

THE *Dream Movement* SERIES

Going Back to Basics



By Marcia Wieder
America's Dream Coach[®]

Number Two



In selected anecdotes in this book, names and identifying characteristics have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.

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Going Back to Basics



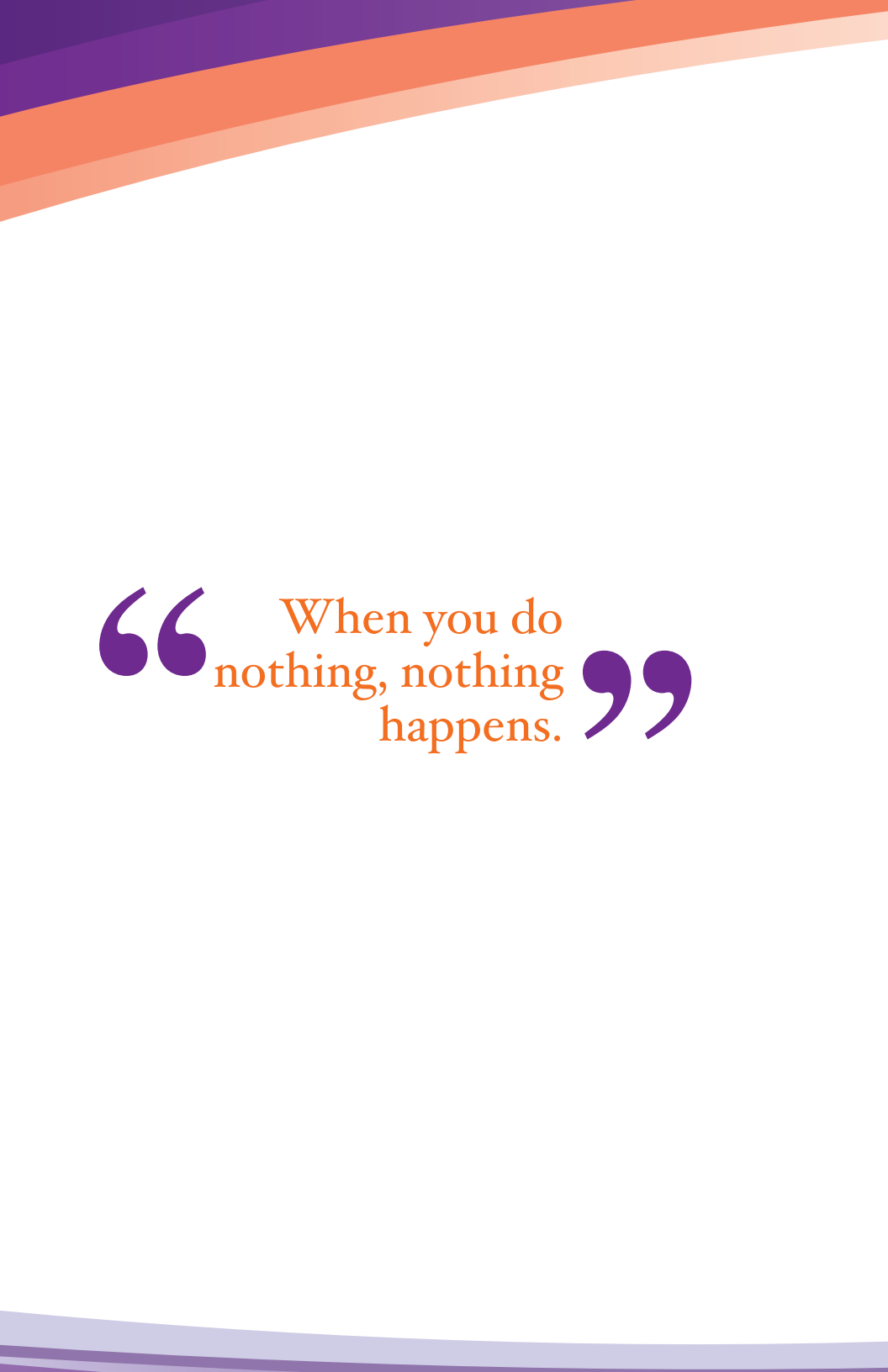
“Trade the mundane
for the unexpected.”





Table of Contents

Going Back to Basics	7
Notice Wake-Up Calls	8
Create Daily Practices	10
Do a Check-In	12
Deepen Your Breathing	14
Honor Your Body	15
Complete Incompletions	18
Accept Responsibility	21
Build Relationships	22
Six Steps for Ongoing Ease	23
Insights	34



“ When you do
nothing, nothing
happens. ”

GOING BACK TO BASICS

Preparing to look deeply at yourself, your life and how you want your life to be is a moment of truth. Although it can be done gently, it can never be taken too lightly. After all, this is your life and it should be lived to its fullest.

Perhaps the biggest commitment we can make while pursuing all the things we want and need, is the promise to take care of ourselves first. Only then can we truly be there for the many others that depend on us. To fail at self-preservation leaves our minds and bodies stressed, exhausted and incapable of sustaining a meaningful existence.

It is essential that your overall health is good and that your relationships are intact so you are really free to focus on you. This book will help you take a look at your relationship to yourself and to others in your life. It's too easy to gloss over the basic premise and just assume you'll somehow get to taking care of "you" later. But often that extra time never comes. When you do nothing, nothing happens. To expect otherwise is to live in a fantasy world, where you may end up with many disappointments and failed longings. Yet, that doesn't need to happen. And it won't as you focus, even a little, on making time for yourself first. The practice of really taking care of YOU; of identifying what your needs are and scheduling this time in first, can become a new way of living life.

Are you the type that fills your calendar up with all the things you need to do, and if there's an hour left over by Sunday you treat yourself to something special: a movie, golf game or a late night bath? Or, rather than enjoying a simple pleasure does even that time get used up with scheduling the week ahead? Face it, laundry, dishes and errands are inevitable and endless. What will it take for you to slow down or to make quality time to tune into your needs? Are you waiting for something to happen to you or a loved one that will finally get you to stop "the runaway train?" You can plan better than that, and I'll show you how.

My mother and the parents of two of my closest friends, all had triple bypass surgery last year. Luckily, modern surgery could put them back together. However, we can't let this become the norm. How we take care of ourselves on a daily basis will determine the quality of our health, our well-being and our lives.

NOTICE WAKE-UP CALLS

When I started running out of energy, I pushed myself harder. When I started gaining weight, I dieted. But when my stomach swelled up like a basketball and stayed that way, I knew something was wrong. I had a tumor on my ovary. I'm not sure anything short of a crisis would have really slowed me down. I hope you're more sensible and responsive to your needs than I was.

How often it seems to take some jolt to wake us up and say, "It's time to make a change." My surgery did just that. After five hours with my body cut open, I took a serious look at myself and how I was living my life.

The operation really affected my self-esteem. My thoughts about myself and my entire perspective on life were turned upside down. I thought I was strong. I never expected my body to fail me. As a strong-willed person, I thought I could fix or make anything happen that I set my mind to. I was wrong, and unfortunately found out the hard way.

I tried many alternatives to surgery. I felt such a sense of powerlessness that it made me quite humble. Finally, after much soul-searching, I succumbed to "go under the knife" and had the surgery I so desperately needed. The whole experience helped me realize that I was a human being made of flesh and blood, doing the best job I could. I also learned to take help when I truly needed it. My pride had initially gotten in the way, but the risk of losing everything I had worked so hard for opened my eyes and heart to what had to be done.

As we learn to ask for help from friends and family, we can begin to feel different about ourselves and about our worth as human beings. This insight allows us access to a whole new

level of power; power born from vulnerability and the power to be ourselves, just as we are. From this place, we can begin to make important promises to ourselves.

The biggest and most significant promise that I ask you to make is a tough one for many of us, especially if we're always taking care of, and giving to others. The opera singer Jessey Norman said, "Problems arise in that one has to find a balance between what people need from you and what you need yourself." I would encourage you to take care of yourself first, so that you have the resources to take care of and be there for others. Though initially this sounds self-centered, it makes sense when you consider the alternative of becoming completely spent. That's "spent" as in "chewed up and spit out." Standing strong in the resolution to be true to ones self is non-negotiable. Backing out of it isn't an

“Start every morning
with ‘What will
honor me today?’”

option. Actually it's an obligation worth fighting for, even at the risk of putting some things or people off. At least until you're ready to consider adding more to your to-do list. But, before you agree to do another favor, task or project, consider starting every morning with the most wonderful question, of "What will honor me today?" You deserve that kind of self-respect.

Faith Popcorn, a clever trend forecaster and the president of BrainReserve says, "After more than a decade of virtuous self-improvement, we're sick of being good, eating less, drinking less, saving money. It's time for safe indulgence, be it treating yourself to expensive makeup or staying in bed late on Sunday instead of getting up early to go to the gym."

Sometimes your indulgence may be to go for a long walk or to have a cup of tea in the park. Sometimes it may be writing

or reading poetry or a good novel. Sometimes it may be eating Bon-Bons, while watching a video as you lounge on your couch in your pajamas...at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Ask, listen, and do what you need to do. Sometimes it's easy and sometimes it takes guts. This is the practice of coming home or being at home with yourself, both literally and figuratively. When you're at peace with yourself, anywhere is home. Only then can you wholeheartedly give others what they need.

Making and acting on agreements with ourselves is a critical practice in building self-trust. The relationship that we have with ourselves is the single most important relationship we'll experience in our lifetime. How can we know what our dreams are, much less how to make them happen, if we fail to know ourselves and our needs? It's impossible.

If we only focus on our goals and producing results, the achievement or failure of them will only develop our ego-needs. The real practice of connecting with our souls comes from honoring who we are and accepting life without so many limitations. This requires getting still, being silent and not doing anything for awhile, so we can fully open up and allow life in.

On days when we feel scattered, or inadequate, how can we possibly be responsible or capable? I don't think we can. What I used to do on the days when I was down was anything that would make me feel better. My personal list included eating lots of chocolate and going shopping. Although not horrible vices, they never sustained me. Well, I must confess, the chocolate did help for a little bit.

CREATE DAILY PRACTICES

I meet so many people who have developed simple daily regimes they follow to help keep them balanced, happy and focused on the things that really matter. They follow them not because they have to or because they should. They use these daily pleasures as a way to honor themselves; their bodies, souls, hearts and minds. I recommend you do this for one main reason: Honoring a simple regime and keeping your personal agree-

ments will help you feel good about yourself and keep you “present” in life. The opposite is to check-out, give up, give in or just not care. Being present and accounted for is how we demonstrate to ourselves that we are important, special and deserve the best. Think of it as a way to salute your place in the world, wherever and whatever it may be...it’s yours.

Funny, as we treat ourselves this way, others begin to follow suit, treating us in a similar manner. It’s even possible to have this rub off on family and friends. We can experience the simple

“ Fully open up
and allow life in. ”

delight of taking good care of ourselves and notice that we actually have extra time for each other. See what it is that you need.

Here’s my short list: every day I try to spend at least a few minutes outside, preferably somewhere more green than gray; eat healthy, breathe deeply, and do some form of exercise. Now, exercise doesn’t have to be a dirty word. All it means is doing something physical to increase the amount of calories (which are really just measures of heat, i.e. energy) burned. Many of us take in more calories than we need, and what happens? Our bodies, smart as they are, intuitively store them for us in the form of fat. Great. Thanks.

But if you’re not concerned about weight loss, consider all the other benefits to adding at least a few minutes of exercise to your life: reducing stress, lowering your heart rate, reducing high-blood pressure, increasing stamina, and so on. Besides, sweating can be liberating!

You don’t have to join an expensive gym or a trendy class. Just be creative and mindful. Take the stairs rather than the elevator. Park a bit farther out in the parking lot. Throw a

Frisbee with your kids. Save twenty bucks and wash your car on a beautiful sunny day listening to the Beach Boys or any other music that invokes the feeling of Summer. Walk the dog. And if you have it in you, walk the dog uphill. As Nike® says, “Just Do It.”

This is a daily agreement that I have. I relish it and am grateful that I have found a simple way to put my needs first. Sound selfish? By indulging in yourself a little, you will have extra energy, love and time to give to those around you. The writer Anne Shaw said, “Fond as we are of our loved ones, there comes at times during their absence an unexplained peace.” It’s amazing how taking the quality time for ourselves, can create more to share with others.

Whatever daily practices you employ, here are some really simple suggestions to help maintain them for the long-term:

- Check in with your daily needs.
- Write them down and keep it simple.
- Practice keeping your agreements, especially with yourself.
- Be aware and notice life.
- Notice how you feel.
- Notice what you’re thinking.
- Stay in communications by sharing what’s up.
- Listen carefully and actively.
- Have fun, notice when you’re not and make a shift.
- Read this list.

DO A CHECK-IN

There is a deeper process of taking care of ourselves. It starts with an honest “check in.” Where are you now with your needs and wants? And what, if anything, are you going to do about it? This is a good place to begin.

Consider starting with some real quiet time. I don’t mean a few minutes in the elevator or in the bathroom between appointments, but quality quiet time. When you first wake up, either in bed or over your morning coffee or tea, try spending ten minutes checking in with yourself.

Take inventory, but do it with your heart. Ask your heart and your body how they feel and what they need. Ask yourself what would bring you joy today. Practice being still, being quiet and listening for answers. Practice tuning in and listen-

“Take inventory,
but do it with
your heart.”

ing to your heart. Gerald Jampolsky, M.D. is the founder of The Center for Attitudinal Healing and author of *Change Your Mind, Change Your Life* and *Love is Letting Go of Fear*. He says, “Peace of mind is our single goal.”

Here are the symptoms of inner peace (author unknown):

- A tendency to think and act deliberately, rather than from fears based on past expectations.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging others.
- A loss of interest in judging self.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of ability to worry.
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling through the heart.
- Increasing susceptibility to kindness offered, and the uncontrollable urge to reciprocate.
- An increasing tendency to allow things to unfold, rather than resisting and manipulating.

What follows are the areas that I recommend you personally explore. Use these and any others that you can think of to clearly assess where you stand and what you need to do. Once you do, you'll be better prepared to attain inner peace and greater ease in your life. Remember, this about getting back to basics.

DEEPEN YOUR BREATHING

Breathing slowly and deeply is a good way to take your internal pulse and focus. The first definition of the word “inspiration” in the dictionary is “breathing in.” Are you inspired? Are you actually breathing in life? Do you feel life as it fills you up and as you blow it out?

Many of us have forgotten how to breathe. Busy on the run, we shallowly fill our lungs with just enough air to keep ourselves from being asphyxiated. We’re just not taking the time to breathe the way our minds and bodies need us to. Even though breathing is instinctual, breathing the best way is not.

There are three forms of breathing: Upper, middle and lower-costal. “Upper” is the shallow breathing we do when under duress or threatened. It’s that breathless feeling you get when it’s your turn to address an audience; run a flight of stairs when we haven’t done so in a while; or taking that phone call from your boss after you’ve failed to meet a sales quota. It’s the type of breathing that accompanies stress of any guise.

“Middle” breathing is the everyday breathing we do. It keeps us alive and functioning. We don’t think about it. Luckily our brain thinks about it for us, without bugging the busy parts of our mind that has to keep track of fifty other things to do. We simply take another breath every time our blood-oxygen levels get too low. This is such a brilliant design because I’d hate to have to remember this too on top of trying to remember to pick up dry-cleaning, stamps and dog food.

The type of breathing I am proposing you do more of is the “lower” form. This is the breathing you might call “cleansing” or “deep” breathing. It fills the whole lungs, not just the top or middle, but way down to the lower portions that often gets ignored on a busy day. Breathe deeply and slowly. You can tell you’re doing it right because your belly will actually get pushed out as you fill in your lungs. This may be the only time having your belly stick out (other than while pregnant) is a good thing. It’s that simple and vital.

Our breathing is a barometer showing us how we are living

our life. As we learn to deepen our breathing, so too can we deepen the quality of our life. Imagine, all that, not from just breathing, but from breathing fully. Notice the quality of your breath and you may see some correlation to the quality of your life. Is your breathing slow, gentle, natural, rhythmic or stagnant, short, rushed, shallow or forced? Learn to know the differences between all three—each has its place.

HONOR YOUR BODY

This section is not about attaining the perfect body, but rather about having your body working perfectly for you. Maybe you've heard the statement, "Garbage in, garbage out" or, "You are what you eat." Well it's true. You're also what you think, feel and dream. We don't have to necessarily feel sad or happy, but just by making a facial expression associated with an emotion, our brain responds in kind, influencing our emotional experience. The point is to first try and behave how you want or should act, and more than likely your feelings and emotions will follow suit. As you might guess, I would encourage you to put on a smile when you least feel like doing it. Chances are you'll laugh at how silly you look, smiling for no apparent reason. Trust me, it can't hurt. Plus, no one ever died from an overdose of "fake-smiling."

So, have you made an unspoken agreement with your body to do the right thing? Or are you at the mercy over its lack of discipline. Does your body act like the child who doesn't stop whining until he/she gets what it wants? Is your body and heart light or heavy? Check in. What does your body need to support you, as you dream your big dreams? Keep checking in.

Are the majority of foods you eat whole and nurturing? Or are they overly-processed with saturated fat, slowly clogging your arteries and poisoning your system? Picking up a burger and fries at the drive-through is okay once and a while, especially if you make it up by eating an extra helping of broccoli the next day. But, doing it on a weekly basis can compromise

your health. At least don't eat them the night before you have your cholesterol checked!

Moderation is the key here. Rather than giving up the french fries when you really crave them, just have them on rare occasion, savoring every bite. Don't make a hobby out of it. And make sure to drink enough of the right things to stay

“What needs attention and what needs healing?”

well-hydrated. Stay away from sugary sodas and go easy drinking too many caffeinated beverages. But enjoy fresh juices, low-fat or skim milk, water and similarly healthy beverages that you can imbibe in as your diet permits. And that's "diet" as in the usual foods you eat or drink; not to be confused with a fad "diet." Again, be reasonable and use common sense. No one says you need to carry around and drink a 32 oz. bottle of triple-distilled, vitamin/mineral/amino acid-infused gooseberry water to be healthy.

Early in the morning or at least once a day do some form of movement. A short walk or a few stretches will get you started, and dancing or a great workout will benefit you even more. How do you pamper your body? Do you give it and get hugs and held, massaged and tickled? Do you notice what's working, what needs attention and what needs healing? And once you do notice, do you or will you take action?

Two words about sleep: get enough. Dr. James Maas, from Cornell University and the author of *Power Sleep: The Revolutionary Program That Prepares Your Mind for Peak Performance* recommends learning to know how much sleep you need to perform optimally. If you find your mind and body sluggish, he suggests incorporating a 20-minute "Power Nap" into your schedule. These are best taken in the afternoon, about eight hours into your day. While some people can fully

function on a mere five or six hours, most of us need closer to eight to stay sharp and healthy. Yes, healthy. Being chronically sleep-deprived has been linked to everything from obvious reduced mental functions to increases in disease rates and decreases in longevity. Losing sleep jeopardizes your health, mentally and physically, so be sure to give your body what it needs. The restorative process of sleep cannot be overestimated, take advantage of it when you can.

My friend Dana was a powerful advertising executive in New York City when she and her husband decided to have a baby. While experiencing several emotionally painful and devastating miscarriages, she learned to hear what her body was saying. Her life and lifestyle were simply too stressful and her body was loudly reacting to it.

Dana honored what she heard. She and her husband completely changed their lives, including moving to Arizona. It took tremendous courage, will and desire to do this. Was it worth it? When you see them with their beautiful daughter Rachel Hannah there is absolutely no doubt whatsoever.

Our bodies are essential to our well-being. They hold us and give us so much. What do you give your body on a daily and regular basis? Stop here and take inventory. Be honest and make critical life choices that will take care of you from this point forward. A little attention in the right place will go a long, long way.

This is one way you can learn to focus intently, fully feel your desires, deeply set an intention and receive specific guidance on your next steps. The author Elisabeth Kubler-Ross said, “Learn to get in touch with the silence within yourself and know that everything in this life has a purpose.”

If you are thinking you just don’t have the time, be aware of this misperception. Nothing will give you more time and more quality time than the practice of meditation. Don’t let your belief about time be the excuse for not exploring this necessary practice and delicious treat.

Johnny Moses, a brilliant twenty-five year old Native Amer-

ican who speaks eighteen languages says, “If you respect yourself and treat yourself as sacred, you will respect all things and know all things are sacred.” Recover the sacred through your own ritual practices.

COMPLETE INCOMPLETIONS

As you deepen your ability to be still your senses become more acute. You’ll develop a greater sensitivity to people and things around you, learning to discriminate between what’s true and what’s not. You recognize false securities, illusions and what no longer serves you. Soon you’ll be able to let go of people, ideas and things that don’t work, or hold you back...free of guilt and full of potential.

Practice lifting your burdens by clearing the clutter of your mind and life. If you want to make your dreams come true, you need to create space for them, not just in your closets or in your office, but in yourself. Make room in your life for your dreams.

Are there areas left incomplete in your life? They can be notorious and contagious. One incompleteness leads to another and so on. It’s difficult to focus on creating and dreaming when you have parking tickets that are overdue or garbage all over your apartment.

When you have clothes or shoes all around the house, dishes piled in the sink or a buried desk, you may be out of sorts. We don’t need to be obsessive about this. We just want to recognize signs. When life is overly cluttered, often so are we. Learn to see what’s in your space. Recognize where you’re sluggish or sloppy and clean it up.

In the morning, when you’re enjoying your quiet, dreaming time, you won’t be distracted. Or in the evening, you’ll be delighted and free to focus on you when you come home rather than tending to a mess.

Complete what you start, when you start it, even if it’s to decide what not to do it anymore. Keep your mind relaxed and available for the things that matter to you. You will find this a life changing practice.

As our life becomes more balanced and well-rounded (which comes from finding time for ourselves) we end up having access to more. The quality of people we associate with and the level of integrity by which we live our lives will increase. And wherever we are incomplete, especially with people, it shows up. We might be abrupt or judgmental about something someone says or does, and in reality, may have little to do with them. If there is someone who we are incomplete with, or something that needs to be said, it seems to get in our way again and again, often with different people. It's become a destructive theme in your life, yet you can break the pattern by learning to "be complete" in all your relationships. This includes mom, dad, brothers, sisters, spouses, friends, lovers and bosses.

My friend Carol had a room in her home that she called the "black hole." It was literally filled with incomplete items. She and her husband were trying to sell their house and move overseas and she knew it was time to empty that room. She decided it would be a great symbolic gesture and ritual to handle the black hole of her life. She followed the above procedure and came up with a list of over three hundred items that needed attention. They included returning things she had borrowed, writing letters, returning phone calls and even mailing back an inexpensive bracelet that she had stolen from her neighborhood drug store when she was a teenager.

It took some time and effort initially, but with each item she handled and completed, Carol felt lighter and more liberated. Getting rid of excess baggage (literally) or resolving unfin-

DREAM STEP

Take yourself through this powerful exercise.

Step One: Write down the names of anyone with whom you are incomplete with in any way. Go back as far as you can. You may notice that particular person pops right into your head.

Step Two: Write down what it is that is incomplete or what happened. Go through your entire list.

Step Three: Next to each item or name, write down what you need to do to complete it. On some items you may need to write a letter or make a phone call. On others you may need to find forgiveness or just declare "it's over" and move on.

ished business has a way of freeing you up to concentrate on more important matters. If left unattended, small messes can become landfills in our life. Start taking care of them today, even if you can only make minor inroads with what time you do have. Within a few weeks of completing her list, Carol and her husband easily sold their house and made their big move. Completion creates freedom.

Decide which items on your list you intend to accomplish. I recommend doing them all, if that's what will honor your process. Practice doing this calmly and gracefully rather than turning into a control addict, having to check off each bulleted item on your Post It® note all in one day. Having a sense of humor here and keeping a sense of lightness about this process is very useful. Give yourself reasonable expectations.

The prima ballerina Dame Margot Fonteyn said, "Take your work seriously, but never yourself." What you are going for is a sense of completion and ease, not an obsessive-compulsive drive to keep life in a tidy little package, dust and dirt-free. Life is easier and flows better when it's intact, when you are whole. It's just that simple.

Completing unfinished business with people is not restricted to those still living. You can even get complete with some-

“ If left unattended, small messes can become landfills in our life. ”

one who has died. The past can often hold dark pain and regret, especially when we think we may have blown the chance to do so when that person was alive. How often have we heard someone comment on wishing they could turn back time and express what needed to be said when they could have done so? The chance doesn't materialize magically, and sadly,

many people fail to take it when they should have. But there is still hope for healing.

I know a woman who had a dear friend die at a young age from AIDS. She missed him terribly and decided to go to his grave site and have a conversation with him. She brought bubbles and flowers.

When she got there she was so surprised to hear what came out of her mouth. She was filled with rage. She had planned on having a life long friendship with this person and now he was gone. After two hours of yelling, crying, laughing and blowing bubbles, she was finally able to put it to rest. Her friend lives on in her heart, while she's free of experiencing any intense reactions if told other sad news.

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

When was the last time you said “I was wrong.” or “I made a mistake.”? And if you followed it up with “How can I make things better from here on out?” you’ve already learned a very powerful lesson in achieving a fuller life. Accepting responsibility is hard. It’s no fun being a grown-up sometimes. What with all the bills to pay, a job to report to and a family to be responsible for, no wonder the urge to dump on somebody else is the first thing we often resort to. But blaming someone or something else does not make it so. That kind of diversion tactic is unhealthy and immature. Yet admitting when you’re at fault is a giant leap forward in gaining control of your life. And that is always a good thing.

Think about what happens when we lay blame, pointing the proverbial finger. When you are pointing your index finger at them, notice how many other fingers are coming back at you. Last time I counted, it was three. This means that what you don’t like about that person, is most likely something you don’t like about yourself. It’s called projection.

It’s easier to see and say that “it’s their fault.” The writer Erica Jong said, “Take your life in your own hands and what happens? A terrible thing; no one to blame.” When we realize

that life is just one big lesson, we can practice asking what can be learned here. Ask, “If I was wrong, what might I see? If I could see this through their eyes, what might I realize? Why am I having this reaction and what does it say about me?”

This will help you practice compassion for them and for you. Compassion is a quality that emanates from our heart. It takes the emphasis off “being right or wrong” and focuses us on the people involved. In other words, it allows us to be more committed to our relationships than to being “right.” It changes the game and makes it much more meaningful and worthwhile.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

The people in our lives are here for a reason. We choose and create the kinds of relationships we have. Are your relationships deep and profound, heartfelt and kind, loving and generous? How do you want them to be and what are you willing to do to have them be this way?

The clever novelist Virginia Woolf said, “I have lost friends, some by death...others through the sheer inability to cross the street.” What is your dream for the kind of people you want around you and how you expect to interact with them? Find some time and think about this. Take some space and feel this and then find these people, nurture these people and honor them as you honor yourself. And most importantly, practice being the kind of person that you want to be in relationship with.

The emphasis here is to go find them. Go out. Go do the things you dream of doing. Put yourself in the game. Initiate conversations. Smile. Be friendly. Flirt. Whatever it takes, take responsibility for surrounding yourself with quality people and have fun while you’re doing it. Barbara D’Angelis Ph.D., author of *Making Love Work* and also known as the Love Doctor says, “It’s easy to be enlightened when you’re by yourself. Try it with other people.”

I am a big believer in the power of relationships. My main premise for making any dream come true is to share your dream

so others can help make it happen. The people around you are your sacred core. They can hold you up, light the way and ease your load, assuming they are people who are on your team.

It's time to take stock. Who is in your life and at your side right now? Are your confidants people you trust, love, admire and choose to play with? If not, go find them. One of my life's dreams is to partner with creative visionaries to make things happen. There's a whole community of us. We recognize each other by the sparkle in our eyes and we love to build community and share our resources.

I notice as I am clear about my dreams or at least my intentions, I attract like-minded individuals. I seem to meet many people who are interested in being of service to others, many who enjoy teaching and learning. We help each other. You are building lifelong relationships, partnerships and friendships. If this matters to you, start doing it today. Isn't this a big part of what life is really about?

And this is what getting Back to Basics is about. Check in with yourself and your needs. Use your breath to slow down and get quiet. Take especially good care of your body and soul, you'll never get another. Complete whatever is incomplete and surround yourself with people who love you and empower your dreams. See what else will light up your life and practice using it all. That pretty much says it.

SIX STEPS FOR ONGOING EASE

Now you have to take ease out into your daily life. If this gives you concern, it's no wonder. We can count on life for certain things. Life will test us. Life will keep us busy and too often distracted.

When life shows up with all its distractions and annoyances, as well as its opportunities and rewards, you can be ready with your ease tools. What follows is a clever system of tips you can use on a moment's notice and under any circumstance that will assist you in maintaining and practicing ease.

When something happens that throws you "off-center,"

follow this six-step formula. Recognize what's happening when it happens. Realize and reflect on what you are doing and where or how you have done this before. Get into relationship with the people and situation involved. Respond and re-create the scenario.

This formula will offer you ease. Just noticing or realizing what's happening, when it's happening, is a life changing skill that you already possess. But have you forgotten to use it? Making these unconscious skills conscious is simple to do. Soon you will find yourself automatically using these points to remember your inherent ability to reclaim your power. You will notice that you are more in control, much more relaxed and have a much greater capacity to deal with challenging situations.

As you begin to live with greater ease, this six step process will support your daily maintenance of ease. When you hear the word "maintenance," do you think "uh-oh, this is going to be work" and run and hide? For many of us, maintenance is a term that has been used to describe our diet or fitness regime. It connotes arduous workouts and food deprivation. Maintaining good grades meant many hours of studying and no fun. Car maintenance, to me, still means big expense and inconvenience.

But when we talk about maintaining ease, it's a different story altogether. I would never suggest a complicated or energy-draining approach for maintaining ease. It would obviously be counterproductive. The idea behind this maintenance program is to easily incorporate these habits into your existing repertoire, so you can easily practice ease on a daily basis, and especially during stressful times.

Step I: Recognize

To recognize something is simply to see it. How do you recognize your behaviors, feelings and patterns? Recognition is the first step and the key for restoring balance. Recognition gives you access to more of who you are, what you need and what's happening. Without it, we often "spit into the wind" or make

situations harder for ourselves. When you are “in tune” with what you are feeling and what’s going on, you are more present and available to face reality.

Here are five simple suggestions for recognizing what’s happening or what you are feeling. First learn the proper technique of how to breathe properly. Second, is to close your eyes and focus your attention inward. Third, put your attention fully on the situation. Fourth, simply sit down and get still. Or fifth, write in elaborate detail about what you are experiencing. Any of these methods will help you become more present. And in the present moment is where you need to be, as often as possible, to experience ease.

Steps 2 and 3: Realize and Reflect

Realizing what’s happening when it’s happening may sound difficult, but it’s actually easier than many expect. We are so influenced by our past and so colored by our experiences that just seeing “what’s so” is an important skill to practice. This skill already exists inside of you, but by consciously naming it and using it, we are shining a bright light on it. We perfect our skills and techniques through our awareness of and use of them. As you develop this part of yourself, you will have instant access to greater ease.

Realization begins with stopping. Stop and notice what you are feeling. As you realize what’s happening, as it is happening, you can begin to use life’s encounters as a resource for growth and to have ease in your life. To realize something is not just to see it, or have a thought about it, but to feel the emotions associated with these thoughts, and when necessary, to take appropriate action.

Carey wanted a new boyfriend, but saw she was sabotaging the chances of this happening. When Carey finally accessed her feelings, she realized that she was angry because her husband had died, leaving her feeling lonely and abandoned. She carried that unresolved anger around for nine years. Once Carey realized what she was feeling, she immediately felt free and alive, and met a new man within a few months.

Kristen is a successful woman who wanted to make a career change for quite some time. She couldn't understand why she was struggling to live the life she wanted. After listening to her for half an hour, the problem was evident to me. Every time she said what she wanted, she immediately came up with a list of reasons why she couldn't have them. She was sabotaging herself with doubt. But here's the kicker: She had no idea she was doing this. I fed back to her what she was saying, when

“ Give yourself
the potential to
shift. ”

she said it. She was shocked. She had not been listening to herself. Realizing that she had this bad habit was the first step in breaking it. Kristen listens to herself carefully now, which helps her realize what she's thinking and feeling.

To realize something is to give yourself the potential to shift it, or at least to shift your relationship to it. What you don't see, hear, recognize or understand at first now exists in your conscious awareness, ready to be examined and understood.

Often as we begin the journey to know ourselves, we see things that we don't like or don't want to believe about ourselves. My friend Tom realized that his relationship with money was not good. Actually, it was awful. He would do things like lose it, get angry about it and always be late paying his bills, even his taxes. He just hated money and everything about it.

With a commitment to understand himself, Tom began to face his financial issues. He remembered a painful childhood memory about money. When he was six years old, one of his young buddies stole a jar of quarters from his own father. The two boys spent the afternoon binging on candy and soda pop. When their fathers found them, they beat the daylight out of them.

The moment Tom remembered the incident and realized his pain, the block on money released. He no longer loses cash and is able to balance his check book. Sound far-fetched? Within 24 hours of the realization, Tom was offered a new job making thousands of dollars more than in his current position. His remembering released his negative money attachment and freed him to create a new relationship with cash.

Once you realize what's happening, you can reflect upon what this situation means and how you are reacting to it. Ask yourself when have you been here before. What did you learn? What is this revealing about yourself? Do you trust yourself and feel confident or do you need to take some time for yourself to reflect more deeply? See how your ability to trust yourself either empowers or impedes your new relationship with ease. Learn how to confide in and fully trust yourself. This can be done only through practice. It is through the ongoing practice of asking and answering questions and acting on what you think, believe and know, that will deepen your intuition, instincts and risk-taking abilities. Practice minimizing stress around important decisions by exploring options and deepening your self-trust. Think new thoughts, try new ways and recognize what works. These are essential tools for building the kind of life you want.

I spoke at the Governor's Conference for Women in California. Over 2000 women gathered in a room to hear my speech entitled: "Insight, Inspiration and Impact." It was a lively and interactive discussion. About halfway into it, one woman raised her hand.

"Marcia, how can you have ease when you are torn between two mutually exclusive options? It's time to finally take my home-based business and move it out of the house. But I have a problem. I love spending time with my children and I want to be a good mother. To me, this means being there for them when they need me. What should I do?"

Another woman in the audience asked for the microphone and gave her opinion. She felt we should not give our lives up

for our children. She emphatically said, “We have to pursue our own dreams as we encourage our children to pursue theirs.” Half the room cheered in agreement.

I presented another point of view. (There are always at least two, usually more. Whenever we want more ease, we need to explore options and opportunities, while still honoring what is true at any given moment.) I invited the first woman to reflect on her needs. I asked her to make up her ideal career scenario, playing it out fully with either outcome, or with a combined picture including the best of both worlds. I asked her to feel which scene honored where she was in her life and what she needed now. I reminded her that it didn’t have to be an “either/or” situation.

I asked what would give her ease. We saw that she could get creative, perhaps creating child care right in her new office. By asking for help, she began to see new possibilities, and by taking a breath, she could honestly recognize, from a centered and calm place, what action to take. The rest of the room applauded. They witnessed how recognizing old behaviors and reflecting on new ideas created ease and opportunity. It didn’t have to be all or nothing.

This “either/or” theme is not just part of the American culture. I recently spoke in England to The British Association of Entrepreneurs. A woman in the audience said she loved what I was saying about passion and dreams, but asked, “How could I ever put my needs before the needs of my family?”

I felt much compassion for her. Her heart was in the right place. Unfortunately, many of us take care of everyone else first. Our families, clients, employees, friends and pets get all we have. If there’s anything left over, perhaps some of our needs get met. It’s darn near impossible to live a life of ease if your needs are always the last to be identified, heard or fulfilled.

Listening to her question, an image came to my mind. If you are on an airplane and the cabin experiences a pressure change and, God forbid, the oxygen mask falls down in front of you, what does the flight attendant tell you to do? “Please secure your mask first, so you are available to help others around you.”

“ Without passion and inspiration, we become depleted and run out of juice. ”

The oxygen mask offers an interesting metaphor. If you look up the word “inspire” in the dictionary it means “to breathe.” Without inspiration, we would expire or die. Taking care of some of your needs and recognizing and realizing some of your own dreams is essential. Talking about your dreams and passions is not a frivolous conversation. It inspires you and has everything to do with ease.

How are dreams related to ease? A dream is defined as a fervent hope or desire. Living a dream-come-true life requires ease. The whole rationale behind ease is to be able to do less, with less effort, wasting less energy, all while having more. Don't you want more time, energy, creativity, love and happiness? Wouldn't this be a dream come true?

Without passion and inspiration we become depleted and run out of “juice.” But when we take care of ourselves, which includes reflecting on our own needs and living more inspired lives, we have more joy and vitality to give to the people we care about. “I'm taking good care of me, so I can take good care of you,” is a motto many of us need to adopt in order to have ease. If this is true for you, please open your calendar right now and schedule a day (or at least an hour) that is time just for you. Use this time to recognize, realize and reflect on who you are, how you feel and what you need.

Step 4: Relationship

How you relate to life, to the people you meet and the circumstances you encounter, will determine how much ease you have. Before you can be fully available to relate to others, you

need to be in what is called “right relationship” with yourself.

How do you get there? Quality, quiet time is invaluable. During quiet time, you can begin to explore personal healing and awakening, which includes being open-hearted, available and trusting. Concurrently, others will be on their journey to become more of who they are. Although we may follow similar or different paths, the more we know ourselves, the more available we are to be with each other. From this place, we can see and hear each other. We can help and support each other. We can even help make each others’ lives easier and richer.

In relationship, as we share with each other our differences and preferences, the people we interact with are mirrors to help us see, understand and learn about ourselves, especially our dis-owned selves. Your disowned self is the part of you that you don’t know, can’t see, don’t recognize and don’t understand. Regardless, this is the part of you that tends to have the biggest reactions to other people and often wastes huge amounts of

“ We must get into relationship with our dis-owned selves. ”

energy, by blaming others for something that lives inside of you. We must get into relationship with our dis-owned selves in order to experience ease and to have more peace of mind. We all possess these parts and perhaps one of the sacred functions of being human is to come to know these parts of ourselves.

Here’s a story I recently heard a rabbi tell. Thousands of years ago, when God was creating the Earth and life, he asked the angels, “Where on Earth should I put love? It’s so precious I want to put it someplace safe.” The angels thought for awhile and one said, “Put it in the food. Surely the humans will find it there and cherish it.” Another angel said, “Put it in the ground.

Every time they walk they will feel it.” A third angel said, “Put it in the sky. That way it will be everywhere.” Finally God said, “I know—I’ll put it in their hearts. Right there inside of them. It will be safe there. But it will be the last place they look.”

As we reveal ourselves and see others, we can heal and grow and become more whole. True love is not a destination, not a place to get to or a goal to obtain. Love is about bringing wholeness forward. It is about opening our hearts and letting our magnificence and beauty be expressed and witnessed.

Until we get into the right relationship with our wounds and deal with all of ourselves, we are not complete; we are distorted. Until we begin to recognize and realize that we are more than we can see or touch; until we begin to feel our feelings and relate to ourselves, we will not know true inner peace. And without inner peace, ease is impossible. How we relate to what’s happening in our lives, to the people who are involved and to what we are trying to create, can provide much ease or much stress. Every day we meet people who can have great impact on us, who can help us know ease. How we use and honor our relationships affects who we are and who we become.

Here’s a simple example of how relationships provide ease. When my friend John started his new job as a salesman, he called the man who he replaced. John asked for help and his predecessor introduced him to all his old accounts. He began closing deals and making money immediately. John has healed the parts of him that feel unworthy of asking for help and the parts of him that believe life has to be hard. He is in right relationship with himself, which makes it possible to be in right relationship with others. This is a key for having ease.

I’ll say it again. How you relate to life, especially to the situations and people you encounter, is directly related to the amount of ease and joy you will have on a daily basis.

Steps 5 and 6: Respond & Re-Create

When you respond to life from a centered and mature place, you have options such as reacting or relaxing. Sometimes the appropriate response may be to retreat. In retreat, we can find

peace and quiet. Being alone may enhance your concentration and creativity. Solitude has inspired innovation from many famous figures like Buddha and Sir Isaac Newton, as well as many poets, philosophers and computer gurus. Even Greta Garbo told us, “I want to be alone.”


But assuming you don’t retreat, or when you return, there are other ways you can respond. You can re-create your desired outcome and have what you really want. Remember to play and recreate. (Sometimes skipping directly to this step will give you the greatest ease). Re-energize and keep going by recuperating through rest and relaxation. Although many people think that play time is unproductive, it really is necessary. Momentum gained during “down time” of no work or worries can be used as a wave you ride to even greater ease. Learn to enjoy and appreciate both play time and down time. Perhaps we should rename it “up-time.”

“ At any moment,
we can reconnect
to what we love. ”

Even in the most desperate of times, these skills will help. I received a heartfelt and moving letter from a man named Jim. In his 30’s, with a beautiful wife and two young children, he had achieved a high degree of success in his life, including ranking as high as 4th place as a body builder in Mr. USA Competition. But last year he lost his focus and his confidence after his mother committed suicide.

Jim couldn’t eat, became very depressed and began thinking about driving his car off the road to end his own life. He realized he was out of control and needed help. He didn’t know where to turn, so he turned inward. And somehow he found the inner strength to recognize what he was feeling. He reflected on his entire life, what he had accomplished and who

he was. He reconnected to his love for his family and the relationships in his life. He felt how deeply he loved and cared for them. From this place he responded. He remembered and reconnected to his dreams and he decided to re-create his future. He is currently back in training, as he puts it, “to win the U.S. Championships in body building.”

At any moment, we can reconnect to what we love, to what matters to us, and we can use our talents, resources and passion to easily move forward in life. Whether you feel overwhelmed by life or by death, by little details or huge obstacles, you can experience ease by remembering to recognize, realize, reflect, relate, respond and re-create. Using this formula or any aspect of it provides ease. 

Insights

Establish a simple daily regime that will nurture you.

- Write it down, check in daily for additional needs and act on what you need. Ask yourself, “What will honor me today?”
- Notice what you are thinking and feeling. Take some time to really feel your feelings. Learn from everything.
- Find out how to breathe and practice often. This includes exhaling.
- Inventory your well-being, notice what needs attention and give yourself what you need.
- Complete whatever is incomplete from your past so you are free to live in the present.
- Seek out and create relationships that you love and that honor you.
- Practice being at home with yourself as you step out to be with others.
- Life will test us, perhaps keep us busy and often distracted. You can be ready with your ease tools.
- Just noticing or realizing what’s happening, when it’s happening, is a life changing skill that you already possess.
- Recognition is the first step and the key for restoring balance. Recognition gives you access to more of who you are, what you need and what’s happening.
- To realize something is to give yourself the potential to shift it, or at least to shift your relationship to it. For what you once could not see, hear, recognize or understand, now exists in your conscious awareness, to be examined and understood.
- It is through the ongoing practice of asking and answering questions and acting on what you think, believe and know, that will deepen your intuition, instincts and risk-taking abilities.
- Practice minimizing stress around important decisions by exploring options and deepening your self-trust. Think new thoughts, try new ways and recognize what

works. These are essential tools for building the kind of life you want.

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Make a Daily Dream Visit

For immediate support on
Making Your Dreams Come True,
I invite you to...

- Join AmazingDreamers.com
- Attend a Dream Workshop
- Check Out My Dream Store
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