a beginner’s guide

to the universe

uncommon ideas for living an unusually happy life

mike dooley

New York Times best-selling author of Infinite Possibilities and Life on Earth
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HAY HOUSE, INC.
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To Rebecca Solecito Dooley
Before this odyssey ever began,
there was you, your best friends,
and wide-eyed curiosity among you about who would be
the first to leap,
the first to forget, the first to kiss, the first to tell,
the first to fall, the first to get back up,
and the first to remember
that living in the illusions of time and space
all began with a dare . . .

. . . to LOVE in spite of it all.
A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to charity: water.
Contents

Prologue:
The Man You Think I Am

1:
Why the Sun Rises

2:
How “Things” Happen: The Logistics of Magic & Miracles

3:
Learning from All That Hurts

4:
Imagination, Dreams, and Baby Steps

5:
Making the Most of Friends, Family, and Relationships

6:
What Old Souls Know

Epilogue:
The Man I Am

About the Author
Dearest Rebecca,

The phone call I’ll never forget came late afternoon at home. It was the weekend, I was sitting at the desk in my office, your mother across from me. A nurse began, “You want to know the sex?”

“What?”

“You and your wife are having a baby,” she explained patiently, “and you want to know the sex?”

“Yes! Right!”

Without a hint of emotion, she continued, “You’re going to have a girl.”

It was as if God had just spoken.

This reality check of our firstborn about to arrive, when I was 52 years of age (soon to be 53), seemed more authentic than the modestly increased curvature of
your mother’s belly.

A GIRL!

My entire life, while outwardly nonchalant about having kids at all, I’d sometimes allow myself to imagine having a daughter. Of course, by my age, it seemed this boat had already sailed.

And then you arrived, six weeks early. Evading the 25 percent chance you had, based on your mom’s and my genetics, of having full-blown cystic fibrosis. Your five and a half pounds turning our family of two into three. Your mother’s existence, and mine, about to be transformed in ways unimaginable, never mind that we’d been warned of this by every parent who’s ever lived. Even today, my greatest surprise over your presence in our lives is how surprised I’ve been by everything.

As I held you the first time, your searching eyes belied a depth not apparent in your extremely small, frail body. This window to your soul gave no hint of where you’ve been, the plans you’ve made, or who you might become. Your tiny limbs and quivering voice were angelic. I was mesmerized. Which had less to do with odds beaten and digits counted, and more with your very embodiment of life’s greatest mystery: How could any of this—LIFE, YOU, our new family—be remotely possible?!

As these first years have rolled by and your fifth birthday now approaches, more than anything else, I’m awed as I witness you taking your place in the world: vessel of spirit, spark of the Divine. Not as “my” child—you are not truly “mine”—but as a child of the Universe. Still confounded that your mother and I somehow caused a biological chain of events, far beyond our ability to grasp, that would deliver you, as if from heaven, into our lives. That we are charged as caregivers and light bearers seems so contrarily absurd. Who are we to deserve so much? And who are we to be given so great a task? I fumble in my own darkness enough—there’s not much light to spare. Yet, that this madness is so, parents in the dark bringing forth children of light, in a world of meticulous order, means there must be a plan and reason for our relationship. And so I will endeavor, as all parents must, to fulfill my role and not take more from you than I’m able to give.

Since your arrival I’ve adored you for every reason and for none at all. And, as if things could be even better, to my wild astonishment, you seem to be just as crazy about me. To the point of embarrassment as you shun others who crave your attention as much as I do, and when you reach for me in spite of their outstretched arms and open, vulnerable hearts.

Has there been some cosmic mistake that I, rather than a misplaced saint, am the one so privileged to enjoy the extreme proximity of your existence and these
mutual currents of adoration, punctuated with giggles and tears? If only—my heart sometimes aches—I could be the man you think I am when you urgently and repeatedly call out, “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!” hundreds of times in a single day, wanting to share with me your every observation, idea, or whim. Or when you cry over my absence, want to ride upon my shoulders, or sit beside me for a meal. How could I be so important to such perfection as you?

This importance is what I now strive to earn. To one day become the man you see in me—the man you think I am—and to always be a light in your darkness, hope in your despair, and the best father in the world to any degree I may.

When your mom was still pregnant I was told by a friend that your impending birth would mark the day my life would begin. And so it seems—so much so, that I sometimes feel my time on earth prior to your arrival was merely preparation for what we’re now experiencing and all that lies ahead.

Speaking of which, while I have every expectation of loving and guiding you for decades more, I’m not so naïve to think you’ll hear all I say, to assume what I offer will actually be helpful, or, to even be sure I’ll live that long. Yet, as an author and speaker, whose “Notes from the Universe” have almost made me famous, and whose ideas have at least improved my own life, there are some things I hope to impart before this gig is up . . . or before we find out there really was some cosmic mistake. As if, a beginner’s guide to the universe—a handbook for rocking these hallowed jungles of time and space as a budding master, with uncommon ideas for living an unusually happy life.

Not that I’m a master, but my work the past two decades has been to help people live deliberately and create consciously among life’s infinite possibilities—a la thoughts become things, my catchphrase in the film and book The Secret. I’ve been teaching that life is neither a random game of chance, nor a test of obedience. That we live in a world of absolute perfection, made possible by love, upon which we are inclined to thrive. I actually tell audiences that life is not fair, but rigged in our favor.

To add some girding to these otherwise woo-woo ideas, my style and tone have always been more certified public accountant than doting father. I’m simply not used to exploring love and tenderness, which makes all that I feel for you so bizarre and tantalizing. But in spite of my actuarial tone (which I do think serves the lessons), I hope to reach both your mind and your heart.

I realize, of course, most people these days don’t read books, and I’ve found this is triply true if the author is a family member. “Never a prophet in your hometown.” In your own home? Forget it . . . “and would you please take out the trash?” That’s fine—I’d rather be your dad than your guru. Still, teaching is what I’ve been doing and loving for 20 years. And, if the things I write could
possibly shorten your own learning curves, lessen future suffering, and increase future joys, I must try.

In the pages that follow, there are six chapters covering the key tenets and concepts that I believe, once known, will give you or any reader the biggest boost possible in life. Each chapter is introduced by a letter recalling my own life’s epiphanies or relating memories of times recently shared together, followed by brief lessons on taking massive responsibility and its immense rewards. Finally, the epilogue will let you in on the most surprising discovery I’ve made from compiling these ideas, perhaps even the most surprising discovery of my life, concerning the shortcoming that weighs on me most lately—not being the man you think I am—a revelation with implications for every single person who’s ever lived.

So, to spare you any guilt that might arise from blowing off my 15 earlier books, this single one, as simple and concise as I could make it, capturing what I’d most hope any avid reader would gain from all my books combined, is for you . . . and for anyone else who’d like to be reminded of life’s beauty, our power, and how much we’re loved.

May all that you
wish for
be the least you
receive.
Tears and fears filled a large part of your early life.
You still cry for Mumu, though Mom passed when you were one year old. It was her knees you’d cling to when learning to walk. Her 81-year-old frame you’d yearn to hug. Her tired face you’d eagerly kiss.
Three years ago, you screamed, “Daddy! Help! A-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-g-h!” from the guest bathroom, where moments later I found you, having reached
into the empty tub and tipped yourself in, like a seesaw, landing on your extended palms, head down, feet high, your miniature, inverted frame frozen in terror, unable to move except to call for help.

And you woke us on several nights last year, still half asleep, crying with punctuated persuasion, “I . . . DON’T . . . LIKE . . . MONSTERS!”

Crying, obviously, is a child’s tribal call for answers, solutions, or love—that, in each case, must be provided by others. Needs that get more complicated as we age, because while we outgrow many of our dependencies, we still find more to be afraid of.

Fear’s been my lifelong companion and nemesis. Mostly worrying about things that never happened, my own inadequacy, or what other people are thinking. Yet I’ve learned how to cope and even to thrive, loved and in love, by discovering that all fears stem from misunderstandings. And that just a few, new, on-point ideas, applied to painful circumstances or sad perspectives, can completely change everything for the better.

The most powerful lesson I may have ever learned came with the realization that at the core of all fear lies confusion over who we really are, why we’re here, and what we can do with our lives. Which may seem unlikely, until you find out those answers. Ironically, when not tragically, the truths we miss that could steer us clear of confusion are easy to observe and experience in our own day-to-day lives.

Our physical senses alone reveal we live in an infinitely kind and unspeakably wise Universe that we are a part of, not apart from; where you, yourself, through mere thoughts, words, and deeds, become a creator. And of our countless creations, our lives are one.

Getting more cerebral, if Einstein was right and reality is merely a “persistent illusion,” then by extension, so must be time, space, and matter. He said as much about these elements in lesser-known writings. Which means there are no real “befores,” “afters,” “nears,” or “fars.” Everything is literally “here and now,” “One,” with no spatial, material, or time separations. Such qualifiers merely offer unique windows of selective perception.

So, in a Universe without separations, where all are truly One, mustn’t we each be made of, come from, Divine Intelligence? Without separations there can’t be God and non-God. Where would non-God “stuff” come from, anyway? And being of God means you, or your higher self, existed “before” this lifetime and you will “after” it; it means you are real, the illusions are not; you are forever, they are fleeting. It means you came first. Yet that you now find yourself within time and space means you (your higher self) must have chosen to be here and now!
To continue using simple logic, we can conversely realize that amid life’s staggering sophistication, it’s not feasible that we’re here to be tested, judged, and sentenced by an angry, jealous God. First, a God who could dream up the entire universe, much less photosynthesis, could not possibly be so petty, and second, what purpose would testing achieve? To see if God made a mistake?!

Similarly, it’s easy to nix the old notion that life started because of some random accident and is devoid of intelligence. That’s the same as believing that life sprang from rocks or vacuums, without explaining the origin of rocks and vacuums, while casting a blind eye to the intelligence within the world’s 100 million different species, and every cell, in their every body.

All of which builds to the inescapable conclusion that you are important; sacred, honored, loved, not beholden to a world of illusions; rather, it is beholden to you. You are a creator, through the act of perception, of every rock and vacuum; they did not create you. YOU are the very reason the sun comes up every day. Literally. Not “sort of” the reason, but the reason. You are free. Just be yourself. There are no tests. All is well. You deserve happiness, the indisputable highest emotional value known to humankind. (Love is not an emotion, but an absolute, as you’ll read later.) And while these ideas may raise major questions that neither of us has answers for, given the insights just acquired, do those questions matter anymore?

My evidence? How do I know the truth? As your father, I consider it my highest duty to help you think for yourself and to thrive in the world. And to that end, I’m simply offering for your consideration some of the ideas that I’ve honored and lived to great success. Ideas based on love and respect for all. Hardly my own, yet so universal and self-evident they can easily be attained by any earnest seeker.

My “process” for uncovering truth, which in hindsight always passes a simple two-prong test:

Begin with an idea that electrifies you, sourced from your own experiences, logic, or intuition, and consider it true if it:

- speaks of life’s beauty or our power, and
- applies to everyone, always, equally, no matter what.

No one is left behind, no one is excluded, no one is judged.

Could there be better confirmations for truth than our own experiences, logic, and intuition? It might be easy to brush these off as amateurish, until you consider that today’s predominant beliefs do not pass their muster and have no
rational basis other than to further scare and manipulate the masses.

If there were better qualifiers of truth, what would they be? Books? Priests? Scientists? Aren’t texts, creeds, and theories merely summaries of other people’s findings? Better for you to experience life, go within, draw your own conclusions and then see how they stand up to those drawn by a few of the world’s most revered, unbiased thinkers like Lao-tzu, Confucius, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Descartes, Emerson, Thoreau, James, Nietzsche, Hesse, Gibran, or the thousands of other respected voices from history for confirmation. I hope this book one day gives your own experiences, logic, and intuition such confirmation as well. Not that you need any authority other than yourself to stake your claim on life’s unquestionable beauty and your immutable power.

I’m aware, of course, that putting words to truth can sometimes limit it. Due to this unavoidable language barrier, you’re about to find subtle yet unavoidable seeming contradictions throughout this book. Yet, I’d rather risk minor and temporary confusion to buck you from herd-like thinking, and to spark your own search for answers.

As you weigh and consider all I’ve written, call out the limitations and contradictions, but also find what resonates with your heart, aligns with your mind, and is evident in your life. When you discover an idea for which there’s no such resonance, assuming enough of this book does, let it be an invitation for your own sense of personal responsibility to ask, “If this isn’t the truth, then what is?”

If I convince you of nothing else, I will have succeeded if you grasp the immensity of your duty to ask that follow-up question for all things in life that trouble your heart, knowing that there is always a single answer to find and leverage for your own peace and happiness.

There are no other rules. There are no hidden agendas. And there are no unknown variables working against you. You truly do have dominion over all things, unmitigated by anything . . . except confusion over what the truth is.

Your “rock” this lifetime will come from understanding the most fundamental absolutes of our reality, which is what this chapter is about. Then, fear can be banished from your life and all good things added—peace, comfort, creativity, confidence, health, wealth, friendships, happiness, love, enlightenment, truly all things.

Which is exactly what I wish for you.
You’re not here to earn your wings,
you’re here because, in some long-forgotten realm,
you already did.

You came first.
Before the sun, the moon, and the stars.
You chose to be here.
You’re who you most wanted to be.

The reason you forget who you were before
this lifetime began,
is to more fully be who you now are.

“Reality” is not that you’re weak,
and dream of becoming strong;
poor, and dream of becoming rich;
alone, and dream of having friends.
It’s that you’re strong, rich, and among friends—
yet, at times, dream that you’re not.
Thinking is life’s only variable. Everything else was settled a long, long time ago.

In the most basic sense, life as we know it began when God set out, through us, to think what has never been thought.

You are God’s only chance to be you. To see what no one else will ever see, to hear what no one else will ever hear, and to think and feel what no one else will ever think and feel. You are more precious than you can possibly imagine.

You’re already one of the most
important
people who will ever live.

The “original sin” was seeing the world of illusions and thinking they formed reality; Adam biting into the proverbial, illusionary, apple as if it was real, and thus falling from grace, falling from truth.

Every time we react to the world around us as though it were reality, we eat of the forbidden fruit.

If you look to time and space for answers, direction, and meaning, they’ll rock your world in every which way. Yet discover they look to you for answers, direction, and meaning, and you will rock the world.

The more you believe in appearances,
in the story told by your physical senses, 
and see yourself as a pawn in the circumstances 
you now find yourself in, 
the less control you’ll have over them. 
By all means enjoy appearances, 
just don’t trust them.

It’s not the “unseen” that’s fiction, 
but the seen. 
What you can touch will one day disappear; 
what you can feel will last forever.

The truth will not only set you free, 
it’ll slay all dragons, banish all fears, 
heal what hurts, fill what’s empty, 
clear what’s confused, connect all dots, 
lighten what’s heavy, bring friends together, 
turn dust to gold, 
and raise the sun.

To see more and more of what we’re missing 
fully explains the evolution of consciousness
within time and space.

All deliberate change comes first from denying the logic that earlier gave you comfort.

Our ability to stop kidding ourselves is what brings about the greatest breakthroughs, fastest comebacks, and happiest feet.

True love is a given, not an option; an absolute, not a variable. Born of our divinity, not our humanity. Always unconditional.

Our lives are not about love,
they’re about our adventures into love.  
Our adventures are the variable,  
not love.

Life is not just what you see, but what you’ve projected.  
It’s not just what you feel,  
but what you’ve decided.  
It’s not just what you’ve experienced,  
but how you’ve remembered it.  
It’s not just what you’ve forged, but what you’ve allowed.  
And it’s not just who’s appeared,  
but who you’ve summoned.

One of the greatest paradoxes of your physical senses is  
that they actually show you what you believe,  
as much as what you perceive—  
fortunately, the former is easier to change.

Instead of running from something scary,  
it’s easier to learn not to be scared of it.
It’s impossible to be scared when you dwell in truth.

Usually, loving more is easier than fearing less and gets better results.

You can only be afraid,
    when you pretend you’re not in control.
Lonely, when you stop doing things.
    Bored, when you stop following your heart.
And overwhelmed, when you think
    the illusions are real.

The believed-in myth that you might somehow lose
    or become less is what makes life an adventure.
Fear goes away when you remember:
First, you’re a spiritual being. And, second, nothing can ever be lost or taken from a spiritual being that cannot be re-created.

Sometimes it takes being pressed with darkness before you begin to seek the light.

Life does not happen to you. You happen to life.

While you’ll often hear that change is life’s only constant, the only thing really changing is you and what you understand.
Time and space are simply measures of self-awareness.

For those whose thoughts are free, so is everything else. Whether or not they know it.

Whatever you want, you deserve.

All forms of separation—disconnects, divides, illnesses, partings, breakups, and good-byes—are temporary.

You are forever.
If speaking to a spiritual novice
during the earliest days of human evolution,
you might explain God, metaphorically,
as if “He” were angry, testing, and judgmental.

To someone a bit more savvy,
during easier times, you might explain God,
metaphorically, as if “She” were always loving, nurturing,
and forever conspiring on your behalf.

And to someone on the verge of total enlightenment,
during the latter days of human evolution,
you might explain God by asking them
to turn up the music,
take off their shoes,
walk in the grass,
unleash the dog,
free the canary,
catch a breeze,
ride upon a wave,
dream upon a star,
dance
every day,
get up early, take a nap, stay out late,
eat chocolate,
feel the love,
give stuff away,
earn it back,
give some more,
and laugh.
Heaven is everywhere, always, at once. 
Hell is not knowing it.

Find the good in every circumstance. It’s always there.

Behold God, everywhere, always, now. 
There’s no devil, nor does evil exist of its own device. 
Evil is simply ignorance in human thought, misdiagnosed.

While there will be no such thing as a “Judgment Day,”
there are consequences. 
And the consequences of misunderstanding life’s truths 
are likely to include poor behavior, repeating cycles, and, possibly, a truly harrowing adventure through time and space . . .
until your thinking aligns with truth.
    Which will only ever lie
    a few new thoughts away.

No matter how long you ignore life’s magic
    or unwittingly swim against its current,
the instant you stop struggling
    you’ll be back in the flow,
the prodigal child returned home,
    inheritance fully restored.

There are only three things you need
    to know about angels:

1. They’re real.
2. Some exist to serve you.
3. They can do the most when you ask them for help.

Just because you’re a
    supernatural,
unstoppable, creator doesn’t mean you can’t have
friends on your team who help you out from time to time.

Avoid gray areas.
   Therein, the pathway to safety and comfort is guarded by the unreliable half-truths of “maybe,” “sometimes,” and “I don’t know.”

Life is absolute and its principles are exacting.
   In all things, there is a truth.

See everything through truth’s light
   and you’ll never know sadness, lack, or limits.
You’ll see that you are safe. Bathed in love.
   Surrounded by admirers in both the physical and spiritual realms.
You’ll see only beauty, perfection, and meaning.
   And you’ll realize that just as the stark contrasts of time and space may seem to imprison you, within them lies their own infinite possibilities.

Nothing will free you more than the truth
and nothing will hold you back more than not knowing it.

If you ever get curious and wonder who you were meant to be, look in the mirror and smile.

Your life’s purpose is far more a function of being yourself, than making clever choices.

Feeling lost does not mean you are.

All that you need, to have all that you want, lies inside of you right now.
While the notions of purpose, meanings, and destinies may challenge you, one idea you can always be clear on is that the mind that spun the cosmos together clearly has wishes and dreams all its own . . . that obviously included you.

All is supremely well.

There is no choice you will ever make that might limit you as much as you may fear.

Busy yourself doing what you most want, among the possibly skimpy choices you’ll sometimes have, and in no time you’ll find that your purpose has found you.
What’s most important is that you’re here.  
A million times less important is what you do here, when, where, and with whom.

You are not on earth to make things happen . . .  
to spread the love . . . to make it a better place  
or to learn acceptance of the things you cannot change.  
You are not on earth to find your soulmate or your purpose  
. . . To put the needs of others before your own.  
And you are most certainly not on earth to suffer, pay penance, be tested, or judged . . .  
. . . you are here because in your loftiest state of being, perched high above the wonderment, at the pinnacle of your glory, you wondered what it would be like, even fleetingly, to believe in limits.

And when you can grasp this  
*from within the illusions*,  
you will also grasp how unlimited you truly are.

There are really only two conditions  
of the human experience:  
Very, very happy, or, about to become very, very happy.
“Your happiness” is the ultimate answer to every “WHY?” you could ever ask God.

Forever has only just begun.
Slow never fails to arrive.
And, happy always lasts longer than sad.
Time truly is on your side.

Happiness doesn’t mean you’ve settled for less; it means you’re ready for more.

Some people are happiest when they’re unhappy. Let them be happy.
If you ever want to find a life partner,
    live in greater prosperity, be more productive,
foster peace on earth, or improve your health,
    if you can “be happy now,” ahead of time,
before these things have arrived,
    then these things will arrive even faster.

Happiness isn’t a crop you harvest when
    your dreams come true.
It’s the fertilizer that makes them come true faster.
    It’s also what opens the floodgates, beats your heart,
finds true love, feeds your mind, and frees your soul.

The wiser you are, the easier life gets.
    But then, the happier you are,
the less you need easy.

By all means, seek to change the things you don’t like
    and to manifest the things you do,
just don’t put off your happiness for either.
Happiness is the one option you’ll always have that no one can deny you.

The Law of Happy states:
However happy you’ve ever been, you will one day be happier.

The path to enlightenment is not a path at all, but a metaphor for the time it takes to live in joy, no matter what.

When the world seems hard and clarity is elusive, you might refresh your thinking by reframing time and space as the kindergarten of the Universe, not its Harvard.
Rising suns and babbling brooks.
Tropical forests and sleeping meadows.
Modern marvels and scientific breakthroughs.
Exciting discoveries and limitless frontiers.
Devoted friends and caring strangers.
Lives and loves and souls to hold so close,
your heart could burst . . .

While there may, at times, seem to be a lot of
“real estate” between where you are
and where you dream of being,
the road runs straight through paradise.

It’s not that you have to wait
for your dreams to come true,
but that you get to—
in a magical world where love abounds,
in the palm of God’s hand,
until your brief turn in space is over.
The reason butterflies float, fireflies light,
comets fall, trees grow, cats purr, and tails wag
is because each is reflecting something in you,
at the very moment of perception,
disguised by the elements, captured in time,
to remind you of your sublime divinity.

If you ever find yourself driving down the motorway of life,
looking for an exit that says “Easy Street” . . .
consider, that’s probably where we got on,
following a sign that said, “Paradise, this way.
Road Under Construction. Watch out for lightworkers,
invisible beliefs, and runaway dogma. No stopping.”

The great perfection of living a lifetime
within a world of illusions lies in the fact that
no matter what happens next, you’ll be richer for it.
People, when given a chance, smile, skip, and dance.
    They create, play, and laugh.
They care, share, and love.

The ones who don’t, haven’t yet realized that chances
    are something you give to yourself.

No matter your path,
    you will one day see that the good and the beautiful
wildly exceeded the bad and the ugly.

Should you ever overhear someone say
    they’re only human,
remind them it’s just for a short while, that before long
    they’ll be able to see their wings again,
speak in tongues, and blaze trails throughout eternity
    upon chariots of fire.
The dead do have their day,
and they all live beyond it.
No one really dies.

To the naked eye death appears random.
To the spiritually inclined it appears ordained.

Life is so magnificent that once you pass from this plane,
even your times of sorrow, fear, frustration, anger, confusion, and loneliness will be dearly missed.

But you’ll smile when you find them as carefully set jewels
in your crown of compassion.
You’ll cry happy tears as the veils of time fall away
revealing that each moment of the life you just lived
is still unfolding.

And you’ll laugh when you realize this all could have
been understood when you were who you now are.

The odd thing about the often long and lonely path of life
is that when you get to the end of it and look back,
you’ll find that it was neither.

Do not fear that at the end of your life,
you will somehow disappear back into God
the way a cube of sugar dissolves into a hot drink,
for even now you live your life inside of God,
while at the same time maintaining your own
radiant essence and glorious identity.

Given the world’s uncertainty
about what happens at death,
it’s easy to imagine that the main thing those who’ve
“passed” would like to tell those who haven’t is
that once you get over the shock of your safe arrival—
completely intact, cool as ever, bathed in love—
what you’ll miss most about Earth
is the beguiling romance of uncertainty.

Not that you won’t also miss windy mornings, starry skies,
and old trees; bare feet, barking dogs, and beige;
beetles, strawberries, and doorbells; coffee, blue jeans,
and falling leaves.
It’s good to remember that all roads lead “home.”

It’s better to realize that you never really left.

❤️
I remember hearing your heart beat for the first time, months before you were born. A heartbeat where earlier there’d been none. It was like hearing spirit knock on a door that would eventually open to time and space. “Miracle” fails to adequately describe the transformation of spirit into flesh.

And ever since, your presence and growth has ushered before us a procession
of magical moments. Truly, if human beings only knew of how many miracles they performed every day, just by being here, nothing else in our lives would ever again overwhelm us, frighten us, or seem impossible.

Another one of my life’s big “Aha!” moments, was finding that miracles need not bend the physical laws of the universe to blow our minds or leave us speechless. Most don’t. And as you learn to create consciously, you’ll actually begin to notice, with hindsight, that most of your extraordinary accomplishments will occur through an implausible, though wholly ordinary, series of events.

For example, dreaming of Prince Charming (no hurry, please), when followed with consistent, thoughtful action, unclouded with misunderstandings and contradictions, will lead to meeting Prince Charming . . . although through a seemingly natural sequence of “routine” events, that “coincidentally” lined up, each absolutely crucial and exquisitely timed, that never would have occurred without the initial dream. This is because all manifestations begin with a desired end result, which then attracts the right ideas, circumstances, and people onto your path. Ultimately creating a life that resembles, or surpasses, whatever you were originally thinking about.

Most miracles remain invisible and are unknown until long after they transpire. Yet you perform them all the time, we all do. Human beings are nonstop, can’t-be-turned-off-even-if-we-wanted-to-be, natural-born creators. We are matter manipulators by way of our everyday thoughts, because these are the de facto end results that we end up believing in and acting on.

Of course, at first it doesn’t seem possible that we could be “happening” to life in this way. Too many things we wish for never show up and too many things we never imagined do. You’re sure to have as many objections and questions as I once did. But as you stay with it, insisting upon truth, opening heart and mind, you’ll finally see the obvious:

- Thoughts become things, unless other thoughts of yours get in the way.
- When the unthought-of happens, it’s always a stepping-stone in a journey to a farther destination that you had thought of.
- Shared manifestations, in a world of 7+ billion co-creators, like the weather or the economy, arise based on the participants’ collective thoughts, confusions, and behaviors.
- Before this lifetime began, you knew the prevailing collective thoughts, and therefore the world’s probabilities for war or peace, feast or famine, and other transformations or upheavals, as well as localized probabilities like
how your parents might be challenged and how your other family members might live their lives. These either played into your life’s private intentions or were irrelevant.

- It’s usually “impossible” for a personal manifestation to violate core collective beliefs about the nature of reality, like the physical laws of the world. Were this to happen, it would tear the fabric of your collective life stage. Because of this, you can’t turn charging lions into house cats. But your thoughts followed by action, like possessing an intense focus on survival and running for your life, might trigger a herd of passing zebras to distract those lions—which would be no less miraculous.

- While the collective may deny you certain freakish manifestations (like turning lions into kitties) and while you may temporarily give your power away to certain individuals, no one can ultimately keep you from manifesting more friends and laughter, health and healing, wealth and abundance, or living a happy, fulfilling life.

And it gets better.

A lot better.

*Almost unimaginably better.*

*Your positive thoughts are far more likely to become “things” than your negative ones.*

If this sounds over the top, consider: Haven’t you smiled more than you’ve frowned? Laughed more than you’ve cried? Had clarity more than confusion? Friends more than enemies? Health more than sickness? Money more than being in the red? And in all such comparison, aren’t the differences usually by GIGANTIC proportions? Can you then begin to see that life is not some 50/50 roll of the dice? That it’s “not fair”? That nothing from your past can prevent you from thinking and thus creating anew?

Positive thoughts are in alignment with the beauty and power that brought us here. Thinking “positive” is going with the flow, instead of resisting it. That’s why it has more power. Even part-time positivity will overrule part-time negativity, so long as there’s both in thought and deed.

You are not expected to become a miracle worker. You already are one. Should spirit move you to explore this further, however, I urge you to begin noticing exactly how you’ve been “accidentally” doing what you do, and to start doing it deliberately, consciously, and with abandon. The lessons in this chapter
will get you grounded in understanding the logistics of creation, opportunity, moving beyond limits, and your power over life’s illusions. We’ll take these concepts further in chapter 4 with lessons on how to apply them.

Fortify what you learn here with the evidence that’s now everywhere in your life. We’re literally built to thrive. You’re built to thrive. It’s our default setting in absolutely all regards. As wildly successful as the human race has been so far, it’s been so in spite of our profound naivetes—thinking that God is angry or that we’re here by accident! Can you imagine the scale of breakthroughs we’ll experience once everyone sees the obvious, releases fear, and engages their power? This is where we’re headed, and that day swiftly approaches.

I want it for you now.
No matter what you may go after in life, getting what you want will always boil down to at least a little bit of Divine Intervention—your own.

The speed with which any dream may be realized is always a function of how small the miracles have to be in order not to freak out the dreamer.

The difference between “have” and “have-not” is always down to imagination.

There are three things that will always evade your physical senses: trees growing, the earth spinning, and dreams coming true. Never assume these things aren’t happening based upon what you see.

Detours, challenges, and crises are simply cover for
miracles that had no other way of reaching you.

Don’t let the miracles that have not transpired yet, blind you to those that have.

Your dreams are what the Universe has dreamed for you.

Most miracles aren’t obvious until long after they happen, which likely means that in your life, as you read these words, some big ones have recently happened that will soon change everything.

At all times, far more is happening on your behalf than your physical senses will ever reveal.
While knowledge is indeed power, very little must be known to dream, act, manifest, and be happy.

Wanting more is just the first sign of many that you’re going to get it.

“Thoughts become things” explains where you fit into the equation of reality creation. As a creator yourself.

What mortals don’t realize is that for every thought they think the physical world is changed. Not knowing this is the main thing that makes us mortal.
Nothing will change your life as much as changing your mind.

Until you dream, there isn’t a mold.
    Until you speak, there isn’t a promise.
And until you move, there isn’t a path.
    Yet do these things, and you’ll rearrange the stars that shine on your life.

Divine Intelligence did not create the physical universe by studying quarks, drawing schematics, or painting butterflies.
    It began by imagining the desired end result: the vastness, the harmony, the symbiotic relationships, a stage to play out our lessons, and in an instant, Big Bang.
    Everything necessary for life as we know it, including the supporting math, sciences, and physical laws of the universe, was spontaneously created and forced into place.

Your chosen “end results” will do the same, forcing the details, circumstances, people, serendipities, accidents, and coincidences that will ultimately bring about your manifestation of your earlier thoughts.
Your net worth will depend mostly on your net thoughts.

The concepts of destiny, fate, luck, coincidences, and accidents are all contrary or subordinate to the inviolate principle of *thoughts becoming things*, and will therefore always fail to fully explain the life that you lead.

Ancient spiritual contracts of the kind you will no doubt read of, do indeed exist and provide a framework for every *facet* of the life you’ll lead. However, they’re rewritten every dawn, perpetually updated as each day unfolds, and all stipulate they’re to become null and void in the event they might ever limit you.

*Karma is a phenomenon, not a law,*
that contributes to the manifestation of your life and circumstances *reflective of your focus, behavior, and beliefs*. If your focus, behavior, and beliefs are negative or positive, generous or stingy, you will give and receive accordingly; what goes around will indeed come around. But change your focus, behavior, and beliefs and you’ll immediately begin to change your experiences, regardless of any karmic “score.”

Nothing that’s happened in your past can take from your present power to choose new thoughts, create a new life, and be happy.

Our beliefs are almighty because they inspire or shut down our thinking, and it’s the thoughts our beliefs encourage or shut down that can or can’t then become the things and events of our lives.

While your beliefs will mostly be invisible, what they manifest will appear everywhere in your life. You simply need to look at those areas that displease you to find where you might begin with some introspection, probing, and rethinking.
One way to defeat invisible, limiting beliefs is to dream *and move* toward a life so grand that the only way those new thoughts could become things is if any beliefs in their way were obliterated. And so they shall be.

Your beliefs are only invisible when you live within their limits. Better to reach, stretch, and dream big.

Just because you might not know what your limiting beliefs are, you can always know the kinds of empowering beliefs you’d like to possess. Write these down. Get used to them. See their validity. And then, one decision at a time, one day at a time, choose to behave with the mind of the highest within you. Until that’s all there is.

Your words are your thoughts that will become things the soonest—let them be of what you like and love. What you care about and cherish.
What serves you and makes you happy.
What gives you wings and makes your heart sing.
What makes you dream.
And very little else.

A focus on undesirable circumstances
will usually extend and multiply those circumstances.

When you talk about “what is” or “what was,”
even if just explaining to a friendly ear,
you risk projecting more of the same into your future.

When you truly understand how life works,
you’ll rarely, if ever, say things like, “It’s hard,”
“It’s not working,” or “Something’s wrong with me.”

Instead, you’ll start saying things like,
“I’ll find the time for that.” “Good thing I’m rich.”
or “I can’t take a bad picture.”
The emotional highs and lows of any given day reveal exactly what you’ve been telling yourself on that day.

The mason, disappointed with the form of fresh concrete, does not try to reshape it; she starts over.

Often, having what you want is a function of mentally letting go of what you have.

Just because you’re not being judged, doesn’t mean you live in a world that’s neutral to your existence. You are loved, supported, and inclined to succeed.

Your positive thoughts are at least 10,000 times more powerful than your negative thoughts.
Don’t worry that you worry.
   Even the fewest positive thoughts,
words, and steps taken, every day,
can turn any tide and right any ship.

Self-correcting, rebounding, and healing
are both in your nature and entirely normal.

The best hope one has for thriving among the seen,
the known, and the manifested
comes from playing off the unseen, the unknown,
and the not yet manifested.

There’s always more than one right answer,
path, possibility, partner, nuance, or flavor—
so insist upon none, or you’ll exclude all others.
It’s not the day you have to manage, but the moment.
   It’s not the dragon you have to slay, but the fear.
And it’s not the path you have to know,
   but the destination.

The “Bermuda Triangle of Manifesting”
   contains 3 “things” you can never be assured
of successfully micromanaging:
   specific people behaving in specific ways,
   how a dream will come true,
   and unimportant details
(by the way, all details are unimportant).

The workaround is simple:
   imagine abundance, not a dollar amount,
   love without insisting upon who,
   and a rocking life,
not just bells, whistles, and bling.
To safeguard that you’re not in
   the Bermuda Triangle of Manifesting,
punctuate the end of each expressed desire with
   “or better.”
To insist upon whos, hows, wheres, and minutiae is to limit an otherwise unlimited Universe. Dwell upon the WOWs, not the hows.

The problem with compromising, economizing, and settling for less, is that these results are no easier to manifest than their fuller counterparts.

Life’s magic has to work just as hard whether the bar’s been lowered or raised.

Don’t be afraid to go where you’ve never gone and do what you’ve never done, because both are necessary to have what you’ve never had and to be who you’ve never been.

It’s not the dazzling voice that makes a singer. Or clever stories that make a writer. And it’s not piles of money that make a tycoon. It’s having a dream and wanting to live it so greatly that you’d rather move with it and “fail” than succeed in another realm.
When the fear of things staying the same exceeds the fear of failure, things happen.

A dream not followed by consistent action, points either to thoughts of contradiction or misunderstandings.

Hoping, wishing, and praying shouldn’t ever be confused with doing.

You were not born to wait. You were born to create.
It only takes one second in time
for everything to fantastically change for the better,
and you’re far more likely to have one such second
by actively living as many as you can.

Being excited about the truth
is never enough to change your life.
You must physically live the truth.

You don’t have to do “it” right,
you just have to do “it.”

The next step on your path to living the life
of your wildest dreams will rarely lie behind doors
marked “WOW,” “SEXY,” or “GLAMOROUS.”

Life’s magic works through you.
Not beside you. Not around you.
Not for you. Not instead of you.
In life, it’s as if we each must choose from countless doorways, all leading to new and different pathways.

So we wonder and think, calculate and stress, over whether or not we’ll knock on the “right” one.

But what we can’t yet see is that all of the pathways beyond all of the doorways eventually lead to the same great room, in the same great house, at the same great party.

Although there are exceptions, the more you do, the more will be done for you.

Taking massive action, on massive dreams, amid massive uncertainties, is pretty much where anyone who’s ever done anything massive had to start. And then things got way easier.
At any point in your life,
  the greater the uncertainties you face,
the greater your chances of hitting a major,
  life-changing “home run.”

Changing what you have
  comes from changing who you are,
which comes from changing what you think,
  which comes from changing what you believe,
which are led by desire and action.

Simply wanting something reinforces the belief
  that you don’t have what you want,
perpetuating that lack.
  Instead, name what you don’t yet have by giving
thanks in advance for having received it,
  as if you already had.

When you give thanks for what you already have,
  the corresponding manifestation
    is to expand and increase what you have.
When you give thanks for what you don’t have,
  as if you already had it,
the corresponding manifestation is to attract and create it into your life.


They don’t get results. Which is fine, unless you wanted results. Don’t ask. Give thanks.

Giving heartfelt thanks for the good fortunes that befall others—no matter who they are—will help yield similar good fortunes for you.

It’s not wanting that unlocks wheels, parts seas, and changes everything. It’s expecting so greatly that you begin preparing and thanking in advance.
What you give, will be given to you.

To find out how much you’ve truly been blessed with in terms of love, time, energy, or any other quality, substance, or dispensation, give of them. Then you’ll know what boundless really means.

Giving demonstrates a belief you are provided for. It’s an act of faith that implies you will remain whole, that what you gave will come back to you, and that love is what matters most. And when you believe these things they’ll become your reality, and abundance will be showered upon you as if the heavens had opened up.

It’s always better to give too much, pay too much, and love too much than not enough, especially when you understand it all comes back anyway.
Once enlightened, you can do less and have more.

But . . . once enlightened, who would want to do less when you finally realize the world spins in your very hand, our thoughts become things, and you can have, do, or be anything you want when you continually show up, stay active, and keep busy?

Unofficially, I’d say that the number-one cause of loneliness is not a lack of friends, but a lack of keeping busy. And that nine out of ten times the solution to every crisis, challenge, or problem—in relationships, careers, or otherwise—is to get busy.

One out of ten times the solution will be to first get quiet, and then get busy.

Little is more impressive, inspirational, or sexy than watching someone in the throes of action, driven by purpose, oblivious to all but their aim.

And anyone, including you, can be that person, on any day you choose.
It’s easier to fall in love,
    and to be fallen in love with,
when you’re busy.

The busier you are the faster time flies, the less you worry,
    the more friends you have, the farther you travel,
the richer you become, the quicker you rebound,
    and the happier you feel.
Plus, chances of being in the right place at the right time
    increase exponentially. Not just for the improved odds,
but the improved faith it demonstrates.

You can only ever do what you can, with what you have,
    from where you are. Yet by design,
it’ll always be enough.

Usually, the best way to find the yellow brick road
    of your life is to start out on the dusty dirt one.
And to let yourself become so preoccupied in making the best
of it, having fun, and challenging yourself that you actually stop paying attention to the path.

Until, one day, not too long after you began, with a new best friend, feeling awesome and a teeny tiny bit taller, looking down at your path you’ll notice that it’s “24 karats.”

Then you’ll wonder for a long time, probably as you sip on an exotic fruit drink, on what day the transformation actually took place.

You may not be able to take “it” with you at the end of your life, but whatsoever you may do, be, or have in time and space awaits you on the other side.

The path to enlightenment usually includes many stages. Most commonly, it begins with festering misunderstandings that lead to pain, the pain then leads to growth, growth leads to clarity, clarity leads to fun, fun leads to joy, and joy leads to true illumination.
Whenever possible, and it usually is,
I recommend skipping to the fun part.
learning from all that hurts

I bet it’s a beautiful day when you read this. Not necessarily sunshiny and
breezy, or even daylight, but sparkling with possibilities and laden with potential. They all are.

Just three years ago, part of my morning ritual, after changing and feeding you breakfast, was to take a short walk, carrying you past a few houses and back. In the winter I’d swaddle you in a blanket, and on warmer days leave your bare arms and legs to the morning’s breeze.

You’d never fail to hold your head high, eyes wide, silently periscoping as I chronicled all I saw . . . from the rising sun, to overhead birds plying the sky, waving neighbors headed off to work, a snail crossing the sidewalk in front of us, peppered with flowery descriptions, observing and declaring that it was, yet another, “Beautiful day!”

By the time you were walking and talking, age three, some mornings, at the first sign of sunrise, you’d creep into our room and timidly ask with a sleep-strained voice, “Daddy . . . is . . . it . . . a bea-u-ti-ful day? Is it a bea-u-ti-ful day, Daddy?” And then as you heard us stir, gaining in tempo and excitement, you’d continue, “Is it a beautiful day?! Is it a beautiful day?! Is it a beautiful day?!” Not really questioning the day’s beauty, but wanting to know if it was, in fact, a new day—confident, I choose to believe, in your early wisdom, that all days are beautiful.

Of course, everything that happens within every moment of any day is born of meaning, order, and love—the epitome of beauty. Even though sometimes, to the physical senses, things might appear to be anything but. That such seeming contradictions unexpectedly crop up, however, will not mean that you aren’t solely creating your life nor will it mean that God is serving up “tests.” We are our own teachers and there are no tests, as you’ll soon read.

This is the trickiest chapter, because what’s to be shared can seem naïve, negative, or just plain offensive. But consider, if you’re beginning to understand that you live a life of your own creation, couched in love, then just maybe, the more any of these carefully vetted chapter lessons sting or offend, the more you have to learn. Life’s perfection isn’t part-time. It’s all the time. And when we suffer it’s always because we’ve missed something, not because we’ve found a flaw in the world. Yes, there’s ugliness, but it’s never pointless. Find the point and you’ll close in on the healing; see the healing and you’ll find love.

Accepting Responsibility

Coming to terms with your supernatural power, means accepting your supernatural responsibilities. To live full throttle, you must accept responsibility
for everything that has ever happened to you. Including your birth and those experiences that were seemingly thrust upon you. If Prince Charming is not who you thought he’d be, move on, but also try to understand your beliefs about men and relationships that led you to define, want and choose him as you once did.

At first, this may seem unfair, to say the least. Yet life is an adventure into possibilities and experimentation. Everyone choosing to be alive at this early stage of our civilization’s development made this choice knowing that ugly things might happen. Made possible, in part, by our own misunderstandings, at a time when unintentional manifestations would be the norm. But we also knew that we’d be surrounded by beauty and possibilities, in a world sustained by love. That we’d be able to change most circumstances we found displeasing. We also knew we’d “return home” unscathed, even greater for the experience, eternity still calling, no matter what had just happened in the fleeting, imaginary illusions of time and space.

By claiming responsibility for all things in your life, you reclaim your power. You no longer believe that others, fate, or God decides what happens to you. You cease being a victim. You begin living on your terms.

**Life Lessons**

All dreams come with built-in challenges. If not, you’d already have what you want and there’d be no dream. One does not exist without the other, but our challenges only reveal themselves once we start moving toward our dreams. For example, wanting your dream job, but finding it requires public speaking. Moving in with Romeo, to discover he wasn’t quite ready. Wanting to write a book, then learning what that demands. Your dreams are part of how you will one day become the person you know you can be; they call you down a path upon which you learn “the price” you must pay for their realization. If you like, you can think of them as tests you must pass, but not given by God—created instead from the collision and juxtaposition of your old thoughts (that led to today) and your new ones (that will make your dreams come true).

With more critical thinking you’ll see your challenges show you where your thoughts and beliefs need clarity. They are hurdles that perfectly match your evolution at the exact moment you’re ready to take the next step. *This is how it works.* Your dreams aren’t random, they’re custom fitted (by you) to take you on a journey that will teach what you wanted to learn—maybe not consciously, but effectively. That’s the whole point: your dreams lie beyond your reach, so that you will reach!
How I *desperately* wish that you’d never suffer the pain of a broken heart—never know what it is to be slighted, feel lost, unworthy, insufficient—the list of such agonies is endless. Yet when I reflect on my own life, I’m truly frightened by the thought of how much less I’d be today had such grievances been shielded from me, denying me the spiritual insights and emotional wisdom that have come from my own times of defeat, heartbreak, and humiliation. These scars have given my subsequent life quests traction and made possible achieving heights of love and confidence that earlier I couldn’t even have imagined.

The emotional pains you’ll inevitably encounter will hurt me every bit as much as they’ll hurt you, but avoiding them is not the answer. Learning to rebound, grow, and flourish despite them is—which I hope to help you with through the following lessons. This chapter is about reframing how you view setbacks and problems, helping you to leverage the gifts that come from adversity, because no trifling of the past, no matter how great, can tarnish the brilliance of eternity.

**Love you, mean it.**
Always,
the thing that didn’t work out for your very, very best
. . . really did.

You didn’t choose this lifetime
thinking it would be without challenges.
You chose it, in large part,
for the challenges you’d likely have.

When something troubling, difficult,
or painful happens,
look to see what it makes possible,
that wouldn’t have otherwise been possible,
and you’ll find at least part of its reason for happening.

The path to enlightenment must include:
Accepting full responsibility for your own happiness.
And,
accepting full responsibility
for your own unhappiness.
It’s one kind of victory to slay a beast,
move a mountain, and cross a chasm;
it’s another kind altogether to realize that the beast,
the mountain, and the chasm
were of your own design.

If not for your challenges, problems, and issues,
how else would you know there are still
a few things you misunderstand?

Every “no” means “not yet.”
Every setback means “there’s something better.”
Every loss means “even more is on the way.”
And every disappointment, “pucker up, buttercup.”

It’s not just that when one door closes,
another door opens.
When one door closes, choirs burst into chorus,
orchestras orchestrate, bugles bugle, pigs fly,
and 10,000 new doors open.

It’s no one’s responsibility to tell you what your “issues” are, and contrary to popular thinking, most will not. Which pretty much means there’ll only be one person you can trust in such matters.

Where you are is never who you are.

You’re not alive to face hurdle after hurdle; it’s not as if, should you master your issues today, more will be added tomorrow. While there’ll always be more to learn, as you become wiser you’ll find you have fewer challenges, which are each quite manageable, feeling more like opportunities than burdens.

The only real problem you’ll ever have
is thinking you have a problem.

When you prepare for adversity,
you build not a bridge to retreat by,
but one for adversity to advance upon.

Once you realize that everything difficult you go
through—every scuffed knee, lost deal, or broken
heart—
will eventually play wildly in your favor,
you’ll find it hard to complain about anything.

Every challenge is an invitation to a happier place
than you even knew existed.

Setbacks, delays, and disappointments
are like steps in the mambo, tango, and cha-cha.
If you studied the movements without knowing the dance,
nothing would make sense.
But when you see the big picture—poetry in motion.

If, ever in your life, suddenly and without warning, an event, person, or unexpected good news changes everything for the better, it will mean chances are astronomically high . . . that it will happen again. And again. And again.

Words like blame, victim, or fault should never be used in enlightened conversations—instead try creator, adventurer, or heroine.

Wondering how else you could view life when you’re experiencing emotional or physical pain is a sign of spiritual maturity. Wondering how else you could view life when things are already going really well is the sign of a spiritual rock star.
If you aren’t constantly pushing yourself to grow,
it’ll mean you’re missing something.
And that thing you’re missing will eventually cause you to fall,
leading you to push yourself as you get back up,
repeating itself until you understand what you were missing.
All of which can be avoided when,
even though you think you aren’t missing anything at all,
you continually push yourself.

You’re not meant to bear that which you find unpleasant;
you’re meant to change it.

Anger is almost always a sign
that you’ve been quiet for too long.
But instead of offering a solution,
it closes the mind and cools the heart
when both are needed most.

Usually the person you’re angry at
has the most to teach you.
Not that they’re necessarily right about
whatever you’re angry about.

It won’t be your cake-for-breakfast,
pajamas-in-the-afternoon,
    he-loves-me kind of times
you’ll remember at the end of your life
    with the greatest fondness,
but your bounced-back, fears-faced,
    and I-love-him kind of times.

Sometimes you have to move away, to get closer.
    Let go, to stake your claim.
    Be still, to move forward.
    Give, to receive.
    Cry, to feel the joy.
    Pretend, to make it real.
    Fake it, before you make it.

And sometimes, you must first decide
to feel their love, to find it was there all along.

Setbacks are only devastating
    when you think they’ll last forever.
They never do.

Exactly where you’ve been will make possible exactly who you become. And one day, no matter where you’ve been, you’ll wake up and feel so much joy for your life, exactly as is, that you wouldn’t trade *anything* for your past, exactly as it was . . . *and exactly as it is on the day you read this.*

The biggest misconception people have about the past is thinking it can detract from the rest of their lives. To the contrary, the past only ever makes more things possible.

Although this might not make sense now, always consider, that at the deepest level, all pain is self-inflicted. And when this does make sense, you’ll find it’s really great news.

Almost no one would ever choose an adventure
if they knew they’d become hopelessly lost,  
have their heart broken to pieces,  
or at times wish they’d never been born.  
But absolutely everyone would choose any of those scenarios  
if they also knew that because of the chaos they’d sooner  
find themselves, fall passionately in love,  
and live happily ever after.

The only way to find your way is to first be lost.  
To make it big, start out small.  
To fall in love, first feel none.  
So, any such feelings of being lost, feeling small,  
missing love, or the like should be seen as signs  
that you’ve made a really big and daring “wish,”  
and the manifestation process has already begun.

Of all the joys on earth, few compare to  
the crowning glory of achieving against the odds,  
succeeding in the face of peril,  
or triumphing over adversity.  
Yet in every such case, without exception,  
the poor odds, peril, and adversity must come first.
Talking a lot about something that bothers you
is a pretty good sign
you’ve got something profoundly liberating to learn.

That which curses you today will bless you tomorrow.
That is, if you come to believe in curses and blessings
in a world where there are only miracles.

Said another way,
the more challenges you face on any given day,
the more happy dancing and high fives will follow.

You don’t have to know how you got yourself into any mess
to know how to move from it.

Just because you won’t always physically see life’s order,
especially during crises or when disappointed,
won’t mean you can’t always deduce it must be there . . .
in absolutely insane wall-to-wall proportions.
The only hint you might receive
that you’ve begun living
the greatest chapter of your life,
is that it might start out feeling like the worst.

Admit, confess, and atone before you have to,
because one day, you’ll have to.
And on that day you’ll realize it would have been far better
to act and call out your naïveté,
than wait for the ambush.

Sadness, fear, and despair are less conditions
than they are decisions—
to see yourself as less than you really are.

When you feel happy, especially really happy,
it’ll seem that you’ve always been happy
and that you’ll always be happy.
Which is just as true when you feel really sad,
lonely, depressed, broke, sick, or scared.

Which means how you choose to feel on any given day will
recharacterize how you feel about your entire life.
Disappointments have little to do with circumstance
and everything to do with perspective.

You can change how you feel in the twinkling of an eye
if you just change what you view as important.

For whatever bothers you,
not that it shouldn’t,
know that YOU are the reason it bothers you.

The reason others might think they need you
is because they won’t yet believe they already have all that
it takes to have all that they want.
So they pretend you hold the key.

And, maybe, sometimes, you might be tempted
to think the same about someone else.
Practice seeing everything with spiritual eyes,
and you’ll find
... no predicament that can’t
be turned into an advantage,
... no foe who can’t become a friend, and
... no burden that can’t give you wings.

While in the pursuit of a grand and wonderful dream,
should you suddenly round a bend and see before you
an enormous uncharted mountain with towering cliffs,
jagged rocks, and seemingly impenetrable walls,
consider it a sign that your dream is far more worthwhile
than you had previously imagined.

When fear speaks, it’s almost always wrong.
Unless you’re being chased by wildebeests.
And when love speaks, it’s almost always right.
And usually bouncy.
However wrong fear is, it often appears when you’re in exactly the right place, at exactly the right time, doing exactly what you “should” be doing to learn the most.

Next time you meet fear, ask, “How might I use you and what may I learn?”

Look to what you’re afraid of to learn where you can grow.

Actually, life’s lions and tigers and bears are really just angels and fairies and unicorns that followed you here, in disguise, from worlds beyond, agreeing to poke, unnerve, and awaken you whenever you forget that you’re dreaming.

When you see things that pain you, sadden you, or make
your heart ache, remember,
you’re not seeing all.

If you think deeply enough upon those things
that cause you great suffering and consternation,
you’ll ultimately find great joy and illumination.

It really is an itty-bitty world we live on.
And if you can maintain this perspective,
you’ll be pleasantly surprised by how your challenges shrink.

The first step you might take
toward changing unpleasant circumstances . . .
is to stop dwelling upon those circumstances.

The best remedy for dealing with a troubling past
is living in the present.
Not on your “worst day,” during your lowest ebb, nor through your most challenging circumstances will you fail to rebound to higher heights than before.

If ever you find yourself sitting in the darkness, and then decide you want to sit in the light, consider, your first few steps must be in the darkness.

Letting go is always easier than holding on. And it’s how new stuff can find you faster.

It’s easier to let go of the past once you realize that no matter how differently things might have gone, you still couldn’t be more loved than you now are, nor could you have more to look forward to.
Whenever there’s a genuine commitment, no matter what direction you choose, all of life’s elements will align to gain you an advantage, stack the deck, and prepare one and all for some serious legend making.

The greater the emotional pain, the greater the desire had been to learn the most.

Look to what’s beautiful for truth. And to what hurts for its beauty.

Whenever feeling confused, conflicted, or bored by life, seek a higher perspective. Because feeling confused, conflicted, or bored means there is one.

No matter how things may ever seem,
friends are always near and love is always present.

Nothing is ever lost.
Not time;
for what seems to have passed
lives on in the wisdom of future decisions.
Not money;
for what seems to have been spent
was only invested.
And not love;
for what seems to have vanished
has only moved so close you must look
within your heart to find it.

There is no harm, misstep, violation, or disaster
that cannot be amended, balanced, corrected, or fixed.

Sometimes, when it seems your wings have suddenly
and unexpectedly been clipped,
maybe, just maybe, there’s more to learn
by staying where you are.
It’s often from a sense of discontent, feelings of incompleteness, or even a twinge of true unhappiness, that the seeds of great accomplishment and transformation are sown.

Taking responsibility doesn’t mean you have to understand the nuances of your role in bringing about painful events, other than acknowledging you had a role.

Nor does it mean condoning past or present violations or that you shouldn’t defend yourself, speak up, protest, be heard, press charges, file suit, or warn others.

Neither does it mean you’re to blame or are at fault.

You’re an ancient gladiator of love and joy who, when choosing this lifetime, knew what you were doing.
Can you imagine, then, considering your magnificence and zest for life, you might not want to live every adventure on “easy street”? That on occasion, if not as a rule, you might want to be challenged?

That you might sometimes choose to be in harm’s way to spare others the pain? That you might want to see what you’re truly capable of achieving and enduring? How deeply you might love and be loved?

All under a variety of circumstances?

The more from your past that you accept responsibility for, including absolutely, positively everything, the more in your future you’ll have the power to change, including absolutely, positively everything.

Should you ever feel a bit bummed out and not know why . . . or catch yourself looking back over your shoulder, wondering . . . or sometimes asking, What’s taking so long? . . . understand, this is typical of all spiritual overachievers.
The easiest way to avoid letdowns and disappointments is never tricking yourself into thinking that your happiness is dependent upon the things and events of time and space. Which is not to imply you can’t change both.

Emotional pains are just truth knocking upon a door that’s been closed too long.

Every story has a happy ending if you believe in endings—either in this lifetime or thereafter. And this alone, when factoring in all of life’s splendors, will make any fleeting pain and sorrow totally and unquestionably “worth it.”

The thing that makes the darkest of times bearable, is remembering that life as you now know it, is not reality; earth is simply a dreamed-up world where angels earn their wings.
Meanwhile, somewhere “back home,”
you’re snug as a bug, peacefully sleeping
in the palm of God’s hand,
surrounded by ancient friends who can’t wait for you to
awaken and tell the stories of who and where
you thought you were.

And once everyone has had their turn,
you’ll all look at each other mischievously,
and whisper at the same time . . .

“Let’s . . . go . . . back!”
Every night for countless weeks over the summer before writing this book, we fought the same battle, with varying twists. You were Moana, from our favorite Disney film. In the shallow end of our swimming pool was your invisible family; they all loved and accepted me. I was Maui (also from Moana). Together, we’d cross turbulent seas toward my family, on the thick blue floatie, to the deep end where the bench was built into the side of the pool, trying to elude the murderous Kakamora pirates. Shortly into our quest, the volcano mistress Te Kā (she and
the pirates were also of Moana and invisible) would rear her head, throwing massive molten lava rocks at us as we navigated to the far edge of the pool for safety. You’d scream. I’d scream. We’d fight back with all our might as the film’s soundtrack blasted from patio speakers into the woods surrounding our home. Triumphant, you’d meet my family, who loved and accepted you, and we’d sail back to your family. Every night. For months.

What a production! What a summer! We were swept away by art imitating life imitating art. The magic of the ocean, so brilliantly portrayed by the writers of that great film, is exactly what I’ve been teaching adults, except that it works on land too. It exists for us, you’re supposed to use it, it’s intelligent, a friend, and it yearns to help you help yourself.

Implied repeatedly throughout the story was the fact that “the magic” could only help Moana when:

1. she had a dream—a specific vision, need, or goal,
2. she really cared, emotionally, about it (because she or her dream would otherwise die), and
3. she first, however feebly, took action.

Time and again she would physically throw herself into the ocean intending to save her island, or find Maui, or retrieve the emerald heart of Te Fiti. A seemingly outrageous notion that this tiny, fragile person, flung into an ocean as wide as the planet, might make a difference. Yet because she did act, demonstrating belief and expectation, the ocean responded. Came alive. And exponentially magnified her efforts.

This is life’s greatest manifesting secret, after passionately having a dream and caring about it, you must act on it, even when you don’t know what to do. Even when it seems hopeless. Even when you don’t know how your mortal “baby steps” could possibly make a difference.

Having a goal is easy. Caring about it is usually easy too. But taking action when it feels like your chances of success are infinitesimal—that takes a superhero. Only when you act does life’s magic respond. You’ve got to have skin in the game, or there’s no game. Do something, literally anything in the vague direction of your dream, regularly and consistently, and then, seemingly from nowhere, when you least expect, the magical winds of change begin to howl.

When the pool got too cold to swim in, your imagination would soar indoors. Some nights at bath time you were a rainbow kitty, colors revealed as if by magic once you were in the water. Other evenings we’d grab the kiddie paint and
transform the aluminum ladder in the garage into an ever more beautiful pink, flowered staircase. To where? I didn’t ask, because really, once you have a pink, flowered staircase, does it matter where it leads?

These were your stories, I was just the lucky guy who landed a co-starring role in the productions. And as I marvel now at our Academy Award–worthy performances, I’m rather amazed to realize that probably 97 percent of our adventures took place in our minds. I’m further wowed thinking that this ratio never changes throughout our life, no matter our age, no matter what we do.

What we want, what we fear, what we dream of, how we prepare, how we react, what we endure, what we decide, is almost all mental. Even if you’re physically engaged in rigorous performances all day, every day, the mental planning, preparation, and evolving drama is still at least 97 percent of your experience . . . by my admittedly not-remotely-scientific-certainly-underestimated measure. Right?

So, here’s my offer. With life’s inner game mastered early on, the rest of your life, the tiny part that shows up in time and space, will be a crazy-easy downhill slide. Perfecting your imagination to dream, to engage, to pretend, and to act. Sparking passion to inspire and ramp up a heightened sense of anticipation. Ultimately cultivating enough confidence that you believe in yourself and your journey, enabling resilience and patience, creating every opportunity for life’s magic to reach and transform you.

Imagination is life. And yours will serve you well as you grow up—especially when you know what you’re doing. Which is sure to happen if you stay true to yourself and you learn to tune out the voices that would strip you of believing in magic, make-believe, and the power of pretending. Keep your invisible friends. Be unpredictable. A tad unreasonable. Spontaneous. A dreamer.

Pay no attention to those who say life is hard. That we’re here to be tested. That success is about survival of the fittest, hard work, and lucky breaks. That opportunity only knocks once. The early bird gets the worm. No matter how much those who say these things care about you.

Fortunately, the truth is a hard thing to lose. People, with all that they fear and all the limits they believe in, are still “irrationally” full of optimism. Fables and folklore insist that dreams come true, science now tells us that there’s an energy to positive thinking, athletes are encouraged to visualize, in The Secret we talked about it as a universal law of attraction, and I’ve been telling people for 20 years that our thoughts literally become the things and events of our lives.

To repeat one of the most important lessons in this book, “thinking” is where and how you fit into the equation of reality creation. Learning how to “aim that thing” and calculating engagement is what this chapter is about. It’s an add-on to
chapter 2, with more specificity about the subtle art of breathing life into your dreams.

Imagine . . .
Time and space is where we chase things
we pretend we don’t have—
love, friends, and abundance—
while worrying about things we pretend we do have—
problems, challenges, and issues.
Until one day we happen to notice
the prophetic powers of pretending.

To build a mansion in time and space,
whether of mortar, gold, or friendships,
think of imagination as your blueprint,
欲望 as your funding,
faith as your builder, and action
as proof these dots are being connected.

Treating any old job as if it were your dream job
is the fastest way to spark the kind of life changes
that will yield your dream job.

Same for any old house, friend, day, life,
or pair of espadrilles.

Great big, ear-to-ear, open-mouth smiles
are responsible for far more sizzling romances, salary increases, life extensions, and calorie burning than our dentists, doctors, and financial planners will ever comprehend.

Smiling or laughing for no reason at all is one of the best reasons to smile or laugh—plus, doing either will summon circumstances that will give you reason after reason.

Bringing new things into your life boils down to learning to think of yourself with them. And vice versa for removing things from your life.

Always speak of the past gratefully. Of the future, excitedly. And of the present, with bobbing eyebrows and a Cheshire grin.
If anyone should ever ask if you’re enlightened . . .
   always say, “Yes!”
Same if they ask whether or not you’re healthy,
   wealthy, and loved beyond imagination.

When in doubt, show up early, think less, feel more,
   ask once, give thanks, expect the best,
appreciate everything, never give up, make it fun, lead,
   invent, regroup, wink, chill, smile,
and live as if your success were inevitable,
   and so it shall be.

Every fortune, comeback, or kiss
   was first a thought, a whisper, a dream.

The trick with imagination is remembering to use it.

Creative visualization, as an exercise,
   gives the biggest bang for the least effort.
Visualize, every weekday (you can take weekends off),
   no longer than a few minutes,
imagine your dreamed-of end results,
   as if they’d already come to pass,
fueled by emotion,
yourself in the picture,
smiling broadly,
happy tears running down your face.

If you’re at least visualizing or meditating enough
to wonder whether or not you’re doing it right,
you’re doing it right
and you’re way ahead of the game.

The secret to living the life of your dreams is
to start living them at once, however humbly,
to any degree you can.
If you can’t travel far, travel near.
If you can’t dine out, go for dessert.
If you don’t have a travel partner, be your own.

The secret to performing miracles lies in:
1. Knowing your desired outcome.
   2. Not knowing how you’ll pull it off.
Should you ever be in need of a miracle, think not of the miracle, not even a little, but instead of its intended result.

Little ducks never line up until momma duck just goes—the same will be true of getting your ducks in a row.

Rarely are the first steps in a journey anything like the final ones, either in direction, pace, or grace. Which means that none of those things are even half as important as the fact that there are steps at all.

Usually, if you just start “dancing,” the “music” will be added—as will the partners, a giant disco ball, and whatever else you need. Because the resources you need to complete a journey are only added once you begin it.
The odd thing about inspiration is that it usually comes after, not before, a new journey is started.

When just starting out on a new journey, it’s only natural to feel vulnerable. After all it may seem that you have much to lose. The truth, however, is that never again at any other point in the same journey will you have so much to gain.

Don’t let the dazzling heights you aspire to scare you from getting started. Few could climb Mount Everest tomorrow, though virtually all could begin preparing.

It’s more important to start, than to start in the right direction.
There’s nothing you’ve ever done that wasn’t significantly done for you, once you got started. Remember that next time you’re overwhelmed at the outset of a new adventure.

Most big ideas don’t seem like big ideas at first. So, be on the lookout for little ones that seem kind of ho-hum, let-me-floss-first kind of ideas.

Until the really great stuff comes along, do the not-so-great stuff, because for those who dream big, the not-so-great stuff always leads to the really great stuff.

Great big innovative, world-changing ideas are plentiful. People who take tiny little baby steps toward them are rare.
It’s okay to dream big and start small—you’ll probably have to.

The real reason so many have trouble with taking baby steps is because they think those steps are important for the distance covered. Not realizing that each one triggers enormous leaps and bounds taken on their behalf in realms unseen.

Life’s magic isn’t a substitute for networking, socializing, preparing, or cold calling. To the contrary, these are some of its greatest incubators.

Don’t be afraid to do the obvious. Not all miracles hide in the unseen. Some hang around, waiting for you to call, write, or show up.
It’s better to have loved and lost, tried and failed, dreamed and missed, than to sit out your turn in fear. Because the loss, the failure, and the miss are only temporary, whereas the love, the adventure, and the dream will never stop paying dividends.

You simply can’t lose something you’re still capable of giving. You can’t fail if you haven’t stopped trying. And you can’t miss if you’re still aiming.

The thing that most forget, while dreamily looking off into the horizon for the ship of their dreams, is that such ships never sail in, but are built beneath our very feet.

Here’s a little “Inevitability Test” to check on the progress you’re making toward achieving any particular dream:
You’re pretty much doing something about it every single day.

Consistent effort, no matter how small,
sparks magic, fills sails, butters bread, turns tides,
instills faith, summons friends, improves health,
burns calories, creates abundance, yields clarity,
builds courage, spins planets, and rewrites destinies.

Opportunity never stops knocking.
And neither should you.

There are more than enough worms for every bird,
early and late.
What matters is that you keep showing up.

Thinking big but acting small
is the same as thinking small.
It’s not the size of your dreams that determines whether they come true, but the size of the actions you take that imply their inevitable arrival.

Sometimes the hard way is really the easy way and the slow way is really the fast way. Yet such sublime surprises may remain forever unknown if you just wait for the quick and easy way.

Practice. Study. Prepare yourself. Think. Act. Face your beasts. Pay the piper whatever dues you think you have to pay. Do the dance, walk the fire, wait in line. Plant the seeds, hoe the field, go to market. Because on the day that you become all that you may ever dream of becoming, there’s simply no price you’d find too great.
The anticipated happiness
that moves you in the direction
of a new dream will always pale in comparison to the
actual happiness you’ll find once it comes true.
Which is worth trying to imagine, anyway.

The more you push yourself into areas of discomfort—
gently, just a bit, from time to time—
the more “comfortable” you’ll become in those areas.

The opposite is also true.

Do not abandon the tools of intellect,
logic, and common sense,
but combine them with your feelings, faith,
and imagination.

Avoiding something draws it ever near.
Defending yourself can become a full-time job.
And worrying about things that might never happen
increases their chances of happening.
Never forget that all you may ever dream of having is far less than what you already have.

Manifesting deadlines are fine when placed upon yourself, like “write a new chapter every month,” as guides or goals, but don’t give deadlines to the Universe and its magic, like, “Have a publisher by year-end.”
You simply cannot see enough of your dream’s required logistics, in relation to all of your other desires, and in relation to those of the world, to do so effectively without risking limitation or sacrificing other dreams.

The greatest trick and most subtle secret to doing anything really, really well is loving that you get to do it at all.

Do it your way, that’s why you’re here.
The presumption, at all times and under all circumstances, should always be that you are good enough, worthy enough, and lovable enough. And that you are exactly the right kind of person, in the right place, at the right time to have the life you want. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have been given such dreams to begin with.

Sometimes you’ll learn much more about life, love, and happiness,
- when you’re single than when you’re in a relationship,
- when you’re looking for work than when you’re working, and
- when you’re confused rather than when you’re clear...

...which doesn’t mean don’t seek change if you want there to be change. It means, if you can allow yourself to learn what there is to learn, from wherever you now are, rather than resist, you’ll greatly accelerate your dreamed of transformation.
When you don’t know what to do next,
it might be because you’ve already done more than
you give yourself credit for,
and it’s time to chill out a bit.

Very often when you just can’t decide between two
or more options,
the answer that would give you the most peace
. . . hasn’t yet arrived.

Ask, yet expect.
Surrender, yet prepare.
And miracles will abound.

The only way to get what you really want
is to know what you really want.
And the only way to know what you really want
is to know yourself.
And the only way to know yourself is to be yourself. And the only way to be yourself is to listen to your heart.

Enjoying short-term pleasures to the detriment of long-term dreams is as crazy as pursuing long-term dreams to the detriment of short-term pleasures. Both are important.

Impatience is a sign that you’ve temporarily forgotten to behave at all times as if your dreams have already come true.

The more you hurry, the slower you go. The more you wait, the longer it takes.

It’s totally possible to have big, huge, gigantic dreams,
yet still be deliriously happy before they come true.

Sometimes, when things take longer than you thought they would, it’s just a reminder from your higher self that you have more time than you thought and that there’s a journey to enjoy.

The shortest distance between here and there—or between today and the life of your wildest dreams—runs through joy. Be led by it.

When you hang out in time and space long enough, you’ll inevitably learn it’s through the twin gateways of persistence and patience that masters become masters.

Persistence is priceless, but its value lies in doing, doing, doing,
not in waiting, waiting, waiting.
Not knocking on one door until it opens,
    but knocking on all of them until one opens.

Whenever spending or investing,
    whether a little or a lot, wisely or not,
remember to celebrate that you’re creating opportunities,
exchanging energy, dancing with life,
supporting economies, feeding families,
lessening poverty, demonstrating courage,
validating others, eradicating fear, inviting magic,
and lifting humanity higher into the light.

Actually, creating wealth is even more fun than spending it,
so be sure to daydream as much about the former
    as the latter.

The best way to manifest money,
    which is just as true for manifesting love,
is to focus less on these by-products of a life well lived
    and more on a life well lived.

It’s not thinking about the bucks that makes one rich,
but thinking rich that makes the bucks.

It takes a really special person to find true happiness in the lap of luxury, surrounded by friends and laughter, and choices, choices, choices. And oddly, it’s usually the exact same kind of person who could have been equally happy without all that, spending time alone, maybe with a book, or some tools, or a dog.

The self-made millionaire invariably thinks about income more than expenses. And probably about customers, more than vendors; possibilities more than risks; smiles more than frowns; options more than commitments; vacations more than overtime; detours more than setbacks; opportunities more than obstacles.

It’s okay to love material things; matter is pure spirit, only more so, because you’ve thought about it so much,
you’ve brought it to “life.”

The most surefire way to find yourself,
make a friend,
turn a buck,
and discover your power
is to help someone else do the same.

One of the most advanced forms of self-help
is helping others.
So please, when in doubt or when in trouble,
“help yourself.”

True selfishness is
honoring God’s unique expression in you,
which will ensure that as the winds of divinity
are blown through your heart,
the melody is unlike any other.
To care for self at the expense of others
is not selfishness, but ignorance.
We all depend to some degree upon the whole to truly
prosper, and when any one of us suffers, all suffer.

Living deliberately starts with imagining your dreams
as if they have already come true.
It’s a matter of switching gears, never looking back, and
being the person that you’ve always dreamed you’d be.
Predicating your behavior on their reality,
not the old illusions that will still surround you.

Living your life from their mind-set.
Entertaining every thought, saying every word,
and making every decision from their point of view.
Walking the way they would walk,
dressing the way they would dress,
and spending your free time
the way they would spend theirs.

Frequently, in time and space, right before a really
HUGE dream comes true
. . . nothing seems to be happening.

So if, perchance, it ever appears as if
absolutely nothing is happening in your life,
particularly after you’ve been dreaming big and taking
action ... consider it ...

a sign.

Probably the most important thing I could tell you about living the life of your dreams, would be to point out that you already are.
making the most of friends, family & relationships
You won’t remember this, you were two. We were at the kids’ park playing follow the leader, each of us jostling to be at the front of our two-person conga line, when a little boy about your size walked into our space, causing us to stop while you stared at him, then at me, then at him, before asking in a hopeful tone without malice, “Daddy, can you make him disappear?”

And then there was the time, at the same park a few months later, when you timidly drifted from me toward the two slightly older girls sitting and chattering away in the sand-filled, vacated volleyball court with dolls and shovels. I watched as you approached, eyebrows raised, in your first self-chosen social encounter of your own creation, about to connect with new best friends formulating the most magical words you could imagine to greet them, probably, “My name is Rebecca. That’s my daddy,” as was your go-to self-identifying phrase around strangers . . . when suddenly, as if these two you approached were cleverly disguised samurai sword–carrying ninja warriors, with the spin of her head toward you, the leader cleaved you in half, pronouncing you unworthy: “No. Not here. GO!” Shredding your heart and mine with her unceremonious words. Her execution was so abrupt, I fleetingly hoped you didn’t understand, except the command was punctuated with a snap of her extended arm and pointed finger telling you exactly which way to depart.

Frozen in shock and grief, your fragile smile replaced by a grimaced awkwardness, unable to step in any direction, the building anguish so great you couldn’t speak your name or even cry to me, tears welling as you tried to maintain your composure, I saw you die in defeat. Until you did cry, uncontrollably, withering into my fast-approaching arms. Your pain was deep. Heartbroken. Confused. Sad. Suffering. Devastated. And utterly inconsolable.

I tried to tell you it didn’t matter, that they were not being nice, that they were unworthy of your interest, that there were other, more fun things for us to do. That life was still beautiful, the sun was still shining, the day was not done . . . but you couldn’t hear me. I frantically wondered what else I could do to minimize the crippling memory and lasting scar of this fateful day . . .

Fifteen minutes later you were fine. What?

I wonder, though, if you’ll have the same recovery time when you’re 15? 25? Older? With understanding, it could be the same—if you’d even allow yourself to feel so hurt by the fickle behavior of others in the first place. Because with understanding you’d know to rely on yourself for approval. You’d find that what others say and do reflects their issues, not yours. And you’d learn that you are more than what happens on any step of your life’s path; you are more, even, than the path itself. With understanding you’ll better be able to see yourself as I now see you, which will remind you always of how deeply you’re loved.
Little will add to your life as much as your relationships, although what you gain, when, how, and with who, won’t always be as predictable as you’d like, nor will your gains necessarily coincide with what you hoped to be receiving. And little else will build you up as much or tear you down as quickly as what you learn from love. Until, in the end, with a heart that learns to be open and vulnerable, you’ll find that it was you, all along, who did the building and tearing.

Not that others won’t have a role, given by you, to assist in your “construction.” And conversely, you’ll often be granted roles in helping to shape the lives of others. Understand, however, that no one can come into our lives who’s not preapproved. Their probable actions and behaviors known in advance of whenever your paths may cross.

Which is to say, that while you’re the ultimate authority of what happens in your life, one of your more clever levers for effecting this, will be who you draw or allow into your adventure, and what behaviors you help to elicit from them through your own thoughts, words, and deeds.

Sounds complicated, but it’s not. All you need to take from this, is that those in your life are “on board” with your manifestations and lessons, present and future, just as you are for theirs. True teammates. Love bound, however you may fumble or offend. Your needs, fears, and passions are intertwined. Compatible. Complementary. Today. Tomorrow . . . minds may change.

In this chapter I’ll share what I’ve learned in my life on love, rejection, longing, sharing, disappointment, compromise, commitment, and moving on. But no matter how much I may open your heart to the little I know about love, you will still, for the rest of your life, persistently desire to have certain people appear in, or disappear from, yours, and to have them otherwise behave in certain preferable ways. They will have similar wishes of you.

Throughout, remember who you really are to each other. Kindred spirits drawn together in the romantic adventure of life. Fellow actors lost in these illusions to learn what’s true and real. Honor each other. Enjoy the camaraderie. Treat one another with the same kindness and respect you hope to be afforded. Understand that just as others might hurt you out of confusion, so will you them. And as much as you’d like to hear apologies or to be forgiven, so would they.

In the meantime, no matter who else comes or goes from your adventure, please know I’ll always be there, in one form or another, to catch you when you fall, send angels when you call, and love you through it all.

You’re simply the greatest.
you are loved
If everyone really knew how much they were loved,

not only from “above,”

but by those now in their life,

there’d be little hearts drawn on everything

from wheelbarrows to skyscrapers to jumbo jets.

When something hurts your eyes, stop looking at it.

When it hurts your ears, stop listening to it.

And when it hurts your heart, stop justifying it.

In the beginning, the price of giving great love

is risking that it won’t be returned.

In the end, however, you’ll find great love

is always returned.

To err on the side of generosity, patience,

love, or kindness is not to err.

If you could actually stand in someone else’s shoes

to hear what they hear, see what they see,

and feel what they feel, you would honestly wonder what
planet they live on
and be blown away by how different their
“reality” is from yours.

You’d also never, in a million years, be quick to judge again.

Being happy without a partner
is the fastest way to attract one.
   If you even want one.

One of love’s many corollaries is that the brighter your
light, the more you attract . . . everything.
   Moths and butterflies.
At which point you begin learning what to celebrate
and what to let fly on by.

There is no such thing as an ideal relationship status,
except yours, today, for now.

Of all the reasons you might draw someone into your life,
one would never be to find their faults.
Putting up your defenses will inspire others to put up their offenses.

Sometimes it may help to see difficult people as reminders of what you may have put others through. Or to see grouchy people as those who may have chosen a more challenging life than you.

When you look for what’s right—in others, in relationships, in yourself, and in your journey—you’ll always find it.

Same when you look for what’s wrong.

You may not ever understand what’s going on in “their” life, but you can always figure out what’s going on in yours. Let their shortcomings inspire you to work on your own.
Sometimes, the person whose life looks the easiest has had it the hardest, but they’re really good at not dwelling on the past, living in the moment, having dreams for tomorrow, and “rolling like that.”

Always, the strong carry the weak, the rich carry the poor, the healthy carry the sick, and the happy carry the sad.

And it’s probably because this was once their promise, to thank those who earlier carried them.

Everyone gets carried a little bit, which is something to remember when it’s your turn to carry.

Seeing things from someone else’s perspective can totally change your life. Which might even explain why they’re in yours to begin with.
In your times with others you’ll laugh and cry,  
and in your times alone you’ll understand why—  
let there be both.

Arguments are won intellectually, not love.

Being fair and reasonable  
will earn you respect and admiration,  
but being genuinely kind  
will make you a total love magnet.

Ask with love  
and their answer may surprise you.

Hear with love and your answer may surprise them.

Simply dwelling upon joy, abundance,  
or anything else that might involve other people  
will literally draw complete strangers into your life who  
will bring those things,  
when in alignment with all else you dwell upon.
At all times and in all places, be the first to smile.

While it’s often fashionable
to dwell upon what might have been,
what’s usually not understood is that,
really and truly, it couldn’t have.

Most of the time when people think the present could
have been different than it is,
it’s because they think the past was different than it was.

Be glad things went as they did—you still have forever.

When someone treats you differently than you expected,
it’s usually because you’ve been
sending out mixed signals.

No matter what you do that may disappoint or hurt others,
always keep in mind, it was the very best you could
have done, with what you knew at the time.
And so will this be true of others who disappoint or hurt you.

When it comes to choosing who will be in your life, be sure to value their “Cowabunga!” quality as much as all others.

The more it seems “love hurts,” the more you can be sure it’s something else, like pride, fear, or not remembering how fabulous you are.

Those in great relationships aren’t always those who are good at relationships. And those in challenging relationships aren’t always those who are bad at relationships.

No matter how great the desire is to please another, let it be no greater than the desire to be yourself.
Don’t trust anyone who tells you your happiness is more important to them than their own.

When you finally see what this whole time-space thing is all about, you’re going to laugh; you’re going to cry; and you’re going to be so very grateful you LOVED as much as you did.

There’s nothing unspiritual about ending a relationship, for any reason or for no reason, so long as you do it with love.

No one owes anyone anything. No matter who they are. No matter what they’ve done. No matter how much they may claim to suffer without you.
Those who deserve your love the least
are usually the ones who need it the most.

Some, however, are better loved at a distance.
   For a while, anyway.
Fortunately, love doesn’t really know the difference.

The lower the price of your love, the higher its value;
the fewer the conditions, the greater its reach.

The criteria for unleashing torrents
   of love upon thine enemy
lies first in knowing that there should be no criteria.

When love is otherwise hard to feel for someone,
   allow it to begin with sympathy.

Your “soul mate” might not be the same person
throughout your life,
and sometimes it might just be you.
Only do those things you want to do,  
with whom you want to do them.

Always follow your heart,  
unless it’s been broken.  
Then you must lead it.  
Back into love.

Hearts are never too big to mend,  
too small to rebound,  
or too tired to love again.

When the choice is to hurt or be hurt,  
cheat or be cheated, violate or be violated,  
always, always, always choose the latter.  
And then try to figure out how you created such  
a fork in the road of your life to begin with.
Always, kindness prevails—
no matter how things appear,
nor how humbling a task, nor how unkind they’ve been.

When someone speaks on a topic unfamiliar to you,
you might be able to gauge the honesty and accuracy
of their words by all else they’ve ever shared with you
on topics you were familiar with.

Same for authors.

Sometimes, expecting a straight answer from some
people is absolutely out of the question.
Which should answer your question.

It’s always best to assume that everyone either
knows the truth, or will know the truth,
because they either do or they will.

When you understand that your disappointment in
another’s behavior always stems from
their immaturity, or yours,
rather than their unkindness, or yours,
it becomes much harder not to keep skipping through life, giddy with joy, smelling the flowers.

When someone behaves poorly, it’s always because they’ve forgotten how powerful they really are, how beautiful life is, or how much they’re loved.

At this very moment there are people only you can reach. Some of whom may have chosen this very lifetime hoping you’d be in theirs.

The best way to deal with other people . . . is to just let them be other people.

One of the most helpful things you can do for another is to let them learn their lessons for themselves, at their own pace. It’s also one of the most helpful things
you can do for yourself.

The only person who should ever have to live by your standards, is you. Let everyone else off the hook.

The most effective way of changing another person, though not guaranteed, comes from changing how you see them.

If you don’t really have to change someone to keep on loving them, then don’t. Because trying to change one thing about them might change other things about them.

For as long as you wish to keep someone in your life, whoever they may be, understanding them, as opposed to changing them, will wildly improve chances they’ll wish to keep you in their life.
How you treat people, in general,
    is the single biggest factor for determining
how people, in general, will treat you.

This does not always work, however,
in one-on-one relationships.

Expecting and preparing for someone’s very best behavior—
in terms of respect, kindness, love,
or just winning their attention—guarantees nothing.
    But wildly improves your chance of receiving it . . .
    . . . better, if you don’t insist that such behavior
    come from a specific person,
chances of receiving it from someone else “as good or better,”
at the right time, are 100 percent.

Nothing you might ever do
can ensure anyone else’s happiness.

It’s not that people will act a certain way around you,
    but that you’ll attract certain types of people and
behaviors based upon your thoughts, beliefs, and expectations of them.

When you change, the people you attract and their behaviors will change.

A kind word can move mountains and change lives. But for those times when they escape you, when the right thing isn’t said, or the time wasn’t right to say it, kind thoughts can do the same.

Thoughts have a way of lingering, seeking, and finding their intended beneficiary, unfettered by time and space.

Your kind thoughts and deeds toward others—like sharing a smile, a compliment, or a helping hand—plant seeds of beauty, hope, and love that will one day grow into a spectacular garden that you will get to call home.

Forgiveness is only necessary when first there’s blame. And blame can only be cast when first there’s misunderstanding. Better to accept that at some level, for some reason,
you chose to participate in whatever happened between you and someone else, and thereby reclaim your power, than to abdicate responsibility through a false belief that bad things can happen to good people, setting yourself up for another fall.

As is true of kissing, let your life know both spontaneity and thoughtfulness. 

Sexual orientation is like being left- or right-handed— it’s not random, it will serve you, and you are far, far more than any orientation. 

Good looks have less to do with one’s body and more to do with one’s mind. 

Looks change, beauty lasts.
Sometimes, more can be learned from the disagreeable than the agreeable.

Any profound difference you make in the life of someone else will always be smaller than the difference it will make in your own.

Success is better measured in smiles received, giggles heard, and hands held than in dollars earned, deadlines met, and weight lost.

Know everyone by their good traits.

Sometimes, it’s not just about finding the perfect friend, partner, or tribe, but finding the perfection in those you’ve already found.
See everyone you meet as a brand-new chance to fall in love for a different reason than ever before.

Friends are friends because they’ve discovered how much they have in common. Enemies are friends too, who’ve not yet discovered this.

For anyone, ever, to be in your life, you have something to gain. Besides their absence.

Although your acquiring the self-confidence to say, “I love you, good-bye,” might be a reason.

If you can see the little girl or little boy in another, you’ll probably find that the mask they wear isn’t to inspire your fear, but to hide their own.

Sometimes, understanding their fears, helps you to understand their pain and their behavior.
And understanding their fears sometimes helps you to understand your own.

The next time someone upsets you, think to yourself, 
*Thanks for pointing out that I’ve begun depending on you.*

And the next time someone doesn’t take your view into account, think, 
*That’s okay, I was once like that.*

And if someone steals from you, think, 
*It was nothing, my supply is the Universe . . .*

. . . or lies to you, think, 
*I’m sorry you feel that need.*

Violates you, 
*All for my growth and glory.*

Is rude to you, 
*Cheer up, dear soul, it’ll be okay.*

Judges you, 
*Thanks for sharing.*

Drives by you like a bat out of hell, 
*Be careful, my friend, you are loved.*

And the next time someone greets you with a smile, 
smile back, like you’re sharing a great secret.
The great thing about feeling deep, earthshaking love . . . is that you can start with anyone.

Send them love. Wish them peace. See them happy.

Everyone, always, forever.
what
old souls
know

Dream.
I’m not an “old soul,” but you might be. It’s an expression, of course, that universally means a kinder person, typically more patient, thoughtful and wise than most, presumably from lots of earthly experience. Perhaps, some speculate, experience that spans many lifetimes.

It’s harder to know the soul age of kids because you were all so recently on the other side, “closer” to Source, from which we all emerged. Your worldview is less complicated than grown-ups’. I remember my niece, your cousin, when your age—upon learning of death and giving it some thought—suddenly blurted out, “Mommy, I know what happens when we die!”

“What, honey? What happens when we die?”

“We go back to normal.”

We’re a long way from normal right now. But imagine, as I’ve already shared, it was from “normal” that we chose to come here. In our existence prior to entering the illusions, as the God-particles we had to have been, in pure radiance and light. Even from here we can deduce that back then we had to have been pretty amazing, in all of our glory, everywhere, always, at once, with thoughts that spontaneously changed everything, showered in love and knowing it, metaphorically in the palm of God’s hand. Pure God, ourselves. There’s only one thing that could rival that, make it better, even, exploding all possibilities into even more possibilities . . . voluntarily losing ourselves to be here. On one condition, of course: Our return to “normal” must be guaranteed. Otherwise, who would ever leave?

My little brain cannot conceive of anything, in all creation, not in any sphere of existence, that might be as audacious and brilliant as being born into time and space without any recollection of our divinity. Having to find our own way when lost, our own courage when frightened, and the infinite powers at our disposal when challenged. Left to the elements to rediscover our supremacy over them. Driven by our passions so that we might rise above our humble, naked beginnings and ultimately see through the illusions that have hypnotized us. Only to find ourselves once again high upon the throne of “thy kingdom come” (used to be a Catholic, loved the pageantry), from whence it all began.

The deepest truth, of course, is that we never left our throne or stopped being pure God. Not remembering this, however, is the kicker that has made our adventures possible.

I want you to start remembering.

You have your work cut out for you. To give some context to the times you’ve landed in: taken as a whole, I’d say the soul age of the world today is still quite
young, comparable to an individual in his or her late teenage years learning about responsibility and consequence. Easy to judge by simply observing our collective behavior.

Obviously, we’re in a precarious orbit. At a critical point in shaping our destiny, which hinges entirely on the private and collective decisions we make that increasingly have global implications. Of course, we knew what we were getting into, born when we were, that the world would be moving from darkness into the light, from confusion and fear into truth and love; that we’d be alive at the dawn of our species’ spiritual awakening. And you, born when you were, knew, given our natural propensity to self-correct and thrive, there’d still be a great likelihood of stunning advances in every field of humanity during this very lifetime.

Knowing this will hopefully ground and reassure you. What matters most, however, are your choices in this lifetime, not who you were and what you did in others. Facing today’s fears. Living today’s dreams. Creating new stories. Understanding yourself. The lessons that follow in this chapter are meant to move you to those ends, as I aim to whittle down the list of questions you might still have.

These observations and conclusions were arrived at in the same way as the earlier chapters, through blending experience, logic, and intuition. I’ve found throughout my life that by holding on to questions long enough, particularly ones that doubled me over in angst or awe, the answers I sought inevitably arrived. Here, again, my ideas are not unique; you’d arrive at them on your own should you have the interest, yet to offer you a boost so that you might peer from “my shoulders,” perhaps even into realms I cannot yet see, I humbly continue.

Good God almighty.
In all battles between the heart and mind, go with your heart. For truly, it’s a lot easier for your mind to catch up with your heart, than for your heart to catch up with your mind.

Step one for changing the entire world is falling in love with it as it already is. Same for changing yourself.

Sometimes a lack of clarity, is actually the clarity you were in need of.

The older the soul, the softer the glance, the quicker the smile, and the sooner to say, “I love you.”
They also tend to hold hands with those they walk beside.

When pondering the vastness of the cosmos, keep in mind that it goes even farther inward than outward.

You can usually tell an old soul by how indifferent they are to setbacks and by how friendly they are to trees.

Young souls use pain to learn how things are. Mature souls use pain to learn how else things might be. And old souls use pain to learn how else they might be.
Random awkwardness, unexpected shyness, feared inadequacy, and occasional blushing are just a few signs that a giant is settling into their greatness.

Always listen to your doubts.

Not just because they might teach you of your fears but because, sometimes, they might teach you of your wisdom.

Those who say, “I don’t know what to do,” usually do know what to do.

Disappointment without anger is the mark of an old soul.

Not being disappointed is the mark of a really old soul.
And trusting life so thoroughly
    that every step on its path is valued
more than where it was supposed to take you,
is the mark of eternal youth.

Of all the things that really and truly matter,
    working efficiently and getting more done
is not among them.

The day will come, if it hasn’t already,
    when nothing else will matter to you as much
as helping others to succeed and to find the happiness
you have found.

You only have to ride the wave of life,
    not create it.
Nine out of ten old souls agree that one of the very best things about spiritual maturity is appreciating that age is so very meaningless.

The tenth soul?

Out climbing trees and couldn’t be reached.

The best way to create more free time, is to take it.

To move a mountain, befriend it, him, or her.

Everything that’s ever happened to you,
up until reading these very words,
was just practice for the really good stuff that’s to follow.

Each blossom still blooms in its field,
each child still clutches your hand,
and each friend still lingers in your heart.
Just because a window of time has closed
doesn’t mean what it showed you is gone.

You needn’t be intimidated by your dreams
or scared by your fears,
because in a world of illusion, where you are their creator,
you are also their greater.

When driving down the road of life,
rarely do you know how good you have it,
until you see it in the rearview mirror.
Unless you remember this mid-drive,
which should be right about now.
Young souls look to secrets, rites, and rituals.
Mature souls look to science, math, and evidence.
And old souls just look within.

The pursuit of money as a means to anything
should always be secondary
to the pursuit of the thing itself.

The sun asks not that the moon and planets
help brighten each day
but relishes her role as a keeper of the light
and a bringer of the dawn.
A role, no doubt, that will be much like your own.
Some people bloom late. Some very late.
   And some, very, very late. But, they all bloom.
And the longer it takes, the more spectacular it is.

Dimming your light in sadness or empathy
   over the suffering of others doesn’t help anyone.

Sometimes it’s your downtime,
   lounging-in-bed-too-long time, walkabout time,
watching-the-rain time and blow-Friday-off time
   that makes possible your greatest achievements.

When you give yourself permission
   to be totally unproductive,
   and you actually relish such interludes,
your genius, creativity, and productivity
   will increase exponentially.
A sign that you’re approaching enlightenment, beyond auras, ringing bells, and a healing touch, is that you start valuing idle daydreaming as much as you value being in the throes of creativity.

And that you begin talking sweetly, not only to plants and trees, but to cars and toasters and computers.

You find you’re eagerly picking up trash in public places.

And, quite unequivocally, you begin to feel gratitude for present challenges, love for lousy drivers, and sympathy for those who don’t see service in their work.

Until you arrive, then, these might be ways to lean in.

It’s perfectly okay, and sometimes highly ideal, to claim all is well amid doubt and confusion. To be happy in spite of challenges. To laugh at problems. Dance without a partner. Sing without a rhyme. And talk to inanimate objects.
You might be an old soul when, in spite of the usual challenges, you’d be happy to live another 10,000 lifetimes, even though your learning is almost done.

Whereas feeling impatience or boredom usually means you’ve got more living to do.

While you may, from time to time, envy others, it’s precisely during those moments when you might ask yourself whether or not you’d actually like to be them. And your envy will be cured.

Gorgeous, magnificent, and sublime are words that should be used as frequently as possible between you and your mirror. *Hubba, hubba* is good too. And please never forget to smile.
For a long time yet, there will be things not to like in time and space . . . animal testing, war, discrimination, hatred, to name a few. But please realize, only while living can you do anything about them.

When it comes to climbing mountains, slaying dragons, or just plain getting what you want, remember, you’ve got a built-in, double-secret advantage: *You’re supernatural.*

In the truest sense, the world around you is just more you.

Just because all things are possible, doesn’t mean you’re supposed to do all things. Besides, it’s not like you aren’t going to live forever.
Your feelings are your choice,
what manifests thereafter may not be.
Choose wisely.

Young souls value people for their strength,
mature souls value people for their productivity,
and old souls value people.

Primitive societies live by the Rule of Might,
and the strong prevail.
Advanced societies live by the Rule of Law,
and the privileged prevail.
Enlightened societies live by the Rule of Love,
and everyone thrives.
Apologize to an old soul
and your gesture will be honored.
Apologize to a young soul
and matters may become even more complicated.
Apologize anyway.

What if every wrinkle, scar, and gray hair
made you more beautiful?
Every tear shed, mistake made, and challenge faced
drew you closer to the light?
And every breath taken, sentence spoken, and path chosen
sparked uproarious cheering from behind
the curtains of time and space?
They do.

Taking full responsibility for your life includes
never forgetting to have fun.

The novice learns to be honest with others,
in terms of who, what, when, and where.

The advanced soul learns to be honest with self, and discovers that “perspective” rules, yet changes swiftly.

The master, however, studies honesty in terms of motivation, where heretofore, the lies have really piled up.

It’s not what’s said that determines whether you’re being honest, but why you said it. For example, if someone told you it’s a beautiful day, to distract your attention from the dent they just put in your car door, they’d be lying.

Never make a decision until you have to.

People who give are given to. People who care are cared for. And people who love . . .
age slower, run faster, jump higher,
are as happy with friends as they are alone,
climb more trees, skip when they could walk,
kiss when they could talk,
take the odd Friday off,
experience faster manifestations,
and are really popular with animals.

Being worthy isn’t something you earn,
it’s something you recognize.

Always see work as play
and play as important,
and soon you won’t know the difference between them.

A “forever being” would never worry about the future,
look back and regret, or have anything, ever, to fear.
Unless they forgot they’re forever.
Upon hearing criticism, the beginner scorns it. The careful student weighs it. And the master says, “But, of course!” understanding she attracted it and therefore needed to hear it, whether it was true or not.

Never has a word been uttered that didn’t have meaning to the ears who heard it.

Offering criticism belies a longing for recognition, appreciation, and validation. None of which, however, can be obtained through criticism.
Thinking that the death of a loved one is unfortunate, ill-timed, sad for the departed, or random is to deny the perfection and order that are otherwise so abundantly obvious throughout these magical jungles of time and space.

From time to time, as your life allows, try not to be too practical, logical, or predictable.

Often, that which you misunderstand is drawn to you. Never because you “needed” the lesson, nor because all must be so initiated, but because there had been earlier thoughts of awe, wonder, or criticism. And such thoughts, as all thoughts must, will rearrange your life to bring you more of whatever you were thinking of. And then, in attracting what you didn’t understand, you will ultimately gain enough clarity to understand it, release it, and finally, be free of it.

Spirituality should not be sought to avoid
the material world, but to better engage it.

Sometimes the people who know, don’t know they know. And sometimes the people who don’t know, think they do. But you can always tell who is which, because with knowing comes kindness.

A test that reveals whether or not those in your company are truly enlightened is whether or not they treat others as if they, too, are truly enlightened.

The primary roles of love are not to heal, fix, or mend. Not to soothe, cure, or ease. Not even to refresh, rejuvenate, or restore. The primary roles of love are to “Yahoo!” “Yee-haa!” and “Whoo-hoo!”
The difference between a young soul and an old soul is only known by the old soul, who would never breathe a word of it.

The most fun a baby soul can have comes from having. The most fun a young soul can have comes from doing. And the most fun an old soul can have comes from being—which usually leads to lots of having and doing.

Ultimate life mastery eventually becomes more a function of knowing what to want, than knowing how to get what you want.
It’s being alive that makes you rich.

If an event was so super-extraordinarily rare and fantastically incredible that it only happened once every 10 billion years, it would still be infinitely more ordinary, routine, and credible than the passage of any given day.

An enlightened soul is not one to whom truth has been revealed, but one who has summoned it.

A little heads-up on an affliction that afflicts all really old souls:
Giving love, eventually, becomes a much greater need than receiving it.

Whenever conferring with another—
either face-to-face or across the miles—
whether a human being, departed spirit, or sentient tree,
always speak to the highest within them.

(Right, as if some trees weren’t sentient. Nice catch.)

When you distrust, you attract the untrustworthy.

The very first inkling you may have
that you were actually born into “spiritual royalty”
comes when you notice there are flowers only you can pick.
Butterflies only you can see.
Laughter and tears only you can know.
And dreams only you can make real.
Let every season run its course and every tide ebb and flow, but think not that you have no choice of where your wandering mind may go.

In other words, letting life happen doesn’t mean giving up your power.

The reason most people worry so much, is because there exists between them and life a passionate love affair.

If ever granted one wish, wish for what is, because nothing will ever be better than living in a world where the past doesn’t matter, the future can be anything, and your thoughts become things.
The trick to being in the right place, at the right time, is knowing you already are.

It always works, there’s only love, things are getting better, you chose well, there’ve been no mistakes, you’re never alone, and everything makes you more.

You can be quite sure, given the infinite choices available at the time and your celestial connection with the Divine, that long ago, when you carefully mapped out your present adventure into the jungles of time and space; the hills and valleys you would likely traverse; the setbacks and advances you would likely encounter; the good, the bad, and the ugly, and all of the lives you would touch;

when your planning was done
and the “big picture” revealed . . .

. . . you burst into tears of joy, 
overwhelmed by its perfection and who you’d become.

Savor the uncertainties.  
Seize the possibilities.  
Seek.  
Wander.  
Explore.  
Ask.  

Face your fears.

Don’t rush love  
or force details.

Take risks.  
Be exceedingly kind.  
Move with your dreams.

You have what it takes to  
be whoever you feel called to be.  
Your full presence is needed;  
you were chosen to live amid these very days,  
as much as you chose.

You are inclined to succeed  
and your success will inspire others to do the same.
You are who God most wanted to be.
epilogue
the man
i am
Two years ago, at the local science center, we were both deep into the three-story-tall transparent human-hamster house, that really was for kids taller than you, and not for adults at all. As in earlier visits, your zeal for adventure had us both lost inside. Like usual, hunched over, cramming myself into the barrel hallways and spiral climbs, I was one of the few, if any, parents inside.

Especially endearing were your repeated calls for me to follow you whenever I slowed, your hand blindly reaching behind you to receive mine, “Daddy, Daddy, come on, Daddy!” There was no shame or embarrassment that I was with you. To the contrary, I was the cool enabler of your adventures—besides, you hadn’t reached that age yet. Each time you called, the sound of your voice quickened my pace and filled my heart, helping me to forget the physical pain of the assignment.

About an hour into it—an hour—my knees and back and neck were so tired, I casually let the space between us increase and you silently “let me slide,” aware but ignoring, or so I thought, the distance growing between us.

Before too long, I was on the outside, looking in. When possible, I watched and trailed under you, far above me, though you were no longer reachable. It was clear you were getting quite good at navigating this thing and didn’t really need me. Similarly, while the first few times it was fun for me to go inside as the doting, appreciated father, I’d had my fill. From the viewpoint of comfort, yours as much as mine, we probably let our playing and mutual dependency go on longer than necessary. Yet we were both happy to have spent a little extra time together, ensuring attainment of this point between dependence and release. That you’d still call for me from time to time, as if to need me . . . sweet bliss.

Without any warning whatsoever, a trace thought in my mind rapidly grew into a man-eating beast, and suddenly, I was gutted. It happened as you climbed alone up a level, from the second to the third, and began to leverage yourself around an obstacle, not that there was any connection between what you were doing and what I was thinking. It dawned on me that this process leading to independence is exactly what it’ll be like once you grow up, ready to leave our home. That the father-daughter relationship is a functional one. A job, fulfilling, joyful—especially joyful—to share life with you, to guide and help you, so that one day you can fly from our home and start your life. Then, too, there’ll be some overlap, in between faux dependency and independence, for everyone’s comfort. From which your every move will then be about your own adventures in the world beyond our home, maybe even with your own kids one day, no longer revolving around your mom and me. That is, if we’re even included at all,
except for the rare, compulsory family holiday, at which I’ll tell those in your life the same old stories and share the same old photos, trying to be relevant, my heart lost in the past, reliving what will surely be the most enchanted memories of my entire life . . . of times you probably won’t even remember.

Oh, doth nostalgia work fast! In my mind you were already gone, instead of three years old, inside of a Plexiglas maze. Overcome with a heart-wrenching sadness, two dripping pools of saltwater where eyes once were, with hopelessly blurred vision unable to distinguish between you and other crawling toddlers, a swelling knot in my throat . . . thinking, WHAT HAVE I DONE?! Lost my mind?! Got a little tired so I let MY BABY scale unreachable heights in the human-hamster house? Were you really okay? Ready to be on your own? WHY THE HELL was I in such a hurry to let you drift? Was I in THAT MUCH pain? Couldn’t I have been useful just a little longer? Wouldn’t it have been worth it to hang around a bit more, prolonging the opportunity TO BE TOGETHER . . . before, IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, you’d definitely not want your “Daddy” slowing you down?

On the verge of a loud and embarrassing snort-sob, I spotted you and saw you waver. You stopped mid-tunnel. You spun around, and around again . . . and then, hallelujah, I heard you call, “Daddy . . . ? Daddy?! Where are you?” “HERE I AM!” I waved with an exaggerated, ecstatic grin and eyebrows so optimistically stretched they almost left my face. Is this really happening? Or was I having some delusional fantasy? My eyes sharpening their focus, I saw yours lower to find me, truly surprised I had left my post, “Daddy, WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?” You looked as desperate for me as I had been feeling for you. “Daddy, I NEED YOU!” My heart burst.

Faster than an Olympian track star, I entered that human-hamster house hunched to half the height of my almost six-foot-three-inch frame, did the loop, ripped a few contortions to ascend the spiral climb, and leapt over the plastic bubble pit to give you a reassuring bear hug before you could say, “DADDY!” one more time. Sweet redemption . . .

What w-a-s that?

I still don’t know, but because of it, I was reminded of how much I love you . . . and love being loved by you. And I suddenly felt again as if all else in my life has existed to reach this moment. Not that any one part, including my love for your mother, is less important, because from all those parts being what they were, this moment was possible. This realization suddenly illuminated all else that came before your birth in an equally glorious, meaningful light. The depth of my love for you is not merely explained and held by your existence, but extends to all things, all times, all places, and all the people in my life that
brought us here. We are one, they are us, we are them, all is God, God is love—the very embodiment of life’s greatest mystery, answered.

It seems so obvious now, that the world we live in is one huge human-hamster house that takes us nowhere, except within. The props and technologies we harness are far less important for what they achieve, and far more important because they give us a context in which to create, interact, and be together. It matters not whether we commute every day like the Flintstones or the Jetsons. What’s important is that there are people in our lives to learn from, play with, grow with, and love.

That’s what we are to each other—mirrors, sounding boards, love switches. It’s the drama that makes our lives rich, that fleshes out and gives meaning to our journeys, creating reference points of relativity where none could otherwise exist. The drama! Oh my God, how wrong I had it. Merit, success, money, service, dedication, innovation do not hold a candle to the treasure of emotions that make up our lives.

It’s the romance of life, created by believing in the illusions that stirs our heart and binds our sense. Our false belief that time, space, and matter are real ultimately shows us that only our feelings last. Just as my false belief that I could lose you ratchets up my appreciation for the present moment, or my false belief that you are “my” daughter fills me with self-love and importance that I might not have otherwise allowed. These false beliefs are like temporary crutches that we will one day walk without. You’ve shown me this, and more.

Relishing the perfection in you, I began to consider that beyond your digits and health, what I marvel over most is your unique God-illuminated essence, which quite obviously is present in every little girl . . . and every little boy . . . and, of course, in every grown-up. That it must be there in all people, never wavering, blazing in all its glory. It could be no other way. No matter who, no matter where, no matter when, and just as important, no matter what they’ve ever done. They still remain of God, by God, pure God. That “we are” is our saving grace, the pulsing proof of our divinity. Our magnificence does not exist because of what we do, achieve, or have. That we breathe is enough.

And then . . . when I least suspected it . . . with denial at first . . . then reluctance . . . and finally . . . a shrug . . . I saw it in me. I saw that I am the very same, pure miracle. Which is what I’ve written and taught others for years, yet it took my feelings for you, before I really got it about me.

This concept is still expanding in my mind. Especially getting that the love I have for you, which will never wither or fade, must be what my parents once felt and still feel for me. And more, what God once felt, and still must feel, for me. And that like my love for you, their love is not about what I do or don’t do, who
I am or who I become, not even about who or how much I serve. Their love “is” because I am . . . again, the very embodiment of life’s greatest puzzle. Leading, therefore, to my ultimate realization:

*I already am . . . the man you think I am.*

In fact, missing the mark is impossible. I can’t not be that person, any more than you could be less than the perfection I’m constantly in awe of. *This is who we really are.* All of us. No one left behind, each a rare and precious spark of God, left to find this out for ourselves, or . . . maybe from our daughter.

Know this for yourself, precious wonder, and remember it should you ever feel unworthy of love. You’re already more than you could ever hope to become. You are utterly adored simply for being who you are, exactly as you are, who you can’t not be.

Without a doubt, right here and now, as you read these very words with eyes that sparkle, no matter the day, amid your dancing manifestations in a perfect world on an emerald planet while your heart beats, your blood flows, and angels peer over your shoulder, I think that you, and I, and everyone who may ever read these words, and everyone who won’t, are the “luckiest” people alive.

*I’ll love you forever, Solecito, my little sun—*

*Dad*
about the author
Mike Dooley is a *New York Times* best-selling author whose books have been published in 25 languages. He’s also a late-blooming first-time husband and father, who’s now living and learning between Orlando, Florida, and Manzanillo, Mexico. You can learn more about Mike at [www.tut.com](http://www.tut.com).
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