australia. This is no way to live." We started the application process for permanent residency that week. But it was to take us another four years to take the plunge and actually emigrate.

#### **Voice of the coach:**

**My decision to leave came from a place of fear and anger, but it took much longer for me to be emotionally ready to leave my home country because:**

- I needed to change my thinking about how I wanted to live my life

- I needed to get myself brave enough to leave the security and comfort of what I was familiar with
- I needed to learn to trust myself and Roelof
- I needed to develop faith in the unknown
- I still needed to figure out who I was as I'd be taking myself with me

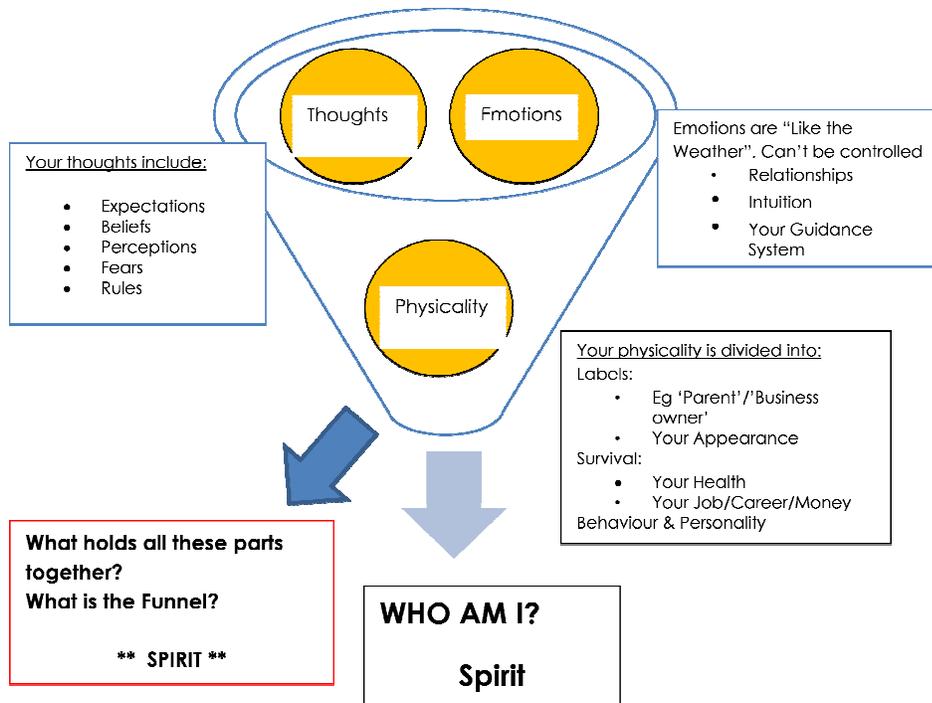
Of course I knew none of this at the time, but circumstances, albeit unpleasant had forced me forward in a new direction. I would just need some time to catch up to the larger plan for my life. And that's usually how the first brave step forward occurs. Making a decision. The rest will fall into place at the right time. I often coach with the words that individuals grow into relationships or successes. It's not as much about the WHAT as about the WHO you become. And that is a journey in- and of itself.

One of the bigger questions in life is "Who are you?" It's a question that is often sneered at, or dismissed, merely from the sheer magnitude of it. And also from what it could mean to you, if you actually knew the answer to it. You, however, are the only one that can answer it. For you. And it will be different for everyone. It's a process of discovery - and sometimes a challenging one. But that's what makes it interesting. Heroes and idols are often more inspiring for their stories than for what they're currently achieving. Think of Nelson Mandela or Oprah Winfrey.

The model below is a simplistic diagram laying out a generic concept of what you as a human being consist of.

- (1) Your thoughts
- (2) Your emotions
- (3) Your physicality
- (4) Within the funnel of your Spirit

**Where to start if you're considering change:**



This model is by no means a scientific approach, but I use it for pragmatic reasons to show you how interconnected you are.

- (1) **Your thoughts** consist of your expectations, fears, beliefs, 'rules', perceptions and projections. Changing your thoughts is a great place to initiate effective change.

This book has taken you through many examples of how this played out in my life so far. It's clear that my thoughts ruled my life with all the self-sabotaging 'stuff' so entrenched in my subconscious. I encourage you to start weeding these out and examine each at a conscious level. Decide then what you wish to do with your new personal insights. Do this in a detailed and preferably systematic way by looking at beliefs, fears, perceptions, expectations and rules that no longer serve your highest good. These are different and can be reframed or discarded as you choose.

*What you thought before has led to every choice you have made, and this adds up to you at this moment. If you want to change who you are physically, mentally and spiritually, you will have to change what you think.*

*Dr Patrick Gentempo*

Dr Wayne Dyer, *'You'll See It When You Believe It'* says the same thing in that personal development is not changing who you are, but rather who you *think* you are. Once again, it all starts with thought. Once you stop telling yourself what you're not allowed to be, but present thoughts of love and acceptance to yourself, it becomes magical to be alive.

- (2) **Your emotions:** Scattered throughout this journey is the story of how increasingly I found myself in touch with my emotional body. Acknowledging this, then more importantly starting to trust my emotional state led me to an inner, peaceful life of being guided by my intuition. I explain emotions more as the journey develops. This only really starts from this point onwards.

- (3) **Your physicality:** Mine included health issues, injury issues as well as all the labels I'd attached to make me relevant in my own life. I was proudly independent and intellectual and clung to these labels for identity. I lived under the power of the ego. Some labels that were already slowly disappearing were 'daughter', 'perfect', 'competent' and 'good.'
- (4) Hopefully what you'll discover at the end of this journey is that these three abovementioned aspects are all a part of who you are. Each serves a different function, but the greater part of your make-up is **your Spirit**. This is what so desperately wants to be set free and live authentically. It hates being confined. It seeks expression and creativity. If your Spirit is being honoured and connected with, all other aspects of yourself can roam around freely and change without judgement. These emotional, physical and mental aspects become resilient and robust regardless of what happens externally to you, because they're safely nestled in Spirit which is pure love.

If this is totally new to you, perhaps start with noticing your **thoughts**. What goes through your mind on a minute-by-minute basis? What are the messages you're continually sending yourself? Are they loving thoughts or critical thoughts?

As you become more and more aware of your self-talk, you may decide you don't want to be ruled by this hostile voice any longer. Become more aware of how you're **feeling** on a regular basis. Ask yourself the question, 'How do I FEEL about that?' 'If I was honest, what is it that I really want?'

This will take you to a different level of understanding of yourself. Your feeling state is honest. It may not be true or even right, but it's honest for that point in time. And that's a powerful indicator of what's going on for you.

'I feel hurt that my best friend forgot my birthday.' is an honest emotional connection. It's true for that moment and makes no one right or wrong. You then ask yourself, "What exactly is hurtful?"

"She thinks I'm not important," your ego voice may respond.

"Is that really true?" your loving voice may counter.

"No. She's probably just caught up. I'll remind her." And somehow, now you'll feel better, with only your thoughts about the incident having changed.

Look at all the **labels** you have about yourself for example, I'm a father, I'm a teacher, I'm a good driver or I always remember birthdays

What attachment do you have to these things? What do you think they mean about you?

Examine what **behaviours** you pride yourself on. I'm always nice, I'm polite, I'm reliable.

What do these behaviours mean about you? How do they serve you?

What do the following things mean about you: your job, your salary and any titles or qualifications you may have?

None of these things are entirely who you are. All these things are aspects of you. Once you define yourself by any one of these single elements, you're limiting yourself and setting yourself up for disappointment or disillusion. You're a whole being made up of many interconnected parts. Your whole being is the entire funnel in the diagram which is fluid and ever-changing. Your mind and your heart need to communicate clearly with each other, otherwise you'll land in an endless cycle of mentally wanting change, but emotionally fearing it. This goes nowhere.

So, look at the process of getting to know yourself as an adventure. Take yourself on this journey of discovery through your subconscious beliefs and fears, your strengths and weaknesses, your gifts, talents and challenges. Be brave enough to voice your deepest desires, biggest dreams and highest aspirations.

Let go of controlling each aspect in this funnel structure. Let each part of you just be within the collective nature of your Spirit. The more you lose the impact and the importance attached to your thoughts, your emotions and your behaviour, the more space you'll create in the funnel for your Spirit to thrive. Get to know your spirit - it certainly wants to get to know you!

***Listen to the passion of your soul, set the wings of your spirit free and let not a single song go  
unsung.  
Sylvana Rossetti***

Many people believe they've already learnt what they're meant to learn by a certain stage at their life.

"What's the point of learning new things? It may mean I need to change," I've had many peers ask, "And that would be too hard..."

Sick Puppies sing the song "Maybe" with the following lyrics which provide an inkling as to why some people fear change and the mind- muddle that can be created.

*'Maybe I've just had enough  
Maybe it's time to change and leave it all behind  
I've never been one to walk alone  
I've always been scared to try  
So why does it feel so wrong to reach for something more  
To wanna live a better life  
What am I waiting for?  
'Cause nothing stays the same  
Maybe it's time to change...  
What if I can't trust myself?  
What if I just need some help?'*

***Nothing limits achievement like small thinking; nothing expands possibilities like unleashed  
imagination.  
William Arthur Ward***

#### **On Fearing Change ....**

***The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found  
these dangers sufficient reasons for remaining ashore.  
Vincent van Gogh.***

Between questioning my life direction and meaning, my unknown hip pain and my degenerating spine I found myself exploring all forms of alternative healing. I felt conflicted about going down this road as the Christian part of me was convinced this was of the Devil. Christian friends had even confirmed this belief for me.

***"First choose from the options that thrill you.  
Then choose the ones that also teach you.  
And from these, choose the scariest.  
Butterflies in your tummy are good."  
Mike Dooley***

I started with a Reiki practitioner who referred me to a different modality.

"Your body is looking for Cranio," she said, "I suggest you find a Cranio-Sacral therapist"

I then found Sam, and at my first session with her, being a bundle of nerves and anxiety, I explained, "I have no idea why I'm here. I don't even know what you do, but all I know is that I'm in the right place doing the right thing." And I was.

Despite the unknown and the self-talk convincing me that I was on my way to Hell, I felt a deep inner peace that all was okay and exactly how it was meant to be. This is where my self-trust started and constantly spoke to the Universe, reaffirming my intention to go where led.

I cried all the way home after my first session, talking to Miles on the phone at the same time.

"I don't understand what happened. There is lots of heat. She didn't even touch me, but I could feel the heat and my body responded in ways I don't understand. So much *stuff* came out."

"What does she actually do?" he wanted to know.

"That's just it. It's energy! I don't know if she does anything, but so much happens! And so many emotions came out. I feel so great. So relieved. I think I need to stop fighting with myself about the way forward."

Journal entry:

*'Remember that leaning into the unknown creates momentum.*

*Be willing to start without seeing the whole picture*

*I'm not lost; I'm just exploring*

*Keep leaning and the path will appear.'*

I was being guided to see people outside my 'inner circle' and I went where I felt led. Everything was new. Words were being used that I'd never heard before and these people believed in "weird stuff".

"Do you know your numbers mean something?" I asked Miles incredulously, "Apparently your soul chooses when it wants to be born and that's the date it incarnates. That's your birthday and all the numbers added together will tell you about yourself."

Part of my explorative journey included seeing numerologists, astrologers and tarot readers. I was continuously learning. I tried anything that I felt drawn to. I sat down at a psychic for the first time and was shocked by his first words, "You've seen your first ghost, haven't you?" I'd seen a ghost in our bedroom the week before.

"Yes," I replied, "I thought it was a ghost. But he wasn't visiting me."

"Exactly," replied the psychic, "trust your instincts."

But despite learning all the new metaphysical beliefs, things felt familiar and I had the eerie feeling that I'd always known all of this. It wasn't new, inasmuch that I was merely remembering it again.

"It makes so much sense," I excitedly explained to Roelof, "Understanding this stuff just makes life so easy!"

I visited a variety of healers and therapists who all took me through different levels of self-understanding. Being such a newbie to anything New-Ageish I panicked the first time I dropped into a meditative state. I woke myself up with a fright vowing to never lose control like that again!

"What was that?" I asked Sam, "I rose above my body and felt like I was looking down on the room."

"That's a deep meditative or relaxed state," she explained, "it's all okay."

My reading passion changed completely. I found myself engrossed in the self-help sections of the bookstores. I started off reading the Celestine Prophecy (James Redfield) and Conversations with God (Neale Donald Walsch) which switched on many lights for me! My entire perspective shifted and choice and life purpose became everyday words for me.

I bravely waded through the technical books of Caroline Myss. She opened another few doors for me. All my reading combined with my metaphysical studies led me down many new and fascinating paths. I'd found heaven!

The modality of Cranio-Sacral therapy raised my awareness in many areas. The left hip pain that doctors had not been able to diagnose related to my relationship with my mother. And later, I experienced similar pain in my right hip and realised this was all about work, which helped me start re-evaluating accountancy as a career.

True to my nature, I approached this new personal- and spiritual development journey like an academic process. Feeling like a child in a toy store with so many options, I wanted it all and as quickly as possible.

Looking back, I laugh at this to-do list I found in one of my journals during the early days:

'This week:

- Develop the practice of introspection
- Interpret all situations & relationships as symbolically important
- Receive insight and guidance through dreams
- Practice detachment instead of trying to create a specific outcome
- Recognise fear patterns
- Act on inner guidance; give up need for 'proof'.
- Refrain from living in the past
- Refrain from worrying about the future'

Wow! And these were all my focus for just one week. And I was so clinical, believing I had perfect control over the whole process and I'd be able to tick things off a list.

In this state of excitement, awe and wonderment, I sat down with Roelof one day. "I'm on a journey," I explained, "I don't quite understand it. I don't know where it's going to end up. But I'm going on it."

I still often describe this feeling as a tunnel forming all around me, guiding me, keeping me safe as I move down inside it, towards the other end.

"I have no idea what this is going to bring about or what is going to change, but I want you alongside me for the journey. You don't need to get involved or believe everything I'm starting to believe. But I want you present and not worried about me," I continued.

He looked at me, a little surprised, "Okay, but I don't understand this so-called journey you say you're on."

"Yes. I know that and I don't expect you to understand it. I'm not even sure I do. But if I have to choose, I'm going to choose this path I'm on," I bravely told him.

"Can I think about it?" he asked, leaving me in anxious suspense.

The following day I received a bunch of sunflowers at work with a card saying, "To many more years with my space cadet."

And he has been part of my wonderful journey. Alongside me and listening to me. He may not believe what I believe and take it all so seriously, but he takes me seriously and is happy when I'm happy. That's all that counts. He still calls me his space cadet and 'funny bunny'.

### Voice of the coach:

Although each of the things I had on my 'spiritual' to-do list were, by themselves good principles - the way I listed it was controlling. I was applying organisational and management techniques to Spirit! Albeit in the spiritual world, I was still deeply entrenched in the world of 'doing'. This meant my mind led my heart. My mind was constantly busy creating action plans to achieve particular outcomes.

Sonia Choquette refers to 'Spiritual junkies' in her book, '*The Power of Spirit*'. She says the intellectual pursuit of spirit is not enough - you need practice. And you need experiences to practice.

All my reading and fact-gathering was merely part of the process, but I had yet to learn that the Spiritual state of beingness, however is totally different. This happens when you're silent, listening and trusting the process. There is a huge difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. Heart knowledge comes through your *own* understanding of yourself and being able to express yourself fully in your own uniqueness.

I see many clients for coaching who are already on a spiritual journey of sorts who seem to think they have all the answers. And they possibly do - in theory. The hardest journey I always say, however, is the surrender of head to the heart. All the intellectual knowledge needs to be felt to be real. You need to learn where and how you're aware of it all and how you're applying it all in your **everyday life**.

Although it may be useful initially to understand that FEAR stands for 'False Expectations Appearing Real' - this doesn't help you when you're trying to figure out why you cannot commit to a long-term relationship. Yes, you'll understand that it's only a fear and it's not real, but what IS the fear, or even, the fear beneath the fear? And how has this fear been serving you? Because if your fear serves you for some unconscious reason, this makes it harder to move through. Understanding and facing your fears takes you to the unjustified, honest heart-space. You're able to look at yourself with love and compassion and this then provides courage to face your fears. Your soul seeks the peace that lies on the flip side of the fear.

The path of spiritual evolution is exactly that - an evolution. It's not a defined path to walk along, step by step as you tick off a list thinking, 'Been there, done that'. And once you've learnt or understood something it doesn't mean it will remain that way forever. As you evolve, your deeper understanding of Spirit and God within you changes as well. I still believe that, "The more I learn, the less I know," as the world keeps widening and showing me new things. I now see this as exciting as opposed to pointless.

My experience has been that the more the mind unravels and unfolds the more I've realised that nothing is absolute and nothing is real. How I experience something today may be totally different tomorrow as I will have once again, shifted to a new perspective.

Instead, 'The spiritual path requires that we open to all our multiple selves, journeying toward the centre of self, toward the unitive state of consciousness. The practice of self-observation is the

bridge from our ordinary scattered selves to the core of our unified self.' (Pathwork Guide Lecture 204)

A large part of any spiritual journey is done through meditation and reflection. This doesn't mean that you're sitting on a mountain in Tibet and thinking deep thoughts. But it's also deeper than having a good ponder. You actually need to drop down low into yourself, getting honest and real.

Your experience of life is an exact reflection of who you are within. When your life feels limited or unfulfilling, you'll need to go deeper into your unknown, inner layers. You'll need to uncover these frozen, suppressed areas to enjoy a richer experience of life. Every time you expand your inner life, your outer life will also expand. Your best spiritual teacher will always be your life that is right in front of you. What are your current thoughts about the circumstances and people in your life? What are you not seeing about yourself? What are you not learning about yourself?

***I am more and more convinced that our happiness or our unhappiness depends far more on the way we meet the events of life than on the nature of those events themselves.***  
**Karl Wilhelm Von Humboldt**

### On Starting Small ...

The traffic between Pretoria, where we lived and Johannesburg, where we worked became impossibly frustrating. We spent most of our time in Johannesburg anyway to avoid sitting on the jam-packed highway. Andrea had encouraged us for many years to move, as it just made sense. But I'd been resistant (read scared) as Pretoria was where I'd grown up, what I knew and where my friends were. I wasn't comfortable with the idea of upheaving it all and starting over. Anything new or unknown was scary.

"It just makes sense!" Andrea was excited the day I eventually decided to take the plunge and move, "And there's so much to do in Johannesburg!"

To be honest, she'd never really believed I'd be able to give up my sense of security in Pretoria, where I felt comfortable. Neither had I. She'd once joked that "You're the kind of person who always drives the same kind of car and wears the same brand of shoes..."

But this initial move was the Universe's cleverly-planted stepping stone to show me I could move out of my nest. The Australian application was ticking over in the background with minimal intervention and unbeknown to us, our residency approval was imminent.

In the creation of our new home, we pulled out all the stops – even hiring the services of an interior decorator. Living only two kilometres from work gave me an extra two to three hours in my day. What a pleasure! As many of my friends and colleagues were still commuting from Pretoria, I felt compelled to share this fact with them.

"Have I mentioned that it only took me two minutes to get here today?" I'd announce chirpily, waltzing into the office. This teasing became stale quite quickly, but I continued to rub it in regardless. I couldn't have imagined the quality it added to my life unless I'd experienced it for myself.

### On Relationship Harmony ...

Self awareness and discovery led me to discover a deeper capacity to feel love, but also to allow myself to feel pain.

For most of my life up until this point, my marriage had been in the background overshadowed by my career and my running. I took lots of my dissatisfaction and unhappiness out on Roelof. I found very little 'right' about him and often blamed him for the way I felt. With increased self-awareness I started loving and forgiving myself which led me to fall in love with him again, and funny enough, more and more became 'right' with him again.

With what felt like a meaningful work-life balance life quickly fell into external perfection. Everything was convenient, possible and easy. The rocky patches in our relationship had been ironed out and we regularly implemented new strategies to keep working at it. I started knowing what I wanted from Roelof and even more importantly, I started expressing it. And vice versa.

There were three elements to our relationship: Him, me and the relationship itself. We nurtured each individually and watched as all three blossomed. We discovered that our previous, subconscious set of expectations of each other were completely misaligned and mismatched. I asked Roelof one day, "What do you want from a wife?"

He gave me a list of things that I wasn't, "And what you do want from a husband?" he asked.

My list didn't match what his idea of what a husband should be or do either. Living from this misalignment and assumptions had prevented us from meeting each other's needs.

"You mean you don't just want financial security and a house?" he was surprised.

"No. I just want to be heard and emotionally supported. I want you to listen to me and I want to feel loved and safe. "

We started from scratch discovering what the other needed and worked out how to meet those needs. I learnt that if I wanted something and expressed it, I'd often receive it. I no longer needed to play games to get what I wanted. I no longer assumed that he knew what I wanted or needed.

Our regular weekly 'date-nights' became a priority and not much was more important than these. A lot of our re-evaluating and re-establishing of our relationship took place on these valuable Friday evenings. A large part of this reconstruction phase was being held accountable to each other. We'd review the week and how we felt about things each date night and put different strategies in place for the following week. We tried new things and eventually settled into what fitted, worked and most importantly, made us happy.

After nine years of marriage, at lunch with Andrea one day, I announced, "I'm falling more and more in love with Roelof than ever before."

Home life was comfortable again; being financially free I pretty much spent my disposable income as I saw fit. We started international travel as this had been put on hold until we were debt-free. Roelof and I travelled well together and we loved the new experiences. Despite me still fighting occasional injuries, we ran international marathons in Geneva and Victoria Falls. We did an LSD (look, see, decide) trip to Australia and jokingly considered staying in Cairns, running an ice-cream shop. Our permanent residency was approved with this trip in 2004.

***"Sweet success does not mean always being or feeling individually happy. It derives from the capacity to fully and deeply share all the ups and downs of life with another person. It is doing things not to make oneself happy, but because doing them feels like the right thing to do in the broad context of your general wellbeing."***  
***(Paul Pearsall, PhD, from 'Toxic Success')***

External life was falling together in a simple way as my incredible inner journey continued on its rollercoaster. Once I'd declared the willingness and openness to wherever I was headed, I had no real control over the experience. And I continued to be led by intuition and an unfamiliar drive wondering if there was more to life than all of this. I yearned to be a master of my own life. Although I'd engaged with some self-empowerment, I still felt like a pawn along for the ride of a so-called life. I wanted more and felt increasingly bored with accounting work.

With our recent move to Johannesburg, I'd stopped going to Church. I just forgot to go back really. I didn't miss it much and I guess it didn't miss me. With all the new self-exploration and my new mystical sense developing, I no longer needed Church the same way I had. I was being lovingly pulled in an entirely different direction. With all these new fields I was exploring, I was

exposed to broader and different views of life. I realised there was more to this 'spirituality' thing than the Heaven and Hell concept I'd accepted my entire life.

This 'New-Age' way of life became a passion. It's all I spoke about. As I did so, I discovered more and more people who already knew all this stuff and had known for a long time already! Andrea was the biggest help in some aspects. She constantly fed me information and resources.

"Where has this been all my life?" I asked her in wonder.

"You just weren't ready to see it yet," she responded wisely, "when the student is ready – the teacher always appears."

***At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.***

***Albert Schweitzer***

Andrea wasn't doing anything differently – I was just seeing differently. I'd allowed my narrow-mindedness to open up and see what was really there. I'd always limited my own vision into a narrow line of sight that was controllable and understandable.

She'd moved back from her ten years away in Cape Town and I now saw her regularly for lunch. We met once a week at the same place where I spoke openly about metaphysical things with her. She'd been in this mindset many years before me but I'd been very judgmental of it all. And of her. I'd even warned her about going to hell previously when I'd seen her reading a book on Wicca. I'd also banned her tarot cards from our house years previously.

I slowly realised through my conversations with her and all my other experiences that my overall spiritual belief system was changing. I had no real tangible idea of what was evolving, but just knew that everything *felt* different.

"You mean to tell me I'm *allowed* to be happy and free?" I remember asking in amazement.

She smiled and asked me in return, "You do know that God *wants* you to be happy, don't you?"

"Well, no." I replied, "Doesn't He want me to be good? Where does happiness fit into the picture?" And being good is such hard work, I muttered to myself.

"So what do you want for yourself now?" she pressed digging into our shared chicken-liver salad.

"I'm not sure there is a place for good **and** happy. I have rules to live by to be good: right, wrong, sin and punishment."

"So what do you want for yourself now?" she asked again.

"I want to be happy."

I'd wasted so many years trying ever-so-hard not to sin. I'd got myself twisted into knots trying to behave in a certain way, but would inevitably arrive at a place of self-disapproval and disappointment that things didn't work out or I'd once again, done something 'wrong'.

***Real happiness is not dependent on external things.***

***The pond is fed from within.***

***The kind of happiness that stays with you is the happiness that springs from inward thoughts and emotions.***

***William Lyon Phelps***

Despite fighting emotions along the way, with all the energy healing work I did, I started becoming aware of those unmentionable things called 'feelings'. I felt a lot of things, and seemed to understand myself more and judge me less. Albeit in only a small way at first.

I was starting to "feel". Really feel. I stopped seeking and chasing so many external achievements. I saw running for what it was, a hobby.

This is where the parts of my previously 'forgotten' childhood came into consciousness. What I've written in this book so far had been buried up to this point. I'd always thought of my childhood as idyllic, that I'd come from a perfect family. I'd never connected with the painful emotional absence, need for perfection and unrelenting fear I'd lived with.

This journey will continue for the rest of my life, but it started with acknowledging that there were some deep-seated issues, fears and beliefs. And many things may not have been as they seemed.

I was now ready to feel things because I'd stopped the pretence and denial. I'd agreed to own the truth.

***"Intelligent living is not pretending you don't have the emotion, it's how you deal with the emotion."***

***James Hollis***

My initial spiritual unfolding was a gorgeous period of both anticipation and expectation. I felt I couldn't fail at anything and everything I did was ultimately for the benefit of my higher self. I felt the journey to be an ongoing mystery of unfolding within me. By giving myself the permission to truly live, I was becoming more of myself.

***We did not change as we grew older,  
We just became more clearly ourselves***

***Lynn Hall***

### **On Shame ...**

Because our lives seemed settled and easy, Roelof and I agreed to try the process of in vitro fertilisation (IVF). We'd already been trying for six years to fall pregnant without success. I'd already had a few procedures and surgeries, but nothing had made a difference. Our test results showed a few issues with both Roelof and me which made any natural chances of falling pregnant minimal.

I called my sister the first day I walked into the fertility clinic, "What am I doing?" I asked her, "There are big words on the sign here saying "Fertility Clinic". Everyone will now know that I can't have a baby."

Everybody else was falling pregnant easily. What was wrong with me? I was embarrassed and continued to check over my shoulder every time I arrived at the clinic.

The IVF process took only a couple of months with all the tests, the laparoscopy, the injections and consultations, but felt interminably long. I shared my experiences with a few close friends and received overwhelming support. It was only then that I realised how many other people had gone through similar things. One of my colleagues at work even confessed that her two gorgeous kids were, in fact, adopted! She'd kept this a secret till then.

With the nature of IVF being a clinical process the emotional turmoil involved caught me unawares. My only slightly opened well of emotions sprung into life! I felt things I'd never felt before. The highs were very high and the lows were very low.

Naturally, because of Roelof's supportive nature, we drew emotionally closer to each other. I voiced my dependence on him for support through it all. This involved small things like asking him just to hold me at night, which were all firsts for my fiercely independent nature! I no longer thought less of myself having become dependent on him. It was my choice to show my dependence and allow him to support me.

And amazingly, I went with the flow, feeling whatever came up. Mind you, I didn't particularly have a choice with all the hormones raging around in me. I didn't try to understand it all, I just felt it. I doubt I could've understood it actually, even if I'd tried. After the insertion of the embryos into me, I lay on the couch for days, ignoring the outside world and just 'was'. I cried when I wanted to, I laughed at stupid TV series' and talked with Roelof when I felt the need to share.

Waiting in the queue at the clinic for the results of the pregnancy test was heart-breaking. One joyful couple would come out of the room followed by a couple in tears. Eventually our turn arrived and as we sat down, the nurse looked at us and only said, "I'm so sorry..."

Although the negative outcome was a bitter disappointment to us, I found I needed to talk to someone about the entire ordeal more so than just the disappointment. I thought I'd been prepared for the process, but I was wrong. I may have thought I understood emotions, but I did not. When faced with the full force of them from all angles, I was once again, inept at controlling them because I thought I could.

From my journal ...

"... despair. Exhaustion. I feel broken."

One of my biggest fears after this ordeal was whether my marriage would survive the outcome. I felt like a failure as I hadn't been able to do 'my bit' properly. In essence I thought the blame for not having children was mine and perhaps I was being punished.

I chose not to do another cycle of IVF as I still felt raw and daunted by the prospect of doing it all again. We'd need the whole process again as I hadn't produced enough 'good' eggs the first time round for a second bash.

### **Voice of the coach:**

Why do so many people keep secrets? What is all the shame about? I still, to this day find infertility a hush-hush topic in society. There is a sense of shame enveloping it and hiding behind this feeling only fuels it further.

Donkey in the Shrek I movie asks the question, "What's the point of being able to talk, when you've gotta keep secrets?"

One of the biggest rewards to becoming authentic is to see how much you have in common with others. You'll see this when you share your feelings, honestly, with others. You'll be surprised how much shared pain or fear there is and sometimes with the least likely people! Not talking about something because you're ashamed is keeping a lid on it and making yourself 'wrong'.

What shameful things do you keep locked up?

What do you think these things mean about you?

- Are these things true? And are you wrong?

With me starting to feel comfortable with admitting imperfection or weakness, I'm able to give permission to others to do the same. I believe it's through emotional honesty in relationships that I share a true and intimate connection. It's only when I fully trust myself to survive feeling any form of pain that I'm able to expose myself to give and receive love without expectation.

***Everyone knows who they are in their heart. If they open their heart, if they share with others, their hearts desires, if they live their heartfelt truth, they fill their world with magnificence.***  
***(Neale Donald Walsch, Conversations with God 3)***

It's no use hiding shame. It's an emotion and emotions cannot be controlled. They're merely indicators of what's going on inside of you and are a result of thoughts you've had. Emotions come and go - as do thoughts. Dan Millman, author of *Way of The Peaceful Warrior*, compares emotions to the weather. A thunderstorm comes and goes. You can't stop it, but you can go indoors to see it out in the best possible way you know how.

True, meaningful liberation only comes from experiencing painful things to the fullest. So many of your biggest learnings will come through contrast and pain is the contrast to pleasure. If you're brave enough to own a painful emotion, take a step back and understand the thoughts that triggered

it, you're one step closer to healing by choosing a different thought in the future. By experiencing emotions, you can move through them instead of being stuck in them. Glossing over feelings, repressing and denying them means you remain where you are. Stuck. You'll experience the same things over and over again with the same frustrating results.

Remember that the suffering in anything is the *meaning* that you attach to it.

Andrea once asked me, "What will be your meaning if you never have kids?"

If I'd answered that my sole meaning to life was to have children, I'd have been confusing who I am (my true essence) with a *role* that I wanted to play or an experience that I wanted to have.

Remember that roles include being a teacher, parent, employee, entrepreneur, child, boss or leader etc. For example you make a dire mistake at work and suddenly feel that (the whole of ) you is stupid or incompetent. Your entire sense of self feels shamed and internal drama occurs. You are not your role. Detach from this, knowing that each role or experience is just one aspect of your life. You are more than your role and/or any event that occurs in your life. Choose to *think differently* about your roles and you'll *feel differently* when something is threatened. Establish personal meaning from your complete being, including the intangible spirit.

Emotions can help you become conscious of how you're creating meaning in your everyday life, from moment to moment. For example, grief means you've lost something; anger could mean you've been hurt in some way etcetera. Emotions convey information, but it takes practice and reflection to recognise their inputs and understand the messages. And this is where true wisdom stems from.

#### On Personal Growth...

Real personal growth is often about change. And my biggest changes still lay ahead of me. I'd only really started with engaging with the emotional pain of not being able to have children. After the IVF process I thought I was over it all and explained to those who asked me,

"I still have plenty of time and have so much else going on in my life anyway."

I didn't yet know what my greater plan for life was, but I trusted my instincts and took the next step which felt good for me. Which, later that same year was a willingness to move to Australia.

#### On Evolving Spirituality ...

Going through the layers of self-discovery felt like ongoing emotional confusion at times.

"I've fired the Universe again!" I'd announce during periods of feeling at odds with God. This usually happened when something made me angry or hadn't met an expectation.

"For how long this time?" Roelof teased me as inevitably I'd return to God with a deeper personal mysticism, and a little more self-trust each time. I've always had a robust relationship with a Higher Power, firstly Jesus and later, The Universe and now, my own Higher Self. I'd have 'normal' conversations and often arguments with them.

"No one else would dare speak to Jesus like you do," Roelof once remarked as I was urging Jesus to get my car started.

Andrea also commented later in my life, "There was no doubting that Jesus was very real for you. You've always had a deeply spiritual nature."

So – through this Universal nudging, and an overwhelming feeling of safety (despite being uncertain) I felt called to dredge up my courage and move to Australia, and in particular Perth.

One morning soon after the unsuccessful IVF attempt, I woke up and said to Roelof, "I think I'm ready to move to Australia now." Our permanent residency application had finally been approved a few years earlier but we'd put our decision to move on hold.

"You're kidding me," Roelof replied, "Are you sure?"

"Yes. I'm sure. I think I'm ready. I know I'll be okay. I'm scared, but we'll be okay."

"Cool!" Roelof had been ready for years already and was beyond keen to move, "But trust you to decide now and not last month, before I bought a new car!"

We laughed and started discussing our options. I resigned a few weeks later, giving Helen six months' notice.

"I can't blame you for wanting this," Helen said, "It's important to have other options at the moment. But what has made you decide now?"

"I don't really understand it. I literally feel a strong pull from my stomach. It says that I need to go to Perth. Roelof wants to move to Sydney, but Perth is calling me."

"But what are you going to do there?" was her obvious next question.

"I have no idea. I don't know what's in store for us. I just know that I'm not going to be an accountant." Of that I was now certain after years of internal struggle.

### **Voice of the coach:**

Shrek and Donkey have a conversation of interest in the original Shrek movie. It's about onions and Shrek yells at Donkey while walking through a field of sunflowers, "Ogres are like onions. Onions have layers, ogres have layers."

He has it spot on. Our journey of life, if we take it seriously enough and are brave enough to peel ourselves open, becomes layered. I've experienced it as a feeling of "dropping between" layers. With each layer that I unfold and detach from, I drop further down into myself, all the time getting closer and more loving towards who I really am.

Personally, my internal self-needed love and compassion. And I discovered that the self-unfolding process of the layers is gentle. But as life is a continual journey of you learning more about yourself, as soon as you feel 'this is it' and that think you know it all in one layer, the Universe will gently and lovingly push you into the next layer. This may present itself in the form of another challenge or even a life-changing decision like a career and country change.

I describe this process of dropping between layers using the analogy of Russian Dolls which you may have encountered: A set of matryoshkas (Russian dolls) consists of a wooden figure which separates, top from bottom, to reveal a smaller figure of the same sort inside, which has, in turn, another figure inside of it, and so on. The number of nested figures is traditionally at least five, but can be much more, up to several dozen ... (Wikipedia)

You're similar to these dolls in that your essence lies within you as the smallest doll in the middle. Your essence has always been there. All the external layers of dolls are merely a protective mechanism to deal with the outside world. Once you move through these, you get to the core - which has always been your strength, your meaning and your truth.

***One of the most comforting thoughts of all is knowing that all roads lead 'home'. (to yourself)  
Even more comforting is understanding that you never left.  
Mike Dooley***

Being guided through my 'tunnel' and dropping through my various layers meant I didn't need to know at that precise point what was in store for me. I felt safe, despite being terrified, trusting the gentle guided feeling.

Knowing what you really want and feeling fully connected to it with a sense of peace is the work of soul. I have no doubt that it was my soul that dragged me halfway around the world to reconnect with it. It took courage and resolve to follow this calling, but ultimately led to my healing.

The call of your soul may not be easy. It may be the hardest thing you do, but it will provide you with the greatest sense of inner peace and fulfilment. Sort through the clutter of what you think you want. You'll learn to recognise the voice of your soul through its soft, gentle, loving and discerning call.

There is a great adventure in the unknown that propels you to discover powerful parts of you that you didn't know were there. Don't ignore it just because what it's asking from you seems impossible. If it's meant to be the way forward for you, the doors will open for you. You just need to take the first step, willingly, and trust your guidance or otherwise called, your intuition. It's for your Higher Good. Always.

Susan Jeffers in her book, "Embracing Uncertainty, says that:

If you're being led by intuition:

- You're being led rather than groping in the dark
- Your choices are safe
- Life is exciting rather than frightening

In the movie called "Leap Year" starring Amy Adams and Matthew Goode, a young lady flies to Dublin to surprise her boyfriend with a wedding proposal on the twenty-ninth of February. Tradition has it that this is the one day that women can propose to men. She is an uptight, successful business woman who is disappointed that he hasn't yet proposed and decides that this is her one shot to change that!

As fate would have it a dangerous storm prevents her from landing in Dublin and the aircraft's rerouting messes with her perfect plan.

"Wales! I can't land in Wales!", she laments to her fellow passenger, a priest as they are diverted.

"At least we're landing," he calmly responds despite the shaking aircraft and howling winds.

"Yes - but I'm on a schedule! I have to propose to my boyfriend!" she exclaims very upset at the inconvenience of her plan being changed.

Her reaction seems ludicrous when you see it put like that, but how often do you behave in the same way?

As it happens she has the adventure of her lifetime getting from Wales to Dublin and her life is never the same again. Let go of what you're holding so tightly to - and allow some magic to weave its way into your dreams and plans. Then trust yourself to follow that magic.

### On Life Coaching ...

The next seven months were consumed with the arrangements to leave South Africa. Between sorting out all the logistics involved in moving countries, I tried to figure out what I wanted to do once in Australia. Being clear on not wanting to be an accountant was one thing. But figuring out what to do instead was something else altogether!

Miles waltzed into my office one day with an article written by a life coach.

"Please have a look at this. See what you think and whether I need something like this."

Wanting to help, of course, I called Natalie (the life coach) and by the end of the conversation I'd agreed to meet with her for coffee.

She wasn't particularly interested in my pleas of, "But, this is for my friend, not me."

Over coffee, I acknowledged (with surprise!) all the change that was pending in my life and I willingly engaged in a coaching relationship with her. This, once again, opened up the still limited way in which I viewed the world even further. Those layers can sometimes peel back very slowly!

My first session with Natalie involved an extended conversation about what I wanted, which confused me.

"What do you mean, What do I want?" I had no clue how to answer something I'd never been asked before.

But I surprised myself with my passionate response, "I'd like to know if I'm running away or searching for something. I want comfort at the end, and to know that I'm not just taking on any old thing. I want to know that what I'm doing is contributing to my reality. And what my spiritual destiny and purpose are."

Not small things!

I continued, "I feel strongly that the way I want to go is the right way. Who I was is not who I want to be now. There is a new me, not fitting into the old mould ... I see myself going in a different direction. I don't see myself being an accountant."

"I need to know that I'll be fine and happy for the rest of our existence. I want some security that I'm not crazy trying these new things. It feels like I want something of everything ..."

Natalie pushed and prodded me, and I surprised myself by creating a vivid picture of how I saw myself in my "perfect world". I couldn't believe the words that tumbled out of my mouth! It was all so foreign to me and different to what I'd been doing for the previous 35 years! And in this perfect picture were many things that I'd always told myself I wasn't 'allowed' to do.

"I want to write," I said confidently, sitting back amazed. Where had that come from?

"And why don't you write?" Natalie pressed.

"Because writing belongs to my sister. It's her thing and anyway, I can't write!"

"Who says so?" came her calm, insightful response. I just looked at her, dumbfounded. And so it started ... I finally had permission.

Once she'd unleashed me I had lots more to say:

"I would like to feel like I'm not going upstream by making life difficult for myself.

I want an identity.

I'd like clarity as to whether I should carry on being responsible or go and do something completely different.

I want to understand my social dependence.

I'd like to feel more confident with my sister and experience freedom of expression with my family.

I don't want to justify things in terms of outcomes.

I need to know that if I go on this path in the long term I'll be fulfilled.

I want to trust and believe in myself and the process.

I want to love myself and be gentler on myself.

I want more tangible proof that I am okay, with signs of synchronicity in the form of love messages from the Universe."

Both Natalie and I were left breathless, "Phew," she said, "Well done!"

My coaching process was pivotal to me believing I'd survive emigration. I started hearing my own voice speaking about what mattered to ME, as opposed to the ongoing, accusatory voices of my mother, my sister and other authority figures in my life. This took practice (over years) and as I've increasingly started to hear my own voice it's now easy to recognise amongst the clutter.

It's soft, gentle and loving. And actually likes me!

Natalie encouraged me to journal which started this inner connection. The inner connection occurred when I took concentrated time out to remove the clutter. Once the clutter was cleared that feeling of 'home' arrived when my own voice called out to me. It's when I journaled that I most felt okay.

***When you commit your ideas to paper you define yourself; it's like looking at your footprints in the sand or listening to your voice in a recording or in an echo. You become more solid; more real. You confirm your existence.***  
**Matthew McKay**

Journal entry:

*"Whenever I feel 'absurd' in the 'real' world, I must listen to what my own intuition is telling me is real. I have been conditioned and challenged to believe in what I can prove rather than what I can sense. But the more I listen to my own inner voice, the more I will get in touch with myself."*

#### On Self-Honesty ...

Talking with Natalie regularly, I continued to dream up my home, my lifestyle and holy-cow, my freedom. And ironically, it was a 180 degree turn from my current life.

For example, my "want to be" list included:

- Successful
- Wise
- Comfortable
- Free to be myself
- Inspirational
- Healthy
- Myself
- Unique
- Loved
- Socially active with friends
- Fulfilled

"What can you do to start creating this life?" she asked watching the incredulous look wash over my face.

I joined a four-week writing course. Which I loved. I came home singing every Saturday afternoon.

"I love it!" I told Roelof, "I'm no good, but it's so great!"

As my coaching sessions continued, we worked on a plan to 'get me ready' for emigration, leaving my safety net of friends and figuring out what I was going to do there. Once again, deepening my trust was a big part of this process. I explored some options and "felt" my way through it all. I refused to carry the ongoing, ever-increasing mental list of the reasons why I couldn't do things any longer. I was still aware of these thoughts popping up, but I chose to forge ahead anyway.

Seeking clarity, I used the Jack Canfield exercise in 'The Success Principles' to determine my life purpose. Following his steps, I created the following sentence, *'My purpose is through being a reliable leader, to inspire and provide wisdom so people can understand and know who they really are, and being able to communicate easily without hidden agendas.'*

I loved this statement back then, but had no idea what it would look like in reality. It resonated with me and excited me and I believed I'd be shown the way. And guess what I'm doing today?!

The most repeated question I heard during that period was, "How are you going to survive without your friends?" It was a good question as they'd been my crutch for as long as I could remember. I'm grateful that Roelof and I had mended a broken relationship. We'd opened the emotional and communication channels and I could now say that I was taking my best friend with me to Australia.

But, as the old joke goes, there is indeed a fine line between bravery and stupidity. And that line is perhaps the fact that I didn't know what I know now! And thank goodness for that. Emigration is a hard transitional journey. It's as if your foundation disappears on you, and you need to learn to swim. Quickly!

Although I describe this emigration process as brave, all that was happening is that my soul had encouraged me to run away. It wanted a safe space free from the environment it had grown up in. It wanted to flourish. I listened to it and in effect, ran away from home. What glorious freedom.

***All human beings should try to learn before they die what they are running from, and to, and why.***  
**James Thurber**

### **Voice of the coach:**

A client recently said to me, "How come I had no idea that I've spent all my life lying to myself? It's all I seem to do!"

She was referring to the old self-talk voice, which is usually the parent voice that nags and reprimands. The following model demonstrates how this works. Three types of internal dialogue can exist if you learn to recognise them. The arrows represent the flow of communication between the various aspects.

Your child voice is often not heard or misunderstood. This is the part of you that, simply put, wants to have it all, do it now and play through life.

"I've studied enough, I want to watch TV."

"I don't want to get a job, I'd rather just play my music."

"I miss my ex-boyfriend and want him back!"

The parent voice is the voice that constantly tells you what you **should** be doing, saying or feeling. This is the voice that reprimands you and tries to keep you on the straight and narrow. This voice lies to you reminding you of your imperfection:

"You're not as good as Harry Brown, so you must study more."

"If you don't get a good job, you'll never be able to earn a decent living."

"You can't return to that relationship because that will make you weak and needy."

Your parent voice usually belittles your child, sending him or her scuttling further into the background of your whole self. Your parent voice is the voice that imposes the rules and generalisations for living. Your adult voice can change these and choose what's best for you. It's the

negotiating voice which hears both ends of the story and mediates from an authentic perspective.  
Your adult voice could say,

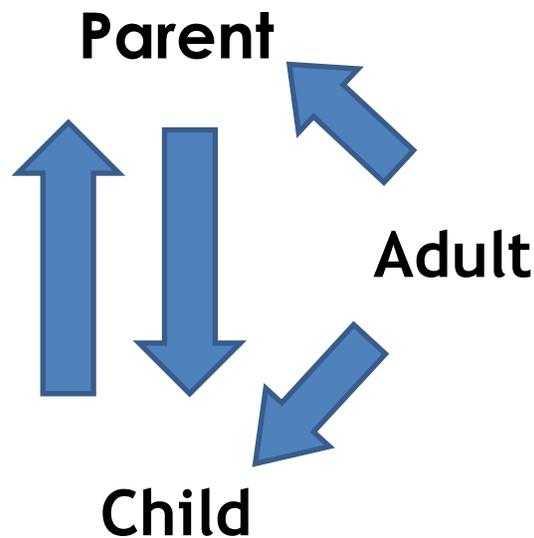
“It doesn’t matter how good or bad anyone else is, your results are your own and will depend on how hard you study. What result do you want and have you studied sufficiently for that?”

“A good job will probably earn you a decent living, but what do you want to do with your musical talent?”

“Does that relationship make you happy? Do you think it’s for your highest good to return to it?”

You will notice that the adult voice is honest and speaks the truth, but puts you in a place of choice and personal empowerment. It’s detached from meaning, attachment, comparison and competition. The adult voice speaks with love.

# The P-A-C Model



Don Miguel-Ruiz reminds us in his book, *The Voice of Knowledge* that the only way to end emotional suffering and restore joy in living is to stop believing in lies which are mainly about ourselves. Start to recognise the scolding parent voice and see how the adult voice will respond.

Coaching, therapy or even journaling is usually the beginning of a conversation with yourself. And thankfully, once you're brave enough to start this, it continues for the rest of your life. Conversing with yourself presents opportunities for depth and enlargement of your life. You may even find out what it is you really want - and how to get it!

*Stephanie Dowrick explains the importance of journaling succinctly. "For you to have choices, your life must have depth. Living at the surface of things, you will remain vulnerable to every passing setback and disappointment. Finding the courage to go beyond the obvious and the familiar, you will come to know yourself in new ways and perhaps feel new respect for the information that springs directly from your lived experience. You will feel safer internally. And you will quite unselfconsciously respond to other people at greater depth.*

*Let this (your journal) be your place where you brainstorm freely. Writing things down unselfconsciously and without censorship lets you 'see' your own thoughts and get some vital distance from them in ways that ruminating never can. It also clears the space for new thoughts to emerge. And it anchors new insights, making them real."*

My journaling time is my safest space. This is my regular time of being in a state of honesty with myself, knowing how I'm feeling and knowing that I can trust myself. Further benefits include being able to ask questions; acknowledge what's happening in my day-to-day life; express gratitude and surrender anxieties and frustrations.

Journaling may take time and sometimes needs discipline when you start, but it quickly becomes a habit. Even better than a habit, it becomes a desire. After all, you're spending quality time with the best company on earth. Your own.

My daily journaling includes (but is not limited to):

- Gratitude - the many (and often small) things that I feel grateful for.
- White light - things that I surrender to the higher powers of a grand design
- Challenges - things that I feel I need clarity on or support with
- Experiences - what has happened during the day

I've discovered that with this process of self-honesty, it's pretty much a guarantee that I may not feel the same tomorrow as I do today. This means there's a good chance that something in me may have shifted and I'll be a different person with new insights tomorrow or even the following hour. But the fact that I've honoured how I felt at this particular juncture has caused the change. And every internal change connects me more with me.

Continual honesty over the years makes you increasingly real, which through a natural process brings out the realness in others. Once you start having real conversations with others, you'll want to call them 'heart to hearts', because these are real connections that count. Your heart is where the truth resides.

### On Divine Timing ...

As with everything in life, Divine Timing is indeed perfect. I'd given Helen six months' notice and during this long resignation period I didn't try to force a situation and create what I planned to do in Australia before its time.

With my sense of self trust, my intimate relationship with Roelof and through a solid commitment to Life Coaching I knew we'd be okay. Roelof still planned to work in a corporate environment as a financial executive, but didn't apply for jobs. He intended to look for work once we'd moved over.

Two weeks before my last day at work Helen asked me, "So, do you know what you're going to do yet?"

"Not yet," I replied, "I'm still waiting on inspiration."

"Well, you do know you're running out of time. You leave at the end of next week."

"Something will turn up," I hoped I sounded more convinced than I felt.

And it did the following week. During the night the concept of Completely Human 'dropped' into my consciousness. Miraculously, it all suddenly fell together, the idea, the name and the concept. I hadn't pushed or forced the process.

I found the following Louise Hay quote, "The truth of my being is that I am perfect, whole and complete. I now choose to live my life from this understanding. I am in the right place, at the right time, doing what is right for me,". Waving this triumphantly I walked into Helen's office the following week, "This is what I want to teach! The business will be called Completely Human and will be a one-stop shop for overall wellness. From fitness to emotional wellbeing to diet wellbeing. I'm going to study life coaching when I get to Perth. I want everyone to understand that they're already perfect, just as they are. Complete and Perfect."

## Your Personal Review

What would you like to see changed in your life?

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.....

What do you really want?

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.....

What's still holding you back?

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.....

What is your inner knowing telling you about your situation?

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.....

What's the worst that could happen?

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.....

Will you recover from this?

.....  
.....

What's the best that could happen?

.....  
.....

How would you be different if this happened?

.....  
.....

What do you think you'd have learned from the experience?

.....  
.....

What do you still need to get really clear and honest about in your life?

.....  
.....

What is your next best step, if you allow yourself to be led by your Higher Self?

.....  
.....

## CHAPTER 6

### ON STARTING OVER ...

Arriving in Australia felt like a second chance at life. I could start over, knowing nobody and without any history! Everything I did was from scratch, affording me a brand new creation.

I hit the ground running with our integration process into Australian life. For at least the first year, I spent all my time in a 'doing' mode. I joined clubs, groups and anything that would have me to learn more and meet people. I set business and financial goals and pretty much failed to deliver on them in my prescribed timeframe. I got caught up in a feeling of chasing ... chasing ... and often feeling disappointed afterwards.

I thought by understanding all the theory around personal development that my old ways of behaviour were no longer relevant and I had changed. But a startling reality hit early when I realised it wasn't so simple and not everything changes just because I'd understood things at an intellectual level. I'd still brought my insecurities and fears with me and I reacted in the same way to situations. Starting a new business in a new country was still going to challenge the old programmed beliefs and fears.

Helen told me a joke just before I left, "There was a family that lived in a house haunted by ghosts. They decided one day to move and packed up all their possessions into their car and trailer. They snuck out hoping to escape peril-free. As they drove out of their driveway, the neighbours waved them goodbye and noticed something peeking from under the tarpaulin covering the trailer. It was the ghosts also waving their goodbyes."

I laughed as she continued, "Remember. You take your ghosts with you."

Being far away from home, I now had no one else to blame for who and how I was. Same reactions to new people had only one thing in common: me.

### On Getting Unstuck ...

I therefore began detailed work on my personal triggers. I'd only scratched the surface, it seemed. What were my triggers? Why did I still react like I did? Where were my judgements still lying?

From the list that I'd sent to Miles years previously, a few still lurked in the background and were now being challenged:

- Not being successful
- Not having enough
- Being stupid
- Losing control/the upper hand
- Not knowing the answer when needed
- Not being appreciated
- Not being respected
- Being caught off guard
- Being found out

The euphoria I'd felt within my new personal development journey was over. An ugly spotlight had been turned on me and I stared straight ahead into an oncoming train of inner self-loathing. Horrible Heidi hadn't disappeared. I thought I'd gotten rid of her in the work situation! But here she was, alive and well in these new situations she found herself. I'd acknowledged her but hadn't owned her entirely.

I did a large part of meeting all of this again through journaling, self-reflection and as always, reading. I still read voraciously and worked in detail through the exercises given. The A-student nerd was alive and well (and still is).

As you know by now, personal healing starts with facing your fears. "But I've done this already!" I'd moan at the Universe, "I know all this stuff already. I've dealt with this."

But Dr James Hollis asks the bigger question, "What is the fear beneath the fear? Most things will fall within overwhelm or abandonment." I had both.

I was overwhelmed entering a world of small business owners who clearly knew what they were doing. I felt like I didn't. There was so much information out there as to what I needed to do to launch and run a successful small business. And if I failed at it, I'd be alone and not worth anything.

"Ten steps to success. Five steps to manifesting your dreams. Seven secrets of internet marketing... on and on it goes," I moaned to Roelof, "How will I ever find the time to do all these steps and apply all these so-called secrets?"

I became very busy doing everything I thought I needed to, with every attempt costing more money. I joined any networking organisation that I could and was religious about attending them. Meeting all these new people started the comparison cycle all over again.

"I met a lady who's also just started up in business and she's already got five clients a day. Why can't I do that?"

"I saw a keynote speaker today. She's only just started out and has already written her book! I'm so slow."

"I went to a coaching lunch today and all the ladies at the table are coaching before they're qualified. Apparently that's the way to do it. I waited till I'd finished. I'm so far behind everyone else."

I'd been in Australia for a couple of months and found myself invited to address a room full of business people about my business. This became the famous '60 second slot' as I soon came to know it. But I wasn't prepared for this exposure and fought an internal struggle.

"What will be more embarrassing: to stand up and speak rubbish or stand up and say I can't do this?"

I went with the flow and explained what was then only an embryo of my business idea. But it was a start. The good news is that no one laughed. The bad news is that no one had a clue what it was that I actually did. But I didn't either at that stage.

I found this competitive mindset overwhelming and I started overcompensating. I internalised all the messages I was receiving from the external world and felt like an imposter in a very successful world. This drove me to a greater need to prove myself, from a deep sense of inadequacy.

I was operating in a new world with skills I was only developing. I started pushing myself beyond my perceived limitations, hoping people wouldn't find out. I started many projects and new ideas but didn't have the energy or the time to do any of them properly. I had too few fingers in too many pies.

Wherever I went I got asked the same questions over and over again, "What's your niche? What's your target market? What's your Unique Selling Proposition? What's your sixty seconds pitch? What's your special offer this week? What's your lead generator? How big is your database? How much marketing are you doing? "And on and on it went.

Being challenged daily with my now familiar fears and beliefs I was forced to pull back from it all and revisit the big questions like "Who am I?"; "Why am I here?" and "What do I want?"

Revisiting my life purpose statement that I'd written out and reconnecting with what excited me in my business, I felt a sense of flexibility. I didn't need to be like everyone else or run my business like everyone else. I gave myself permission to be okay and to choose what I wanted. I no longer needed to give in to what society demanded. I felt deeper comfort in my own skin which allowed the various aspects of me to shimmy around in it, as and when I wished to. I started redefining concepts like success for myself and I found it had very little to do with money and achievement.

I changed the belief that I was my business. My business was just one of the aspects of my life.

"I can fail at Completely Human," I proudly announced to a group of friends, "But that doesn't mean I am a failure. It just means I have failed at this particular business."

Journal entry:

*'I have no more answers – and not so sure what questions either.*

- *There is a large plan to all this*
- *I'm on the 'right' path*
- *I'm absolutely not perfect – but perfectly who I am*
- *I know a lot less than heaps of people and more than others*
- *What I know and experience is totally unique – as with everyone else*
- *As long as I'm aware of myself and others, I'll be okay"*

I was pleasantly surprised to discover that who I really was, was not as bad as I'd feared. Yes, owning the 'failure' bits was uncomfortable and disappointing (to me) but just because I had incompetent bits, did not mean that I was entirely incompetent. I could just learn or ask for help in the areas I felt incompetent.

I revisited my goals and dreams with an understanding of what lay beneath it all:

Journal entry:

*What needs to happen during the next three years for me to be happy about my progress:*

- *Earning money independently through Completely Human*
- *Call myself a business owner*
- *Have balance (nice house, good lifestyle, be healthy and socially active)*
- *Australian Citizenship*
- *Written a novel*

*What are the biggest dangers to face and deal with to achieve this?*

- *Fear of having own business*
- *Fear of failure*
- *Fear of poverty*
- *Self-belief to sell and do what is necessary*
- *Accept I'm entitled to financial success on my own*
- *Foreign country/people and customs not accepting*
- *Accepting day to day challenges as they arise*
- *Not to give up*
- *Patience*

- *Fear of rejection*

### **Voice of the coach:**

You can change your belief in anything because it's your choice. Just because you've always believed it, doesn't mean you have to keep believing it going forward. Concepts like love, happiness and success can actually be redefined. Yes - that's allowed! Make your definitions personal and meaningful.

Most likely through parenting, schooling or another institution, you've been taught that negative behaviour is 'bad' and you tried everything you could to avoid being bad. Fear of being bad can prevent you from trying anything new. So choose to stop using the need to be good as an excuse that holds you back from what you truly want. Dr Barbara de Angelis says that "Avoiding doing the work gets you stuck."

There is an Australian TV series called "Spirited" which illustrates a relationship of sorts, between Henry (a ghost) and Suzy (the only person who can see him). Henry is trapped in ghost-format in Suzy's apartment because it appears he needs to resolve some life issues still. He's stuck in her particular building, being not alive, but also not quite dead. This couple have interesting and odd interactions, with him being inadvertently part of her family dramas (because he can't go anywhere!). She then learns unexpected things from him in return, as is demonstrated in their following conversation:

"You may be *Ms 'I'm Alive'*, but you're walking around like you're dead anyway," he pushes her buttons.

"Why? Because I have impulse control!" she retorts, proudly.

"No. Because you don't know how to **feel**. You don't engage. An Ice-Princess," Henry continues.

"I feel many things!" she shouts, kicking over a chair as if to show the point.

Changing focus, Henry sits down and says, "The truth is that if they were offering tickets to hell, I'd grab one with both hands. But, instead I'm stuck here and I don't know why."

Suzy takes a breath and wisely acknowledges, "Actually, most people feel like that. **They feel like they're stuck here and don't know why.**"

The English word *spirit* comes from the Latin, *spiritus* meaning "breath". Your spirit is thus the animating, sensitive or vital principle in you, similar to the soul, which is often taken to be the seat of your mental, intellectual and emotional powers. Obviously the air that you breathe is an inherent part of your being. It flows through you - giving life to every part of your body. Breathing is a natural process, one that you don't need to actively DO anything about, or even be really aware of. The same applies to your spirit.

Living is different to being alive. Just because you're breathing, doesn't mean that you're necessarily truly ALIVE. This takes more awareness. You need to engage and connect with your breath and your spirit to feel them, otherwise they remain in the background. Take a slow, deep breath and see how you feel. It's different to your usual habit of automatic breathing. The deep breath makes you more present and returns you to your body.

Are you perhaps one of the many who are just 'stuck here, going through the motions, following some pre-set rules and norms without knowing why?' If you'd like to change this, change your thinking to a more consciously aware plane and change your rules if you need to. Carl Jung says, "I'd rather be whole than good." And being whole includes living with Spirit. Make it a habit to regularly breathe your spirit out into your interaction with the world.

From this place of centredness and peace, and ask yourself:

- What really adds life to you?
- What makes you feel alive?
- Why are you here?

Sonia Choquette says that "Your spirit embraces life head-on and rides the ups and downs, the ebb and flow, and the shifts and changes of life with determination and courage." Connect with this because Your ego, on the other hand, tries to hold on tightly. It is fearful and tries to control. This resists the flow of life, through fear and avoiding change. You'll feel this in your shallow breathing.

### On Taking Part In Life ...

My next big challenge came in the form of keynote presenting. My heart almost stopped at the mere thought. Who'd listen to me? What message did I have?

But almost immediately a topic and relevant message appeared in my mind. And now I know, this is how it happens for me. I get clear pictures of my messages at the weirdest times which I trust sufficiently to use. I don't push the creative process, I allow it to come to me.

My first presentation was not a huge success. It wasn't awful, but it wasn't wonderful. Roelof attended and asked me afterwards, "Where were you in the presentation? What happened to your personality?"

At many of the seminars I attended the concept of "Fake it till you make it" was taught. That never sat well with me, but I'd bought into the belief that I had to pretend to already be what I wanted to be. I had to be slick and professional if I wanted to be taken seriously. I also believed I needed to have all the answers and thus barely held myself together from fear of a comment or question.

"What do you mean ... what happened to my personality?" I asked Roelof.

"That person up there doing the presentation wasn't you," he replied, "You're charming and funny. What happened to her?"

"Thanks, you're right," I admitted, "But how do I get her to present? She's scared of what the audience will think."

#### Journal entry:

*I have the ability to move forward.*

*I won't settle for anything less than the very best that my life has to offer me.*

*I put my full commitment and energy into my life.*

*I'm choosing a new attitude and a new direction.*

*I reach within myself and connect with my guiding purpose.*

*I give myself permission to be the unique and beautiful person I am meant to be'*

My skill at presenting has grown and I now teach public speaking at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges with the following philosophy: Take yourself with you up on stage. Don't hide yourself away but give yourself permission to express yourself naturally.

I'd formed friendships and so-called business partnerships during my business start-up phase. Some were well-intentioned, but definitely wrong for me. I wasn't yet absolutely confident in what I had to offer and didn't present my business or my services clearly. I trusted other people's opinions more than I trusted mine. I was taken for a ride in a number of areas, thinking if this was presented in my path it must be a gift from the Universe - synchronicity or suchlike.

From the beginnings of my new life- and business path, I obviously had plenty of questions and doubts about everything. When asking myself all these questions, I used card decks all the time. I referred to an oracle deck of cards with almost any question I had. I also used a tarot deck and learnt some layouts to help me with decisions. This was a good practice that quietened me and made me set aside time to focus on working out things that were right for me. As time moved on, some of these answers started to come instinctively and these days, I use a combination of intuition and card layouts to determine what's in my best interest.

All this external assistance and seeking made me aware that I still lacked clarity. Sometimes I felt like I'd taken one step forward and ten steps backwards facing the exact same old questions: What exactly was I offering? How exactly could I be of service to others? What is my message to the world?

### On Depression ...

Being so busy all the time, fighting the continuous internal dialogue, I settled unknowingly into a depression after being in Australia for eighteen months. I felt sullen, grumpy, intense, brooding and tired all the time, bringing everyone down around me and despite pushing myself in busyness I wanted more and more time alone.

#### Journal entries:

'I've decided that too much focus goes on Completely Human. I need to look at me. I'm not okay. Lack of energy; want to avoid people; not motivated. Tired. Listless. Frustrated.'

'I've done everything that I was supposed to do - why doesn't it feel right?'

I feel like I'd given it my all. I've fought many battles, faced my fears, changed beliefs and am finding myself - so what's this about now?

Most of this depression was sparked by a visit back to South Africa a few months previously. I'd struggled with the reminder what life was like with my family.

As extraordinary as it may seem, I'd actually forgotten all the complicated dynamics and role-playing involved in my family. So, being caught unawares, I was unable to handle things in a more resilient, adult way. I immediately returned to being the invisible child. We'd sit around a family dinner with not one question from anyone as to what life was like in Australia. Behind my back, I understood my mother had expressed her concerns about what I was doing with my life. I'd never really had a conversation with her about it and she never thought to discuss her concerns with me either.

All in all – the usual dysfunctions and miscommunications continued. I had as much a disinterested role in my family as they had in me. We were merely going through the motions and doing the obligatory things because I'd returned home for a brief visit.

I saw my father once during this trip and boldly asked him if he had any regrets in life. Still suffering the after effects of his stroke, communication was difficult, but he managed to say, "I wish I'd had more travel."

That was the closure I needed. He'd never desired anymore of a relationship with his children and was okay with how things had turned out. Wanting more from him for so many years had been because I'd put my own values and expectations onto him and his life. I felt relief in giving up any further expectations I may have had from him. I had no need to continue this relationship as there were no longer any mutual requirements. His life is as he wishes (except for traveling more) and I no longer needed to be an obligated, perfect daughter to a man I didn't know.

#### Voice of the coach:

Depression is actually a privilege, as it's an opportunity to really visit what your psyche wants. In fact, we all carry pockets of depression with us, which are areas that remain unexpressed and unloved. Depression is not a curse or something to be embarrassed about. In many self-help guru circles, which carry the 'Fake it till you Make it' banner the power of positive thinking is preached.

Although there is power in positive thoughts, it is fundamental to personal growth to look at depression and eke it out.

Simply put, depression indicates that something isn't right, somewhere.

### On Manipulation ....

I may have let go of my father, but my mother, on the other hand, bore the brunt of my expectations and as a result she continued to disappoint me. Our old interaction patterns kicked right back in and everything was about her and her same three topics of interest: her bridge playing, her townhouse complex and her internet editing. Her biggest concern for me was, as usual my health,

"You can't stay with Andrea. She has dogs and cats. You'll get sick."

"Mommy, I'll be fine. I want to stay with her. It's convenient."

"But she has two dogs! And three cats. What will happen when you get allergic? Do you have medical cover?"

"Mommy, I'll be fine. Don't worry."

"Okay – I'll bring you over some medicine. I've found a great antihistamine. Have you got your spray?"

And on and on ... It was the same repeated dialogue from my childhood. I'd usually just cave in for the sake of peace, but not this time. I yelled at her, "Mommy, seriously, leave it alone. If I get sick, I get sick. I don't want your stuff and I don't want to hear any more about it. I can look after myself just fine. I've been doing just that in Australia!"

My outburst naturally startled her and then she sulked. But at least I got her to shut up.

I understand we learn by contrast and I needed to experience this again to understand how my life was different in Australia. This is when I acknowledged for the first time that I had indeed run away. I saw why I'd needed to and was grateful that I had. I'd created a life in Australia where I was a decision maker, a creator, independent, open-minded and care-free. But within minutes of returning, I'd reverted to being an angry, mean and helpless daughter. As Ram Dass says, "If you think you're enlightened, go visit your family."

Because of some level of self-insight that I had I could watch the family dynamics from an observer viewpoint, but seeing this and still not changing my reactionary behaviour threw me further into a sense of helplessness.

Andrea tried to organise a get-together of her friends, some of whom had also been mine, in the form of a party. She'd planned a long lunch out in the country and asked me to convince one of the ladies that I wanted her there.

"You must ask her, otherwise she won't come."

"Does she want to come though?" I asked, "Because if she doesn't, it really doesn't matter."

"But if you ask her, she'll feel she has to come, because who knows when she'll see you again?" she persevered. Already highly strung from this ongoing emotional upheaval I over-reacted, "Andrea, I don't particularly want this lunch. You do. I'm tired of all the social functions and running around. So I'm not going to twist the story around so that you get your way with the people you want to attend. Don't try and manipulate me or the situation."

She burst into tears and sulked with me for entire evening. The silence in the house was deafening as a familiar family pattern continued to play out ... But I'd stood up to Andrea, upsetting the status quo and the lunch never happened. I spent most of my week there crying myself to sleep. I phoned Roelof daily at the oddest hours, desperate to come home to Australia, to safety. And sanity.

The day, after our blow-up, Andrea and I spent hours talking through our argument. She'd had the lifelong need to protect me and look after me. She'd only been trying to help me have some social get-togethers of things she thought I'd enjoy. I explained my need to be independent and adult within the family structure. I no longer needed people to decide for me and protect me from myself. This was the first of a number of cathartic, honest conversations with my sister that started to shift the mother-child dynamic between us. She'd always parent to my child role. We were equals and needed to treat each other as such.

I spent a day at Human Communications, where I was welcomed and wanted. I worked a bit, went for lunch, chatted and caught up with friends there. Here was my contrast again: I'd always successfully created a friendship circle in all my previous work environments. I dedicated myself to work because this is where I felt safe as opposed to my family which felt volatile. I'd built an independent life outside of them for survival reasons.

Seeing this stark contrast presented to me again, I could forgive my former self for being a workaholic as I now understood why.

I tested the ground with my mother a few times that week, but each time it re-broke my heart to see how disconnected we still were. When my mother-in-law offered to drop me at the airport for my flight home, my mother whined to me, "I feel like a bad mother. I'm the one that should be taking you. I'm your mother. But you do understand that I need to be at home to record for my work, don't you?"

I wasn't buying into her story anymore. Recording for work had been her excuse for not doing things with and for us for many years. And it was *her* guilt that *she* needed to address.

"You must think I'm a bad mother," she repeated as if I hadn't heard her, "It should be me giving you the lift. But you do understand, don't you?"

I no longer wished to carry her 'stuff' and left her with the stinging response of, "Mommy. That's your guilt. Deal with it. I'm not making it better for you."

### **Voice of the coach:**

Although you've probably often heard the words these days of, "There's no point in looking at the past, just move on" or even better, "You can't change the past, so what's the point?" There is a point. And that point is an understanding. An understanding of yourself. Of others. And of your life.

*Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.*  
*George Santayana*

Understand yourself and where you came from and you will understand everything. Peace and acceptance then start to make an appearance once you realise that you are indeed part of what you are seeking. But, it's worthwhile to notice that you cannot merely learn this - you need to experience it. Carl Jung says that the process of individuation cuts you off from personal conformity and collective identity. This is because you're becoming an individual! A unique individual. Just You.

The process of unravelling you from your attached identity to the often chaotic baggage of your past, present and future brings forth your uniqueness and truth.

### **On Being Disowned ...**

Back in Australia, still reeling from all the emotional upheaval, I sent my mother a long email trying to explain how I felt and what had transpired for me. I spent tiresome hours carefully working out what I wanted to say. I wanted to take full responsibility for how I felt and how I'd reacted. I knew that she wasn't to blame and explicitly mentioned that. My frustration and anger was all about me and the fact that I still desperately desired a different kind of relationship with

her. I no longer needed to be the sick baby of the family with everyone talking around me. I mattered and wanted to be noticed. As an individual.

Her short response came almost immediately,

"OK. Got it."

I was floored. Got it? What did that even mean?! What exactly did she 'get?' But I left it at that.

Journal entry:

*'I feel like I've cut my own umbilical cord and lost those who I thought would always be there.'*

No such thing as unconditional love in this family dynamic, from me or for me. This trip to the family had triggered my belief system of "I fundamentally don't matter" and "I have no place of significance in this big world.'

After the initial brief email saying she got it, I heard once more from my mother, explaining that she no longer wanted to have me in her life as she found our relationship an emotional rollercoaster ride which was too hard to bear. It was easier for her to bail out instead of having further upsets. Once again I'd proved to be a burden and too hard to have in her life. A deep sense of loss prevailed. This was the second time in my life that she'd said practically the same thing to me. I was unwanted and too much like hard work.

I struggled to continue with my day-to-day things as my resentment and anger towards her ate me up from the inside. I hated her and my past. I disowned who I'd been and was determined to ignore everything about my 'previous life'. I referred to the old me versus the new me.

My journal entries were honest.

*"I'm hot air. Nothing. I have nothing. I am nothing."*

*"I'm feeling useless. Pathetic. Stupid. Incompetent. A failure. Lost. Directionless"*

Eventually, almost by accident I started seeing a counsellor with the opening honest words of, "It's a slippery slope I'm on."

Her response to me was, "Your eyes are dead. There's no spark of life in them."

And so the bitterness poured out... I wasn't even aware how angry I still was! I'd already done heaps of self-work, but now an embittered rage poured out of me. I no longer justified it with spiritual meanings, life lessons and unconditional love. I couldn't believe I hadn't dealt with this properly the first time round and was furious at myself for even failing at spiritual development! I let it all out telling her my story and at the end, she surprised me, "What about your father? You didn't mention him once?"

The recurring theme of the absent father. Both in reality as well as in my 'owned' story. My mother was copping all my rage. I revisited my anger work of earlier years and realised how I'd been holding myself back. I'd been focused on my new spiritual beliefs and creating a new future for myself. I hadn't really tackled my past yet.

So now I had new words for my dad in my journal, "You lie ... You always lie." That pretty much summed up our relationship.

Without consciously realising it at the time, as my relationships with my parents were changing, my understanding of my God was changing as well.

Journal entry:

*'I don't believe the Universe really knows I'm here and loves me - I feel like I constantly need to remind it and try and get approval from it. Kind of like a relationship with a parent. The love is conditional and an effort and performance-based .... Trying to get a slice of attention as well. I limit the universe to only having so much love and abundance to what I feel I deserve and have earned ...'*

Phew – that was enlightening. I'd created a set of parents for myself with my relationship to God. This is where I turned for safety, love and protection. But now this relationship was also beginning to change and would still bring about major upheaval in my life as my security blanket fell away.

### On Hatred ...

I felt ashamed that I hated my own mother! What kind of a person doesn't love her own mother? Especially after all she'd sacrificed for me. She'd given up her life and worked three jobs just to provide for us.

Journal entry regarding my mother:

*"I get scared by her. I'm nervous she'll hurt me again. It's easier to keep her at a distance. To protect myself."*

My anger was a natural reaction and expression of being hurt. The magic behind releasing it was the fuel to make the necessary change. Through more journaling work and counselling, I started to clear the impact of our relationship on my desire to have children of my own. I'd never made the connection before. I started to understand how I was subconsciously punishing myself for feeling the way I did towards her. My subconscious punishment was to not fall pregnant myself.

I hadn't expressed it (to myself even) but it showed up elsewhere in my body's innate wisdom. The infertility test results from years before were proof of this and Roelof and I continued to try without success. I didn't want to create miniature burdens in my life by having children I'd be responsible for. "I'm not so sure I want to give up my life," I'd justify.

Although I'd looked at areas of anger before, this was a whole new dimension for me. Once again, it's different to experience anger at your own parents than to do so with others. I found journaling the most beneficial process. I wrote lists of people I was angry with and the reasons why. Once I started I found it hard to stop. My tightly sealed pressure cooker had been opened and a lashing burst forth!

I was surprised at the number of people I was angry with and realised I'd been harbouring these feelings for years. Unexpressed, even to myself. This explained the over-reactions when I'd visited South Africa.

I also unleashed my anger and limiting beliefs about having children:

- Being a mother is a weakness; Being a career woman is being strong
- Being a mother interferes with work
- I'd lose my life being a mom
- It's too much of a sacrifice
- Kids are a burden
- Kids take up all your energy
- Kids are expensive
- Life is never the same afterwards; you'll never get your life back
- My children would be sickly, like me.
- I'd need to be continually responsible
- Children need grandparents

- I can't live without sleep
- Etcetera

Once this became conscious, of course, as always, the Universe provided people and opportunities in my path for me to see things differently. The scales fell off my eyes as my limited beliefs opened up and I was able to see how many parents loved their children and felt that they were the best thing that had ever happened to them! Limited thinking really prevents you from seeing the broader picture of life because you're viewing life through a very small lens of perception.

***One of the greatest paradoxes of your physical senses is that your eyes actually show you what you believe, not what you see.***  
**Mike Dooley**

**On Facing My Shadow ...**

***If you are willing and prepared to discover all of yourself, you are indeed embarking on a journey of immense beauty.***  
**Eva Broch Pierrakos**

This degree of anger highlighted the areas of my life that still needed to be addressed and owned. Many relationships and patterns I'd fallen into no longer served me. The only person who could change anything was me. And I needed to start the change by standing up for myself. If I didn't, I'd remain insignificant and invisible to myself.

***Self-assertiveness means the willingness to stand up for myself, to be who I am openly, to treat myself with respect in all human encounters.***  
**Nathaniel Branden**

I began to understand my disappointment and disillusionment at my failed family structure. I'd never be able to get what so many people took for granted from theirs. I admitted these dysfunctions to myself and to others and felt relieved at being honest. This felt full whereas the pretence of always having to be okay emptied me. My life and upbringing had developed certain aspects in me, for which I was now totally responsible to either accept or change. Acceptance was first.

Journal Entry:

<b><i>'Light aspects'</i></b>	<b><i>"Shadow aspects"</i></b>
<i>I am personable &amp; likeable</i>	<i>I am competitive</i>
<i>I am confident</i>	<i>I am insecure</i>
<i>I am positive</i>	<i>I easily compare myself</i>
<i>I am bubbly</i>	<i>I strive and try too hard</i>
<i>I am successful</i>	<i>I eat too much</i>
<i>I am spiritual</i>	<i>I judge</i>
<i>I am innovative</i>	<i>I get scared easily</i>
<i>I am perseverant</i>	<i>I can't ask</i>
<i>I am brave</i>	<i>I don't always absorb quickly</i>

<i>I am happy</i>	<i>I manipulate</i>
<i>I am intelligent</i>	<i>I justify and rationalise</i>

The interesting thing about this journaling exercise was to see both confidence and insecurity in me. That's the beginning of wholeness. I have all aspects, both light and dark, and different situations will bring out different responses. That makes me interesting and multi-dimensional. I'm learning to live in the full range of my human capacity and to not feel bad about being anything. I also don't need to be something specific all the time. Every emotion and impulse is perfectly human.

Once I learned that I didn't have to BE perfect, and that I was already perfect, my life changed again. By realising that everyone is in the same boat, I toppled off my lofty judgmental throne and found myself on the grubby, hard floor of reality along with all the other souls in this physical domain.

### **Voice of the coach:**

What I've seen that really makes people more attractive is not the fact that they're working on their weak points, but rather that they're embracing them. Embracing your weaknesses is the same as self-acceptance. Full and honest self-acceptance. This attractiveness comes from being genuinely comfortable with who they are, having lost the need to justify themselves to anyone who will listen.

Embracing your shadow comes after you've been honest about these aspects and realised the next step is to befriend the monster within. I've now made friends with Horrible Heidi and am still discovering new aspects of her. She hasn't disappeared. She's still a part of me, but she plays less of a role now that I've learnt to meet her needs and love her. And sometimes a new part emerges and surprises me with the thought of, 'Where did you come from? What brought you out?'

"Our shadow keeps us from full self-expression, from speaking our truth, and from living an authentic life. It is only by embracing our duality that we free ourselves of the behaviours that can potentially bring us down. If you don't acknowledge all of who you are, you're guaranteed to be blindsided by the shadow effect." (Debbie Ford)

***"As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being."***  
**Carl Jung**

The majority of society still doesn't want to honestly look into themselves for fear of what they'll find. To me this means that at some level they already know what they'll find, surely? Otherwise why would they be so scared? The choice in not doing shadow-work is to let that unconscious driver, which lurks below the surface, keep you beholden in fear. The fear is there anyway, but by facing and owning it, you'll dissipate its subconscious hold over you or you may realise that it's not true anyway.

You may fear acknowledging your faults and unconscious negativity because this awareness shakes up your pride and your identification with your masked pretence. The opposite is also true because you fear awakening the unconscious 'positive self' because you don't want to challenge your known universe or find yourself disappointed when you want more than you think you can have. This is how fear and pride narrow your personal perimeters of experience and keep you fragmented and not whole. (The Undefended Self, Susan Thesenga)

Debbie Ford explains that by facing your shadow, you'll experience the following:

- (1) Not shame, but compassion

(2) Not embarrassment, but courage

(3) Not limitation, but freedom

I believe the benefits to living an authentic and whole life are:

- Life becomes more joyful and easier
- You're able to live in an appreciative space of what comes your way
- You no longer need to feel threatened by the views or actions of others
- You can accept criticism far easier
- You lose the need to prove yourself to anyone
- You continually discover new things about you - and about life
- You enjoy freedom of expression
- You dare to dream, you dare to try and you dare to fail because it's all part of your journey and doesn't mean anything about who you are. You realise they're all just experiences.
- Trying and challenges don't feel quite so hard anymore
- You're able to laugh at yourself and all your foibles.
- You generate a deep appreciation of others and their foibles.
- You generate a healthy detached perspective of loving and liking others
- You lose the plus-than and minus-than mindset. Competition doesn't matter.
- You lose the need to hide or pretend
- You enjoy being open-minded and open-hearted
- You experience inner peace. Just because.

### On Expectation & Disappointment ...

As I was starting to pick myself up and put myself together again I realised that starting up my business was more about who I was becoming than about what I was doing.

I was still struggling to get the business off the ground financially. Although I'd changed my broader beliefs regarding what Completely Human was all about, there was still the fundamental reality that I needed to earn a living from the business.

One day I journaled the following words with regard to my frustration:

*"I try. I pay. I think. I plan. I network. I talk. I'm clever. I'm stupid. I help. I give freebies. I ask. I read. I write. I digest ...*

*But where is ALLOW?*

*Where is FEEL?*

*Where is SURRENDER?"*

These were good questions I'd asked myself. The anxiety displayed in this list of all that I was trying, conveyed the amount of mental energy I spent trying to control it all. For some inconceivable reason I still believed at some level that it was up to me alone to MAKE IT HAPPEN. There'd been no space created or energy freed for me to receive anything back. I'd spent my life trying too hard overcompensating for 'I can't'. I'd keep banging my head against walls until something gave. I'd then pride myself on my perseverance.

A few days later my journaling continued with:

- *"I'm tired of believing*
- *I'm tired of rejection*
- *I'm tired of trying*
- *I'm tired of struggling*
- *I'm tired of being positive*
- *I'm tired of thinking and working it out*

*I hate this. It's all just too hard. And I'm not getting ANY help."*

The combination of exhaustion and over-controlling behaviour left me helpless. Because I'd intellectually understood the constructs of allowing and receiving, I'd sent out the intentional energy waves into the Universe for help, but I still hadn't let go of the tightly held reins allowing space and time for anything to actually manifest. This wasn't the first time I'd realised this but nonetheless had jumped right in, trying to manoeuvre the path to suit me.

I looked back over my journaling to notice the over-abundance of the words 'What If' and 'But'. These are fearful, controlling words that can drive you crazy by sending you into a spiral of permanent second guessing and self-doubt.

Journal entry:

"I must do internet marketing. Everyone is doing it. **What if** I get left behind?"

"I must make contact with all the people I met at networking this week. What if they forget about me?"

Re-reading this, I felt the panic I must have felt while journaling. Panic riddled with fear. Fortunately, a friend wisely remarked, "Why not resign as General Manager of the Universe? It doesn't need your help, Heidi. It's been here much longer and has survived without you, just fine."

This comment highlighted that below the belief of, "I can't" lay another belief of, "I don't deserve." Why would the Universe help me? I should be able to do it on my own.

"But who just gets things for free? It's hard work that is rewarded. Things don't just fall out of the sky, you know!" I defended my beliefs to those challenging me.

Many months later my journaling reflected some wisdom that had replaced the fear:

Journal entry:

*"Once again, I remain open and inviting to what lies before me. Good night, dear Soul."*

I'd loosened the reins and allowed some space for miracles to work themselves into the web of my life.

***Let your mind start a journey thru a strange new world. Leave all thoughts of the world you knew before. Let your soul take you where you long to be ... Close your eyes let your spirit start to soar, and you'll live as you've never lived before."***  
***Erich Fromm***

**Voice of the coach:**

Getting in touch with your feelings of deservedness makes all the difference. And you may just then start believing in magic and abundance as well! A great way to make this switch is to do an exercise in rephrasing, which provides you with breathing room. I've rephrased the journal entries from before as follows:

"I'd love to do some internet marketing as it seems to be effective. What if I could get someone to help me with this? I'm open to opportunity."

Or "I know I need to do internet marketing, but there may be a more effective and resourceful way for me at this time."

And

"I'd rather send out a quality newsletter and I'll be able to do that effectively when I have more time next week."

Can you feel the difference in the feeling behind each statement as I rephrased it?

It's more than just changing the words from the negative to the positive. I gave myself permission to think, free from fear. I gave myself other options and allowed myself not to deliver a specific outcome according to some external rule.

If your mindset is one of opportunity and possibility instead of fear and competition, you'll find that an entirely different world presents itself to you. This world is generous, kind and benevolent. It's actually merely a mirror of your new mindset. It will feel like you've been given a different set of lenses to look through. Life that previously appeared 'hard' and 'difficult' now provides you with pure potential which you can choose to engage with at any given moment!

It's often said that personal development is a journey. A never ending road of self-discovery. That's true as you continually learn and explore new aspects of yourself through various life experiences. I've picked up a pattern in this journey that most people get caught up in. The moment you have an aha moment, learn something new about yourself or let go of something you no longer need you may fall into the following cycle:

1. Hope for a 'brighter' future. Everything feels new.
2. Inner anticipation and excitement that life is going to change with new thoughts and vision.
3. Expectation as to how things are going to be and what things are going to look like.
4. Disappointment that things don't work out exactly as expected.
5. Disillusion that nothing is as it seems and the change didn't 'work' - so what's the point?
6. Questioning about all the personal growth and new beliefs taken on board.
7. Anger at yourself and others for causing the disappointment.
8. Despondency that you'll never get out of this cycle and things will always be the same.
9. Depression if you stay in despondency for too long
10. You return to hope the moment another thought perspective shifts and a new opportunity presents itself.

This cycle becomes a self-created fulfilling prophecy, because the emotional ups and downs hinge on expectation and attachment to outcome. An expectation is built up from excitement and then when not delivered in the exact form as anticipated we become disillusioned and feel a set-back.

So, what do you think would happen if you stopped the cycle at step four and never set an expectation in a specific form?

"Gradually we learn to live life without expectations. In the unfolding of each real moment we are fulfilled. As we learn to approach life with gratitude for what has been given us, with a readiness to

open the truth and to love in a spirit of trust, life will give us back many more generous surprises."  
(The Undefended Self, Susan Thesenga)

### On Martyrdom ...

During the evolution of Completely Human, I entered into an informal joint-venture ship with a local business owner. I believed we could help each other as some things seemed synchronous and made sense. But if I'd really trusted my innate wisdom, I'd have known they weren't really. I'd just been desperate for help, security and support at some level, so I jumped in with both feet.

He needed my help to keep his business going. After a lifetime of working non-stop, he was ill and pretty much burnt out. He approached me to assist him with the administrative side of his business and I'd have free rein of his premises to run any events that I wanted to. It appeared at first that we could combine our resources and achieve greater success together.

I'd trusted this to be the help I so desperately wanted, but the larger purpose to this experience was my powerful learning in ending the joint venture. I was brought to a juncture I'd never have arrived at otherwise.

I'd diluted my personal vision for Completely Human to help him out. Our business arrangement became all about his business and keeping it afloat. I allowed myself to be taken in by all of this and expended enormous amounts of energy trying new ideas and taking responsibility for things that had nothing to do with me. This experience of seemingly-perfect synchronicity left me feeling burnt and betrayed. I'd bought into something hoping for a brighter outcome but betrayed myself in the process. I was serving others and helping out, but not in the form that fuelled any passion within me. In fact, the opposite was true, the more I helped out the more my soul died.

The longer I worked there, the more moody, angry and unhappy I became. Roelof gently pointed this out to me, "You do realise that you only feel like this about life because of the work you're doing there, don't you? What are you actually doing for Completely Human?"

"Yes, I know. But there's so much potential. I've been promised all this amazing stuff that I can benefit from in the future," I justified, "and I'm helping him. It's for a higher good."

"But how is all this helping you now? What benefit is there for you?" he persisted.

Roelof was right and I knew I had to leave and reconnect with my own business. I could no longer dilute my own dream in order to help someone else who was suffering. I felt conflicted about this as reflected in my journal entry.

*"Why can't I just keep on biting the bullet? Shut my mouth and do the right thing?"*

I discussed this further with a friend, "I feel badly for leaving him in the lurch, but who is more important? Me or him? His business or my business?"

Journal entry:

*"I just wish I was on my true part and not my manufactured path"*

I made the decision to leave at possibly the worst time in his life. He was in hospital for major surgery and his wife had announced she was leaving him after decades of marriage.

"I'm doing it anyway," I'd called Andrea for courage before heading up into the hospital, "I'm going to be a bitch. But if I don't do it now, there will always be something happening that will keep me stuck. I need to extricate myself from this ongoing drama."

As he lay in bed recovering from heart-surgery I calmly told him, "I can no longer do this. It's not in my best interest. I need to look after myself and my business first and move on. I'll be finishing up in a month's time."

I felt liberated and called Andrea immediately afterwards. "I think I may finally have stood up for my business. I've faced something head on and put myself first. I can't look after everyone else's lives as well."

I put my own dream (in the way I envisioned it) first. I trusted myself to execute it and focus on only my business vision. I went forth without the need for validation or the support of people I perceived to be more experienced or knowledgeable than me. I'd take what I needed from others and leave what didn't feel right. I knew exactly what it is that I wanted. My passion was primarily coaching within a safe space allowing others to express their truth and re-discover their authenticity. I was also free to write more!

I'd been side-tracked and distracted for far too long, allowing the influence and power of others to interfere.

Journal entry:

*"I'll write from my truth.*

*I'll speak from my truth.*

*I'll behave from my truth.*

*I'll 'be' from my truth."*

This had an almost immediate effect on my business. I'd closed all the doors that weren't in alignment with my heart's desire and who I was and, finally, the revenue doors flew open. Clients streamed in.

***Life is a short pause between two mysteries. Make the pause as luminous as possible.***

***Carl Jung***

I'd come across this pattern of helping out, playing martyr many times in my life: Looking after Libby when she was ill, sacrificing my salary for the sake of the company's profitability targets (MME), meeting my mother for breakfasts out of duty and obligation for ten years, breaking up with boyfriends just by ignoring them. I'd done things by default without ever having honest and mature conversations about them, either with myself or with the other relevant parties.

I'd found ways to wriggle myself out of situations instead of just owning up to the truth of "I no longer want or need this in my life." I'd finally broken this stranglehold pattern of mine – I believed that I was allowed to choose who and what I could have in my life. Also I understood that people can provide me with help, insight or guidance, but it's not always necessarily right for me at that time. Or at all. I still have the choice in all circumstances. My higher self knows what's best for me and that's how I move forward, listening to its guidance and then trusting it.

Although this experience took me backwards in the creation of my business by about seven months, it left me more connected to my passion. I created firm vision and mission statements. I created a clearer message on my website and developed the Authenticity course I now run. I'd reconnected with my self-belief and original concept and found myself firmly planted again within my larger purpose.

Your Personal Review

What do you wish you could start over?

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.....

What ghosts are you still running away from?

.....  
.....

What patterns do you find repeating in your life?

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.....

What of the old, already rehashed belief systems still plague you?

.....  
.....

Where do you find yourself ducking and diving unable to handle the tough situations?

.....  
.....

What expectations do you still have of your parents? Break this down into your mother and your father.

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.....  
.....

How are you still looking for approval from them?

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.....

How and where can you find this approval within, in your current life?

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.....

Have you ever answered the big questions of, "Who am I" and, "Why am I here?"

What are they?

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.....  
.....

Where are you a spectator in your life and where are you an active participant?

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.....

How big a role do you play in your life?

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.....

How well have you connected to your true emotional states? Can you identify with your daily emotions and name them?

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Where do you still experience disappointment? What were your original expectations?

.....  
.....

What shadow elements of yourself **still** trigger a reaction? (i.e. remain unowned)

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.....

Are you living a manufactured life or following your true heart's path?

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.....

What does your Spirit want to do? What does your Spirit want from life? Have you asked it?

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.....

## CHAPTER 7

### ON CO-CREATION ...

My brother had a scalextric set when he was young. Scalextric is a powered race car system that is lots of fun! I see life as similar to this model with three options for the car to move continuously along the tracks.

- (1) Being completely out of purpose and flow, means your car is permanently off the electrified tracks. You're not connected or even plugged in and remain permanently off-kilter and struggling.
- (2) Being on purpose but not trusting yourself suggests your car is half off and half on the track. Progress is much slower and tougher. You somehow need to keep being put back on track and then something may happen to topple you off again.
- (3) When you're in flow, fully connected and guided, you trust yourself to whizz around the track with a surety that seems effortless.

Which race car would you rather be?

As is clear from my journey, I've spent many years tackling my fears and moving through them. I haven't got rid of them, and will probably never do so but I am able to comfortably admit to them being a part of me and not allow them to control me or hold me back any longer. I may still indulge in procrastination (a form of fear) until I'm ready to tackle something head-on, but I mostly move through things eventually.

The problem with fear being so predominant in life is it's the only thing that stops you from being whole and authentic. And inauthenticity prevents you from whizzing around the track.

Co-creation is a self-empowering concept of encouraging you to actively partake in your own life. From a soul plus a physical perspective. You, the true you, are indeed the master of your own destiny. Your destiny unfolds in front of you as long as you are walking your truth, being honest with yourself and those around you and always intending to serve others' highest good. It's important to remember that the manifestation of desires via co-creation takes time to occur. You will need to actively grow in various areas of your life. You grow into your manifestations.

Have you ever watched a loaf of bread being baked? It takes the necessary time to rise, at the right temperature after having mixed the right ingredients. You, as the baker can't push it along or try and bake it quicker. Deliciously warm melt-in-the-mouth bread WILL result when the time is right. Your role in the baking process is merely doing what is required. You mix the ingredients, knead the dough and heat up the oven. Once you've popped the loaf pan inside, you LEAVE the bread ALONE. The baking process isn't hard and goes smoothly. You get on with your other commitments and yet, still enjoy the magic of fresh bread a while later!

It's the same with any personal development or new relationship work. Forcing a situation takes you nowhere, but doing the required work while trusting Spirit to do its work helps you rise within your unlimited capacity.

Yes, you can create a picture of WHAT you want in your life but it's important to let go of the HOW. You don't want your dream to keep escaping your grasp the moment you hover over it, do you? This doesn't mean, however, that you stop doing anything towards your heart's desire. Your life is still your responsibility. But, ironically you become more effective and efficient because you spend more time in the present with what you do. And with what you **want**.

Co-creation is so-called because the Universe assists you, but you're the one that needs to be aware, open to guidance, trusting, brave and importantly, taking action.

*When it is over, I don't want to wonder  
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.  
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
or full of argument.  
I don't want to end up simply having visited this world."  
Mary Oliver*

It is your inner commitment to be true to yourself and to follow your dreams that trigger the support of the Universe. Creating and delivering my business has been all about me growing myself. As I've naturally grown and evolved, so has my business. The hardest work in life is often the work you do on yourself. It's easier to be distracted and 'busy' with the day to day efforts in being a business owner or career person, but if you don't do your inner work, it's impossible to move closer to yourself. You need to turn yourself back on yourself - with a spotlight if necessary - in order to move closer to yourself.

"No matter how cynical and individually competitive we've become, few of us would consider ourselves to have led a truly successful life unless we've attained some sense of spiritual meaning and connection in our life." (Paul Pearsall, PhD, from 'Toxic Success')

You're inherently part of the process so commit to staying connected in truth.

Yours.

### On My Creative Ability ... Life Included

Being an accountant all my life, I functioned using my left brain and hadn't ventured far into the right brain, creative part. I was raised to be proud of my intellect. But slowly, as my heart started to open up creativity flowed through me. I began to marvel at where some of my ideas come from!

I'm still no artist by any stretch of the imagination, but there are many other outlets for my creativity. Through writing, coaching, workshops, seminars and product-creation.

Once again, by changing my definition of something, my perspective changed. My definition of an artistic and creative ability is now broader and more encompassing and I give myself permission to try.

#### **Voice of the coach:**

We've already discussed letting go of the limiting concepts of right and wrong or good versus bad. Letting go of these allows you to open yourself up to experience imperfection in creative pursuits. Anything you create or dream about is perfect in that particular instant. I may write an article one day and think it's terrific, inspirational and clear. But revisiting it the following day meets with the thought of "What on earth was I thinking?"

In which areas of your life do you have specific beliefs about your ability to manifest or create what you want? Are these working for or against you? Remember, by unveiling these beliefs, you get a chance to re-evaluate and choose a better belief that more represents how you'd prefer to think to create a different reality.

"I lead a small life, but a valuable one. Do I do it because I like it, or because I haven't been brave? So much of what I see reminds me of what I read in a book, and I wonder, 'Shouldn't it be the other way round?'" These are the words Meg Ryan sends to her online friend, Tom Hanks in the movie, "You've Got Mail". Her comfort zone was challenged and when she eventually surrendered to the process, her life turned around. She discovered her dream of writing and found romance.

To be uncomfortable is to grow. If you're growing and exploring, you'll find new things - perhaps even happiness and love. Allow yourself to step out of your self-imposed, protected comfort zone and see what lies on the other side. You may be surprised - and even better, surprise yourself!

As life is really about **who you become** during it, rather than what you achieve in it - give yourself permission to change. Both internally and externally. This leads to a larger life - and a deeper expression of yourself. And this in turn provides the freedom so often longed for.

***"I used to have a comfort zone where I knew I wouldn't fail. The same four walls and busywork were really more like jail."  
(Author of 'My Comfort Zone')***

"Allow your deepest truths to be altered. Alter them yourself. Because your new idea of Who You Are is where the growth is. Your new idea of What Is So is where evolution accelerates. Your new idea about all of it is where the excitement is, where the creation is, where God in You is made manifest and becomes fully realised. Be open. Don't close off the possibility of new truth because you've been comfortable with the old one. Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."

(Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God 3*)

### On Working at Relationships ...

Roelof and I had done a large part of our relationship healing before moving to Australia, but communication always has room for improvement. The more we changed as individuals in our new home, the more our communication techniques changed. Being strangers to a foreign country brought us closer together, due to our ability to express how we felt. (I'm sure he sometimes wishes I wasn't quite so expressive!)

There were new things I needed from him now. Things I hadn't previously even considered. With both of us previously working in a corporate environment, I'd often not speak to him at all during the day. This now changed. I wanted to hear from him every day (because initially I had no one else to speak to and the days seemed very long!). This then became a routine, which is still applicable today. He phones me at lunchtime every day and I look forward to it.

Going from being a financially independent and self-sufficient woman to now being at home during the day brought its ego challenges. We'd previously had a live-in maid who did all our cooking and cleaning, so the domestic chores of life had never been discussed.

I wanted to be considered a business owner, just as important as Roelof was and not to be taken for granted, "Just because I'm at home all day, doesn't mean I'm a house-wife," I was on the defensive, "So I don't have to have supper ready for you when you get home!"

This defensiveness changed when he vulnerably explained to me that he didn't want dinner at home because I was a 'housewife' but because he felt loved when he walked through the door to a cooked meal. This is what had happened at home with his mother, who'd worked as well, and he wanted to feel the same.

Explaining it like that changed everything! How easy that was. I wanted to show him love and that was a fairly easy way to do it. Doing the cooking with this new mindset took nothing away from me. I want Roelof to be happy. And he wants me to be happy. If I can do something that will make him happy - **without compromising myself in the process** - there is no reason not to. I'm far happier when he is happier and I know that the reverse is also true.

There is no need for a power struggle in our household. Both of us are, in fact, equal with different contributions to make. Learning to be open and honest - myself - made my relationships with others and Roelof easier. This eliminated the need for game-playing, guesswork and perfection. And somehow simultaneously brought love, spontaneity and freedom.

**Voice of the coach:**

We all desire love. To give and receive it. But it goes without saying that relationships are not always easy and don't always give us what we so badly long for in the form we crave. Relationships are however, a great arena to find your blocks. You'll discover your likes, dislikes, quirks, belief systems, judgements, fears and triggers. Various relationships (including friendships) may take you into thoughts, feelings and behaviour patterns that may have been denied for a long time.

Regular communication about each other's needs and desires is fundamental to keeping a relationship moving forward. These may change as time goes on and the other partner needs to know about any changes. Despite what you want to believe, your partner cannot read your mind!

I'm half embarrassed to admit that it took me possibly six years of married life to fully grasp that men are different to women. Men function and think completely differently and changing that is like changing water into rock. There is the old saying that men marry women hoping they won't change, but they do and women marry men hoping to change them, but can't. Make peace with the fact that you cannot in fact, change anyone and all the pressure of expectation disappears.

Men will not see everything the same as women and expecting that leads to unhappiness and disappointment. It's easier to learn to express what you want and have him give it to you that way.

***Human relationships are the perfect tool for sanding away our rough edges and getting at the core of divinity within us.***  
***Ek Nath Easwaran***

So often individuals seek what they think is lacking in themselves, in another. It is expected somehow that the 'other' will fix or heal you. My experience has shown me that people living outside of themselves and deriving meaning from the external environment inevitably face the emptiness of their existence.

This often happens when women live vicariously through their husband's career or through their children. They find their purpose in these people and the related events. But nothing lasts forever, except your relationship with yourself. You're the only thing you have a guarantee of carrying with you for the rest of your life. You may as well make the most of the relationship with- and experience of being you.

Co-dependency has been defined as a pattern of relying on people outside of ourselves to define us and our worth. That way of being is also known as "externally referenced." When externally referenced, we believe the idea that self-esteem, worth, happiness and pain come from people and things outside of ourselves. (Dr Jane Bolton, Psy.D. MFT)

I suggest that you discard the impossible list of expectations, requirements and agendas you have for each other. Don't expect to be completed somehow through anyone else. What you'll get from a partner is most likely love, nurturing and support. But who you are is who you are - individually. This shouldn't essentially change in a relationship.

David Deida reminds us in 'Way of The Superior Man', that your highest purpose in life cannot be reduced to any particular relationship.

You are much more than that.

### **On Acknowledgement ...**

I struggled for a long time with giving acknowledgement and compliments, especially to Andrea. Besides my perception that her ego was big enough and didn't need further boosting, I believed that by increasing her worth I detracted from mine. It was easier to find things wrong with her, allowing me to feel better about who I was.

As mentioned before, this pattern continued when I started meeting other business owners in Perth. I was secretly jealous of anyone else's achievements as it meant I wasn't good enough and needed to work harder at my own business. I'd congratulate them with a hollow feeling, shoving myself emotionally into a pit and putting them onto a pedestal.

But the more detached, yet secure I began to feel in my authenticity the more I could recognise each person's separate significance on this planet. I was regularly acknowledging myself in my journaling. By just giving myself that special time each day I felt acknowledged. It no longer mattered who did what in the external world. I'd become full with a healthy and robust self-concept. What did it really matter when someone else was right or the centre of attention?

I now practice the realisation that one of the greatest gifts I can give someone is to allow them to feel good about who they are. That's something we all yearn for. To feel good about ourselves. To feel okay.

### **Voice of the coach:**

I often still see people being criticised for talking too much about themselves or for bragging whilst in a group situation:

"She's so dominating and thinks it's all about her."

"Why doesn't he give someone else a chance to talk?"

When this happens, it has nothing to do with the 'braggarts', but everything to do with the criticisers. Be honest about how you're feeling when you judge. What does it bring up for you?

Allow others their space. It reduces nothing about who you are. The only thing you probably feel is your bruised ego and hence need to criticise or make an assumption. If you really want to make a contribution to the discussion, speak up for yourself instead of wallowing in the resentment of someone else's limelight. You'll be heard if you speak up. Once again, no one is going to read your mind.

By judging less and accepting more, you're able to authentically give that gift to others. Do so with sincerity. The only way to be really sincere about this is when you're fully detached from your own ego. Someone else's achievement is in no way a negative reflection of who you are. Don't fall into the ego trap and let it prevent happiness to all parties involved.

If you choose to live in a constant state of comparison to others it means you're either putting yourself up on a pedestal and others in a pit, or alternatively you're putting others on a pedestal, and yourself in the pit. Comparative living is like riding a roller coaster. The highs are exciting when you feel superior to others, but as you start to plummet down into the pit, you lose your nerve and resort to the default position of fear!

Consider for a moment people that you criticise. Are you (honestly) in any way jealous of them? If so, what about? Do you secretly wish you could speak so openly in a group and share your achievements so proudly?

For example, a client of mine, let's call her Jane has a best friend Mary whom she is always criticising, internally of course! This is what Jane thinks, "Mary is so reckless with money. She spends without thinking and does exactly what she wants regardless of the outcome. She should be more responsible and grow up."

When Jane was questioned about this, she realised that secretly she felt superior to Mary because she was 'more adult and more responsible'. Such a good, honest confession!

Secondly, when questioned further, Jane admitted that she was secretly jealous of Mary's attitude and wished she could just let loose sometimes. She felt she was too uptight and conservative, hardly leaving her any room for fun in her life at all.

So - have a look at all your relationships where you compare yourself. Either from a more-than (superior) position or a less-than (inferior) position. All these relationships will tell you something about yourself. Understanding yourself better in this way will help you accept others and yourself more. The entire situation gets diffused as you become honest about the situation.

All forms of relationships are about trust and vulnerability. It takes self-acceptance to develop resilience against feeling vulnerable in front of others. Vulnerability means being open to discussing your fears, your hurts, your anxieties and your insecurities. Simply put, it means expressing, with honesty, exactly how you feel. This initially often takes courage. One of the greatest ironies in life lies in the fact that those who are the strongest are those who are able to show their vulnerability to others.

But more often than not, when you're in a comparative or competitive relationship with others, you return to a default position of self-doubt. You doubt who you are, what you can do and the right to be there but probably overcompensate with righteous indignation.

Here's an interesting exercise to face your self-doubt head-on:

Journal entry (based on a coaching exercise)

'Interview with self-doubt

*Q. So, Self-doubt, when did you first introduce yourself to Heidi?*

*SD. Early on, the moment she became aware of the differences between her and her sister.*

*Q. And how often do you come to her?*

*SD. Very often, I descend on her whenever she interacts with anyone.*

*Q. How does she behave when you're around?*

*SD. She mumbles, talks quickly and softly. She loses passion and feels uncomfortable. She assumes everyone else knows more than she does and keeps quiet.*

*Q. When is she particularly vulnerable to your attack?*

*SD. When she has to discuss something she believes others may know more about than her. Or may be better qualified at, or when she's thinking more about the person she's talking to than on what's she's saying and what she believes in.'*

This is a very enlightening journaling exercise. Try the same for yourself. Interview your own self-doubt and see when it comes to light in your life and it may highlight when you enter a plus or minus game with others.

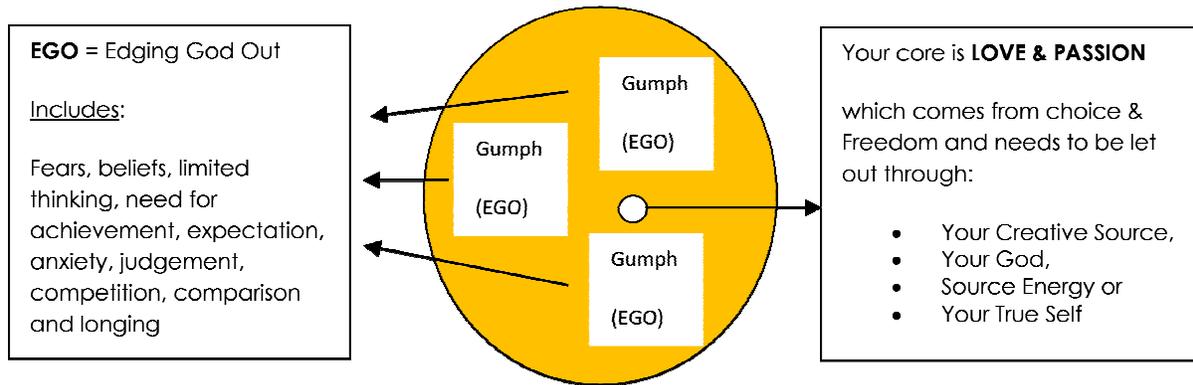
**Courage is not the towering oak that sees storms come and go; it is the fragile blossom that opens in the snow."  
Alice M Swaim**

### On The Ego ...

I've mentioned the concept of ego a number of times throughout this book. It may be time for a more comprehensive discussion.

The first time I heard Ego described as 'Edging God Out' was in the works of Dr Wayne Dyer and this catchy phrase made things simple and clear for me.

Ego's purpose is to create a sense of separateness from others and from the world at large. I've experienced this in bucket loads with competition, comparison, expectations and judgements. Ego gives us a sense of being different (usually in the form of either better or worse than or superior versus inferior than others).



Depicted as the small inner circle in the diagram above is the core of your complete being. Your core is freedom and choice in whatever your passion is. More often than not, this is love.

But your core is surrounded and clouded with what I've called 'gumph', namely the voice of ego. Gumph is nonsense, which is really the language of the ego. This gumph includes all the elements listed in the box on the left hand side. These are the things that keep you disconnected from your passion. The 'gumph' area is literally blocking the growth and expression of the tiny little circle of passion. The more ego there is, the less room there is for your passionate core to be expressed.

For example your passion may be playing the piano, but your ego voice speaks to you in the language of 'gumph' saying, "There are so many other good piano players out there, what makes you special?" This is the fearful voice of competition and comparison and Edges God Out (EGO).

Ego is not purely about pride, as is often the misconception, but rather about the non-alignment with God-field. The chief delusion that ego likes to have you buy into is that you should have control and should be in control. Ego likes to convince you that it knows everything. And therefore that you do too. This way it holds onto the reins of your life and gets you playing a game with yourself striving to be everything it promises, but at the same time feeling unworthy of it all with the need to work harder and be something that you aren't.

Ego is the protective mechanism you carry internal to yourself that defends you and makes you want to feel okay through something external to yourself. Very often, ego wants to make you feel better than everyone else, because that's when you do, in fact, feel okay.

- When I feel a sense of fear of losing out or not being good enough, I'm in ego.
- When I feel insecure, I'm in ego.
- When I feel relaxed about who I am, with no feeling of 'having to say or do anything' I know I'm not in ego.
- When I don't worry about the outcome or what people may think, I'm not in ego.

This ongoing struggle between Love and Ego implies a lack in yourself. You may subconsciously hold out for a missing piece that someone or something else must supply. Ego is the main component of the fake self. We all rely upon our egos to lead us through the known world, but you'll never reach a state of full self-expression through love as long as ego is leading the way.

Your true self is not based on one thing alone. Rather the authentic self that you seek is a constant accumulating set of experiences. You are not your experiences, they merely add to your learning.

The difference between Ego and Spirit is that ego is needy, but spirit is not. Spirit wants to give, not to take. It wants to bring joy and has no hunger for approval. It doesn't crave the obedience or agreement of another person and lives beyond all limitations.

My ego has dominated my life and isn't going to give up easily. It's also not good or bad. It just is. I'm aware of where and when it serves me. I'm also aware that it's only a PART of me - it's NOT me. My ego may get bruised occasionally, but the impact of that is only in how I let it affect me. A bruising of the ego doesn't in any way change who I am. Very often when I get acknowledged or praised for something, I feel good and say, "My ego enjoys that. Thank you very much." I enjoy the warm, fuzzy feeling of approval but know that it's not something I can hold onto or attach meaning to. Things change too quickly in life and the next day may bring negative feedback.

I experienced this stark contrast one morning after sending my monthly newsletter out to my database. Amongst all my emails were two replies to the article I'd written. I opened the first one from a lady who expressed how appropriate the article was and how grateful she was about the things I'd said as it had changed her life that day. I was over the moon, "Yay! People do appreciate me! I write well!"

But the very next email was to bring me cluttering off my self-created pedestal. This particular reader asked me how I could say what I'd said and told me she'd never read such rubbish!

Neither one of those responses is in fact, true. They're both different perceptions from different people. My ego enjoyed the one response and was hurt by the other one. My spirit wasn't bothered by either. I choose to live from spirit, as my spirit is my authentic self.

Dr Wayne Dyer explains ego fabulously in reminding you that you are NOT:

- What you have
- What you do
- Your reputation

These things are all only food for your ego. Once put like that, it makes things seem scarily meaningless, doesn't it? So - the big question is '*What are you left with if you take away what you have, what you do and your reputation?*'

My new God is a creative abundant energy around me. The total God-field is all knowledgeable; all powerful and all creative. I am linked to this. Believing I am separated and 'need help' is what limits me. I am well able to step into opportunities presented in my path. I trust my own internal navigation system which becomes more trustworthy the more I remain connected with God-force. Everything is possible, but perhaps not always at this particular point in time, as I have physical limitations, time restrictions and emotional constraints.

- What do you want?
- What do you really want?

- Who are You?
- Who or What is your God?

Working through these questions helps you to step into a deeper understanding of your co-creating ability and away from the seductive power of ego. This means you don't ask an external source of power to do something for you, but rather ask for an opportunity to be presented to you. Then fully believe that you're able to take up the opportunity and make the most of it.

Your ego will want to hang on tightly to what it knows, to where it feels safe and where it's comfortable. Acknowledge this, but move on regardless.

### On The Noisy Mind ...

#### Journal entry:

*"The meditation is making a huge difference! Think I'm finally connecting to me. I'm busy attaching myself to me."*

Although I was running my own business, and living a life of freedom un beholden to anyone (of sorts), it was actually all a process of working out what I wanted. It took me a while to sort through all the traffic in my mind.

My mind often felt like a formula one track, with the noise, the increasing speeds, the variety of participants and the non-stop commentary. The loudest and fastest car would win and I'd go flat out trying to do what it wanted. I'd soon run into frustration as I burned out while seeing my true choice appearing in the rear. By giving up on non-serving relationships (both personal and business) in the race cars I no longer wanted I was able to eventually keep the track clear for a few unique gentle engines to purr along.

I'm now in the habit of first quietening the race track completely before making any decisions. All that remains then is the purring car I actually want. It may not be the car that wins the race at the end of the day, but it's the car that will get me to the next day in the least conflicted way.

**Wisdom arrives in silence.  
Mike Dooley**

#### Journal entry:

*'It's clear to me that my life has always had a divine, underlying plan and I've lived in that plan without even knowing it. I am where I am as result of doing what I wanted and was somehow led. If I feel trapped, I'm allowed to free myself, which is what I did. I've created independence, freedom and love in my life. Based on my past journey.*

*Whatever needs to come my way and design my future will come. But how do I get to a point where I believe this all the time? Feel this and trust this continuously? It's still the same old battle... heart versus mind."*

As my business changed and grew, I changed and grew. Or rather, more accurately, as I changed, my business changed. One of the pivotal turning points in this journey was the habit of expressing daily gratitude. I'd heard this a million times before and dismissed it to be 'positive thinking rubbish'.

"How can that help? It's just another way to fool myself." I'd quibbled.

But I made a concerted effort to move out of the habit of journaling about "I still don't have..." or "Why is this happening?" and "What's wrong with me?"

Instead, I changed my journaling habits to include daily gratitude. This (amazingly) increased my level of energy vibration. It's true! The change was noticeable almost immediately.

**Happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude.**  
Denis Waitley

Journal entry:

*"My heart feels full of gratitude for everything. My head says 'for what?' I'm so used to listening to my head – and that's where the panic comes from. My heart is happy, excited, full and very thrilled to be alive. I'm experiencing both voices, but can tell the difference. I **choose** to listen to my heart."*

Although I still had many questions and anxieties, I saw my life through different eyes. So many things were great as well as amazing. The life I'd created was pretty much the picture I'd described to my life coach when I'd started out, many years previously.

Before this shift to gratitude I'd been stuck on rehashing what still hadn't manifested. I'd continuously compare myself to others and to the goals I'd set. I kept looking for any small sense of victory, working harder and harder, from longer and longer to-do lists to achieve this.

**Voice of the coach:**

Things are hardly ever as dramatic as they appear to be at the time, but can feel that way if you're emotionally attached. You create drama because that gives you a sense of space in the world. If you're creating drama, you exist and you feel noticed. Your limitation however is that you then only seem to exist through the reactions and responses of others, feeding you and making you feel alive.

What does this mean then, when none of this is happening in your life? What sustains you in these periods? If you had to go into an absolutely still place in your mind, what would you find?

"Take back more of your mental time so that no matter how busy your body is, you can still pay more attention to finding simple, peaceful delight in the most mundane and ordinary of daily life activities. If we are mentally present for the moments of our life rather than thinking ahead or back, we're enjoying the sweet success of practical pleasure" (Paul Pearsall, PhD, 'Toxic Success')

Many people believe that they have to suddenly become overnight meditators. Just because you decide to do it, doesn't mean it's easy. Meditation, like most other things takes practice. I found journaling to be a useful interim measure as it forced me to focus, sit still and hear what was happening in my head. It also kept my busy mind happy as it felt like it was *doing* something with the actual writing.

Once you're comfortable with this discipline, try guided meditation on CDs. Load these onto your iPod and lie in bed if this is easier for you to start with. Many of these nowadays are enhanced with hypnotic sounds that make it simpler to fall into a trance. Don't try and run before you can walk. Once you've got used to this as a habit, try meditation on your own or join a meditation group that meets regularly.

Another useful tool is using oracle cards. Sit quietly and ask a specific question you want clarity on. Breathe deeply keeping your energy focused on the deck and on your question. Shuffle the cards and pick out any number of cards that feels right for you. Interpret these using your intuition as well as with the guidebook that is provided.

Another great way to quieten the mind is to walk in nature. Just allow the thoughts to come through you. Don't attach any emotion to them as you walk and connect with your surroundings. Feel the peace and calm that descends on you and enjoy. Lose your iPod and enjoy the silence of your surroundings.

On Happiness ...

Helen, the co-owner of Completely Human, came to visit me a couple of times in Perth and I knew that things had turned when she said to me, "I like this new Heidi. She has presence."

And I felt I had. I'd allowed the real, inner Heidi to slowly emerge. I'd let go of the empty, pretence of a shell. I'd given up hiding myself away through fear and old patterning. What would've been the point of continuing as I was, if I really wanted my life to be different?

Being true to yourself means you're happier. And this starts by honouring, owning and expressing your emotional being.

**"Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them"**  
**Henry David Thoreau**

Journal entry:

*'I am nothing wonderful.*

*I've never achieved huge successes or fame; failed at most things I tried.*

*But I know I am something. Despite it all.*

*I'm not a nobody, despite having nothing to show for it. I have my own purpose.*

*Live my life moment to moment.*

*Enjoying and embracing who I am and the life I live.*

*I fall into my own happiness – irrespective of what the exterior world has to say.*

*I am me. I can be nothing else.*

*I don't want to be anything else.*

*My path is my path. It's hard. It's long. It's painful.*

*But it's mine; and the small victories, shifts and growth belong to me as well.*

*We're one. My experiences, my feelings and me.'*

**Voice of the coach:**

Happiness generates positive energy for you and those around you. It becomes contagious and people will want some of it from you. By being positive, energetic and happy, you're not taking - but rather, you're giving; even better, you're doing this without the hard effort and all the trying. So therefore, in order to selflessly give, you need to honour yourself first. And that certainly breaks away from the disillusion that that is selfish.

In the movie 'Rails and Ties' starring Kevin Bacon, the wife has cancer which is no longer treatable. Her words to her husband at the beginning of the film are, "I'm not scared of dying, I'm more afraid that I haven't really lived." She then turns her life around from its apparent stagnation and creates adventure during her last few years. Naturally in the process she influences her husband and his life also changes.

This is akin to the woman on her deathbed who says, "I can't die now. I'm not happy yet."

Isn't it time to work out what happiness means to you, personally? Can you afford to waste another day putting this on hold by just hoping that it will come along by itself? Get involved in your own life. Actively participate in it. The first (and often difficult) part is the honest acknowledgment that you are unhappy, or not fully happy. If this is not what you want from your life, then work out what makes you happy and do it.

***The amount of happiness that you have depends on the amount of freedom you have in your heart.***

***- Thich Nhat Hanh***

I have clients who often ask, "What about me? When is it my turn to be happy? Who cares about me?" The answer to this is merely, "if you are not for you, then who is?"

If you haven't chosen to be happy and do what makes you happy, then who will? And remember, with the funnel model of spirit, to change anything starts with changing your thinking. So, it's your turn. Now. Choose happiness.

Robert Holden, PhD, author of *'Be Happy Now'* says that happiness only feels set, but isn't actually set. He says further that you cannot be a victim and also be happy as they're incompatible. So understand that you will never *become* happy, you can only choose to *be* happy, now.

Essential premises of happiness:

- Attaining satisfaction and fulfilment from a true sense of self
- Gaining courageous hopefulness and a sense of freedom
- Objective self-esteem, encompassing self-worth, self-trust and self-respect

***'Happiness is the result of being completely and successfully human.***

***W Beran Wolfe***

**On Selfishness ...**

A great example of selfishness was the previous example of deserting my business colleague in his hospital bed. But, standing up for myself gave me the space to truly start helping others through my business. And he was naturally, albeit unexpectedly, forced to face his predicament, take responsibility for his life and make changes that he'd avoided for thirty years.

***'Life, like a cathedral is not so much to be admired for its external appearance and majesty. Life, like a cathedral, is more meaningful because of what goes on in the sanctity within. Seek patiently and persistently to discover true life by looking inward.'***  
***(Unknown)***

Selfish or self-absorbed, I believe my self-transformation has provided the following for me:

1. A sense of personal empowerment
2. A deep sense of connection to my soul
3. Courage to remain in my personal and unique truth
4. Gratitude (overwhelmingly so)
5. An understanding of oneness and a feeling of equality
6. Self-trust
7. Reduced judgement of others and myself
8. Patience
9. A deepening of some relationships and letting go of others
10. Love and compassionate support to my partner

There is no way this list has a negative influence on others. I see it as a gift. An ongoing gift because it gives and gives.

Selfishly, I've developed the habit of re-evaluating my life at the end of each year. In this re-evaluation I include people, places and things. I commit to fewer selected things and decide to let things go that no longer serve me. This clears space and emotional energy for me to continue to live with passion and purpose.

A year is a long time to accumulate clutter and fill the plate of my life and therefore, I need to clear space to make room for the new. And inevitably, once I've been brave enough to detach

and create space, something new and exciting shows up. And I get the opportunity to learn some more.

During a meditation one day I saw a picture of me physically pushing a heavy block of concrete away from me. The more I detached myself from it, the more space I created in front of me. That's my visual understanding of healthy detachment. My desires are all "out there". But through creating an open, detached space, I allow for opportunities provided by the Universe to magically "arrive" in it. I have not cramped them out or hanging onto some predetermined form in my mind.

***The purpose of our soul's continuing journey is to create an external opportunity and an infinite context within which we may experience and express; become and fulfil; know and recreate who we are.***  
**(Unknown)**

**Voice of the coach:**

Selfishness and self-absorption are absolutely parts of any spiritual journey. If you don't focus on yourself and learn to love yourself in the mirror how will you ever really connect deeply with who you are? For many people it's the first time in their lives that they give attention to themselves. It's actually akin to a journey of caring for your soul.

Selfishness, as with many other labels, is perceived as bad. It's something that you try very hard not to be because it's wrong and people may not like you because of it. This comes from the belief that selfishness is *exclusionary*, i.e. it's either you OR others. What if you changed your mindset to make the term selfish *inclusionary*, which means it's both you AND others?

That would mean that you merely have the priority of looking after yourself first, which results in you being more energetic, more authentic, happier, more resilient and able to cope better. With this kind of high vibration you are effortlessly more than able to provide love to others. Where is the selfishness then?

I call my annual decluttering exercise a selfish act because it is time that I focus purely on my needs and who I want to be. I understand however that it is a selfish act, but by no means makes me a selfish person. Once again, one behaviour doesn't define the whole of me. And ironically, this one selfish act enables me to serve others better for the year ahead anyway. It's a simple, yet effective strategy.

In Robert Holden's book, "Authentic Success" he simply says that being busy all the time is insane. It erodes away at your life and destroys your larger dreams. If you're constantly keeping busy, you'll keep filling up that "empty space" and allow no gap for opportunity.

If you want to create your own space in the world, listen to who you are. Follow your own path. Stop making excuses for others and putting their needs ahead of yours. There is no need to sell yourself and your soul short just to do the "right" thing. Sacrificing yourself means you're not standing up for yourself and simultaneously you dilute crucial elements of your freedom and happiness! This reduces your impact and influence instead of letting your true light shine forth.

"This little light of mine ... I'm going to let it shine ... let it shine ... "

***To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.***  
**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Morgan Freeman in the movie, "Ten Items Or Less" gives the following exercise to his co-star (Paz Vega) to do.

"Here are two shopping baskets. In the one basket put in ten items in your life that you wish to keep. In the other basket, put in ten items that you wish to discard."

Paz Vega's discard-basket in the movie was overflowing, yet she couldn't find ten items to put into her keep-basket.

I give this exercise to clients to do as a decluttering exercise. It helps you get clear of what you want to change. This can include beliefs, fears, rules and expectations. Examples include attachments to stuff, people, things from your past, your form and identity, money, winning, failures and disappointments, other people's opinions or any obligations.

This exercise also helps you value what you do have in your life that perhaps you're not paying enough attention to. Look at what you've included in your keep-basket and see how you currently prioritise these items.

Remember that where you attention goes, energy flows.

Which basket to do you choose to focus on?

## The Ten Items Or Less Exercise



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What do I want to keep?  
Thoughts, Expectations, Rules,  
People, Obligations,  
Experiences, Memories etcetera



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What do I want to get rid of?  
Thoughts, Expectations, Rules,  
People, Obligations, Experiences,  
Memories etcetera

On Loving Myself ...

Journal entry:

*"I really like this blossoming person – she may not be liked by all, but I don't care."*

By now I had a completely different, yet developing relationship with myself. This new, flexible and loving relationship resulted in a completely different relationship with the world around me. I find the world easy and forgiving. I have to be nothing less or more than who I am at the present time. I don't have to hold onto secrets or pretend some things about myself don't exist.

I have nothing to protect myself from, as I know I will cope. I may feel pain, rejection and hurt, but this doesn't mean that I won't survive, whatever life is handing me.

***"Spend the rest of your life giving people back to themselves, that they might love themselves. And show them by how you are with them that you know there is nothing they are lacking, nothing they are missing, nothing they need, nothing they are not."***  
***Tomorrow's God, Neale Donald Walsch***

During one of my workshops, I asked a client (a teacher) to look at the canvas she'd painted reflecting her life. I saw that her painting had disturbed her.

"What would you do if that was created by one of the children at your school?" I asked.

She quickly replied, "I'd do anything to help him and make sure that he got the help he needed."

"Then why don't you do the same for yourself?" I asked gently as soft tears dropped down her cheeks.

Journal entry:

*"I'm really getting this thing called being whole. I'm beginning to understand what being whole really means. Particularly when it involves recognising everything I've ever been, which leads me to the realisation of whom I am now."*

**Voice of the coach:**

James Arthur Ray in his book "Harmonic Wealth" refers to a gestation period, which is usually the time from conception to birth. This is the time it takes for anything to grow be it a human being, a plant or an animal. Everything needs a period of growing to be ready for the world. Even an idea. And it's the same with the manifestation of desires in your life. He explains that you need to actively grow in various areas of your life to grow INTO your manifestations and dreams.

I see it more as growing INTO YOURSELF. This, ironically is not really about growing, but rather about giving yourself permission to become authentically whole and full again, as this is how you started off as a baby.

Ask yourself the challenging questions, "What if I did ...?", "What if I tried that and believed I'd be okay even if I failed?"

Just starting something is often how you'll find yourself growing into new skills, new learning and greater wisdom.

**On Love & Compassion ...**

***The task of life is meaning, not happiness.***  
***James Hollis, PhD***

Just as soon as I thought I had all the answers having re-engaged with who I was, another large life-changing event happened when we travelled through Vietnam and Cambodia for three weeks.

We went on holiday for the first time ever without a detailed plan or itinerary. I loved the spontaneity and trust that the holiday required. We didn't always know what the next day would bring and trusted what was presented to us and made decisions spontaneously.

But something larger happened to me internally – I saw life from outside of myself. Things that I'd decided were 'true' and 'real' about my spiritual life up to that point – weren't. Reality was really only as I perceived it. Even spiritually.

My heart ached often at some of the family situations of the locals we met during our travels. I was also surprised by the environmental damage we came across. Although I grew up in a poor, third world country I hadn't ever had these feelings before. Although there was evidence everywhere of being a spiritual country, I never felt any of it. It didn't fit into what my definition of 'spiritual' was. Many of my preconceived expectations weren't met and my spiritual judgements challenged. I returned from holiday with a deep despondency wondering what really mattered. Reincarnation and life lessons no longer made sense to me.

"I don't have any answers after all. God doesn't actually exist. I've lived my personal development journey in some sense of illusion. Or delusion?" I moaned to Andrea, sitting at Singapore airport during transition.

I felt a huge sense of betrayal by God (Universe) during this holiday. God, once again, suddenly looked different to me. He'd moved out of the box I'd conveniently placed him in. I felt isolated and without a safety-net. My world had fallen out from underneath me. Where was the loving God in a place like Cambodia? What was the purpose of having a spiritual belief system?

I asked Andrea, "Surely their souls didn't choose to live life like this? What opportunity is there for them to get 'metaphysical', do any form of personal growth, learn spiritual lessons and become a higher being of enlightenment? Everything's just a joke then!"

What amazed me however was how the Vietnamese and Cambodians religiously followed their faith, all the while putting out offerings and believing in something larger than their circumstances. But their reality (which I saw) was to earn money to provide basic foodstuffs to feed their families. Nothing more. Nothing less. Their existence being solely about survival challenged my philosophy that there must be more to life than this practical reality we find ourselves in.

"What hocus-pocus do I really believe in then?" I wondered. I'd attached my own personal meaning to the way they lived and onto what they should believe.

It took me about three months to consolidate what had happened for me in Cambodia and Vietnam. I struggled to explain to people and found myself withdrawing from people, spiritual ones, especially. I no longer resonated with what they were saying. It all seemed too superficial and 'easy' – when there was a real, harsh reality out there that couldn't be explained away through 'letting go' or 'law of attraction' or spiritual lessons.

Knowing all the theory about souls choosing their paths and their lessons for this lifetime made me angrier at the concept. Who'd want to choose to live like that? They'd survived horror upon horror and somehow still managed to get up in the morning for work.

Understanding slowly filtered through and I made peace with a few things:

- Everything just is. Exactly as it's meant to be.
- Only two things matter in my life. Love and compassion.
- I don't need to change anything for anyone. I don't even need to understand everything. All I can do is offer both love and compassion and the rest is up to the universal flow and each person's higher power.

***One word frees us of all the weight and pain in life. That word is Love.  
Sophocles.***

For example, our taxi driver in Cambodia lived literally from day to day. We tried to preplan and help him find work for the day after we were due to leave. He was confused and said, "But I'll do that tomorrow. Not today." We'd tried to impose our fearful pre-planning onto his lifestyle which made no sense to him.

I reconnected with another God. Not the external image I somehow still carried. My new God is the universal connection I have with me and with everything around me. I came to fully realise that God is a field of intention. An all-pervasive energy force that surrounds us all. This energy is neither good nor bad, it just is. I choose to live in its power, in its love and its magic.

At this juncture in my life, I'm of the opinion that a great task in life is finding personal meaning. Many people may say happiness. I think happiness comes from living within your personally-defined meaning. And this is different for everyone, including a poverty-stricken taxi driver.

If you've found your meaning and live according to that, happiness will develop from within. Feelings of isolation, feeling lost and unloved will be replaced by a deeper sense of self.

My personal meaning therefore became love and compassion. I didn't have to help everyone or impose my views trying to understand them. I only have to live from a space of love and compassion which has finally set me free.

### **Voice of the coach:**

James Hollis explains that meaning is something inherent and is trying to find us all the time. But we need to step out of the way first.

Keep reminding yourself that things only have the meaning you give to them. Most things mean nothing. You choose your meaning. And this means you can self-create, as a vessel for spirit.

My definition of God has changed a number of times as my understanding of myself has deepened. I have no doubt that this will still evolve as I do. Allow yourself the same by experiencing the reality of today as only the reality for today. Remain open to seeing and believing something different tomorrow.

***"There is one thing in this world that you must never forget to do. If you forget everything else and not this, there's nothing to worry about; but if you remember everything else and forget this, then you will have done nothing in your life. It's as if a king has sent you to some country to do a task, and you perform a hundred other services, but not the one he sent you to do."***  
**Rumi (on individual purpose)**

### **On Continual Growth ...**

It's important to find new ways to grow, adapt and change. By not doing this, you risk diminishing your enjoyment of life as you become used to the current status quo which can feel stale after a while.

Metaphorically, as in physical life, we start personal growth with a crawling phase. This is represented by in-house training where a parent locks the cupboards and limits your freedom whilst you start exploring. Many adults spend their entire life at this stage, yielding to old beliefs and fears, closing their dreams in locked cupboards and accepting limited freedom. You don't know what you don't know.

We then move to the walking phase which provides increased independence. Providing some stability, helping hands makes us feel brave enough to venture out of our parents' sight. These explorations turn into adventures where new discoveries take place. Many adults start personal development work in order to attain some stability or effect some change or achieve some goal. Often, however when the going gets hard it proves disappointing and they give up, even though the initial adventure was exciting.

The running phase is exciting because it means you can get around faster and this is when you start seeing quicker results and become more independent. Changes start to happen in your

physical body as well as in your life, such as your relationships and your career. You begin to sense increased purpose as well as emotional and financial freedom. You're reaping some rewards from your internal changes.

But more gloriously, as opposed to the physical world, in the world of personal growth you can learn to fly. You can continue to use all your ongoing lessons and evolving beliefs to get above it all. Through self-acceptance and self-honouring you can soar in your individuality and unique perfection detached from the dramas of life around you.

***“When you have come to the edge of all the light you have  
And step into the darkness of the unknown  
Believe that one of the two will happen to you  
Either you'll find something solid to stand on  
Or you'll be taught how to fly!”  
Richard Bach***

I often hear people express fear of returning to the 'old self' of who they once were. This fear sets in once some liberating light bulbs have sparked as their soul opens up. I was the same. I was terrified that I'd return to old habits, thinking patterns and ways.

Life is a process of experiences. All your experiences are made up of precious moments. Each one takes you to a place you haven't been to before and to a new understanding of yourself. Each moment presents a new set of variables: how you think, feel and act. This means you are ever-changing, should you be aware of it. Part of that process may be to step backwards sometimes and you may feel you've regressed to the 'old you'. But look carefully and see if perhaps you've merely been presented with a reality check. Perhaps you've needed contrast to show you how much your thinking has changed.

Journal entry:

*“But I love (yes- actually) the process I'm in and really it's all thanks to Helen. I'm terrified to go back to my old self, in my old world and fall back into old beliefs and habits.”*

Looking back now, I realise this and understand the stages we go through when we start with spiritual development and what I've demonstrated in this book:

- An instinctual knowing that this is 'right' and everything seems to make sense
- An urgency and need to share new revelations with everybody who *should* also think like this
- A reactionary behaviour to 'get what we want' because it's now suddenly all possible and can be manifested.
- An understanding that there is more to this journey than meets the eye. It's not about getting what you desire inasmuch as about becoming more of who you are.
- An understanding of the role the shadow self plays in your life.
- An acceptance of just what is, with regards to you, others and life in general. An acceptance of many diverse routes to happiness and fulfilment.
- Skills in communication, love, compassion and behaviour in order to interact with all people and the world.
- A continued deepening relationship with yourself, through self-acceptance and self-love.
- Your personal, ever-evolving true meaning, freedom and then, naturally, influence.

Journal entry:

Things that help me connect with my individuality and unique perfection

- *I need lots of time on my own otherwise my edginess increases.*

- *I pour a lot of energy into my life and hence have a huge need to retreat into myself. (Many may see this as isolation, but I see this as reconnection.)*
- *Once I start to feel that my energy levels are becoming depleted I consciously need to replenish them. And I start to feel protective of my boundaries.*
- *I bore easily and thrive on change, loving new projects and new people.*
- *I live with love and compassion towards myself which naturally flows out to others.*
- *I take love when it's given and I give love as often as I can.*
- *I've realised that I don't have all the answers – and that the questions can often change.*
- *I'm grateful that my creative process of life is not limited to what I think I know.*
- *I know that there is a larger plan to all of this. I'm on the path that is best for me. For now.*
- *I'm absolutely not perfect, but absolutely perfect as I am.*
- *What I know and experience is totally unique – as with everyone else.*
- *As long as I'm consciously aware of myself and of others, I'll be okay.*
- *Mostly however I give myself the love I deserve. And that's a lot!*

***Love yourself even when you don't know what is going on. There is no way you can separate yourself from love and maintain freedom.  
(John-Roger, from: The Tao of Spirit)***

These can be used as my own personal affirmations for those days when self-doubt creeps in and things don't quite seem as clear or have a holistic meaning any more.

## Your Personal Review

How open are you to new ideas and opportunities?

.....  
.....

What do you understand by co-creation?

.....  
.....

Where are you creative? Or what is blocking your creativity?

.....  
.....

What patterns exist in your relationships?

.....  
.....

What work/communication can be done on/in these relationships?

.....  
.....

What does Ego dominate in your life?

- What makes it so important?
- What is it trying to control?
- What is it scared of losing?

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What can you declutter in your life, using the 10 items or less exercise?

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What does happiness mean to you?

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What is your opinion of selfishness?

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What is your meaning to life? Your personal meaning?

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What can you do to actively reconnect to your perfect, unique self?

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How will you know that you are continually growing? Can you ensure that this happens?

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How often are you aware of loving yourself?

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## CHAPTER 8

### ON ACCEPTANCE

When you run a marathon, you're aware that once you reach the 42.2km mark you have crossed the finish line. You are home. You are finished. Usually there is a crowd to cheer you in, a large banner that you run under with the words 'Finish' on it as well as an electronic board showing your time.

Life doesn't mimic this however. There is no clear-cut finish line for you to cross over. There is no set distance for you to complete. There is no crowd to cheer you through or a timing mechanism to let you know how well you did.

All there is, is the daily connection with your authentic self, namely your spirit. Every day and every moment is precious and you don't need to have covered a certain amount of them to have achieved a milestone. Instead it's about the life and fulfilment within each moment that spurs you on.

***Close your eyes and imagine that everything you have and everything you are is enough. You don't need to be better or different – you're great just as you are. Can you experience the peace and contentment that owning that perspective brings?***

***Moving into such total acceptance does not mean that we stop growing. When we can accept who we are now, we open the doors to our own inspiration to do and be even more!***

***Who you really are is enough.  
Orah Mountain Dreamer***

I returned 'home' (to South Africa) to celebrate my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with family and friends. I'd been in Australia for three years and hadn't been back since the challenging visit a couple of years previously. I wanted to celebrate this big event with some of the same friends I've had since high school and university. They flew down to Cape Town and we shared a house there for a long weekend for the celebrations. I felt truly blessed and privileged to have such special people in my life. They spoil me and were really keen to see me and have me around. Perhaps absence does make the heart grow fonder, after all?

I spent just under three weeks there revisiting some old haunts and re-establishing many past connections. This included a reunion of my MME days. The previous management team reunited to help me piece together the memories of those days. I realised we'd experienced both good times as well as bad. Although there were many painful memories, and this is all I'd attached to, it became clear that we'd had a lot of fun and also carried many happy memories from that time. Hearing all the stories again, helped me fully understand why the 'divorce' had felt so sore and painful. "That's who you were then, Heidi," they said to me, "It's all you had in your life. Work was all you were."

I came away from this experience knowing the last person to forgive and make peace with was me. I also saw that no one who'd been caught in the crossfire between Warren and myself had been scarred or permanently damaged. People are resilient. We cope. We survive.

The biggest closure for me during this trip was mending the relationship with my mother. When she'd heard that I was visiting for my birthday, she'd asked if she could see me. I'd tentatively agreed to see her if I had time.

We got together at a lunch at my brother's house and she asked to see me alone if it was at all possible. We went shopping together the following day and I realised she was open to talking about real stuff – that being feelings, desires, experiences, hurts and who she is. I expressed myself openly and honestly telling her many of the things I'd written in the draft version of this book.

"But remember," I explained, "this book is not about you. And some of it may not even be true in your eyes, because it's about my perception of events which have brought about my reality."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"What I say, think and do in life and especially what I've written is only my perspective of the experiences. Naturally, I could only have seen through my own eyes, but that said, regardless of all of this being from a limited perception, these were the events that made me behave, think and believe as I did. I cannot change my emotional past. It's always with me, and has played a major role in who I've become. Not acknowledging this would only hamper my further transformation, but I am choosing to move beyond it," I continued, "and I'm not blaming or criticizing you or anyone."

"I understand that, and I'm also finally realising all the emotional patterns in the generations of our family," she acknowledged.

"Do you know that for years and years I've been scared of opening any emails from you?" I asked her.

"Why on earth would you be scared of me?" she was perplexed.

"For fear of how I'd feel, which could be anything like anger, guilt, manipulated, pity, rejection, failure or inadequacy. It was easier to merely delete them without even reading them."

But since these open and honest chats I no longer carry that continual anxiety. I know there is a chance that she can and may still hurt me and vice versa – it doesn't change who I am or mean anything about me. What she expects and thinks of me has nothing to do with me. We've already hurt each other enough to last a lifetime.

There is no blame as I cannot change the past. I'm fully aware and understand that she did the best that she could do with the emotional and physical limitations she had. But that was for then. Now, as an adult, I require different things from her and these were what I expressed. She acknowledged both our prior hurts and rejections and we'll take it step by step from here.

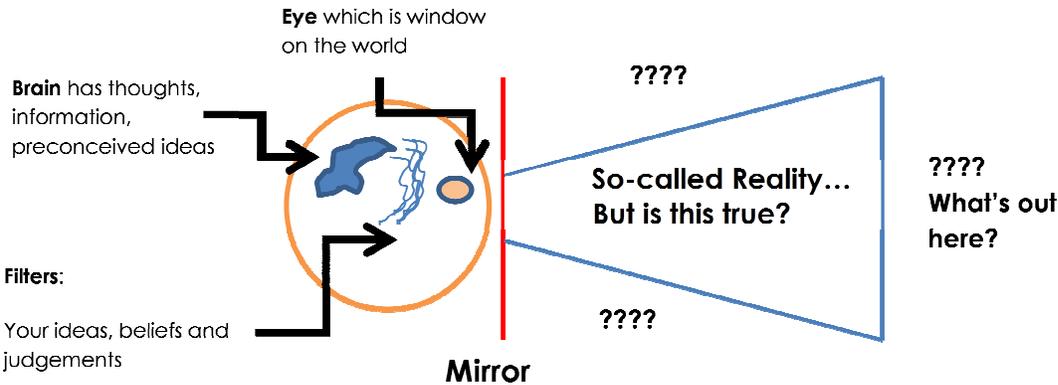
A gentleness now exists in our relationship that has never been there before. She no longer sees through me. She sees me.

### **Voice of the coach:**

It's human nature to let the negative experiences in life overpower the positive ones. But I realised this was a choice I was making. And to make matters worse, it was a choice I was making based on my limited perceptions of my past. I could remain in the past and still hold my mother accountable for how I was raised and what the results were or I could experience life differently by changing the way I viewed it all.

What do you choose to focus on: What is wrong or what is right? On how bad you or others are or on how perfect things inherently are?

Perception is the understanding *you* develop through the uses of *your* senses or *your* mind. This therefore is your unique viewpoint. But, so often projected onto others.



This simple model is made up of the following elements:

- (1) Your brain, with its unique way of processing your thoughts
- (2) Your filters, which come from your past conditioning. This is your unique view of how the world operates based on your past experiences and self-imposed rules.
- (3) Your Eye through which you view the world (people and experiences)
- (4) Your feeling-state (not depicted in the model)

How you interpret what happens around you is a function of these four elements operating together. We'll use the same example of the forgotten birthday:

- (1) Your eye views an event happening: *"Jennifer didn't call me on my birthday"*
- (2) You filter this experience through your unique model of the world, which is a subjective experience of reality: *"The right thing to do is to always remember friends' birthdays. This shows that I care and love them."*
- (3) Your brain therefore interprets this experience as: *"Jennifer doesn't care for and love me."*
- (4) You feel hurt and angry

But, is this really true? Do you know for sure that Jennifer doesn't love you? Probably not. Perhaps she just forgot or had a personal crisis in her life? But you've created meaning from a potentially innocuous event.

The model depicts this 'alternate reality' outside the so-called reality using question marks asking 'What's out here?'. If you're solely looking at the world through your own filters and limitations, you'll only ever experience the small triangle of 'So-called reality'. That's what's meant by the statement that you create your own reality. How you're thinking and interpreting things feels like it's real, but it may not be the truth. The more you broaden your perspective, the wider your reality of experience becomes, with a more open mind. Sometimes when you're aware and open-minded you'll see things you never saw before which may surprise you and bring you joy.

The other thing to notice in our example of Jennifer is that this event or circumstances has caused a reaction in you: You feel hurt and angry. Understand now that this emotion is because of you, not because of Jennifer. Your brain has jumped to a conclusion and interpreted her action into your personal meaning of not being loved. Not everyone would jump to this same conclusion.

*"You respond to what you perceive, and as you perceive, so shall you believe"*

Another noteworthy aspect of the model above is the role of the mirror. Because perception is something that comes from inside you it's a natural response to project this onto others or the world around you. It's not possible to see anything outside of you that isn't you. This also explains once again why different people feel different things from the same experience. It's helpful then to notice that if you're feeling anger and judgement towards another for something work out what it's about. It's a mirror of something in you and it probably has more to do with you than the external source.

Others are acting as you're projecting them to act. Your world will change as you change the way you look at it. For example, a mouse and an elephant will look at a large tree in two very different ways. One as a huge obstacle and the other as an opportunity for food. The tree hasn't done anything except be a tree.

- How would your reality change if the lens through which you viewed the world changed?
- How would your reality change if you understood your filters better?
- How would your reality change if you used the mirror as a growth-tool?
- How would your reality change if you expanded your awareness through attention and choice?

I've found many people hesitant to venture beyond their self-imposed rules, ideas, perceptions and reality because of a fundamental need to be right. By admitting that there may be another interpretation would imply that you're somehow inferior by being wrong. This is understandable as the need to be right is important to people for a variety of reasons:

- Gives you the high ground (be it intellectually, morally or ethically)
- You feel respected
- Makes you feel deserving
- Gives you a feeling of 'I am okay'
- You feel like a winner
- You feel superior
- You feel in control
- Gets you attention
- You feel acknowledged
- You feel liked
- You feel successful

But these reasons are all mere illusions for short term gain as they're about making you feel better about who you are. They're all another **perceived** improvement on your feeling state from 'not okay' to 'okay'.

The huge liberation from grasping the concept of perception and projection fully is that you know that whatever happens, happens and you will survive the outcome. It doesn't matter what people think or say about you, because that all comes through their filters anyway. Most likely it has nothing to do with you at all, but rather a reflection of their expectations and demands from life.

Understanding this gives you permission to be who you are. Changing your behaviour may or may not change their perception at all. You have no guarantee about what is happening in their mind. External parties make judgements based on where they're at and remember that judgement basically means viewing the world as *you are*, rather than how the world is.

Because all experiences have the purpose of bringing you another step closer to your understanding of yourself, that's all you can take away from them. There is no need for you to impose your own limited perceptions onto everything, creating some meaning which makes you suffer. My mother and I are, instead, starting to share true compassion, which is a genuine understanding of both of our life experiences, through both sets of eyes.

Give yourself permission to keep learning. Your authentic self is ever-evolving as nothing is finite. What you may see today is only your perception of what is happening around you for this day. If the same thing had to happen tomorrow, you may see it differently.

***If you correct your mind, the rest of your life will fall into place.***  
Lao-Tzu

### On Perfection ...

Journal entry:

'Quit waiting until you're perfectly ready; you never will be.'

It's time to quit waiting for:

- Perfection
- Reassurance
- The right help to come along
- Someone to 'discover' me
- A clear set of instructions
- More self-confidence'

I still have doubts. I definitely don't have all the answers. But I no longer feel I need to. Nothing is cast in stone and nothing is permanent. As long as some doubt exists, I believe I will continue to challenge myself for change and growth. A sense of knowing it all, or at least, pretending to know it all is limiting. Very limiting and very rigid. A sense of not knowing opens me up to possibility and experience. And these are the things that transform me and take me to the next layer of who I am becoming.

So - I am now forty years old, and officially more than a little over halfway through my life if the Bible's three-score and ten is to be believed. If this has been the extent of my internal journey to now, I feel very excited about what's still ahead. I've been the only one to allow myself to be held back by non-serving beliefs. Imagine what the next half of my life holds in store for me as I enter it in a state of permission!

I feel resilient enough to deal with it!

I surrender. I give. I listen. I learn.

### On Self-Trust ...

One of the least practised characteristics I encounter in my clientele is that of self-trust. This means trusting your own self to survive, to cope or to merely be okay.

I spent a lot of time giving my power away to others, assuming they knew more or knew better what was best for me. I'd often listen to the opinions and corrections of anyone around me and assume that they must be correct. But I learnt, sometimes the hard way, that within their

willingness to help lay their own filters and perceptions. The information I receive from others is, therefore, often miscoloured and at some level serves the 'helper' in as much as it serves me, which may not be 100% in my best interest and for my highest good. I've learnt to take the time and check in with this.

Journal entry:

*'I just want to be one with myself and all energy around me. I'd like to deeply breathe into each moment and then let the moment take care of itself. I want to remove all hidden agendas I have (and I do!) and be true. And free. And honest. And me.'*

**Voice of the coach:**



Your dream or goal (i.e end destination)

The next step forward takes you here

Intersection where you vibrate

In my coaching practice I use the analogy of a fishing net to represent life and our journey on it. Imagine yourself as a vibrating entity at one particular point on the net. The net itself represents the Universe or God or Intention or your waiting Co-Creation. The word universe means 'One Song' and I like to think of this net as a 'Human Being dancing to the music of the Universe'. Everything is connected and you are, in effect, one with the net merely vibrating at your specific frequency, somewhere in the grand design.

Everything else in your world is also vibrating on this net at different intersections. All you have to do is take the next step. You can choose in what direction you want to move. Your choices include moving forward, backward, left or right. It's easier to make this decision if you know where you want to go as you'll take the next step in that direction. So you can set this as your vision which is some point on the opposite side of the net towards which you wish to move.

The difficult part very often is actually taking that next step forward. You have the support of the net with you and the variety of people around you. But remember that for the most part, if you take a step forward and don't like it, you can always take another step in a different direction. Sometimes the actual direction doesn't matter, it's more important to trust yourself to just take the first necessary step forward towards a life you want to live.

Trusting yourself is of paramount importance. And this is far easier to do once you've started to shed all the pretences and are able to hear the true, inner voice guiding you. This voice is gentle, loving and wishes to harm no-one, but puts your highest, best-interest first.

An inner voice tells you that there is much more to your life and yourself than you are capable of experiencing at the present time. (Pathwork Guide, Lecture 204)

It's also important to keep making a conscious choice to move forward. If you remain stuck in blame for the past, it holds you back feeling like a victim without choice.

By living with an understanding of the net analogy, you'll realise that you're fully connected and one with the universal energy. You'll understand the concept of everything and everybody being connected and self-trust becomes a natural by-product of this understanding. By being so connected to who you really are and all that is around you, there is nothing else to trust but your Higher Self. From living like this you'll experience some of the following:

- A sense of personal empowerment
- Courage to remain in your truth
- Ongoing gratitude
- A feeling of connectedness
- Self-trust
- Acceptance of others (non-judgment)
- An ability to be in the world, knowing you can handle whatever life hands you.
- Uncertainty is not something to fear, but an enriching aspect of your life.
- A healthy, realistic outlook on life and others

***If one advances confidently in the direction of one's dreams, and endeavours to live the life which one has imagined, one will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.***

***Henry David Thoreau***

Dr Wayne Dyer, in *"You'll See It When You Believe It"*, explains that the attitude of knowing that everything happens as it's supposed to, that there are no accidents and that we're precisely where we're supposed to be, doing what we're supposed to takes a tremendous pressure off and it eliminates the need to be judgemental.

When you're continually moving forward and trusting yourself and life, you may make the right decision or even the wrong one. It doesn't really matter because whatever happens strengthens your capacity for any future experiences with a deeper sense of trusting yourself again. You know you will cope and you will learn. Always.

Accepting all of this, allow yourself to walk around in an open-awed wonderment, with the question, "What is the next stage of my journey?"

Know that you have something supporting you. Something resilient, meaningful and loving.

You.

## Your Personal Review

Who are you still asking permission from?

To be, do or have what?

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If you are not supporting and loving yourself, who is then?

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What fantasies do you still have for your life? What are your means to express them?

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What elements of perfection are you still expecting from yourself? And from others?

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What does self-trust look like to you? Do you think you're ready to trust yourself?

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What would you say the key to your life is?

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What is the best piece of advice you'd like to leave for the next generation?

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# YOUR "I AM" STATEMENT

You've spent some time focusing on who you are. Can you describe this now?

Don't worry about being grammatically correct. Create a personal statement that YOU feel good about and that makes sense to YOU.

(Use some of the learnings from this book or just a feeling you've gathered about yourself)

## I AM

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***The truth is that being grown up is knowing who you are and having the courage to be that person. Once and for all.  
(Dr Tom, from the TV series 'Being Erica')***

**PART III**  
**“WHAT TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE”**  
**Me. Completely Me**

*“And so, for the first time in my life, perhaps, I took my lamp and went down into the depths of me.”*

*T de Chardin*

The journey back into ourselves is a full circle. We return home again, but this time feeling connected to it and loving what it is. The journey to being Completely Human may be a long one which goes through many spirals and dips. But it's exciting and rewarding if you remain committed and open to learning.

I understand the journey I embarked on as follows:

Transformation on the physical plane:

- (1) You may remember my beginning of inherently believing I was nothing, but pretending to be everything.
- (2) I then lost the pretence and admitted to believing I was nothing
- (3) I then started to believe that I was indeed, something
- (4) I continually shed my beliefs and limitations to start practising being somebody

Transformation on the spiritual plane:

- (5) I then realised that this somebody (ego) was only an illusion and that I was in fact nothing
- (6) I then grasped that within this nothing lies the everything that has always been there
- (7) I embraced the fact that I am everything, but nothing meaningful, without love and compassion.
- (8) I am one with God and everything around me. My Higher Self is my guidance system, my support, my unconditional love, my meaning, my wisdom and my freedom.

## CHAPTER 9

### ON PERSONAL FREEDOM & MEANING ...

**Freedom comes from the ability to live in the Higher Self no matter what is happening in your life.**  
**Susan Jeffers**

I'm at the point of my life where my Personal Freedom and Meaning lie completely within me. Within who I am. I am authentically living from a state of deep connectedness to my spirit. I listen solely to my Higher Self which is part of the global web of consciousness (my fishing net of life) fully embracing my spirit, which is my authentic self.

When I know that I'm one with my own source, I don't feel anxiety or neediness. I don't feel lack or pressure. I'm at peace. I'm in harmony. I am content. I accept what comes my way and then let it go. I'm free. I know that I am okay. And always will be.

I often get asked the big question from people.... Why am I here?

- To live
- To live honestly
- To give joy
- To be happy
- To discover
- To learn
- To help others with the above
- To listen
- To hear

- To share

Some Completely Human affirmations to keep you engaged with your authenticity:

- I'm totally independent of the good or bad opinion of others
- I'm beneath no one and I'm above no one.
- I'm fearless (despite having fear!) in the face of any and all challenges.
- I am not alone in the world.
- A magical life is possible.
- I embrace synchronicity.
- I am a being that radiates love.
- God is both within and outside of me. God just is. Everywhere and nowhere in particular. I am everything. And nothing.
- Whatever comes my way, I'll discover a new and wonderful part of myself.
- My own meaning is me. I am everything I want.

Journal entry

*'I'm not chasing anything within or through spirituality either. There is no destination, there is no externality; it all just is. Attachment leads me astray and disconnects me from myself.'*

In the following excerpt Mike Dooley beautifully explains my evolutionary concept of God, Personal Freedom and Meaning:

**If speaking to a spiritual novice during the darker days of human evolution, one might explain God, metaphorically, as if 'He' were angry, testing and judgmental.**

**To someone a bit more savvy, during easier times, one might explain God, metaphorically, as if 'She' were always loving, nurturing and forever conspiring on our behalf.**

**And to someone on the verge of a total breakthrough, during the latter days of human evolution, one might explain God by asking them to turn up the music, take off their shoes, walk in the grass, unleash the dogs, free the canary, catch a breeze, ride a wave, dance every day, get up early, take a nap, stay out late, eat chocolate, feel the love, give stuff away, earn it back, give some more, and laugh ... Really.**

I recently dreamt of the blue-haired doll my sister worked so hard to get as a teenager. I now see this as a picture of personal freedom, authenticity and uniqueness. The doll may have been weird and unusual, but it didn't matter to Andrea. It was just a blue-haired doll.

And now, it doesn't matter that I'm different to people around me. It doesn't matter that I'm unique or that some people may not see the point of who I am or what I do. I am who I am and I allow myself to be that way. To be Completely Human. That's my meaning and my personal freedom.

The blue-haired doll caught on early... it's no wonder she had such a huge smile on her canvas face.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT**  
**[www.completelyhuman.com](http://www.completelyhuman.com)**