

What's in the Way Is the Way

A PRACTICAL GUIDE *for* WAKING UP TO LIFE

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Introduction

Your Transformation Begins

I am inviting you on the most important journey you will ever take: the journey back to a heartfelt connection with yourself and a trust-filled connection with your life. This journey will show you that there is a sense of well-being with you always, no matter what is happening in your life.

If you are like most people, you have only sporadic glimpses of this well-being. This may be because you, like most everyone else, have a deep belief inside of you that says you are not enough. You may also have been conditioned to believe that if you just fix yourself or your life, you will be “enough” and thus know the peace and happiness you long for. You have become an ongoing project, and this causes you to struggle with your compulsions, your finances, your relationships, and your health. Rather than peace and joy, you may very well be living with a low-grade sense of unease that periodically flares up and plunges you into turmoil. Your life has become a series of problems to be solved rather than an adventure to be lived. If you are honest with yourself, you recognize that this fixing game has never brought you peace, well-being, or ease.

I too lived from this place of struggle for many years, so I intimately know the deep pain and heartache that comes from the fix-it mode. I was very compulsive, at times suicidal, and felt that I had no value. Most of the time, I experienced a sense of unease, and often it would flare up into dread, hopeless despair, and overall anxiousness. These feelings would show up as relentless struggles in my mind, knots in my stomach, and debilitating headaches that came from an

intense longing to run away from my life. I gained a huge amount of weight, washed a lot of the food down with alcohol, and took every pill I could get my hands on.

Since I perceived myself as defective, I tried to get rid of the parts of me I didn't like and hold on to the ones I did. But these parts seemed to have a life of their own, appearing when I didn't want them and disappearing when I wanted them to stay. I also desperately tried to understand it all, but that just kept me caught in my head.

It wasn't until I discovered how to listen to myself that I began to open up again. Rather than always being in fix-it mode, I learned how to meet myself exactly as I am, opening into the place beyond judging, fixing, getting rid of, and trying to understand. I learned the art of being present for my own experience, no matter what it is, and the art of meeting myself—even the so-called unacceptable, unmeetable parts of myself—in my own heart.

Slowly, just as the morning light dispels the dark, I came back to myself. I also discovered how to show up for the great adventure of Life—not just life in the everyday sense, but the intelligent process unfolding in and through everyone and everything. Instead of always trying to create a better reality, I showed up for Reality with a capital R. (When capitalized, the words *Life* and *Reality*—as well as *Love*, *Intelligence*, and *Presence*—all refer to the interconnected, intelligent field of being that is Life.)

Rather than being in a constant state of unease, I came to know more and more joy, trust, and love. Did this make all of my vulnerabilities go away? No. These feelings will always be a part of me, for vulnerability is an essential part of being human, and vulnerabilities are the doorways back into peace, joy, and love. Now mine are nestled in the spaciousness of my own heart. And when they get reawakened through this sometimes fierce process called Life, they don't take over any more. Instead, they open my heart even more.

I tell you this so that you know what I am offering you here comes from having actually lived it. Rather than letting me stay lost in the depth of darkness I'd taken on, Life itself showed me the pathway from contraction and struggle to connection and well-being. Since I

began sharing my journey more than thirty years ago, I have guided thousands of people on their own journeys back to themselves and back to Life. And each of them, in turn, has helped me to see more clearly the pathway back to Life.

In this book, I am inviting you on a journey back to ease and well-being. In this exploration, you will first discover how to see through the game of struggle so you can know the joy of being fully alive. Struggle is like a cloud bank of stories that cuts you off from your natural state of joy and peace, and you have been conditioned throughout your life to believe in these stories. Struggle is based on fear; it is held together with judgment, and it leaves you vulnerable to sadness, anger, loneliness, and despair. Your struggling self doesn't only grapple with the big challenges of Life; it resists the smaller things, like the length of the stoplight, the spot on your shirt, or the shape of your nose. You will learn how not to get seduced by your mind's addiction to struggle, how to see the particular stories of struggle you were conditioned to believe, and how to give them the spacious acceptance they need to let go. You will learn how to unhook from all of the fears, longings, irritations, and sorrows that struggle generates. Rather than turning to your compulsions or fighting with the people in your life, you will be able to simply let it all pass through you, knowing that at any given moment only a small part of you has a problem with Life. The rest of you is at peace.

You will also learn how to meet yourself exactly as you are, weaving every part of yourself—even the parts you think are unlikable and unlovable—into your own heart. You will move beyond being a victim of the challenges of your life so that you can gather the treasures that always accompany them. You will come to see that your life, rather than being a series of events that are happening *to* you, is all happening *for* you. Everything in your life—especially your challenges—is tailor-made to help you see your stories of struggle. Whatever is in the way *is* the way! You will learn how to listen to your challenges, rather than striving to overcome them, so they can lead you back to your heart.

And finally, you will rediscover how to be open to Life again—right here, right now, feeling at home no matter where you are, no matter what is happening. Everything you experience on this journey will allow you the safety to show up for the great adventure called Life—not an idea of what it should be, but the real thing. This is what you deeply long for: an intimate connection with Life. At your core, you yearn to show up for what Life is offering in this moment rather than wanting your experience to be different than it is. You long to let go of trying, resisting, and constantly evaluating how you're doing so that you can relax into your life and know the joy of being fully available and present for Life.

Joseph Campbell, the much-loved mythologist and writer, said in *The Power of Myth*, “People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonance within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. That's what it's all finally about.”

What Campbell is alluding to is the heart of this book. It is an invitation to fully experience Life so you can again know “the rapture of being alive,” which is all about connecting with what is right here, right now.

Chapter 1 shows you how your stories of struggle become clouds in your mind that eventually surround you, cutting you off from seeing the meadow of your own innate okayness and from Life. You will also meet “the storyteller,” the voice that spins the ongoing tales of struggle, and discover the power of compassionate curiosity to quiet your storyteller. In chapter 2, we explore the qualities of the meadow in more detail. Chapter 3 examines fear, which is the core movement of your storyteller, and you'll discover that it is possible to see through its stories. In chapter 4, you take the essential step of discovering that you are not the one in charge of this transformation process, you are not alone, and help is only a question away.

With this foundation, in chapter 5 we'll explore the power of being curious about your immediate experience. Chapter 6 guides you in discovering *how* to bring the power of curiosity into your daily life.

In chapter 7 we look at your heart's ability to heal. Then, in chapter 8, you'll learn how to touch even the deepest of holdings inside of you with the healing of your heart.

In chapter 9 you will reconnect with your natural state of trust. In chapter 10, all that we have explored will be brought together into four guidelines that will help you to be with whatever Life brings you. By the end of this book, you will discover that what we are exploring in these pages has the power to transform the world.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

Understanding what is being offered here is an important step, but the doors into being fully alive open through *experiencing* what is being offered. You may have some resistance to opening to Life, for while this is what we all deeply long for, we are also afraid of it. Direct experience, even of the resistant part of you, can help you get past any resistance that may come up. In this book, I have incorporated two means of helping you move through resistance and connect with the truth beyond the words.

First, throughout each chapter, you will be invited to pause to connect with what is being offered in that moment. These are invitations to let go of the world of struggle and open to Life here and now, to dip the finger of your attention into the river of your experience and let Life in. You can stay at just the level of understanding the words, and that can be an important phase. But there comes a time when we become ready to move beyond understanding into actually experiencing what the words are pointing to. You don't have to figure out what that is; you simply discover that you can let go of the game of struggle and connect with Life in the moment.

Second, I have designed a ten-week introspective process to allow you to fully experience the offerings of each of the ten chapters. This process is found in the section called "Remembering" at the end of each chapter. This name reflects that everything offered in this book you already know and have just forgotten. But this process also contains an element of re-mem-bering: we no longer see ourselves as a separated part of a dismembered whole, but rediscover the

cohesiveness of Life and how we are necessary components of it. The more we clear out our stories of struggle, the more we re-member, or put ourselves back into, this great flow of Life.

You will be given a “Remembering Statement” that captures the essence of what was explored in each chapter. These truth statements come from the place beyond the struggling self. They will help you, as you move throughout your day, to reconnect with what you have learned. You can write the truths on sticky notes and place them around your environment. Or you can associate them with something you do many times a day, such as using the bathroom or answering the phone. You can even use them as a mantra during your times of conscious breathing.

These truths will also be helpful in getting to know your struggling self, which may at times argue with the core remembering. Notice when your mind is open to them, and notice what it says when it is not. Remember that when your mind is arguing with a truthful statement, this is just your struggling self.

If the statement that is chosen for the week doesn't call to you, ask yourself what touched you the most in the chapter. Then put it in a few words that you can come back to throughout the week, reminding yourself what you are remembering.

You are also encouraged to spend some quiet time with yourself every day, learning to see and listen to your inner experiences rather than being seduced by the game of struggle. I call these times “Remembering Sessions.” Through them, you are invited to bring what we are exploring in each chapter into your immediate experience.

These sessions may look like meditation, but in the traditional sense, they are not. Rather than trying to make something happen or get to a better state or change what is, you are strengthening the muscle of your attention. With attention, you can be curious about what is going on right now in order to discover how to relate to your immediate experience rather than turning it into a problem. For it is when your attention and your immediate experience come together that you rediscover your innate sense of ease, peace, and well-being beyond the clouds of struggle in your mind.

Your Remembering Session is a powerful place to get to know your mind. If you are like most people, your mind will have times when it struggles with the sessions. It will try to do them right and judge itself for how it is doing. It will often get bored or just space out. Most people think they are failures at what is called “meditation” because they’re trying to do it “right.” But your experience would be completely different if you knew that whatever shows up in your daily Remembering Session is exactly what needs to be there, and that when you can be curious about it, you step out of the game of struggle.

On the first day of each week, I suggest you read through the instructions for the chapter’s Remembering Session and then close your eyes and go exploring. The abbreviated version at the end of the instructions can guide you for every day of the week after that.

Many people find it helpful to connect with themselves in this way as early in the day as they can, so it sets a tone for the day. If this doesn’t work for you, find a time when you can regularly explore the Remembering Session of the chapter.

You can also sprinkle a minute or two of becoming curious about what you are experiencing as you move throughout your day. As with the Remembering Statements, it can help to connect this curiosity with something you do a number of times during the day, like eating, using the bathroom, or answering the phone.

I have designed the Remembering process to span ten weeks, so you can spend seven days connecting with the core discoveries of each chapter and your experience of them. But I encourage you to take more or less time, as you feel called to. You could spend several weeks on one session or move through two in one week. Also, while the sessions do help you integrate on a deeper level what is being offered here, if you are not called to do the sessions, honor that. You will still receive from the book what you need to receive. Trust yourself and open to these sessions if and when it is right for you. Even though there is a tried-and-true pathway from *doing* Life to *being* Life, you have your unique expression of that path. So it is important that you take in what resonates with you and leave the rest.

*

The core of our journey together is about opening what has been closed inside of you, so that the energy that has been bound up in your struggling self can be released and you can again know the joy of being fully alive. Well-being is here right now. You don't need to search for it, you don't need to fix yourself to know it, and you don't even need to change anything in your life. Your innate sense of well-being is revealed as you learn how to unhook from your struggling self.

On behalf of all the people who live on this beautiful, blue-green jewel that is our planet, I thank you for your willingness to take this journey back to Life. This gratitude comes from knowing that as you discover and live from the meadow of well-being, your life will be transformed. And as your life transforms, you will transform the lives of everybody you meet—or even think about—for the rest of your life. When you are not caught in the world of struggle, you are *here*, open to the amazing majesty and mystery of Life, radiating the presence of well-being. And a human being who has discovered how to be here becomes an invitation to all beings to unhook from the mind's addiction to struggle and open back into the joy of being fully here for Life. For the healing of all beings, Life is bringing you home.

Are you ready to embark on the journey from struggle to well-being? If so, let's begin.

1

It's All Okay—It's Truly Okay

Imagine a day when everything was okay—not just okay, but *really* okay. You may have just fallen in love or received something you have wanted for a long time. Or maybe you are on vacation with no pressures, lying on a beach in deep contentment. Allow the images of your okay day to fill you up. Go for the gusto—let in that *okayness*. Let it flood your mind, your body, and your heart.

Now notice what you are experiencing as you use your imagination to open up to the joy of everything being okay. In your mind there is probably a sense that nothing needs to be any different than it is. In your body, there is likely an experience of deep relaxation that allows for the glow of joy. Your heart is open, spacious, and light. *Abh!*

What would it be like if you knew that everything was always okay? That doesn't mean there wouldn't be challenges. It just means that you wouldn't turn them into problems, so then you would be able to respond to them from a clear place. What would it be like to live from this open, relaxed, engaged, and spacious place? Isn't this what you deeply long for—to no longer struggle with Life and instead be available to the experience of Life as it is right here, right now? This is possible! In fact, everything in your life is a part of the journey into recognizing and living from a place that is beyond struggle.

THE MYTH OF NOT BEING OKAY

We all long for this okayness, and yet it seems very elusive. If you step back and look at what is going on inside of you all day long, you would see that rather than resting in the ease of okayness, your mind is often doing the opposite. It is searching for something better—a better body, a better mate, a better meditation, a better car, a better mind. This kind of mind hopes that if you can just get your life the way you want it to be, then you will feel okay.

You can also spend a lot of energy trying to get rid of the parts of you that you don't like. You hope all of this wanting and resisting will finally soothe the raging beast of the voice in your head that says you and your life need to be different than what they are in order to have everything be okay. When struggling with your life doesn't bring you lasting satisfaction, you look for it through the numbing world of compulsions.

When you look honestly at your search for a better experience, you will see that it doesn't work. Or the better way to say it is that it does work, for brief moments, but it keeps you caught in the belief that if you just do it right—if you change yourself and your life enough—then you will know that illusive okayness you so deeply long for. But haven't you noticed that every time your mind feels that it has gotten yourself and your life together, they haven't stayed that way?

It is very important to understand that the mind is not being put down here. It is an exquisite creation of Life that took 13.8 billion years to form—since the beginning of the universe. Life created the mind as a tool for maneuvering through Life, not to be in charge of it. The mind is a wonderful servant, but it is a horrible master. Giving it the task of being in charge of Life has created the world of struggle that most people live in all day long, keeping them cut off from peace and joy.

The more you can learn how to use your mind rather than having it use you, you will discover that okayness is your natural state and that it is always with you no matter what happens in your life. You just don't see it because you are always trying to find it. And you can't find it, for you have never lost it. You could be angry, deeply despairing, or even very afraid, and your natural field of well-being is also there at