

# **What Is True for *Me* About Relationships?**

*A Personal Workbook*

**Developed by Reverend Jane Beach**

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# What Is True for *Me*...

## About Relationships?

### *A Personal Workbook*

Dear Friend,

This course is about honoring your relationship with yourself, with your God, and with everyone who has ever entered your life, even for a moment. There are no right or wrong answers; instead this is meant to be a journey into your own mind and heart. You are star of the show, the hero of the story, no matter what your story looks like. What matters is what *you* think.

“What is True for *Me* About Relationships?” is designed as a personal workbook, a journal in which to contemplate *your* thoughts, opinions, questions, revelations, and everything that comes in-between. You will read articles that present ideas for you to consider, followed by questions that ask you to reach deep inside yourself to discover what *you* truly believe about how you view others, and yourself.

You are cherished by a God that knows who you are, loves you unconditionally, and accepts you without condition or reservation. Sink into the *feeling* of that great Love as you do this work. It is my great honor to walk alongside you, honoring every step you take.

With gratitude and love,

Jane

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# What Is True for *Me* About Relationships?

*A Personal Workbook*

- ♥ Week 1                      Myself
- ♥ Week 2                      Spirit
- ♥ Week 3                      Family
- ♥ Week 4                      Others
- ♥ Week 5                      Accepting Change
- ♥ Week 6                      Beginnings and Endings
- ♥ Week 7                      Forgiveness
- ♥ Week 8                      My Place in the World



# Class Agreements

## Attendance and Active Participation

This course is about you. Your willingness to deepen your personal understanding of who you are – and what *you* believe is true – has brought you to this class. Therefore, attendance and active participation are the foundation of the journey, crucial for the experience that lies ahead.

## Workbook Writing

The best way to move through your workbook is to first read the title page and then all the articles for that week. This gives you an idea of the overall concepts being presented. You can bet that ideas and insights will start percolating! Then go back and do the written work, giving it your undivided time and attention.

Spend quality time writing down your thoughts and feelings about each article in the workbook. Don't just answer in phrases – write down full sentences that convey your thoughts. Not only does this deepen your personal unfolding experience, it also helps you express your perspective during class dialog.

You will get as much out of this class as you put into it, so bring yourself wholly into the experience. You will be glad you did!

## Final Thought Paper: “What is True for Me About Relationships?”

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True for Me About Relationships?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to focus on one of the questions below as a springboard for your thoughts.

- What have I learned about myself and my relationship to myself?
- What have I learned about my relationships with others?
- What have I learned about my relationship with the God of my understanding?
- What is my purpose for being in the world today? What gifts do I bring?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented on the last night of class. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.

## **The Importance of Sharing**

You will find that sharing your insights and experiences and learning from others is an important part of the class. The purpose of sharing is multifaceted. It provides an opportunity to share from your own experience, as well as develop the ability to listen and really hear other people, and to benefit from their sharing.

## **Guidelines for Sharing**

### **Confidentiality**

- What is said in class stays in class.
- What is said in the small break-out groups stays within that group. When you share with the whole group, share your insights only instead of the revelation of someone else in the small group.

### **Sharing with respect**

- Speak about your own feelings and experiences and not about what someone else has shared as their feelings or experiences.
- Actively listen while another person is sharing and then refrain from commenting or giving advice (no “fixing”).
- Once a person has shared, the response of the others in the group is, “Thank you,” and then the next person shares. This helps keep the tendency to comment (pulling the attention back to the person speaking) and “fixing” at bay.
- Respect the rights of others and share one time only in each sharing opportunity. If you later remember something wonderful you intended to share wait until everyone else has had a turn to share.
- Be sensitive to the amount of class time you spend in sharing. If sharing is easy for you hold back in order to allow time for others. If sharing is more difficult for you, learn to speak up and share yourself.



*A man has to learn that he cannot command things, but that he can command himself; that he cannot coerce the wills of others, but that he can mold and master his own will: and things serve him who serves Truth; people seek guidance of him who is master of himself.*

- James Allen

## Week 1

# What is True for *Me* About Myself?

*The world is nothing but my perception of it. I see only through myself. I hear only through the filter of my story.*

- Byron Katie

### This Week

This week we honor ourselves by looking at what we believe to be true about who we are. In what ways do we value ourselves? In what ways do we play small? What areas of our lives do we try to forget? What areas grab our attention? It's time to acknowledge *all* of who we are, doing our best to remember that we are divinely loved *just as we are*. Let's begin!

*To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Because he believes in himself, he doesn't try to convince others. Because he is content with himself, he doesn't need other's approval. Because he accepts himself, the whole world accepts him.*

- Tao-Te Ching

*Life is the dancer and you are the dance.*

- Eckhart Tolle



## **What is true for *me* about my relationship with myself?**

**This is my opportunity to consider what is true for *me* about my relationship with myself, since that is the starting place for all my other relationships. What do I believe is true about me in general? In what instances am I my own best friend? Are there times when I become my worst enemy? What may cause me to swing from one to the other?**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these two pages for some beginning thoughts about my relationship with myself today.**

**My relationship with myself today (continued)**



# Be For Yourself

From *Just One Thing: Developing a Buddha Brain One Simple Practice at a Time*

By Rick Hanson

To take any steps toward your own well-being – such as the practices in this book – you have got to be on your own side. Not against others, but *for* yourself.

For many people, that's harder than it sounds. Maybe you were raised to think you didn't count as much as other people. Maybe when you've tried to stick up for yourself, you've been blocked or knocked down. Maybe deep down you feel you don't deserve to be happy.

Think about what it's like to be a good friend to someone. Then ask: Am I that kind of friend to *myself*?

If not, you could be too hard on yourself, too quick to feel you're falling short, too dismissive of what you get done each day. Or too half-hearted about protecting yourself from mistreatment or telling others what you really need. Or too resigned to your own pain, or too slow about doing those things – both inside your head and outside it, in the wider world – to make your life better.

Plus, how can you truly help others if you don't start by helping yourself?

The foundation of all practice is to wish yourself well, to let your own sorrows and needs and dreams *matter* to you. Then, whatever you do for yourself will have real oomph behind it!

## How

Several times a day, ask yourself: Am I on my own side here? Am I looking out for my own best interests? (Which will often include the best interests of others.)

Good times to do this:

- If you feel bad (e.g., sad, hurt, worried, disappointed, mistreated, frustrated, stressed, or irritated)
- If someone is pushing you to do something
- If you know you should do something for your own benefit but you're not doing it (like asserting yourself with someone, looking for a new job, or quitting smoking)

At these times, or in general:

- Bring to mind the feeling of being with someone who cares about you. This will help you feel like you matter and have worth, which is the basis of being for yourself.
- Recall what it feels like to be for someone. Perhaps a child, pet, or dear friend. Notice different aspects of this experience, such as loyalty, concern, warmth, determination, or advocacy. Let the sense of being on someone's side be big in your awareness. Let your body shift into a posture of support and advocacy: perhaps sitting or standing a little more erect, chest coming up a bit, eyes more intent; you're strengthening the experience of being for someone by drawing on embodied cognition, on the sensorimotor systems in your brain that underlie and shape your thoughts and feelings.
- Recall a time when you had to be strong, energetic, fierce, or intense on your own behalf. It could be as simple as the experience of the last part of an exercise routine, when you had to use every last ounce of willpower to finish it. Or it could be a time you had to escape from a serious danger, or stand up for yourself against an intimidating person, or doggedly grind out a big project in school or work. As in the bullet point just above, open to this experience and shift into embodying it so it is as real as possible for you, and so that you are stimulating and thus strengthening its underlying neural networks.
- See yourself as a young child – sweet, vulnerable, precious – and extend this same attitude of loyalty, strength, and caring toward that little boy or girl. (You could get a picture of yourself as a kid and carry it in your wallet or purse, and look at it from time to time.)
- Imagine having this same sense and stance of loyalty, strength, and caring for yourself today.
- Be mindful of what it feels like in your body to be on your own side. Open to and encourage that feeling as much as possible. Notice any resistance to it and try to let it go.
- Ask yourself: *Being on my own side, what's the best thing to do here?*
- Then, as best you can, do it.

Remember

- Being for yourself simply means that you care about yourself. You wish to feel happy instead of worried, sad, guilty, or angry. You want people to treat you well instead of badly. You want to help your future self – the person you'll be next week, next year, next decade – to have as good a life as possible.

- Your experience *matters*, both for the moment-to-moment experience of living and for the lasting traces that your thoughts and feelings leave behind in the structure of your brain.
- It is moral to treat people with decency, respect, compassion, and kindness. Well, “people” includes you! You have as many rights, and your opinions and needs and dreams have as much standing, as those of anyone else in this world.
- When you take good care of yourself, then you have more to offer others, from the people close to you to the whole wide world.

**This course is about my relationships with everyone, beginning with myself.**

**Using the reminders above, I will write about a time I was either on my own side, or I was an advocate for someone else. What were the circumstances, and what did it feel like?**

**What are three ways that I can take good care of myself this week? What changes will I make? How will it feel to put myself first in my life?**

**Change #1:**

**Change #2:**

**Change #3:**

**How does it feel to put myself first in my life?**



# Change Your Story, Change Your Life

From *Pearls of Wisdom: 30 Inspirational Ideas to Live Your Best Life Now!*

By Barnet Bain

Barnet Bain is a “creativity doctor” and coach. He is an award-winning producer and director of numerous films, including Emmy-nominated *Homeless to Harvard*, Oscar winner *What Dreams May Come*, *The Celestine Prophecy*, and *The Lost and Found Family*.

Once upon a time, in a land before social networks, smart phones, gaming, iPads, and a gazillion TV channel universes, the primary story experience was still hooked up to family life. As a boy, the stories I heard around our dining room table defined how I saw myself.

Family narratives used to reveal how and where we fit into the bigger picture. They pointed the way to vital traditions of connection and meaning. Stories have always been the glue of community life. It has been that way in every culture.

Until now.

Now family time has been replaced by media time. Modern stories arrive one size fits all, products for a consumer culture. By the time a child turns ten years old, he or she has an imagination structured by tens of thousands of messages, all reinforcing the whopper that meaning can be found through the brand of running shoes you wear or the kind of ride you drive.

As a result, separation and alienation have never been greater.

When I was a newcomer to the film industry and fighting for my place at the table, I complained one night to an old mentor about the harsh unfairness of Hollywood. He was not buying a word of it.

“You are forgetting, Barnet. You are not in Hollywood. Hollywood is *in you*.”

I chewed on that one for a long time before the light went on.

Nowadays I am being bombarded with information from a variety of sources. I have had to become a conscious story consumer. I am responsible for every message I let in from a story. It is up to me to participate.

There has to be a contract between an audience and a storyteller for the magic to occur. It is a co-creation. Walt Whitman said, “To have great poets, there must be great audiences.” If we don’t know what value to expect from the contract, then maybe it is because we have lost sight of our roles as participants.

Quantum physics tells us that an observer has something to do with the experience of reality. If the environment is an extension of my mind, even a little, then if I change my mind about what is important to me, it will produce different results.

In other words, if you change your story, you will change your life. There are no bystanders in the commerce of stories. *We are all participants.*

Here are some ways I approach it.

From action-hero stories, I get what it means to live every moment as if it were my last. I’m engaged, involved, and committed to a cause. I participate with honor. I understand the importance of “get up and go.”

Love stories unfold in enchanted pockets of gracious giving and receiving. They foster my compassion for the loss and hurts of others: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. They tease open my heart and mind.

Space operas and science fiction help me see past the world of form. Beneath the veneer of every alien civilization and dimension await universal tests. How do I make a difference? Live more. Stretch more. Forgive more. What am I prepared to move beyond (or leave behind) to access the Force within, to go boldly into the unknown?

Dramatic stories help me connect with the feelings of others and how I deal with my own relationships with my spouse, children, friends, boss, colleagues, myself, Higher Self, and God/Goddess/All That Is. When I can recognize myself in another person, it increases my ability to respond to them and their situations.

Comedies always force me to wonder why I take myself so seriously. Funny stories remind me to laugh, to find humor in the frantic dance I do for love without remembering I am loved all along.

Horror stories and war stories have lots to reveal about what is dark in me as well as what is light. They often reflect judgments or emotions that are not fully expressed or that I am denying altogether. Stories that arouse strong feelings of antipathy in me are always a sure sign of resistances, fears, and blockages to my growth that persist below the waterline of my awareness. What I resist persists.

We can change our stories as easy as this. Somehow the world magically rearranges itself to reflect a new story. Take a moment to experiment for yourself. Pick a story, event, or conversation, and start with these steps.

- What is your reaction to the so-called facts of your current story? Does it make you angry? Does it upset you? Do you wish it would go away?
- Create an alternative meaning for your story, one that you prefer. But no super heroes or helpful aliens. It must be within your realm of possibility. You are the protagonist; you are the hero.
- Feed your new story with committed attention and be vigilant for evidence to support it.
- Stay detached from any messages to the contrary. Don't let them suck you in.
- Most importantly, live your new story as your highest truth.

If you practice this, you will be actively aligning yourself with principles of quantum creativity where, by simply changing your story, you can create powerful changes in your life.

**I will pick a story, event, or conversation in my life and create a new story in which I am the hero. Here is the old story:**

**Here is the new story, including the happy ending:**

**As I imagine that new story as being the absolute truth of my life – that it has already happened – I am filled with the *feelings* of having it. What emotions am I feeling? Gratitude, relief, excitement, belief, optimism, passion? Below I will name five emotions that I feel as a result of having my new story. For each I will tell *why* I feel that way.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

# Just As We Are

From *Coming Home to Why You Are*

By David Richo

Most of us learn, early in our lives, how to posture and pose. We design a persona, a way of portraying ourselves to others that we think will be satisfactory to them. We may have begun constructing this false self in childhood, especially if it was not safe to be ourselves, just as we were, in our family. We may still be trying to fashion our behavior to others' liking.

There is another alternative: we ourselves can become the audience that matters to us. That happens when we give up any attempt to get others to accept or love us. We can build and use social skills, but we are unwilling to change ourselves in order to fit in. Instead, we want to portray ourselves realistically, no matter what the reaction of others.

We are aware of our limitations – and are working on them. We hope others will do the same, but we do not try to make that happen. In fact, we do not want them to use any charms of body, word, or mind to trick or seduce others into wanting us. We are pleased with others' attraction to us only when it is for us just as we are...

We notice two results: We are no longer intimidated by the judgments of others. Others then find us more appealing because we show that we like ourselves and, at the same time, appreciate them. This is the exquisite paradox in how being ourselves leads to more connection to others.

Our practice of becoming more authentic makes us more accommodating toward and patient with ourselves, which are forms of loving-kindness. As we settle into the reality of who we are, with pride in our gifts and unabashed awareness of our limits, we more easily access happiness, sanity, and wisdom.

Others love us more because our courage and vulnerability are more appealing to them than successful pretense. We love ourselves more because our own unconditional truthfulness has become more valuable to us than praise.

“I desire to conduct the affairs of this administration that if, at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.”

Abraham Lincoln, “Speech to the Missouri Committee of Seventy”

*I am letting go of the need to keep up appearances or to project an overly impressive self-image. I am becoming ever more willing to appear as I am, without pretense and no matter how unflattering. Being loved for who I am has become more important – and more interesting – than upholding the ever-shaky status of my persona in the world.*

**What are ten traits, or ways of being, that are part of the real, authentic me?**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

**Am I willing to show others these authentic traits? Why or why not?**





# Divine Companion

From *Prayers to the Great Creator*

By Julia Cameron

I count myself fortunate to be my own companion on life's journey.

I am interested by my thoughts and perceptions.

I am conscious of the many gifts I bring to living:  
my stamina, my humor, my perceptivity, my integrity.

I count myself lucky to be responsible for my unfolding.

I appreciate my commitment to being personally responsible for the caliber of my life,  
for undertaking an active role in the quality of my own life.

I applaud my ability to act decisively on my own behalf,  
to seek out persons and activities which are of interest to me.

I remind myself that I am lucky indeed to have someone  
of my own caliber as my constant friend, my loyal ally.

Rather than berate myself for shortcomings or imagined flaws,

I cherish the many parts of my character  
which make me a pleasure in my own life.



# Workbook Studies for Week 2

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 1 Workbook:** Finish reading and responding to the Week 1 articles and exercises.
- ♥ **Week 2 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 2 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.

*Though we may know Him by a thousand names, He is one and the same to us all.*

- Mahatma Gandhi

## Week 2

*What I'm looking for is not out there. It is in me.*

- Helen Keller

# What is True for *Me* About Spirit?

*Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.*

- Rabbi Abraham Herschel

### **This Week**

This week offers an exploration of what we believe about our personal relationship with the God of our understanding. Just as the sun's rays urge plant life to reach, grow, blossom, and thrive, we have within us a divine light that invites us to bask in the glow of its love and from that love, live our greatness. When we turn toward our soul – our own inner light – for direction, we begin to blossom in the warmth of our Truth. We ask the question, “Where am I in the process?”

*Anytime people are in very extreme circumstances, dealing with life and death and dealing with survival – I think we can find truth in those moments.*

- Matthew Fox

*We all have the extraordinary coded within us, waiting to be released.*

- Jean Houston



## What is true for *me* about Spirit?

**This is my opportunity to consider what is true for *me* about my personal relationship with the God of my understanding. What do I call him/her/it? Do my thoughts about God match what I was taught or believed as a child? What is the same? What is different? What do I *want* to believe? What questions do I have?**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about my relationship with Spirit today.**

**My relationship with Spirit today (continued)**

**My relationship with Spirit today (continued)**



# A Personal Connection

From *The Seven Whispers*

By Christina Baldwin

*Prayer is not a pious gesture at all;  
It is a response to the One whose heart beats with ours.*

- Joan Chittister

*I love you, I love you.  
That is all that has ever mattered.  
Live your life full and I will always be with you.*

- Cell phone call, September 11, 2001

I have believed all my life that there is a necessary interaction that occurs between a person and the Divine. This interaction does not come only to prophets, bodhisattvas, and other great spiritual masters, it comes also to us: ordinary people in our ordinary lives. It is part of our natural human capacity to call out one of the thousand names of “God.” And it is part of our human capacity to perceive and interpret the response.

Call and response is perhaps the oldest impulse we know. Humankind has always looked up and bowed down before the mysteries of the universe and asked God to become present. Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed – religions arise from a lineage of trembling prophets who understood that, if summoned, God might actually appear. Their stories say these were ordinary men and women who were pulled out of their ordinary lives into the service of what they summoned forth. Knowing this, we stand in our ordinariness and surmise that God might also actually appear to us and break us open to the life of service hiding within everyday details. What an amazing opportunity we have, to discover our own language of call and God’s own language of response – and to take responsibility, that as the times we live through become less ordinary, we ourselves become less ordinary in response to the needs of the times.

My family tells a story that when I was a girl of five or six years, I set about scribbling furiously on a large sheet of paper my mother had put down on the floor. Crayons scattered around me, tongue stuck out in concentration, I worked the colors onto the page. The texture of the linoleum came up through the paper, adding surprise designs to my drawing, which seemed to appear like magic. My mother wandered by and asked me, “What are you drawing?”

“A picture of God,” I replied.

My mother knelt down to deliver her disappointing news as gently as possible. “Oh honey, you can’t do that. Nobody knows what God looks like.”

I hear that I did not even lift my gaze from the enthrallment of my artwork as I informed her, “They will, as soon as I’m done with my drawing.”

Connection to what theologian Joan Chittister calls “the One whose heart beats with ours” is part of our natural human capacity. And though children often have a natural and confident connection with the Divine, in the long journeys through religious training and enculturation, many people become adults no longer sure what they think about God, whether they know what “God” is or what “God” looks like.

In my own journey, the more I read, and the more I experience, the more mysterious the Divine becomes. I grew up a Protestant Christian with the Lord as my shepherd and little squares of white bread and grape juice served once a month in church. I marveled over the elaborate prayers of playmates who wore white veils to their first communion and prayed to Mother Mary and a host of what I called “the saints and saintesses.” Down the road, if I stayed till Friday dusk at Howie Bernstein’s house, his mother sang exotic prayers, lit candles, and sent me home with a piece of warm challah in my hand.

In my twenties, I grounded my spirit in Quaker Meeting and social activism, followed by eclectic reading in world religions, and adult confirmation as an Episcopalian. My religious training has been augmented by insights from indigenous spiritual traditions; studies in shamanism and Celtic spirituality; practices in yoga, chi gong, and vipassana meditation; and long walks in nature with my dog. All I know is there are a thousand faces of the Divine, and a thousand ways to pray. Every minute of life presents an essential choice: to avail ourselves of this relationship, or to close up in isolation.

We know there is power in spirit that can answer our prayers and change our lives, but we may not be sure what to pray for, or how ready we are to have our lives changed, thank you very much, God. We know there is power in spirit that can decode the mystery of life, but it’s Tuesday, and we have a long list of things to do. We put off our willingness to entertain spiritual transformation day by day. Yet, no matter how ambivalent we are, no matter how liberal or conservative our religious and spiritual views, our longing for active relationship with *something greater than ourselves* cannot be forever denied. This longing may be the capacity that saves us in times like these. It is not a movement toward a specific religion, or away from religion: it is a movement to reclaim a personal relationship with the Divine.

Among humankind are millions and billions of good-hearted, good-natured, well-meaning people. I believe these people – including you and me – can redirect the course of history. We have already started. Millions of us are willing to reappraise social and personal values, and even change core beliefs, based on new and increasing information and insight about the world. Millions of us contribute to the common good through billions of small and yet significant acts of kindness and compassion. And millions of us are looking for some connection to spirit so real, so unmistakably authentic, that it will release our capacity to make an enormous shift in how we treat each other and the world.



Sometimes I think of the connection to spirit as being like a phone line. The connection is always open: it's our half of the relationship to stay available for incoming calls. Sometimes I turn the ringer off. Sometimes I ignore the ringing. Sometimes I pick up the phone with suspicion. Sometimes I hang up in anger. Sometimes I get impatient at the interruption. Sometimes I have no idea how to respond. The problem is not in the sending, but in the receiving. And unlike a lot of other calls, the one from spirit is the one we are hoping to receive.

One time, having tea with a friend, we were deep in conversation when the phone rang. I ignored it, thinking I was being polite. Jerry stopped his thought midsentence and asked, "Aren't you going to get the phone? Maybe God is calling you." I looked at him in amazement, reached for the receiver, and tentatively said, "Hello?..." I don't remember who was calling, but I have never forgotten Jerry's message to stay curious, to see if I can decode the Divine in everyday interactions. We have in ourselves some mysterious ability, in ordinary moments and moments of extreme, to speak with the voice of God – like the man who phoned from the World Trade Center with one last, brilliant message.

**Have I ever had a moment when I sensed the presence of something greater than myself? Maybe it was when I suddenly knew what to do or say and everything turned out okay, or when, all of a sudden, something wonderful happened. I will write about it here.**

**If the connection to Spirit is like a phone line, with the line from God always open, how willing am I to stay available for incoming calls? What might keep me from picking up the phone?**

**If I do pick up the phone and receive divine direction, what might keep me from acting on it?**

**There was a time when I did listen to divine direction – my own inner wisdom – and I had the courage to follow it. I will write about it here.**

**How did it *feel* to listen to Spirit and then act on it?**

# Meeting Your Creator

From *Your Soul's Assignment*

By Chris Michaels

Human life is a process of discovery. Every experience we encounter or create shows us some truths about ourselves. We are not here to learn lessons per se. We are here to unfold the truth of what we are – to discover that God has placed itself inside each of us in a unique pattern. God is not an “external” event. It is an “internal” awareness!

That’s why the prophet Paul told us that we would be transformed by the renewing of our own *minds*. He didn’t say that transformation would come from a person, or a location. It’s an “inner” experience that comes as a result of knowing the God within you.

Many people have been taught to *fear* God. Some have wondered whether there really is a God. Others go through life without pursuing any spiritual connection at all. Few people really *know* God, or have any *personal* relationship with Spirit. But those who do lead lives that are very different from the rest. They are the ones who are truly transformed.

All of our experiences, challenges, dramas and traumas in life are designed to bring us face to face with God. They are inroads to the Divine – opportunities to reveal what has been hidden inside. And perhaps it’s human nature to want to curse them as we go through them. But when we get to the other side of our challenge, feeling triumphant and courageous for having slayed the dragon we faced, then our perspective changes. Now we see our challenges for the Divine events they really were.

How do you know you’re truly courageous until you’ve faced the thing that scares the hell out of you? How do you know the limit of your patience unless someone you know has worked your last nerve? How will you know the depth of forgiveness unless you are called upon to forgive the “unforgiveable?”

Every challenge we face brings us closer to the strength and power we’ve always had inside. They are calls to the Divine to rise up within us – so that we can *know* and *feel* the presence of God. They are appointments with our soul’s destiny to be a co-creator with Spirit.

**As I look back at my life and consider the statement: “All of our experiences, challenges, dramas and traumas in life are designed to bring us face to face with God,” what do I believe is true? Why? I will give real-life examples here.**

**What do I believe is true regarding challenging situations? (continued)**

**Have I ever experienced the strength and power within me? I will write about it here.**

**Did these experiences/challenges help me *know* and *feel* the presence of the God of my understanding?**

# God's True Love

From *The Untethered Soul*

By Michael Singer

What if it is really true that God is not judging? What if God is loving? We all know that true love doesn't judge. Love sees nothing but beauty in its beloved. There is no impurity. There is no possibility of impurity. No matter what it beholds, it's all beautiful. That is how true love sees. That is what it looks like through the eyes of love. So if God is love, what must it look like through those eyes – the eyes that are filled with infinite love and unconditional compassion ...?

Do you want to know how God looks upon this world? Do you want to know how He feels about different kinds of people? Then look at the sun. Does the sun shine more brightly on a saint than on anyone else? Is the air more available to the saint? Does the rain fall on one neighbor's trees more than another's?

You can turn your eyes from the sun's light and live in darkness for a hundred years. If you then turn toward the light, the light is still there. It is there for you just the same as for the person who has enjoyed its brilliance for a hundred years. All of nature is like this. The fruit on the tree willingly gives itself to everyone. Do any of the forces of nature differentiate? Does anything in God's creation, other than the human mind, actually pass judgment? Nature just gives and gives to whoever will receive. Should you choose not to receive, it doesn't punish you. You punish yourself because you choose not to receive. If you say to the light, "I will not look at you. I am going to live in darkness," the light just keeps shining. If you say to God, "I don't believe in you and want nothing to do with you," creation continues to sustain you.

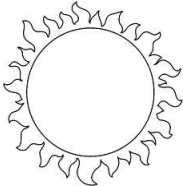
Your relationship with God is the same as your relationship with the Sun. If you hid from the sun for years and then chose to come out of your darkness, the sun would still be shining as if you had never left. You don't need to apologize. You just pick your head up and look at the sun. It's the same way when you decide to turn toward God – you just do it. If, instead, you allow guilt and shame to interfere, that's just your ego blocking the Divine Force. You can't offend the Divine One; its very nature is light, love, compassion, protection, and giving. You can't make it stop loving you. It's just like the sun. You can't make the sun stop shining on you; you can only choose not to look at it. The moment you look, you'll see it's there.

As you drift back into Spirit, you will see that those are the eyes that look out upon this world. That is the heart that shines down upon everything and everyone. Through those eyes, the most wretched of creatures looks beautiful. That's the part that no one understands. People say that God cries when He looks at this earth. The saint sees that God goes into ecstasy when He looks upon this earth, under all conditions, and at all times.

Ecstasy is the only thing God knows. God's nature is eternal, conscious bliss. No matter what you've done, you're not going to be the one thing that ruins it.

The beauty is that you can experience this ecstasy. And when you begin to feel this joy, that's when you'll know God's nature. Then nobody will upset or disappoint you. Nothing will create a problem. It will all appear as part of the beautiful dance of creation unfolding before you. Your natural state will get higher and higher. You'll feel love instead of shame. Instead of being unwilling to lift your eyes to the Divine because of what you've said or done, you'll see the Divine as a place of unconditional refuge.

Contemplate this, and let go of the idea of a judgmental God. You have a loving God. In truth, you have love itself for a God. And love cannot do other than love. Your God is in ecstasy and there's nothing you can do about it. And if God is in ecstasy, I wonder what He sees when He looks at you?



**If I let the sunshine of God's light shine on me – without hiding from it - how might I change?**



**How might my life change?**

**If God is always in ecstasy, what do I believe God sees when it looks at me?**



# Are You Looking for Me?

From *The Kabir Book*

By Kabir, Translated by Robert Bly

Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat.

My shoulder is against yours.

You will not find me in Indian shrine rooms,

not in synagogues, not cathedrals,

not in masses, nor sacred songs.

Not in legs winding around your own neck,

nor in eating nothing but vegetables.

When you really look for me, you will see me instantly.

You will find me in the tiniest house of time.

Kabir says: 'Student, tell me, what is God?'

He is the Breath inside the breath.



# Workbook Studies for Week 3

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 3 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 3 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Remember to write in full sentences, expressing your thoughts fully and completely.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.



## Week 3

# What is True for *Me* About My Family Relationships?

### This Week

This week offers a gateway to how our family relationships affect the way we look at life – and ourselves – today. If we are stuck, this week is an invitation to see our families through new eyes; in the process we just might “unstick” ourselves. In honoring our memories, emotions and beliefs, this week we ask if they are helping us today or holding us back; we have the power to change!

*To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.*

- Confucius

*Nobody's family can hang out the sign,  
"Nothing the matter here."*

- Chinese proverb

*The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life.*

- Richard Bach

*Family values are a little like family vacations — subject to changeable weather and remembered more fondly with the passage of time. Though it rained all week at the beach, it's often the momentary rainbows that we remember.*

- Leslie Dreyfous

*My father was an amazing man. The older I got, the smarter he got.*

- Mark Twain



## **What is true for *me* about my relationships with my family?**

**Family relationships can be complex. What we learned as children sets us up for how we think about ourselves and others today. Questions arise such as: When I hear the word “family” what thoughts and emotions come to mind? How do I want to feel when I think about my family of origin? In what ways have I changed my view of my family since I’ve become an adult? Honoring my emotions today, do I still have more work to do in that area? Am I willing to change if what I’m feeling is causing me pain?**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these two pages for some beginning thoughts about my family relationships today.**

**My family relationships (continued)**

**My family relationships (continued)**





# My Family Story

From *How, Then, Shall We Live?*

By Wayne Muller

The people of the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa say, “A story is like the wind – it comes from a far-off place, and we feel it.” Stories can be the glue that holds us together as a people. As Americans, we have certain common stories that are woven into our lives together – George Washington, Betsy Ross, Abraham Lincoln, Geronimo, Susan B. Anthony, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. The stories hold the myths of who we are as a nation.

Religious communities have stories that hold the shape of what is sacred. Christians have stories of Christmas and Easter. Jews gather to tell the story of Passover, of their liberation from slavery in Egypt. Hindus recite the Ramayana, the story of the path of devotion. Buddhists tell the story of the Buddha’s enlightenment under the canopy of the Bodhi tree. There are also teaching stories, Sufi tales, Hasidic tales, Native American coyote characters, Zen koans. Stories are maps of the geography of a human life, showing us where to find the important things. Stories remind us what to look for when we are frightened or lost.

Sometimes the stories of our lives are less enlightening, perhaps more painful. The stories of our lives are filled with moments of joy and sorrow that shaped the way we have grown. Jack tells me the story of his alcoholic father, the rages, the fights, the places he would go to hide. Michelle tells me the story of her mother, the one who left her alone in a New York apartment building for hours at a time when she was eight years old, and talks to me about the fear she carries inside always. Hannah tells me about the time she ran to her stepfather, arms open for love, and he turned away without a word; she always feels alone. Joseph grew up in a Jewish ghetto, always having to fight, never safe, learning to make alliances he didn’t want, just to get protection. Brenda lost her father when she was three; she aches for care...

Our stories speak about how we were in our remembered smallness, how every day we were held, hurt, loved, ignored, honored, beaten, cared for, alone, frightened, strong, watching, listening – each day adding up to a story of our life. Our story holds us as cup holds water.

It is vital and true and deeply required that we tell our story. We must trace the shape of it, speak of the place in our body where it still lives, weep the tears of it, allow it to be seen and known. To have someone know the story of how we came to be here, how we came to be this way.

Yet there inevitably comes a point when no single story is ever large enough to hold us. After we have told our story once, or twice, or ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times, it ceases to be a practice of awakening; it becomes a performance. While it may elicit certain

levels of sympathy and support, it does not move us along the path of healing, and it does not open our eyes. In fact, it closes our eyes to anything that does not fit into our story.

When someone tells their story at a retreat or workshop, I can feel when they have told it many times before. They want me to hear their story, but more important, *they want me to hear who they are within the story*. They want me to listen, but they also want to break open, to become awake. They want to be free, free even from the story.

When we allow Angela's story of her stepfather's abuse to be told, it melts away. When we allow Jeff's diagnosis to fall away, he feels peace. When we invite Ellen's story to become more accepting, she feels relief. Allowing the story to soften a little, our deeper self reveals its secret. This is the point of healing: not just to tell our story, but to let the story fade away, revealing our true nature. When we have told the story, we can leave the story behind.

The Buddha told his disciples this parable:

A man is on a journey. He comes to a vast stretch of water. On this side the shore is dangerous, but on the other side it is safe and without danger. No boat goes to the other shore which is safe and without danger, nor is there any bridge for crossing over. It would be good therefore if I would gather grass, wood, branches and leaves to make a raft, and with the help of that raft cross over safely to the other side.

Then that man, O disciples, gathers grass, wood, branches and leaves and makes a raft, and with the help of that raft crosses over safely to the other side, exerting himself with his hands and feet. Having crossed over and got to the other side, he thinks: "This raft was of great help to me. With its aide I have crossed safely over to this side. It would be good if I carry this raft on my head or on my back wherever I go."

The Buddha then asked his disciples what this man should do with the raft. Would it not be better to say, "The raft has been a great help to me. Now I can beach it on the shore or let it float away, so I can be on my way"? In this way, explained the Buddha, his own teachings are to be used for crossing over and are not to be carried. They are practical teachings meant to bring peace and happiness. While the lessons may seem beautiful, even they are to be let go when the lesson has been learned.

So it is with our family story. Our childhood, or family identity, our diagnosis can carry us part of the way into adulthood, but its value is limited. Once our story has helped us pay attention to our history, named it, and mourned it, it is time for us to let it go. We have crossed over the river. We need not carry our story on our back forever.

**Below are five important aspects of how I see myself within my family story. I will explain them in detail, using examples that are stored in my memory:**

**Five important aspects of how I see myself within my family story**

1.

2.

**Five important aspects of how I see myself within my family story (continued)**

**3.**

**4.**

**Five important aspects of how I see myself within my family story (continued)**

5.

**How have these memories helped mold who I am today?**

**Which of these memories have I left behind, or am willing to leave behind now?**

**How do I feel about crossing the river and not carrying my story on my back anymore?**

**Where is the God of my understanding in all of it?**

# My Story

From *Let Go Now, Embracing Detachment: Set Boundaries and Make Your Life Your Own*

By Karen Casey

As a young girl growing up in a dysfunctional family, I became very skilled at reading the body language of others to see if I was “okay.” I didn’t get many signs of approval. My parents struggled with their relationship, and my dad’s anger, coupled with my mom’s sadness, permeated the household. I tiptoed around the rage when possible, and then as I got older, I raged too.

At age thirteen, I discovered the marvelous effects of alcohol from a glass of Coke spiked with whiskey that I surreptitiously mixed at a family wedding reception. From that day until May 24, 1976, I used alcohol to change the way my life looked and felt. But between that first drink and the last, some twenty-three years later, I was to undergo many traumas. The majority of them were complicated by my dependence on men, right along with my dependence on alcohol and other drugs.

I simply had mastered my ability to read another’s every mood, and that became my mood, too. I was soon imprisoned by the behaviors of others, and then I tried to control those behaviors, which I was sure was possible and, furthermore, would allow me to feel okay about myself and the relationship. Alas, it was not possible. My sense of isolation escalated and my grip on alcohol tightened.

Not surprising, my first marriage ended, one that I had been sure would provide me with the security I sought. Neither of us understood the effects of the alcohol in our lives. I didn’t choose to see the effects even then and instead sought other relationships that also had alcohol as the glue. One relationship followed another, none of them mirroring the dream I had crafted for myself. But all the relationships had one thing in common: my inability to allow the other person to have a life of his own; thus, I had no real life either. I clung and harped and cried and used alcohol to feed the dark hole inside me.

Then I was introduced to Al-Anon, where the miracle actually began. I didn’t very readily get the message being conveyed, but the joy I observed drew me back, week after week. I knew I wanted what the others in that room seemed to have, and they kept saying, “Keep coming back.” I did, contentedly so. Eventually I began couple’s counseling with my “significant other,” a man who never once had time to come to our sessions. This should have been a red flag, but I simply didn’t want to acknowledge what I suspected it meant.

The counselor eventually sought to hear my story anyway and sent me straight to Alcoholics Anonymous. It was there that my life got both better and worse. My dependence on men, any man, seemed like the solution to me. Even though I wasn’t using alcohol



anymore to fill the dark hole, I was relying on the attention of men to have the same effect. The emotional insanity was crippling.

Because I was going to Al-Anon, I was trying to manage my feelings around others, but my success was limited. And then my sponsor said, “Stay out of relationships with men for a year and find out who you are, Karen.” I complied, not very happily at first, but her words rang true. I still didn’t comply with most of the suggestions I was hearing in either Al-Anon or AA, but eventually my willingness grew. All I knew for sure was that others in the group knew more than I did, and I wanted what many of them had.

Being told that my life did not need to revolve around the moods, the actions, the dreams, the failures, or the successes of anyone else was information I simply didn’t know how to absorb. I had always “danced” around others; I knew no other dance. For quite a spell, I was at a loss, sitting on the sidelines. But then the messages I was hearing began to penetrate. I was “enough,” they said; I didn’t need the approval of anyone else. I had a God in whom I could trust to guide my every action, a God who loved me, flaws and all.

Then the messages, the principles that ultimately led to my grip on the meaning of detachment, thankfully multiplied:

- Wherever we are, God is present.
- Whoever comes our way is part of our learning curve.
- We have the power to change how we think.
- Appreciating the journey of everyone else is what gives my own journey purpose.
- Peaceful feelings follow peaceful actions.
- The chaos of others need not attract us.
- No argument demands our participation.
- Acting, rather than reacting, is blissful. To witness another’s journey is all we are ever called to do.
- Our teachers are everywhere. Silence may be the best response we can make in myriad situations.
- There are two kinds of business: your business and none of your business.
- Taking no hostages is the surest way to peace.

I have hung on to every one of these messages for dear life at one time or another, and to many more that I illustrate in the meditations that follow. They each became part of my lifeline to sanity. They still are part of my lifeline. My understanding of detachment and its value as the way to a peaceful heart and journey is encased in each and every one of them. For more than thirty years, I have worked to master these principles. I have been more successful with some than with others. But my journey is not finished. That’s the great news I celebrate every day when I wake up.

I have all the time I need to seek and enjoy the fruits of this journey. Willingness comes first. Application of the principles comes next. And gratitude to God and the hovering angels for helping me is never to be forgotten. What any one of us does today pays forward in someone’s life tomorrow. And we are an interconnected whole: whomever we help by

our actions in this moment will be available to help others tomorrow. I have loved claiming my small part in the unending circle of peaceful living. You can claim your part too. The world will be made better by the efforts of all of us.

**After reading the bulleted principles above, I will be quietly guided to five of them that are most meaningful in my life. I will write about them here. Why is that principle important to me? How has it helped me to change the way I see myself and others? How do I apply it in my life?**

**The first principle is \_\_\_\_\_.**

The second principle is \_\_\_\_\_.

**The third principle is** \_\_\_\_\_.

**The fourth principle is** \_\_\_\_\_.

**The fifth principle is** \_\_\_\_\_.

# Seeing through Compassionate Eyes

From *Until Today!*

By Iyanla Vanzant

*I am now receptive to the idea that ... what I see  
in others represents the fears I have about myself.*

See everyone in your family for the truth of who they are; spiritual beings on a spiritual journey that does not always follow a straight or narrow path. See your family members as souls on a journey, struggling through their lessons, just like you. See them as vulnerable and innocent children, as afraid of their challenges as you are of yours. It would be helpful to see that they are working through their “stuff” in the same way you are working through your stuff. They don’t always do the *right thing*, in the *right way*, for the *right reason*. But neither do you. And there are times when they need a second chance. Even if it is the *fifty-ninth* time they have needed a second chance. Haven’t you been in the same position on *sixty-two* separate occasions?

See your family members, even those you hate to see coming in your direction, through the memory of your own fears and pains. Remember being afraid to look at yourself? Remember feeling guilty or ashamed of what you saw when you did look? Remember how you tried to cover up the parts of yourself that you determined were bad? Remember how you hated to hear the things people would tell you when they say the pieces of you that you tried to hide? Remember how you acted and reacted? Well, let those memories be the looking glass through which you see those whom you consider to be the undeveloped or underdeveloped members of your own family. Look at them through compassionate eyes and see their pain, their wounds, their futile attempts to hide their silent truth.

Until today, you may have viewed certain members of your family through judgmental, harsh or hostile eyes. If so, you were seeing them with your own fears. Just for today, see your blood, community and world family with the compassion, support and love you know it will take to inspire them to want to do better.

*Today I am devoted to seeing all of my family members  
through eyes filled with compassion and love!*

**If I choose to see certain family members through eyes of compassion instead of my own fear, what might change within me?**

**If I choose to see certain family members through eyes of compassion instead of my own fear, what might change within me? (continued)**

**If I choose to see certain family members through eyes of compassion instead of my own fears, how might my relationship with that person(s) change?**





# I Soften My Heart to Love's Touch

From *Blessings*

By Julia Cameron

I accept the gift of my vulnerability.

I am willing to be vulnerable to love.

I am willing to reveal myself in all of my human beauty and frailty.

I am willing to be as I am, both perfect and a work in progress.

I am willing to be unfinished, unpolished, in a state of change.

I am willing to accept myself as I am and I am willing to allow others to see me as I am. I am willing to be unveiled and undefended.

I am willing to be seen and understood.

I am willing to view myself and others with compassion. I am willing to view myself and others nonjudgmentally.

I am willing to be the human being, complete in myself without the need for accomplishment to justify my worth.

Blessing myself just as I am, I lovingly open to all I can be.



# Workbook Studies for Week 4

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 4 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 4 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Remember to write in full sentences, expressing your thoughts fully and completely.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.

*If we're crabby with the bank teller, it will be harder to be gentle with the people we love the most.*

- Marianne Williamson

## Week 4

# What is True for *Me* About My Relationships with Others?

*Keep memories of insult on a short leash, and memories of blessing on a long one.*

- Alan Cohen

*When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over.*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

### This Week

This week we are receptive to understanding ourselves in relationship to others. How we treat others tells us a lot about how we treat ourselves. In accepting our relationships as they are, we can learn from them. As we embrace what they have to teach us, we treat ourselves more kindly. As we treat ourselves with compassion and respect, we bring compassion and respect into our relationships. It is an exciting, creative circle of caring, with Love right smack in the center!

*Our work-a-day lives are filled with opportunities to bless others. The power of a single glance or an encouraging smile must never be underestimated.*

- G. Richard Rieger

*The things that matter to us most in our lives are not fantastic or grand. They are moments when we touch one another, when we are there in the most attentive or caring way. This simple and profound intimacy is the love that we all long for.*

- Jack Kornfield



## **What is true for *me* about my relationships with others?**

**We are in relationship with everyone around us: drivers on the freeway, standing in line at the grocery store or sitting in the waiting room, sharing the elevator or sitting in the café booth next to us, as well as professional associates, friends and loved ones. As we move through our day with the myriad of people who cross our path we learn a lot about ourselves. Since this is a process of self-discovery, this is a good thing!**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about my relationships with others today.**

**My relationships with others today (continued)**

**My relationships with others today (continued)**



# The Secret to Relationships

From *The Power*

By Rhonda Byrne

Life presents everything to you so that you can choose what you love. And part of the gift of life is that you are given all kinds of people, so you can choose what you love in those people and turn away from what you don't love. You are not meant to manufacture love for qualities in a person you don't love, but simply to turn away without giving them any feeling.

Turning away from what you don't love in someone means you're relaxed about it, and you know life is giving you a choice. It doesn't mean that you argue with them to prove they're wrong or you criticize or blame them, or that you want to change them because you think you're right. Because if you do any of these things, you're not giving love – big time!

*“Your own soul is nourished when you are kind;  
it is destroyed when you are cruel.”*

- King Solomon (Circa 10<sup>th</sup> Century BC)  
Biblical King of Israel, in Proverbs 11:17

When you are on a feeling frequency of love, then only people who are on the same feeling frequency as you are can come into your life.

You know some days you feel really happy, some days you feel irritated, and others you feel sad. You can be many different versions of yourself. A person in a relationship with you can also be many versions, including happy, irritated, or sad. No doubt you will have seen them being many different versions, but every version is still that person. When you're happy, then only the happy version of other people can come into your life. But you have to be happy to receive the happy versions of other people!

It doesn't mean you are responsible for other people's happiness, because everyone is responsible for their own lives and happiness. What it means is there's nothing else for you to do but to be happy yourself, and the law of attraction will do the rest.

*“Happiness depends upon ourselves.”*

- Aristotle (384-322 BC)  
Greek Philosopher and Scientist

## PETs

One way to take the sting out of confrontational or difficult relationships is to imagine people as you own “Personal Emotional Trainers”! The force of love presents you with a whole array of Personal Emotional Trainers, disguised as everyday people, but they are all training you to choose love!

Some people may be soft Personal Emotional Trainers because they don’t push you very hard and they’re so easy to love. Some people may be tough Personal Emotional Trainers because they push you to your limits, as some personal physical trainers do, but they are the ones who are making you stronger to choose love no matter what.

Personal Emotional Trainers can use all kinds of situations and tactics to challenge you, but the thing to remember is that every challenge is presented so you will choose love and turn away from negativity and blame. Some trainers may challenge you to judge them or others, but don’t fall for that trap. Judgment is negative and it’s not giving love, so if you can’t love the good in someone or something, simply turn away.

Some trainers may test you by provoking you to feel revenge, anger, or hatred. Turn away by looking for the things you love in life. Some trainers may even hit you with guilt, feelings of unworthiness, or fear. Don’t fall for any of them, because negativity of any kind is not love.

*“Hatred paralyzes life, love releases it.  
Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it.  
Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it.”*

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)  
Baptist Minister and Civil Rights Leader

If you imagine the people in your life as your Personal Emotional Trainers, it will help you with any difficult relationships. It is the tough trainers who make you stronger and determined to choose love no matter what, but they’re also giving you a message. They’re telling you that you’ve gotten yourself onto a negative feeling frequency – and you need to feel better to move off it! No one can come into your life and affect you negatively, unless you are already on the same negative feeling frequency. If you’re on a feeling frequency of love, it won’t matter how tough or negative someone is, they will not and cannot affect you!

Each person is just doing their job, just as you are doing your job of being a Personal Emotional Trainer to others. There are no enemies; there are only some great PETs, and some tough PETs who are making you great.

## The Law of Attraction Is a Sticky Business

The law of attraction is a sticky business. When you rejoice in another person’s good fortune, their good fortune sticks to you! When you admire or appreciate anything about



another person, you're sticking those qualities to yourself. But when you think or discuss things about someone else, you're sticking those negative things to you too, and you're putting them into your own life.

The law of attraction is responding to *your* feelings. Whatever you give, you receive, and so if you stick a label on any person, circumstance, or event in your life, you are sticking the label on you, and that's what you will receive.

Now this is fantastic news, because it means you can stick everything you love and want to you by looking for the things you love in other people, and saying yes to them with all of your heart! The world is your catalogue, and when you understand the power of your love, it is a full-time job noticing everything you love in other people. But it's the easiest and best way to change your whole life. It beats struggle and suffering. All you have to do is notice the things you love in other people, and turn away from the things you don't so you don't give them any feeling. How easy is that?

**Who are the easy Personal Emotional Trainers in my life? Why?**

**Who are the tough Personal Emotional Trainers in my life? Why?**

**How am I a Personal Emotional Trainer for others?**

**Knowing that the law of attraction is a sticky business, and that I can stick everything I love and want to *me* by looking for the things I love in others, what are the things I love about other people?**

# He Found Peace in a War Zone

From *Choices*

By Melody Beattie

Marvin sat at the dining room table, looking at the war zone.

His daughter was screaming at his fiancée. “You’re not my mother. You can’t tell me what to do.”

Her daughter was glaring at him.

He and his fiancée were glaring at each other.

This was his cue. He had tried to make this relationship work, but they had hit a wall. Her kid. Enemy camp. He couldn’t take it anymore. And he didn’t need this crap in his life.

*It was so simple when I was alone, raising my daughter, being a single dad, Marvin thought, getting up from the table. This is all so complicated. Family histories, family business that doesn’t have anything to do with me. I just want peace and quiet again. I want my life back.*

He watched his fiancée gather up the dishes from the table.

*The problem is, he thought, I really love her.*

He grabbed his jacket and went outside for a long walk.

It wasn’t any deep soul-searching moment, just a quiet prayer. *It looks like I’ve only got two choices, God, he said. Live in a war zone, or lose the woman I love.*

Neither alternative felt acceptable to him.

He walked back to the house. He helped his fiancée finish cleaning the kitchen, kissed her cheek, and said he was going to bed. She said goodnight; she was going home. An unsettled tension filled the air. He knew this wasn’t hard just on him; it was hard on the woman he loved, too. It was a quiet moment of surrender when he chose to say to himself, *I don’t know what to do.*

That night he lay in bed, searching through his past. He’d been through a lot in his life. Getting sober, turning his life around. Going through a divorce. Now he was the head of a large company. Listening to people, helping them solve their problems, was a way of life for him. But he couldn’t seem to find the solution for the problems he was having with the people he most loved in his life.

Marvin searched his mind for a pattern of problem solving that had worked for him in the past. What were the common denominators every time he hit a wall, and finally broke through? He could find only two. Well, actually three. Make a commitment. Let go. Then find a way to serve and help people by what he was committed to do.

An idea occurred to him, a choice he hadn't thought of before.

It was going to take time, commitment, and energy, but it just might work.

The next day, he called his fiancée at work.

She liked the idea, too.

Within three months, they were leading an informal support group for other families trying to blend. Every other group was open, so the children could attend, too. The group met for over two years. It gave those families the time and space to air their feelings and support each other through change.

Marvin has been married to the woman who was his fiancée for twelve years. "I didn't have a clue if my idea would work or not," Marvin says. "But holding the door open for others – helping other people – was how I learned the skills to be able to walk through that door myself."

Holding the door open for others is a concept that's been around for a long time. It's the foundation of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous and other self-help groups.

Life is better when it's shared, and that includes problems. Sometimes we hear an idea we haven't thought of before, or gain a new perspective on what we're going through. Other times, just hearing that other people feel the way we feel validates us, helps us accept ourselves, calms us enough to keep going.

We find courage, strength, and inspiration that we can't find by ourselves.

I stopped by the coffee shop one day and ran into a friend who's involved with a Twelve-Step program. He was sitting with a man who wasn't involved with Twelve-Step groups and didn't have much understanding of them. My friend was trying to explain to this man why he kept working with newcomers to this particular Twelve-Step group.

"I'm not doing it to save their lives," he explained. "I'm doing it to save mine. When I help them, I hear myself telling them what I need to do myself."

There's magic in service. There's magic in a group.

If we want to get it for ourselves, we need to give it away.

*Hard calls don't always mean just two choices. Sometimes there's a third: we can ask God to show us what to do.*

**When have I found courage, strength, and inspiration from others? I will write about it here, using specific examples.**

**When have others found courage, strength, and inspiration from me? Again I will use specific examples.**



**When have I been willing to ask God what to do, and then had the courage to follow that guidance?**

# Stop playing the “if-then” and the “when-then” game.

From *Smile for No Good Reason*

By Lee Jampolsky

Quicksand. Just the word conjures up images of an old Tarzan movie: a naïve visitor to the jungle takes that fateful step into the pit of sludge, thinking it solid ground. In some scenes, all that was left of the poor traveler was a safari hat resting on the surface. As a kid I watched enough Tarzan movies to learn that the thing to do if you step into quicksand is be still and hope somebody throws you a nearby vine.

*Quicksand Thinking.* As the term suggests, this is when you step into a disguised and dangerous thought system and begin to sink faster than the poor fellow in the Tarzan movie. Unless you are still and grab a vine, soon all that will remain is your hat floating on the surface.

The most common form of Quicksand Thinking is *When-Then* and *If-Then* beliefs. When you engage in If-Then thinking, you believe peace of mind is impossible because of something that occurred in the past. When you engage in When-Then thinking you believe that your happiness is conditional upon something happening in the future.

The first step in getting out of Quicksand Thinking is knowing you are in it. This entails identifying your If-Then and When-Then thinking. We all have our favorites, but the following is a list of common If-Then and When-Then statements. If yours are not included, feel free to add to the list.

## **Favorite If-Then Beliefs**

*If I had slept better last night, then I could be more pleasant.*

*If you had not done what you did, then I could be happy.*

*If I'd had a better childhood, then I could be happy.*

*If I had been born with a different body, then I would be happier.*

*If I hadn't married you, then I would be happy.*

### **Favorite When-Then Beliefs**

*When you apologize, then I will forgive you.*

*When I have more money, then I will be happier.*

*When I lose some weight, then I will like myself.*

*When I'm no longer ill, then I will be happy.*

*When I find the right partner, then I will be happy.*

In the Tarzan movies, if the unfortunate soul in the quicksand was smart enough to know he was in quicksand and stay still, the next step was to hope somebody would throw him a vine. In your life, that somebody is God, and He has plenty of vines to toss you. It is possible that you have just let the vine sit there while you sink in Quicksand Thinking. Be sure not to do this anymore. When you know you are in Quicksand Thinking, be still. Then ask for help from God. Asking for help is really no big deal or fancy prayer. All you need to do is say something like, "This way of thinking is hurting me and other people. What would You have me think instead?"

*When you feel you are sinking:  
Be still. Ask for help. Grab the vine.*

**Some of my If-Then Beliefs are:**

**Some of my When-Then Beliefs are:**

**Today I will work with one of my If-Then or When-Then beliefs. I test the process of being still, asking for help and grabbing the vine. I will write about the experience here.**

**What was the *feeling* of being still and asking for help?**

**What is true for *me* about being willing to grab the vine of divine direction and acting on it?**



# The Goal is One

By Rumi

There are a myriad different ways to search,  
but the object of the search is always the same.

Don't you see that the roads to Mecca are all different?  
One comes from Byzantium, another from Syria,  
still others wind through land or across the sea.

The roads are different; the goal is one.

When people reach the goal,  
all quarrels or disputes that flared along the road are resolved.  
Those who yelled at each other along the road,  
"You are wrong!" or  
"You are a blasphemer!"  
forget all possible differences when they reach the goal.

There all hearts sing in unison.



# Workbook Studies for Week 5

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 5 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 5 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Remember to write in full sentences, expressing your thoughts fully and completely.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.
- ♥ Begin thinking about your Thought Paper for Week 8. See workbook p. 7.





*Every moment of one's existence one is growing into more or retreating into less. One is always living a little more or dying a little bit.*

- Norman Mailer

## Week 5

# What is True for *Me* About Accepting Change?

*Most of us are about as eager to be changed as we were to be born, and go through our changes in a similar state of shock.*

- James Baldwin

### This Week

This week we look at the ways in which we accept or resist change, knowing that our answers tell us a lot about our relationships with others, with ourselves and with our God. Where our human heart wants certainty, we also know that change is normal and natural. Can we begin to know that we are divinely loved – and safe – in the midst of every relationship change and life transition?

*The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.*

- C. G. Jung

*And suddenly you know: It's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.*

- Meister Eckhart

*To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it.*

- Mother Teresa



## What is true for *me* about accepting change?

**Every relationship is like the tide, ebbing and flowing with change. To what extent do I accept change in my relationships? Am I frightened when the status quo is upset? Do I have an underlying need to control the situation so that I will feel safe? Am I beginning to think more expansively in some of my relationships?**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about my acceptance or resistance to change today.**

**My acceptance or resistance to change today (continued)**

**My acceptance or resistance to change today (continued)**



# What you try to control, you can ruin

From *Shift Happens!*

By Robert Holden

Have you ever noticed that what you try to control the most often gives you the most grief?

Some “things” require control. Some “things” like traffic control, pest control, crime control, and bladder control are all very helpful. Control is not, however the answer to everything. In fact, with relationships, creativity, healing, and happiness, for instance, holding on to control is often a major block to success.

*The relationships you try to control the most are the ones that suffer the most.* Control is fear. Trying to control the people you love betrays old wounds, old heartbreaks, and old pain. Control does not make a relationship safe. On the contrary, control kills trust, intimacy, romance, spontaneity, and growth. You cannot control unconditional love. You have to give up control (and fear) to win love.

Control in relationships often causes power struggles, disenchantment, and unhappy endings. Whenever you try to change someone, you are trying to control them. Whenever you try to make choices for another person, you are also trying to control them. Your relationship is no longer about love and respect; it is about manipulation and dominance. A power struggle will emerge, there will be a war, and both parties will lose – unless control is relinquished.

We are a generation who have been sold beliefs like “control is power,” “control is strength,” and “control is freedom.” “Get control of your life” is a very popular mantra in our society. Control is healthy if it means taking responsibility for your life, choosing your thoughts, and being focused. But control can also be misused. Too much control can make you inflexible, defensive, shortsighted, and ineffective.

Relinquishing control is often the first step to greater creativity, inspiration, and healing. It takes courage, though. I remember once a very famous singer asked me for some relationship counseling, but only on the strict condition that I did not ask her any questions about her parents, her ex-husband, or her private life! Alas! *Trying to control your own healing is one of the most common blocks to wholeness and happiness.*

*Control often causes a mind cramp that kills creativity, innovation, and progress.* In recent years, I have worked closely with the leading new-wave managers who are evolving their companies beyond the old-fashioned “command and control” cultures that did so much to stifle proactivity and success. These highly successful people understand the value of continually letting go of old plans, pictures, and policies for something better.

*Control often betrays an attempt to “do” life all on your own.* It smells of dysfunctional independence, closed-mindedness, fear of change, and even fear of success. Too much control can block receiving, partnership, synergy, and growth. Too much control can cut you off from a better idea, new ways, extra help, and more abundance. Too much control can leave you hemmed in by your own little thoughts so that you lose sight of the big picture.

How do you know if you are applying too much control? Simple. Your life will not be working for you. Where there is too much control, there will be no flow, no abundance, and no joy. Control is the *Achilles’ heel* you drag behind you as you wade through struggle, conflict, and pain. Pain is always a control issue. Whenever you are in pain, you are being asked to give up some control somewhere.

Essentially put, too much control leaves you playing small. It disconnects you from your Unconditioned Self. It stunts your growth. Creativity is constipated. Your options are limited. You are left playing with the devil you know. You miss the higher ground. By contrast, the prizes for letting go of control include new growth, new adventures, and new prosperity.

Take a moment now to run a control check on your life. Notice the relationships and situations where you are applying too much control. *Control usually conceals fear*, i.e., fear of loss, hurt, failure, and so on. Identify your fear. Ask yourself, *Is this fear a fact or is it just a fear?* Recognize that control will not resolve these fears. If anything, too much control accentuates fears.

Wherever you are applying too much control, ask yourself, *What would work better than control here?* Could you perhaps communicate more, trust more, open up more, laugh more, or ask for extra help? Be open to a better way. Affirm “God is in charge here,” or something similar, so as to make yourself available for the highest possible outcome in every relationship, every endeavor, and every moment.

**I will now run a control check on three of my relationships.**

### **Relationship # 1**

**Here I will write about the first relationship where I am applying too much control.**

**Where I am applying too much control (continued)**

**Since control usually conceals fear of loss, hurt, failure, and so on, I will identify the fear(s) I am feeling in this relationship.**

**Recognizing that control will not resolve these fears, I ask myself, *Is this fear a fact or is it just a fear? How do I know this?***

**Now I ask myself, *What would work better than control here?***

**I will use this affirmation to make myself available for the highest possible outcome in this relationship (see the list of affirmations on workbook pages 101):**



## **Relationship # 2**

**Here I will write about the second relationship where I am applying too much control.**

**Now I will identify the fear(s) I am feeling in this relationship.**

**Recognizing that control will not resolve these fears, I ask myself, *Is this fear a fact or is it just a fear? How do I know this?***

**Now I ask myself, *What would work better than control here?***

**I will use this affirmation to make myself available for the highest possible outcome in this relationship (see the list of affirmations on workbook pages 101):**

### **Relationship # 3**

**Here I will write about the third relationship where I am applying too much control.**

**Now I will identify the fear(s) I am feeling in this relationship.**

**Recognizing that control will not resolve these fears, I ask myself, *Is this fear a fact or is it just a fear? How do I know this?***

**Now I ask myself, *What would work better than control here?***

**I will use this affirmation to make myself available for the highest possible outcome in this relationship (see the list of affirmations on workbook pages 101):**

# Affirmations

From *You Can Heal Your Life Companion Book*

by Louise Hay

## **If You Believe:**

My friends don't support me.

Nobody sees it my way.

My boundaries are not respected.

I can't keep friends for too long.

I can't let my friends really know me.

I give my friends advice for their own good.

I don't know how to say no to a friend.

I'll never forgive them.

They ruined my life.

They did it on purpose.

I was so little, and they hurt me so much.

They have to apologize first.

My resentment keeps me safe.

## **Your Affirmation Could Be:**

My friends are loving and supportive.

I am open and receptive to all points of view.

I respect others, and they respect me.

My love and acceptance of others creates lasting friendships.

It's safe for me to be open.

I leave my friends alone. We both have total freedom to be ourselves.

I move beyond those limitations and express myself honestly.

This is a new moment. I am free to let go.

I take responsibility for my own life. I am free.

They were doing the best they could with the knowledge, understanding, and awareness that they had at the time.

I am grown up now, and I take loving care of my inner child.

My spiritual growth is not dependent on others.

I release myself from prison. I am safe and free.

Only weak people forgive.

It is empowering to forgive and let go.

I'm right, and they're wrong.

There is no right or wrong. I move beyond my judgment.

It is all my parents' fault.

My parents treated me in the way they had been treated. I forgive them – and their parents, too.

I don't have to forgive anyone.

I refuse to limit myself. I am always willing to take the next step.

People scare me.

I am loved and safe wherever I go.

I have difficulty expressing my feelings.

It is safe to express my feelings.

Everyone is against me.

I am lovable, and everybody appreciates me.

I am scared of being alone.

I express love, and I always attract love wherever I go.

I'm afraid of rejection.

I love and accept myself, and I am safe.

Love never lasts.

Love is eternal.

I feel trapped.

Love makes me feel free.

Love scares me.

It is safe for me to be in love.

I have to do everything *their* way.

We are always equal partners.

If I take care of it myself, they'll leave me.

We each take care of ourselves.

I'm jealous.

Jealousy is only insecurity. I now develop my own self-esteem.

I can't be myself.

People love me when I am myself.

I'm not good enough.

I am worthy of love.

I don't want a marriage like my parents had.

I am not my parents. I go beyond their patterns.

I don't know how to love.

Loving myself and others gets easier every day.

I'll get hurt.

The more I open up to love, the safer I am.

I can't say no to someone I love.

My partner and I respect each other's decisions.

Everybody leaves me.

I now create a long-lasting, loving relationship.

My boss is abusive.

All my bosses treat me with love and respect.

My co-workers drive me crazy.

I see the best in everyone, and they respond in kind.

People are so stupid.

Everybody is doing the best they can, including me.

If I get angry, I'll lose control.

I express my anger in appropriate places and ways.

When someone is angry, I get scared.

I comfort my inner child, and we are safe.

I won't be loved if I get mad.

The more honest I am, the more I am loved.

My neighbors are so noisy.

I release the need to be disturbed.

Nobody asks me what I think.

My opinions are valued.

**I can add my own affirmations here.**

# Letting Go of Ego

From *Coming Home to Who You Are*

By David Richo

Reacting defensively is a trait of the ego when it is frightened of losing primacy or control. Such defensiveness is a major obstacle to authentic intimacy. Letting go of ego means discarding any arrogant belief in our own entitlement. We begin to see through all the subtle schemes we use so that we can take center stage, get our piece of the pie (no matter who else starves), to be right every time, make sure others pay for daring to hurt, cross, or get ahead of us. We can dismantle all those theatrical stage sets of ego so that our healthy ego comes to the fore.

The neurotic ego is the FACE we want so much to save: *fear* of not being liked and acknowledged, *attachment* to being right, *control* of others and of situations, *entitlement* to be loved and respected by everyone with no reciprocal obligation. These are all compulsions that, sadly, become forms of pain for us and for those who have to deal with us.

When people or events upset us, we can look ourselves in the FACE to see precisely how our ego has been aroused. Then we can gently guide our ego to healthier responses: Fear can yield to love, attachment to letting go, control to allowing, entitlement to standing up for ourselves while accepting that our rights are not unconditional and unlimited. Here is the model:

- When I am afraid, I look for a way to be loving.
- When I am attached, I let go.
- When I am trying to control people, I learn to honor their freedom.
- When I feel entitled, I stand up for my reasonable rights and I don't retaliate if I can't secure them.

As we reduce our inflated ego (which is what it truly wanted all along), our healthy ego gains prominence in our life and choices:

- We have a wiser and wider perspective because we are not blinded by the need for immediate gratification. *In relationships this helps us notice the other person's needs.*
- We are no longer driven by greed or self-centeredness, so we become more serene and open. *In relationships this helps us to be less competitive and more cooperative.*



- We manage our own needs better. *In relationships we are not so demanding and dependent on others.*
- We gain equanimity in conflicts and calamities because we have let go of the compulsion to be in full control. *In relationships this helps us calmly address, process, and resolve our problems.*

**Here I will apply these concepts to the first relationship I've been working with (on page 94):**

**How can I look for a way to be loving?**

**When I am attached, in what ways can I let go?**

**When I'm trying to control them, how can I honor their freedom?**

**When I feel entitled, how might I stand up for my reasonable rights and not retaliate if I can't secure them?**

**What might be the advantages of recognizing the FACE I want so much to save and choosing to work past it in this relationship?**

**Now I will apply these concepts to the second relationship I've been working with (on page 97):**

**How can I look for a way to be loving?**

**When I am attached, in what ways can I let go?**

**When I'm trying to control them, how can I honor their freedom?**

**When I feel entitled, how might I stand up for my reasonable rights and not retaliate if I can't secure them?**

**What might be the advantages of recognizing the FACE I want so much to save and choosing to work past it in this relationship?**

**Finally, I will apply these concepts to the third relationship I've been working with (on page 99):**

**How can I look for a way to be loving?**

**When I am attached, in what ways can I let go?**

**When I'm trying to control them, how can I honor their freedom?**

**When I feel entitled, how might I stand up for my reasonable rights and not retaliate if I can't secure them?**

**What might be the advantages of recognizing the FACE I want so much to save and choosing to work past it in this relationship?**

**What do I believe is true for *me* about these three relationships?**





# Embracing Change

From *Transitions*

By Julia Cameron

All change can be expansive in potential. The choice is ours.

As I open my heart to accept change, my heart softens and grows larger.

Each experience carries the seed of transformation.

Every event can bring blossoming and wealth.

My personal will can resist change or embrace it.

The choice is mine and  
determines the life I will have.

Today, I choose to embrace change.

I open my heart to its hidden but abundant blessings.



# Workbook Studies for Week 6

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 6 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 6 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.
- ♥ Continue considering insights for your final Thought Paper, to be presented in Week 8. See workbook p. 7.

*Lost love is still love. It just takes a different form, that's all. You can't hold their hand... you can't touse their hair... but when those senses weaken another one comes to life... memory... memory becomes your partner. You hold it... you dance with it... life has to end... love doesn't.*

- Mitch Albom

## Week 6

# What is True for *Me* About Endings and New Beginnings?

*Love is never lost. If not reciprocated, it will flow back and soften and purify the heart.*

- Washington Irving

*You are responsible for your life. You can't keep blaming somebody else for your dysfunction. Life is really about moving on.*

- Oprah Winfrey

### **This Week**

This week is about acknowledging the many relationships that have ended in our lives and what we learned from them. Every connection that we have had to another becomes a teacher, whether it is the willingness to say what we need or to gain a greater capacity to love or forgive. Each offers new personal beginnings, as we learn and stretch and grow to become all we were meant to be.

*Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.*

- Dr. Seuss

*Some changes look negative on the surface but you will soon realize that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge.*

- Eckhart Tolle



## What is true for *me* about endings and new beginnings?

**Every ending is really a beginning. As a relationship ends or takes a distinctly different path, we are at choice. Will we let it teach us about what is truly important to us? Will we be open to greater awareness of who we truly are? Although the relationship may be ending, the new beginnings within us are stirring, ready to lead us down a road of inner peace and fulfillment.**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about the endings and consequent new beginnings in my past and in my life today.**

**Endings and new beginnings in my past and in my life today (continued)**

**Endings and new beginnings in my past and in my life today (continued)**



# Loss and Impermanence

From *A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough*

By Wayne Muller

*In a dark time, the eye begins to see.*

- Theodore Roethke, “In a Dark Time”

Everything dies.

Our culture is obsessed with the false promise of perpetual youth, endless progress, and limitless self-improvement. We are comforted by the notion that one day, when we have done the perfect thing, landed the perfect job, spouse, and house, then everything will finally go well from now on. All struggle or strife of the past will be behind us, clear sailing as far as the eye can see, we’re in the money, happy days are here again, let the good times roll, here comes the sun, and it’s all right.

But eventually, inevitably, something will happen. In every life there are moments that are completely unexpected, uninvited, unwanted, in which something precious breaks. Most human lives contain many such moments. There is a terrible reversal of fortune, some horrific violence, a broken dream, or the sudden loss of someone we love, someone so deeply entwined in the fabric of our hearts that we feel we, too, have experienced death.

This is the way of all things.

Working with the dying, I sat beside daughters and sons who held the hands of their dying parents, clasping palm to palm, reluctant to let go. In housing projects, I sat at kitchen tables with families who had lost their jobs, their dreams, and even their essential sense of human dignity. Working with gangs in southern California, I sat with mothers and fathers who buried one after another of their barely teenage sons.

In prisons I met men who had gambled and lost their freedom, their identity, their entire future – along with any sense of inner goodness or value. Working with abused and neglected children, I saw in the eyes of the young and innocent a frighteningly blank darkness devoid of love, trust, or hope. Today, more and more, I meet men and women, good-hearted, hard-working folk who simply cannot keep ever-evaporating jobs, pay their mortgages, keep their homes or their health care.

This is the way of all life. Everything dies. Every living thing, every person, tree, animal, fish, and bird, since the beginning of time has, before we were born, taken birth, lived its life, and experienced its death. And it is not only our lives but our dreams, our wealth, our

plans, all we are and all we have will sooner or later pass away. The Buddha calls this the Law of Impermanence. The preacher in Ecclesiastes taught that for everything there is a season – a time to die and a time to lose.

At the same time, there is an equally powerful, tidal sweep of life and light that washes over and through these very same lives. For every moment of loss there is a corresponding moment of unexpected joy, celebration, healing, success, beauty, grace, and love: A time to be born, a time to seek, a time to love. The Buddha taught that every human life would experience ten thousand joys and ten thousand sorrows. Is this not true for all of us? Some of our dreams come true, others do not; some people stay close, others move away; some get sick and then get better – while others wither and die. Some people we love remain faithful and loving our whole lives, while others abandon or betray us. Relationships and friendships come and go, businesses succeed and fail, fortunes rise and fall, people we love will die, and we will grow old, get sick, and die. As William Stafford says, “Nothing we do can stop time’s unfolding.”

In that inevitable, excruciatingly human moment, we are offered a powerful choice. This choice is perhaps one of the most vitally important choices we ever make, and it determines the course of our lives from that moment forward. The choice is this: Will we interpret this loss as so unjust, unfair and devastating that we feel punished, angry, forever and fatally wounded – or, as our heart, torn apart, bleeds its anguish of sheer, wordless grief, will we somehow feel this loss as an opportunity for our hearts to become more tender, more open, more passionately alive, more grateful for what remains?

Make no mistake. This will happen. It may have already happened, perhaps more than once. With our heart shredded, tender, without armor, and laid bare, we are face to face with how we will choose to live. We must sort out how to respond, to be fully and completely vulnerable to this relentless impermanence: Shall we choose the bitter residue of a sleep-walking life, or be broken open excruciatingly awake to feel, taste, touch the extraordinarily real joys and sorrows of this magnificent human life?

If we indeed choose a life awake, we will embark on a journey not of our own making. It is a journey deep into the country of kindness, loss, beauty, heartbreak, love, honesty, and friendship. In this landscape of the joys and sorrows of a human life, the touch of a tiny hand, the impossible blue of a crisp winter day, the fragrance of jasmine, can take our breath away. And every one of these tiny surprises, these unexpected miracles, become, in each moment, without a doubt, enough.

**Here I will write about a time of loss in a relationship, using real-life examples to explain why it was significant in that particular time in my life. It may have involved a change within the relationship or the relationship itself ended, whatever is most important to me.**



**A time of loss in a relationship (continued)**

**How did it change me? A new way of seeing things? A deeper belief in myself? Courage to move forward? A deeper relationship with my God?**

# Loss

From *Life Lessons: Two Experts on Death and Dying Teach Us about the Mysteries of Life and Living*

By Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

## David Kessler

Most of us fight and resist loss throughout our lives, not understanding that life is loss and loss is life; life cannot change and we cannot grow without loss. There's an old Jewish saying that if you dance at a lot of weddings, you'll cry at a lot of funerals. This means if you're present at many beginnings, you'll also be there for many endings. If you have many friends, you'll experience your share of losses.

If you feel that you're suffering great loss, it's only because you have been so richly blessed by life. The losses we experience in life are both big and small, everything from the death of a parent to misplacing a phone number. Life's losses may be permanent, such as death, or temporary, as when you miss your children on a business trip. Here are the Five Stages – which describe the way we respond to losses in life, whether big or small, permanent or temporary. Suppose your child is born blind; you might feel it's a major loss and respond this way:

- Denial – The doctors say he can't follow objects with his eyes. Give him time, he'll be able to do it when he gets older.
- Anger – The doctors should have known about this, they should have told us sooner! Why would God do this to us!
- Bargaining – I'll be able to deal with this as long as he's teachable and can take care of himself when he's grown up.
- Depression – This is terrible, his life will be so limited.
- Acceptance – We will deal with the problems as they arise, and he can still have a good life filled with love.

On a more trivial note, suppose you drop a contact lens. You might respond to your loss in this way:

- Denial – I can't believe I dropped it!
- Anger – Darn it, I should have been more careful.

- Bargaining – I promise if I find it this time, I will be much more careful in the future.
- Depression – I am so sad I lost it, now I will have to buy another.
- Acceptance – It's okay, I was bound to lose a contact someday. I'll order a new one in the morning.

Not everyone goes through these five stages with every loss, the responses don't always occur in the same order, and you may visit stages more than once. However, we do experience loss many times, in many ways, and we react to our losses. With loss comes experience of its terrain, making us better equipped to cope with life.

Whatever you are feeling when you lose someone or something is exactly what you are supposed to be feeling. It is never our place to tell someone, "You have been in denial too long, it is now time for anger," or anything like that, for we don't know what someone else's healing should look like. Losses feel just as they feel. They leave us feeling empty, helpless, immobilized, paralyzed, worthless, angry, sad and fearful. We don't want to sleep, or we want to sleep all the time; we have no appetite or we eat everything in sight. We may bounce from extreme to extreme or we may touch on everything in between. Being in any or all of these places is part of healing...

We long for wholeness. We hope that we can keep people and things just as they are, but we know we can't. Loss is one of our most difficult lessons in life. We try to make it easier, we even romanticize it, yet the pain of separation from someone or something we care about is one of the hardest things we will ever experience. Absence does not always make the heart grow fonder; sometimes it makes us feel sad, lonely, and empty.

Just as there is no good without bad, or light without dark, there is no growth without loss. And odd though it may sound, there is also not loss without growth. This is a difficult concept to comprehend, which is perhaps why we are always struck by it.

Some of the best teachers of this concept are parents who have lost their children to cancer. Typically, parents say the experience is the end of their world, which is understandable. Years later, some will report that they have grown through their tragedies. Of course, they would rather not have lost their children, but they can see how their losses helped them in ways they didn't expect. They have learned that "'tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." And the truth is, we would rarely trade the experience of having and losing our loved ones with never having had them at all.

From a first glance at our lives and losses, it can be hard to see how we've grown. But grow we do. Those who suffer losses ultimately become stronger, more whole.

- In middle age we may lose some of our hair but realize that what's inside is just as important as what's outside.
- In retirement we may lose income, but we find more freedom.

- In old age we may lose a little independence, but we receive back some of the love we gave to others.
- Oftentimes when we lose the possessions of life, we find after mourning that we are freer, realizing that we were meant to travel lightly through this world.
- Sometimes when relationships end, we learn who we are – not in relation to other people, but just as ourselves.
- We may lose some items or abilities, only to realize how much we appreciate that which we have left...

### **Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**

Losing those we love to death is certainly one of the most heartbreaking experiences. An interesting comment, made with no disrespect for anyone, is that people who lose someone through divorce or separation will often say that they realize death is not the ultimate loss. Rather, it's the separation from loved ones that is so difficult. Knowing about someone's continued existence but being unable to share it with them may cause far more pain and make resolution far more difficult than permanent separation through death. With those who have died, however we find new ways to share their existence as they live on in our hearts and memories.

From those who are dying, we have learned some interesting things about loss. Some common, clear lessons come to us from those who have technically been dead but were brought back to life. First, they share that they are no longer afraid of death. Secondly, they say they now know that death is only the shedding of a physical body, no different from taking off a suit of clothes one no longer needs. Third, they remember having a profound feeling of wholeness in death, feeling connected to everything and everyone, and experiencing no sense of loss. Lastly, they tell us that they were never alone, that someone was with them.

A man in his thirties told me that his wife had unexpectedly left him. He felt absolutely devastated. He spoke about the anguish he was going through, then looked up at me and asked, "Is this what loss feels like? Lots of my friends have lost people to breakups and divorces, and even death. They were sad and they told me they were hurting, but I had no concept that it felt like this. Now that I know what it's really like, I want to go back to all those people and say, "I'm sorry, I had no idea what you were going through."

"I've grown and become much more compassionate. In the future, when a friend is dealing with a loss, I will be a completely different person, much more helpful to them. I will be there for them in ways I would never have thought of before and understand the pain they are going through in a way I could never have imagined."

This is one of the purposes loss serves in our lives. It unifies us. It helps us deepen our understanding of each other. It connects us to one another in a way that no other lesson of

life can. When we are joined in the experience of loss, we care for one another and experience one another in new and profound ways.

The only thing as difficult as loss is wondering if there is going to be a loss. Patients often say, “I wish I would either get better or die!” Or, “The days spent waiting for lab tests are excruciating.”

A couple struggling to reunite complains, “The separation is killing us. We wish we could make this work – or finally end it.”

Life sometimes forces us to live in limbo, not knowing if we will experience loss. We may have to wait a few hours to hear if the surgery went well, a few days to see the test results, or an indeterminate period as a loved one struggles with disease. We may wait in limbo for hours, days, weeks, or longer when a child is missing. The families of soldiers missing in action are often wrenched by the living in limbo. Decades later, many have still not resolved their losses. They may not be able to, not until they learn that their loved ones are definitely dead, or rescued. But that information may never come. The nation felt the strain of limbo when John F. Kennedy Jr.’s plane was reported missing for a number of days. The local, state, and federal governments threw their resources into finding out what had happened, because we needed closure.

Being in limbo of possible loss is, itself, a loss. No matter what the outcome of the situation, it is still a loss to be dealt with...

### **David Kessler**

We mourn for those who have cared for us the way they should have. We also mourn for those who did not give us the love we deserved. I’ve seen this phenomenon over and over: the severely beaten child in the hospital longs for his mother but cannot see her, because she is in jail for having beaten him. You can grieve fully for people who were terrible to you. And if you need to grieve for them, you should do so. We must take time to mourn and experience our losses, and to acknowledge that those losses cannot be negated even if we think the person did not deserve our love.

Whether loss is complicated or not, we will all heal in our own time and in our own way. No one can tell us we should have been healed by now, or that the process is going too rapidly. Grief is always individualized. As long as we are moving through life and have not become stuck, we are healing.

We often unknowingly re-create losses in an attempt to work through them, to do them better, to finally heal them. If we’ve been hurt by loss, we may find ways to protect ourselves against loss: we detach, we deny, we rescue others, we help them with their hurts so we don’t have to feel ours, we become so self-sufficient that we will never need anyone...

There are many steps to healing loss. Feel and acknowledge the loss when you are ready. Let the grace of denial work, remembering that you will feel your feelings when you are

supposed to. You will find the only way out of the pain is through the pain. You will understand it when you are ready to. Many times an understanding of loss comes in years, not in days or months. You will find that you can accept a world in which the loss has taken place...

Late one evening I was on the cancer floor in a hospital, seeing a patient. There, I spoke with a nurse who was devastated because she had just lost a patient. "This is the sixth person I watched die this week!" she complained. "I can't take it anymore; I can't watch loss after loss after loss. It feels too bottomless. I don't know if it will ever end."

I asked this caring nurse if she could take a few moments to take a walk with me. Before she could reply, I gently grabbed her hand and we walked across a bridge to another wing of the hospital. Turning a corner, we entered the maternity area, where I walked her up to the glass partition that separated us from the newborn babies. I watched her face as she began to look at new life, taking this scene in as if she had never witnessed it before.

"Doing what you do," I said, "you need to come here often to remind yourself that life is not only about loss."

Even within our deepest sense of loss, we know that life continues. Despite all the losses and endings that may be bombarding you, new beginnings are all around. In the midst of pain, loss may seem to be never-ending, yet the cycle of life exists all around us. This nurse realized that she had been seeing her work only as loss. She understood that she had forgotten that she was helping to complete the lives that had begun, just like those of these babies, in similar nurseries, many years ago.

**I have learned so much from my relationships! I will consider three different losses and the new beginnings that resulted. It may be the willingness to say what I need, set boundaries, stop trying to control others, practicing patience, quit taking things personally, or watching how I speak to others.**

**Loss #1:**

**Loss #1: (continued)**

**New beginnings that resulted from this loss:**



**Loss #2:**

**New beginnings that resulted from this loss:**

**Loss #3:**

**New beginnings that resulted from this loss:**

# No More Hiding

From *Until Today!*

By Iyanla Vanzant

*I will know love when I realize ... I cannot hide what I think, what I feel or who I am!*

You cannot be fully present in your loving if you are happy sometimes and sad most of the time, if you are afraid to leave while you are wondering if you are going to get left. You cannot be fully present in your loving if you are wondering why you should stay or how you can go without hurting and being hurt. You are not present in love if you are afraid to tell the absolute truth about who you are, what you need and what you want. Under these circumstances, you are not present in love. You are in hiding!

Love does not hide anyone! Love stands tall in the truth of what it is for everyone to see and receive it. Love does not tell half the story, some of the time. Nor does love avoid telling its story just to save time and feelings. Love is respectful, honorable, noble and honest. Love is gentle, compassionate, willing to share and able to comfort. Love speaks boldly yet softly. It reaches far without losing ground. You know that love is present when in the midst of the storm you can find something, some one thing, to laugh about, smile about and hold on to.

You are not fully present in your loving if you are blaming and not accepting your share of responsibility, if you are not acknowledging your part in whatever is going on or your pain about it. You are not and cannot be fully present in your loving if you are not expressing gratitude for all you have received, if you are not supporting or sharing your vision for yourself. You cannot be fully present in your loving of another if you are still making excuses for not being present because you are probably in a great deal of pain!

Until today, you may have made excuses for not being fully present in your loving relationships. Just for today, be devoted to being fully present in all of your relationships. Share the truth of your thoughts and feelings. Share the truth about yourself.

*Today I am devoted to finding the courage to be fully present in my relationships!*

**New beginnings happen when I am willing to let myself be seen and heard. As I think back to the close relationships in my life, what have I learned about my willingness to tell the absolute truth about who I am, what I need, and what I want?**

**Telling the truth about who I am (continued)**

**Now that I'm aware of how I have interacted with loved ones in the past, what new beginnings in my relationships can I make today? How will I honor the truth of who I really am?**



# Misery and Joy

From “A Year of Rumi”

By Rumi, Translated by Andrew Harvey

Misery and joy  
have the  
same shape  
in this world:

You may call the  
rose  
an open heart  
or a  
broken heart.



# Workbook Studies for Week 7

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 7 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 7 articles and exercises.
  
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.
  
- ♥ Begin putting together your thought paper for Week 8:

## THOUGHT PAPER: “What is True for Me About Relationships?”

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True for Me About Relationships?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to focus on one of the questions below as a springboard for your thoughts.

- What have I learned about myself and my relationship to myself?
- What have I learned about my relationships with others?
- What have I learned about my relationship with the God of my understanding?
- What is my purpose for being in the world today? What gifts do I bring?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented on the last night of class. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.





*When you hold resentment toward another, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger than steel. Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and get free.*

- Catherine Ponder

## Week 7

# What is True for *Me* About Forgiveness?

*Lack of forgiveness causes almost all of our self-sabotaging behavior.*

- Mark Victor Hansen

### This Week

This week we explore where we are in the process of forgiveness. What does forgiveness mean to me? If I forgive another, does that mean I'm letting them off the hook? Why is it so hard to forgive myself? If I truly let go of my painful memories, what will happen next? Who will I be without my story? Holding myself in compassionate loving-kindness, I open to my thoughts and feelings about forgiveness.

*Everyone is living in their own reality, continuously finding evidence to prove what they want to believe.*

- Alan Cohen

*If you want to see the brave, look at those who can forgive. If you want to see the heroic, look at those who can love in return for hatred.*

- Bhagavad Gita

*As you give you will receive.*

- A Course in Miracles



## What is true for *me* about forgiveness?

**Forgiveness sets the stage for freedom. Realizing that holding onto my story of “what happened to me” keeps me a prisoner of those circumstances, as if it were still happening today. Letting go of all hope of a better past helps me open my eyes to who and what I am today; in this moment I can see myself as my God sees me – absolutely perfect! In reality, I am somewhere in the middle. What are my thoughts about forgiveness? Where am I in the process of forgiving others and myself?**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about forgiveness.**

**Forgiveness (continued)**

**Forgiveness (continued)**



# Our Desire for Love Exceeds our Capacity to Receive It

From *Your Soul's Assignment*

By Chris Michaels

A few years ago I counseled a man who came to me upset over a lost love. He was in a relationship with a woman whom he described as his “soul mate.” They were together for about six months and things were going great. There was talk of marriage, children and buying a home together.

And then all of the sudden, she dumped him without any apparent reason. He was heart-broken and confused! Finally, after a couple of months he ran into a friend who knew this woman and told him: “That’s what she does to every guy she meets. She stays with them for awhile, gets really close to them – and then gets scared and runs away!”

I hear this same story from a lot of people. They meet someone and things are going great for awhile. And then all of a sudden, without warning, they make a run for it, or do something ridiculous to sabotage the relationship. And when that happens, they always want to know *why*. Why did this happen to me? What went wrong?

Here’s the reason why: People dart out of relationships fearfully because they don’t have enough self-value to accept the love that’s being offered. Perhaps they’re able to effectively *give* love and get somewhat close to *receiving* it. But the closer they get, the more it challenges them to accept a love they just don’t feel worthy of. That’s because many people’s *desire* for love exceeds their capacity to accept it!

To some degree that’s true for all of us. Our *desire* for love goes way beyond what we’re actually ready to receive. And it’s always going to be that way because the amount of love that’s available to us is eternal, everlasting and unconditional!

Your soul’s assignment here on earth is to prepare the way for that love; to create a place in your heart to receive it. Your job is to let yourself be love, in spite of all the things you’ve done that you think are so terrible! And the only way you’re going to let that happen is to forgive yourself first.

To say: “*I did the very best I could with what I knew at the time – and now it’s time to forget the past and stop using it as an excuse to limit my future.*”

Forgiveness clears the way for love and opens your life to a greater good. It gets everything out of the way and lets the love in. When we forgive ourselves, we open our hearts to Spirit

and our lives to a greater good. And when we forgive others, we're finally on the threshold of seeing life for what it truly is: One perfect Spirit expressing itself in an infinite variety of souls!

Self-forgiveness is the first step in creating a close relationship with God. We have to feel *worthy* of a Love that's unconditional and eternal or we'll never be able to accept it. And we'll never feel worthy until we forgive ourselves.

### **Here's how you do that:**

1. Start by trusting that what God made you to be is good enough! If the Infinite Mind that knows the mathematical equation necessary to initiate a universe went to all of the trouble to create you, why not trust that it knew what it was doing? Try to see yourself as God sees you – as another means of perfect expression, an inlet and outlet for Divine Love.
2. Then once you've got a good grip on that idea, and you stop beating yourself up and putting yourself down, start using your spiritual power constructively instead of abusing it. Treat yourself like somebody you love! Spend time thinking about the things you do well and the times you show love and compassion. Resist the temptation to abuse yourself over past errors. Show some self-kindness by giving yourself a break.
3. Then give the same gift to others that you just gave to yourself – Forgiveness!

And here's where it gets hard! It is one thing to think of yourself as a perfect expression of God and quite another to see your "ex-husband" or "ex-wife" as one. It is one thing to forgive yourself for the harm you've caused, but when you're on the *receiving* end of that harm, it's a little harder to let go of that pain!

And it's a giant leap from there to move beyond seeing your personal enemies entitled to God's love, to see everyone on earth entitled to love. What about the people who've hurt millions? Are they just as entitled to God's love? Was Hitler entitled to God's love? Is [Was] Osama bin Laden?

The answer to the question is yes. EVERYONE is included in God's love! Everyone is forgiven for everything! I know how difficult it is to conceive of a love that perfect, or unconditional, that it could forgive these men who've done such horrible things.

Can you imagine how God could forgive them? I would have a hard time forgiving someone who hurt my dog, much less someone who killed other people. I have a hard time forgiving *myself* for the dumb things I do, much less for someone who took the lives of innocent people.

But no one is separate from God's love! No soul has been abandoned by love. That's why forgiveness is the most phenomenal gift of Spirit. It goes beyond human comprehension – that a love could exist that could forgive so much!

The only way I can understand it is to consider what you hear people say about love. They say: “*Love is blind!*” And I don’t think that’s true. Love grants us perfect vision. It’s not that we don’t see what’s wrong with the people we love. We see “through” their faults and idiosyncrasies to the perfect Spirit within them. Love gives us insight into their Divine potential. It allows us to see through the veil of human error.

And if it does that for us – if it allows us to see ONLY that which is perfect and whole in each other, then maybe that is the way God sees each one of us. It sees beyond the hurt and pain of the human experience. It sees beyond our ignorance and shame, straight through to our heart and soul.

God sees us as we truly are: Its own special, unique creation, longing to be loved and accepted, wanting more than anything to be understood! And perhaps that’s why God is able to forgive us: Because the only thing it really knows about us is the absolute truth of our being. God isn’t impressed with our transgressions. It doesn’t know about our sins!

God can easily dismiss our faults, just as we can for the people we love so dearly. To us, they’re perfect. Even if they are kind of goofy to the rest of the world, we still love them. And to God, we’re perfect – even though we may not be able to see it right now.

So start creating self worth that can accept that Divine, perfect love by forgiving yourself today. And then, extend the gift of forgiveness to everyone around you.

### **Self Forgiveness**

*“The final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of his own soul?”*

- Oscar Wilde

Every judgment we have of someone else shows us some aspect of ourselves that we have not yet learned to accept and love. Inevitable, we come face to face with our own heart. We are the ones who must forgive ourselves.

No one is able to go through life without hurting someone. We make mistakes. We hurt others, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not. Since Spirit-IN-us knows that we’re all ONE and that what we do to others, we also do to ourselves all forgiveness has to start with SELF-forgiveness.

When we were children, most of us had higher standards for our parents than they could ever meet. We expected perfection and were shocked to find that they were somewhat less. But as we grew and matured and made our own mistakes in life, we realized that no one is perfect. And our maturity allowed us to look back at our childhood and forgive our parents for not knowing everything, for being human and making human mistakes.

We have to take that same forgiving look at our own lives. We made the mistake of hurting others because at the time we didn't know any better. If we'd have *known* better, we would have *done* better. Everyone is doing the very best they can at any given moment in life. We're all operating at peak capacity with the current understanding we possess. That's why it's always appropriate to forgive yourself for what you didn't know.

You are paid in full for all that you've done in life, both the good and the bad. Nothing in the universe is holding a grudge against you or wanting to punish you at some later date. Reward and punishment are NOT God's game; unconditional love and acceptance *are*.

It's time to forgive yourself – to let go of the self-degradation and condemnation. And it's time to start loving again.

### **What Are You Waiting For?**

I have a close friend who considers herself overweight because she doesn't look the same at fifty as she did at sixteen. And she had this boyfriend who loves her to death! It's so obvious when you see them together. He's kind and gentle to her. He opens the door for her. He actually listens when she talks, which few men do. But she refuses to have intimate relations with him because she says: *"I just don't feel right about my body. I'm too embarrassed to take my clothes off."*

She hasn't been intimate with anyone in at least a decade! So I said to her: *"What if it's going to be this way your whole life? What if you're just going to be this size? Are you going to live your entire life denying yourself love, just because you don't think you look good naked? Honey, nobody looks good naked! That's why God made Armani."*

Don't spend your whole life not letting yourself be loved over some stupid triviality like fat cells. Who cares? Take your clothes off and run through the house screaming: *"Baby, come and get me!"* Or else, you're going to get to the end of your life and have an awful lot of regrets!

One day you're going to have to face your Creator and when God asks: *"Why didn't you let yourself be loved?"* the only answer you'll have is – *"Because I was twenty pounds overweight!"* And how embarrassing will that be?

It's not important how you look, or how much you weigh. All that's really important is how much love and joy you let in to your life. So my advice is: Abandon yourself to love. Let go of your ego and your low self-estimation – and for once in your life, just trust that what God made is perfect.



**It's time to start accepting and loving me in every area of my life! If I can't come up with answers to the questions below, I will look through the eyes of someone who loves me – what would he or she say about me?**

**What do I do that makes me feel good in my relationship with myself, including health and finances? Why?**

1.

2.

3.

**What do I do that makes me feel good about myself in my relationships with those close to me?**

1.

2.

**What do I do that makes me feel good about myself in my relationships with those close to me? (continued)**

3.

**What do I do that makes me feel good about myself in my relationships with casual acquaintances or business colleagues?**

1.

2.

3.

**What do I do that makes me feel good about myself in my relationships with service clerks, waiters, bank tellers, telemarketers, and those with whom I share the road?**

1.

**What do I do that makes me feel good about myself in my relationships with service clerks, waiters, bank tellers, telemarketers, and those with whom I share the road?  
(continued)**

2.

3.

**What do I do that makes me feel good about myself in my relationship with the God of my understanding?**

1.

2.

3.

**If there is an aspect of my life where I have regrets; am I willing to think about it differently today?**

**Am I willing to be open to Divine Love? If so, what might change? If not, why am I resistant?**

**Am I willing to be a place of Love in the world? What might that look like?**

# Forgiveness

From *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*

By Marianne Williamson

It's easy to forgive people who have never done anything to make us angry. People who do make us angry, however, are our most important teachers. They indicate the limits to our capacity for forgiveness. "Holding grievances is an attack on God's plan for salvation." The decision to let go of our grievances against other people is the decision to see ourselves as we truly are, because any darkness we let blind us to another's perfection also blinds us to our own.

It can be very hard to let go of your perceptions of someone's guilt when you know that by every standard of ethics, morality, or integrity, you're right to find fault with them. But the Course asks, "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" If you're judging a brother, you're wrong even if you're right. There have been times when I have had a very hard time giving up my judgment of someone, mentally protesting, "But I'm *right*." I felt as though giving up my judgment amounted to condoning their behavior. I felt, "Well, *somebody's* got to uphold principle in this world. If we just forgive things all the time, then all standard of excellence will disintegrate!"

But God doesn't need us to police the universe. Shaking our finger at someone doesn't help them change. If anything, our perception of someone's guilt only keeps them stuck in it. When we are shaking a finger at someone, figuratively or literally, we are not more apt to correct their wrongful behavior. Treating someone with compassion and forgiveness is much more likely to elicit a healed response. People are less likely to be defensive, and more likely to be open to correction. Most of us are aware on some level when we're off. We'd be doing things differently if we knew how. We don't need attack at this point; we need help. Forgiveness forges a new context, one in which someone can more easily change.

Forgiveness is the choice to see people as they are *now*. When we are angry at people, we are angry because of something they said or did before this moment. But what people said or did is not who they are. Relationships are reborn as we let go perceptions of our brother's past. 'By bringing the past into the present, we create a future just like the past.' By letting the past go, we make room for miracles.

An attack on a brother is a reminder of his guilty past. In choosing to affirm a brother's guilt, we are choosing to experience more of it. The future is programmed in the present. To let the past go is to remember that in the present, my brother is innocent. It is an act of gracious generosity to accept a person based on what we know to be the truth about them, regardless of whether or not they are in touch with that truth themselves...

When people behave unlovingly, they have forgotten who they are. They have fallen asleep to the Christ within them. The job of the miracle worker is to remain awake. We choose not to fall asleep and dream of our brother's guilt. In this way we are given the power to awaken him.

A prime example of a miracle worker is Pollyanna. The ego knows this, which is why she is constantly invalidated in this culture. She walked into a situation where everyone had been in a nasty mood for years. She chose not to see the nastiness. She had faith in what lay beyond it. She extended her perception beyond what her physical senses revealed to her, to what her heart knew to be true about every human being. It didn't matter how anyone behaved. Pollyanna had faith in the love she knew existed behind anyone's fear, and thus she invoked their love into expression. She exercised the power of forgiveness. Within a short time, everyone was nice and everyone was happy! Whenever someone says to me, "Marianne, you're being a Pollyanna," I think to myself, "If only I were that powerful..."

These days it's very common to hear people complain that their issue is that they choose the "wrong" people. The ego is very sly here. It's trying to convince us that we're taking responsibility for the problem, when in fact we're only doing that to a very small degree. Because our description of the problem still makes someone guilty, it can only lead into further darkness, not light. "I continue to choose people who can't commit" is not a miracle-minded perception. A more enlightened question might be, "How committed am I, really? How prepared am I in the deepest recesses of my being to give and receive love in an intimate, committed way?" or, "How can I forgive those who could not go past a certain wall of fear when dealing with me? How can I forgive myself for the ways in which I contributed to our participated in their fear?"

Sometimes it seems as though you're hooked: You feel obsessed or compulsive about another person. When this is the case, it's a pretty good bet that on some level you're not letting them off the hook. In spite of the temptation to look outside yourself for the source as well as the answer to the problem, you hold to miracle-minded thought by looking inside yourself for both. The price you pay for not taking responsibility for your own pain is the failure to realize that you can change your conditions by changing your thoughts. Regardless of who initiated a painful interaction, or how much of the error still lies in someone else's thinking, the Holy Spirit always provides you with complete escape from pain through forgiveness on your part. The other person doesn't have to consciously join you in the change. 'Whoever is saner at the time,' says *A Course in Miracles*, 'is to invite the Holy Spirit into a situation.' It doesn't matter whether or not another person shares our willingness to let God enter. Everything you need in life already exists inside your head.

**Today I choose to shine my light! In what relationship am I willing to take responsibility for my own pain by changing my thoughts about the situation? I will write about it here.**

**Changing my thoughts about the situation (continued)**



**What are the advantages to changing my perception of the situation?**

**How might my life change?**

# Forgiveness Heals Us

From *Freedom Is*

By Brandon Bays

This was a lesson I learned many years ago when, through grace, I healed naturally, without the use of drugs or surgery, from a very large uterine tumor. During that time I had a knowing that part of my healing would lay in uncovering old cell memories that were part of the co-creation of the tumor. I knew that if somehow I could unearth the stored pain and face and release the consciousness of it, somehow my body would go about its own process of healing.

I had read reams of research on cellular healing, and had seen dozens of case studies, and one fact stood out above all the rest: when we suppress a strong emotion, trauma, or painful memory – when it gets stuffed down, or tucked away, or swept under the carpet – chemicals are released in the body that can block certain cell receptors. This shutdown impairs the cells' natural ability to communicate with other cells in the body, and if the emotional issue, or “cell memory,” remains unaddressed and stays stored in the cells, the cell receptors remain closed, and, in time, disease can occur in that part of the body.

I also knew that many of the people who had been successful at cellular healing had spontaneously gained access to these old memories, and when they released them, the body went about its own natural process of healing.

There was no doubt I understood the scientific principles behind cellular healing: I had read all the books available, and I recognized the truth behind the research – *but no one had given us a method to access the cell memories and clear them.* And you can understand all the science on the planet, and know all the statistics, but without a step-by-step process those case histories of spontaneous healing are nothing but a bunch of pretty words.

I was about three weeks into my own healing journey, and I was still lost and beginning to feel pretty sorry for myself. Obviously, I knew that part of my healing lay in uncovering these old cell memories, but I still didn't have a clue how to go about it – I didn't even know where to begin! I tried everything that I knew of, and I had to face the fact that I had not succeeded. The tumor was just as hard and just as large as ever.

Then one day I was getting a message, and I clearly remember the moment a chink appeared in my armor of arrogance. I was lying there reflecting on my twenty years of experience and expertise in the alternative health field, and I had to admit, despite all the knowledge I'd attained, I had failed. In fact, when I inwardly admitted the real truth, I felt myself to be a complete and abject failure. I didn't even know what questions to ask anymore or where to turn.

Then something inside cracked, and I suddenly realized I didn't really know anything. I fell into a helpless, hopeless despair. Internally, something finally gave up. I surrendered, and in that surrender I felt myself fall into the soft embrace of innocence. I fell into the unknown. I didn't *know* anything anymore. In that simple admission, something let go. I felt a palpable release. And spontaneously I opened into a bath of peace. I felt cradled in it and melted into it until there was no inside, no outside, just peace and a simple innocence everywhere. From this innocence I heard a humble prayer emerge, "Please let me be guided to uncover what's stored inside this tumor." As soon as it was spoken, my prayer was released into the unknown, and I lay there in the emptiness, not expecting anything, just being.

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, I *was* guided. And when I uncovered the memory stored in the tumor, my arrogance instantly resurrected itself and loudly shouted in my head, "It can't be that memory – you *know* all about that old memory of violent abuse. You've been through all that. You are *so* finished with it."

But I couldn't afford to listen to my arrogant, know-it-all mind talk, so I opened my being and decided to really welcome the memory, to genuinely face and release all the pain that came with it. But in spite of the fresh opening and release, I still ended up in the same place of acceptance I'd been at for years.

I asked to peace in the room, "Am I complete?" The response was simple and clear, "*No.*" Again I fell into despair. Here I'd uncovered a so-called cell memory, but I didn't even know if it was the right one, plus I'd already dealt with it in the past! I felt helpless, confused, totally at a loss. Once again, something inside me just gave up. And once again, I fell into the soft innocence of not knowing anything, having no answers, not even knowing what to ask anymore.

As I did, I heard another prayer give birth to itself, "Please, somehow, let me be guided to completion – I don't know how to complete. I don't even know if this is the right memory, and even if it is, I've arrived at the same place of acceptance that I've been at for years. Please, show me how to complete."

There was silence. I didn't expect an answer. Time rested. Then spontaneously, unexpectedly, out of the emptiness a single word emerged: "Forgiveness."

Now of course my arrogant thinking mind raised its mouthy head and said, "Forgiveness? What a load of crap. Brandon, you've so long since accepted this whole issue; you've got it handled. You've done so much work on it – been there, done that, got the T-shirt. What difference can forgiveness make?"

But I thought, "You know what? I can't afford to listen to my negative thoughts. Besides, I have nothing to lose by forgiving, and possibly everything to gain."

So I gave it my best shot.

And during the process of forgiveness that followed, I realized that *there is a quantum difference between acceptance and forgiveness.*

I had been at a place of acceptance for many years. That acceptance allowed me to carry a very self-justifying story around with me – how I'd been so-o-o noble, so-o-o compassionate, so-o-o understanding that I'd come to accept what had taken place. Kind, compassionate (arrogant!) Brandon.

To forgive totally, unconditionally, I had to open my heart, get off my soapbox, give up thirty years of my blame game, and completely and wholeheartedly forgive.

It hurt, because I had to face my pride. I had become falsely noble, even saintly in my own eyes, and I had to own up to my own righteousness and finally give up the whole story – a story that had been a defining experience and expression of who I held myself to be. I had to give up my attachment to the story that I had been wronged by life. And when I finally forgave, when I truly opened my heart and completely forgave, the whole story of blame fell away and the consciousness connected with it was no more.

My story was over.

While I was forgiving, I realized that the tumor had never been clinging to me. *I'd* been clinging to it, and thirty years of dragging my victim story with me was finished in that one instant of pure, honest forgiveness.

The rest of the story is history, and three and a half weeks later I was diagnosed to be completely tumor free – no drugs, no surgery.

The healing power of forgiveness is palpably strong. It can heal bodies. It can heal lives. It can heal relationships. It can even heal entire nations. And it truly is *a gift you give yourself.*



So often we make the mistake of believing we are forgiving the other person for their sake, but the truth is, whenever we forgive, we release the consciousness of the whole story that we've been holding onto and nursing, and when it's gone, we are the ones who are freed.

In my experience there are really three aspects to forgiving. First, there has to be a willingness to let go of our attachment to our story, to admit to and let go of our arrogance. We have to be willing to drop our self-righteousness and give up the “juiciness” we feel by being superior, right, or on higher moral ground.

Next, we need to empty out. We need to get real and recognize that behind the arrogance is the real pain and hurt we feel, and we need to open our being and let all the raw feelings that had previously been suppressed and unexpressed be fully felt. We need to release all the pent-up emotion, the words and the consciousness that were hiding behind our pseudo-armor of nobility and blame. All of the genuine pain needs to be released.

Then third, once all the hurt has been met, expressed, and let go of, our hearts are open to uncovering the true learning inherent in the situation. We are open to experiencing what the other has gone through, and we may realize they were probably doing the best they could at that time within the confines of their own past conditioning, dramas, and pain. Once we've released our own pain, our heart feels a natural compassion and understanding of others' pain.

It's from that understanding and compassion that real forgiveness arises. It arises naturally, almost unavoidably, and it is completely unconditional. Once you've emptied out fully, forgiveness floods in to fill the void as a natural expression of grace. Forgiveness releases you completely from your story of pain and allows you to move forward in freedom in your life.

Indeed, forgiveness can become a route to freedom, if you are willing to drop your arrogance, open and release the stored pain, and allow natural compassion for others to arise.

In it all, humility is the key. For in true forgiveness, humility is always present.

**Here I will choose a memory of a painful experience in which I was unfairly treated, misjudged or betrayed that I am willing to forgive. (Different from the situation I chose for Marianne Williamson's "Forgiveness" article.) I will explain it here.**

**Now I will practice the three aspects of forgiving.**

“First, there has to be a willingness to let go of our attachment to our story, to admit to and let go of our arrogance. We have to be willing to drop our self-righteousness and give up the “juiciness” we feel by being superior, right, or on higher moral ground.”

**Am I willing to let go of my attachment to the story and to the need to be “right”?**

“Next, we need to empty out. We need to get real and recognize that behind the arrogance is the real pain and hurt we feel, and we need to open our being and let all the raw feelings that had previously been suppressed and unexpressed be fully felt. We need to release all the pent-up emotion, the words and the consciousness that were hiding behind our pseudo-armor of nobility and blame. All of the genuine pain needs to be released.”

**Becoming quiet and still, am I ready to I allow myself to be open, welcoming every feeling so that it can be fully felt? If so, I will be in that process now and write about it here. If not, I will write about my resistance here.**

“Then third, once all the hurt has been met, expressed, and let go of, our hearts are open to uncovering the true learning inherent in the situation. We are open to experiencing what the other has gone through, and we may realize they were probably doing the best they could at that time within the confines of their own past conditioning, dramas, and pain. Once we’ve released our own pain, our heart feels a natural compassion and understanding of others’ pain.”

**Am I open to the true learning that takes place in the process of looking through the eyes of the other person, or am I not quite ready? If so, I will practice this third step of forgiveness here. If no, I will write about my resistance here.**



**What is true for *me* about forgiveness?**

**What have I learned about forgiveness and my relationship with myself?**

**What have I learned about forgiveness and my relationship with others?**

**What have I learned about forgiveness and my relationship with my God?**



# I Open Myself

From *Handle with Prayer*

By Alan Cohen

I open myself to the presence of a Higher Power,  
and I place my difficulties in the hands of God.

I step back and allow the truth of love to guide me,  
and I surrender to a will that bolsters me.

I am aligned with the Force of Love that knows the well-being of all living things.

Thank you, God,  
for taking care of me in ways  
that I cannot comprehend.

I accept and celebrate Your presence and love in all that I do.



# Workbook Studies for Week 8

## WRITING

- ♥ **Week 8 Workbook:** Read and respond in writing to the Week 8 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Be ready to share your **Thought Paper** next week.
- ♥ **Light desserts:** Feel free to bring light desserts to enjoy during the break.

## THOUGHT PAPER: “What is True for Me About Relationships?”

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True for Me About Relationships?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to focus on one of the questions below as a springboard for your thoughts.

- What have I learned about myself and my relationship to myself?
- What have I learned about my relationships with others?
- What have I learned about my relationship with the God of my understanding?
- What is my purpose for being in the world today? What gifts do I bring?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented next week. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.

*The truth is that the inner Self of every human is supremely great and supremely lovable. Everything is contained in the Self. The divine Principle that creates and sustains this world pulsates within us as our own Self. It scintillates in the heart and shines through all our senses.*

- Swami Muktananda

## Week 8

# What is True for *Me* About My Place in the World?

*The Divine Spirit is flowing through me in an individual way and I accept the genius of my own being.*

- Ernest Holmes

### **This Week**

This week is a thoughtful consideration of our place in the world. Our every thought and corresponding action is like a pebble tossed into a pond, the ripples affecting the energy of life as a whole. We are in relationship with everyone and everything! We are also powerful creators; as we uplift our own lives, the life of all humanity is shifted in a new direction of peace, hope and unlimited possibilities!

*You're the only one who knows when you're using things to protect yourself and keep your ego together and when you're opening and letting things fall apart, letting the world come as it is - working with it rather than struggling against it. You're the only one who knows.*

- Pema Chodron

*Your commitment to other people must be an extension of your commitment to yourself, not at odds with it.*

- Paul Ferrini

*In every community, there is work to be done.  
In every nation, there are wounds to heal.  
In every heart, there is the power to do it.*

- Marianne Williamson



## **What is true for *me* about my place in the world?**

**I have been created as a divine expression of the One to bring my gifts to the world in a way that only I can do. I have a hunch that many of my gifts have yet to be uncovered. Am I willing to take a look at them? Am I willing to step out into the world to share with others my knowledge, my passions, and my compassion? Is something stopping me? If so, what is it? If there is a next step, am I willing to take it?**

**Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about my place in the world.**

**My place in the world (continued)**

**My place in the world (continued)**





# In Giving I Connect with Others

From *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*

By Isabel Allende, Edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman

I have lived with passion and in a hurry, trying to accomplish too many things. I never had time to think about my beliefs until my twenty-eight-year-old daughter Paula fell ill. She was in a coma for over a year, and I took care of her at home until she died in my arms in December of 1992.

During that year of agony and the following year of my grieving, everything stopped for me. There was nothing to do – just cry and remember. However, that year also gave me an opportunity to reflect upon my journey and the principles that hold me together. I discovered that there is a consistency in my beliefs, my writing, and the way I lead my life. I have not changed; I am still the same girl I was fifty years ago, and the same young woman I was in the seventies. I still lust for life, I am still ferociously independent, I still crave justice, and I fall madly in love easily.

Paralyzed and silent in her bed, my daughter Paula taught me a lesson that is now my mantra: You only have what you give. It's by spending yourself that you become rich.

Paula led a life of service. She worked as a volunteer helping women and children, eight hours a day, six days a week. She never had any money, but she needed very little. When she died she had nothing and she needed nothing. During her illness I had to let go of everything: her laughter, her voice, her grace, her beauty, her company, and, finally, her spirit. When she died I thought I had lost everything. But then I realized I still had the love I had given her. I don't even know if she was able to receive that love. She could not respond in any way, her eyes were somber pools that reflected no light. But I was full of love, and that love keeps grown and multiplying and bearing fruit.

The pain of losing my child was a cleansing experience. I had to throw overboard all excess baggage and keep only what is essential. Because of Paula, I don't cling to anything anymore. Now I like to give much more than to receive. I am happier when I love than when I am loved. I adore my husband, my son, my grandchildren, my mother, my dog, and frankly, I don't know if they even like me. But who cares? Loving them is my joy.

Give, give, give – what is the point of having experience, knowledge, or talent if I don't give it away? Of having stories if I don't tell them to others? Of having wealth if I don't share it? I don't intend to be cremated with any of it! It is in giving that I connect with others, with the world, and with the divine.

It is in giving that I feel the spirit of my daughter inside me, like a soft presence.

*Novelist Isabel Allende was born in Peru and raised in Chile. When her uncle, Chilean president Salvador Allende, was assassinated in 1973, she fled with her husband and children to Venezuela. Allende has written more than a dozen novels, including The House of the Spirits and a memoir, My Invented Country.*

**In what ways do I give of myself? How do I give to those in my household, including my animals and plants? How do I give attention to those who are close to me? In what ways do I move through the world with patience, kindness and generosity?**

# A Shared Moment of Trust

From *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*

By Warren Christopher, Edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman

One night recently, I was driving down a two-lane highway at about sixty miles an hour. A car approached from the opposite direction, at about the same speed. As we passed each other, I caught the driver's eye for only a second.

I wondered whether he might be thinking, as I was, how dependent we were on each other at that moment. I was relying on him not to fall asleep, not to be distracted by a cell phone conversation, not to cross over into my lane and bring my life suddenly to an end. And though we had never spoken a word to one another, he relied on me in just the same way.

Multiplied a million times over, I believe that is the way the world works. At some level, we all depend upon one another. Sometimes that dependence requires us simply to refrain from doing something, like crossing over the double yellow line. And sometimes it requires us to act cooperatively, with allies or even with strangers.

Back in 1980, I was negotiating for the release of the fifty-two Americans held hostage in Iran. The Iranians refused to meet with me face-to-face, insisting instead that we send messages back and forth through the government of Algeria. Although I had never before worked with the Algerian foreign minister, I had to rely on him to receive and transmit, with absolute accuracy, both the words and nuances of my messages. With his indispensable help, all fifty-two Americans came home safely.

As technology shrinks our world, the need increases for cooperative action among nations. In 2003, doctors in five nations were quickly mobilized to identify a SARS virus, an action that saved thousands of lives. The threat of international terrorism has shown itself to be a similar problem, one requiring coordinated action by police and intelligence forces across the world. We must recognize that our fates are not ours alone to control.

In my own life, I've put great stock in personal responsibility. But, as the years have passed, I've also come to believe that there are moments when one must rely upon the good faith and judgment of others. So, while each of us faces – at one time or another – the prospect of driving alone down a dark road, what we must learn with experience is that the approaching light may not be a threat, but a shared moment of trust.

Warren Christopher was U.S. secretary of state from 1993 to 1997. As President Carter's deputy secretary of state, he helped normalize relations with China, with ratification of the Panama Canal treaties, and gain release of the American hostages in Iran. A native of North Dakota, Christopher now lives near Los Angeles.

**As I think about my life today, how am I part of the good faith and judgment that make a difference in people's lives? Something as simple as holding the door open for the person behind me, covering my mouth when I sneeze, or making room for a car to merge all matter!**

# Talking with the Sun

From *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*

By Joy Harjo, Edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman

I believe in the sun. In the tangle of human failures of fear, greed, and forgetfulness, the sun gives me clarity. When explorers first encountered my people, they called us heathens, sun worshippers. They didn't understand that the sun is a relative and illuminates our path on this earth.

Many of us continue ceremonies that ensure a connection with the sun. After dancing all night in a circle we realize that we are a part of a larger sense of stars and planets dancing with us overhead. When the sun rises at the apex of the ceremony, we are renewed. There is no mistaking this connection, though Wal-Mart might be just down the road. Humans are vulnerable and rely on the kindnesses of the earth and the sun; we exist together in a sacred field of meaning.

A few weeks ago I visited some friends at a pueblo for a feast day celebration. The runners were up at dawn and completed a ceremonial run that ensures that the sun will continue to return. It is a humble and necessary act of respect. And because the celebration continues, the sun, the earth, and these humans are still together in a harmonious relationship.

Our earth is shifting. We can all see it. I hear from my Inuit and Yupik relatives up north that everything has changed. It's so hot; there is not enough winter. Animals are confused. Ice is melting.

The quantum physicists have it right; they are beginning to think like Indians: Everything is connected dynamically at an intimate level. When you remember this, then the current wobble of the earth makes sense. How much more oil can be drained without replacement, without reciprocity?

One day recently, I walked out of a hotel room off Times Square at dawn to find the sun. It was the fourth morning since the birth of my fourth granddaughter. This was the morning I was to present her to the sun, as a relative, as one of us. It was still dark, overcast as I walked through Times Square. I stood beneath a twenty-first century totem pole of symbols of multinational corporations, made of flash and neon.

The sun rose up over the city, but I couldn't see it amidst the rain. Though I was not at home, bundling up the baby to carry her outside, I carried this newborn girl within the cradleboard of my heart. I held her up and presented her to the sun, so she would be recognized as a relative, so that she won't forget this connection, this promise, so that we all remember the sacredness of life.

Joy Harjo *has written eight collections of poetry and has produced three CDs of her music and poetry. A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, she is a member of the Muskogee Creek Nation. When not teaching creative writing at the University of New Mexico, or traveling and performing, Harjo lives in Honolulu.*

**The sun shines on all of us; to each it gives the gift of its warmth, light and life. The sun reminds us that everything is connected, part of the sacredness of life. What do I bring to the sacredness of life?**

# This I Believe

By \_\_\_\_\_

**It is time for me to consider my place in the world.**

**After reading these three stories of the personal beliefs, I ask myself: What is one thing that *I* believe? In one or two sentences I will choose one of my core beliefs and write it here:**

**How was this belief formed, tested, or changed? I will write the story here.**

**How was this belief formed, tested, or changed (continued)**





# I Voice the Universe in an Original Way

From *Blessings*

By Julia Cameron

I bring to life a unique and powerful voice.  
My insights and perceptions are important blessings.  
Voicing my insights and perceptions is important to the world.  
I am an irreplaceable individual whose gifts benefit all.  
Owning my gifts, inhabiting them, and expanding them  
are my gifts to the world and those with whom I share it.  
As I become larger, more colorful, and more truly myself,  
I create for others the realization  
that it is safe for them to become larger, more vibrant, more fully alive...

As I extend my hand in my immediate world,  
I alter and enlarge the benevolence of the world as a whole.  
My every action is sweet and significant.  
Knowing this, I consciously and creatively act for the highest good.  
My unique voice and consciousness bless all.

