

in deep shift

Riding the Waves of
Change to Find Peace,
Fulfillment, and Freedom

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Introduction

“This is who we really are. We are one blink of an eye away from being fully awake.”

Pema Chödrön

have you ever stepped back, looked at the chaos swirling around you, and thought to yourself, “What the *actual* fuck is happening?” Not just with the specific situation in front of you, but more like, “*What the fuck is happening with my entire existence?!?*” If so, there’s a real good chance you are *in Deep Shift*.

In deep *what?* What I’m referring to is a profound, core-level shift in consciousness. A radical personal transformation. And I mean *radical*. From soul to skin, inside and outside. Being in Deep Shift *is a sign that a major shift in consciousness is occurring in the deepest levels of your being*. A combo platter of spiritual awakening and paradigm shift, it’s the kind of change that makes you say, “Oh my *God*, everything I thought I knew was wrong.”

And just like that, boom, you are gifted with a totally new way of seeing, interacting with, and living in the world. You thought you were one way . . . then you “awaken” . . . and you realize you are an entirely different person! This can happen suddenly on the heels of a traumatic life event, or it can happen over time through dedication to a spiritual practice. In some cases, a person may find themselves in Deep Shift for no apparent reason at all. The last example is the least common, but however you got here—as you’ll come to see in these pages—the good news is that once you accept that you’re *in Deep Shift*, anything and everything is possible.

Which might sound a little, shall we say, intense! But honestly? If you have found yourself in this place, then I believe that you have found the meaning of life itself. Having been through the Shift myself and come out the other side reborn, I believe we are all here to wake up, to transform, and to come back home to ourselves, which essentially means coming home to God/the Universe/Source. (I often refer to the “energy” or “creative force” that makes the world spin as *God*, but feel free to use whatever resonates for you. I don’t care if you call it Big Bird. In my eyes, it’s all the same thing.) A process that essentially means completely letting go of who you thought you were, it’s kind of like winning the spiritual lottery. Let me say it loud and clear: being in Deep Shift means you are getting “plugged in.” Period. This means you are on your way to living with “higher consciousness” and will find yourself increasingly in tune with the same juju that makes the trees grow and lights up the moon at night.

For example, some commonly reported side effects of being in Deep Shift include: living in the “now,” and no longer feeling troubled or distracted by the past or the future; feeling okay to just be you, and no longer feeling daunted, overwhelmed, or discouraged by what others think; having heightened awareness, and being more consciously connected to your “higher self”; making *waaaaay* better decisions, since you’re being guided 24/7 by the inner voice that always knows what’s best for you; detaching from outcomes (in the healthiest way), so you’re not hurt or disappointed by how things turn out; experiencing enhanced mental clarity and creativity, and the ability to absorb information faster and integrate it more deeply; feeling emotionally more grounded and balanced; and regularly getting a good night’s sleep.

Sounds pretty cool, doesn’t it? And all you have to do to experience the above is . . . give up everything you thought you knew about the person you were, the life you have been living, and all that you believed to be true. Deal?

Don’t freak out. From my perspective, being in Deep Shift is the greatest thing that can ever happen to you. Here’s how I see it. As the Bhagavad Gita (the most ancient Hindu text and the basis of the yogic philosophy and teachings) states: “The ways of karma are unfathomable. We can never completely know how and why things happen in this world, but we do know that opportunities will show up in all of our lives. Whether we take the leap

or not is another story.” This means that while not everyone in his or her lifetime will experience the Shift, we are all *built* for transformation. Meaning, we are all born filled with wonder and love, and primed to evolve and to grow throughout the course of our lives. But, over time, the world starts chipping away at our magic. Parents, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, and bosses all—given their own lack of a spiritual hookup—unconsciously lay their power trips on us, steering (or molding) us the way they think is best for us. Which is usually the way that’s best for *them*.

Given the way our society is structured, simply being born on this planet means being born into a state of illusion. This illusion leads us to a false sense of identity. Part of our journey therefore is to grow in “knowing” and personal power in order to connect to our true selves, instead of living our lives as the person we’ve been told we *should* be. This is part of each person’s path. It is how we learn and how we grow. And it is the pitfalls and the forks in the road that stretch our awareness and push us to evolve. The good, the bad, and the ugly, it’s all there to help us, even when we have zero clue what the hell is happening.

Sadly, our governmental, educational, and social structures have been put in place by people who are, by and large, flying blind. Because despite big expansions of consciousness since the 1960s, at this point in time the scales still haven’t tipped. There are more people on the planet who haven’t yet “woken up” and experienced the Shift than there are awakened souls. That means that most of society’s structures and systems were put in place by humans who have not done the work and crossed the transformation Rubicon. After a while, growing up with this kind of guidance, it’s natural for a young person to begin to question their connection to the Divine consciousness that knows everything there is about everything there is. As the pressure begins to build, from friends, family, advertising, and society (it’s everywhere!), we slowly start closing down the wonderment in our soul. Our will to go against the grain, to do it “our” way, starts to break down. We get tired. We learn that it’s easier to follow the rules (and get super-addicted to all the material “rewards” we get for being compliant). Eventually we are nothing but sheeple, following the leader instead of living to the beat of our own hearts. But more often than not, where they are going is a long, dry, and dusty road leading to nowhere truly fulfilling.

And then one day something curious happens: a crack appears in the facade. Maybe it comes after years of managing the anxiety of living the way I described earlier with a regular yoga or meditation practice, or perhaps it shows up in the midst of a particularly challenging life experience. But, as if we've found a secret doorway to a whole other Universe, it is through this crack that we get a teeny glimpse of who we *really* are. A child of the Cosmos. Effortlessly connected to everything that is and flowing like a wave on the Ocean of Life.

With this comes the realization that the way you have been living is *all wrong!* Now that you've seen "the light," nothing about your life makes sense, as if you've been operating on a wonky frequency this whole time and now you've tuned in to a signal that's speaking directly to your soul. Surveying the landscape of what *used* to be your life, you look back and begin to connect the dots. You're able to see how everything you've experienced during your lifetime has, in fact, been leading you to this point—but that now you're here, the "old" way of doing things will no longer cut it. You have moved on from the level of logic and reason and into the realm of feeling, intuition, and living from the seat of your soul. You are officially *in Deep Shift* . . . which is where the real fun begins.

Because *now* comes the time for you to truly carve your own path. After all, it is increasingly obvious that being a mature, switched on, fully functioning adult human is NOT about getting a degree, clocking into a stable job, and living in the suburbs with 2.5 children and a brand-new Lexus. It is about breaking free from the rules of the earthly road and deeply connecting with the power that makes the planet spin. This is true power. Personal, universal, cosmic power. Which means the time has come to un-brainwash yourself from everything you have been told about who you are and what the fuck life is all about and begin writing your own rules for living.

Which is also where this book comes in. Navigating your way through this new terrain often proves to be no easy task, my friend. Great forces will try to pull you back into your old ways of thinking and doing. People won't want to see you change. Society won't want to make space for you to expand. You being in Deep Shift will put others on edge, and managing *their* discomfort can be the most challenging part of all. Which means you're gonna have

to stand up for what you know is true and learn to depend on yourself as you walk bravely into your new life. And when you can't see the enchanted forest for the trees, I'll be dropping bread crumbs throughout these pages to help you find your way.



So, who the hell am I for you to be entrusting me with nothing short of your real-time rebirth into a whole new paradigm? Let me begin by saying that by no stretch of the imagination do I have ALL the answers. Nobody does. But I have found myself being dragged through the Shift on many an occasion. Navigating my own awakening, I have also taken a deep dive into the world of expanded consciousness, and, yes, I have a lot to say on the subject.

It began at the beginning for me, as I was born a highly sensitive person. I didn't have a name for it then, but from an early age I was tapped into the emotional and spiritual energy of my environment. Does this resonate with you? I was also highly intuitive. I could size a person up in one minute flat, as if I could literally "see" into them. I also grew up with a very sensitive and intuitive mother (in another era she might legit have been branded a witch), and I'm convinced she passed on that good juju to yours truly.

When I was nine years old, my mom took me to meet Mother Teresa in a little Catholic church in the Pilsen area of Chicago, where I grew up. At the time, I had no idea who this saintly woman was. I just knew I was going on an adventure with my mom. When we got to the church, we sat down in one of the pews, and when I turned around to look, I saw about forty women dressed in blue-and-white saris. *Wow, I found myself wondering, who are these beautiful women, and why are they so shiny?*

After Mass, we all got a chance to meet Mother Teresa. I walked up to her, and when she took my hand, looking deeply into my eyes, something shifted inside of me, as if a light was turned on in my soul that never went out. In a haze, I asked my mom, "*Who is that lady?*" My mom smiled and calmly told me, "*That lady* single-handedly changed the world, my love."

My obsession with all things spiritual and mystical was confirmed right then and there. By junior high I was devouring books by both the Christian

mystics and modern spiritual teachers like Louise Hay and Wayne Dyer. My mom, being a former nun and a mystical poet, was right there by my side to answer all my questions. I wasn't the best student at school, and I can remember my magical mother saying to me, "Val, just do what you need to do to pass your classes and come home and read whatever you want." Mom was awake, so she knew the system was bogus. By encouraging my mystical studies, I can now see that she was both protecting me from falling into the trap of living somebody else's life and empowering me to have the strength to be my own person.

I went on to major in comparative religious studies in college and then got my master's degree in transpersonal psychology. As I said, I've been endlessly curious about spirituality, and what *really* makes us tick, for as long as I can remember. And that's another trait of mine that I bet you see in yourself, too, as many of those who find ourselves in Deep Shift have been fascinated with spirituality and mysticism from an early age.

As you can tell, my relationship with my mom was super-special, and it was when she passed away due to breast cancer in 2011 that I first found myself in Deep Shift. My world fell apart completely. I thought I would never meet another person who understood me the way she did, and, in the weeks after she passed, I became suicidal. My entire world went black, and I sunk to the depths of despair. I felt as though I had lost EVERYTHING . . . and, in a way, I had. I had no idea who I *was* without my mom. It was as though my entire identity had been shattered, and now, like Humpty Dumpty, I had to put myself back together. What I didn't realize, even after years of studying theology, miracles, and spirituality, is that *this is what transformation looks like*. But nothing, and I mean nothing, could have prepared me for what came next.

A couple of months after losing my mom, I had hit my limit. I found myself on the floor of my shower, on my hands and knees, begging God to either save me or help me take my life. I couldn't go on anymore; the pain was just too much. It also felt as though the person I was had *already* died, and as if there was nothing left to keep me in this life.

About a week later, an ex-boyfriend who was extremely worried about me insisted I come to his company's business dinner just to get me out of

the house. I happened to be seated next to a random man who I struck up a conversation with. In about two minutes flat I was bawling my eyes out, telling him that I was suicidal. Clearly, I was in a really bad space. He was very kind to me and suggested I learn how to meditate. Specifically, he nudged me to learn Transcendental Meditation.

For some reason, I decided to take this stranger's advice, and within a couple weeks I found myself at a meditation center on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. Part of me likes to believe that my mom was helping me from the other side and that she nudged, or rather shoved, me toward meditation. Transcendental Meditation (TM for short) is a mantra-based meditation. You learn with a trained teacher who gives you a mantra (a sound you repeat in your head while meditating) in a special little ceremony with flowers and deities, and next thing you know, you're off to the races.

In my case, the TM teacher and I both closed our eyes, I began to think the mantra to myself . . . and just like that, *I was gone*. I dove into a part of my body and mind I never knew existed—a space that felt boundless, limitless, and totally awesome. It felt like I fell into an ocean of silence inside my own body. As if I had opened the door to heaven, except it was inside of me. When I opened my eyes twenty minutes later, I knew I had experienced something profound. In that moment, I was transformed. Everything was different. Colors looked brighter, sounds were clearer, the air smelled sweet, and I felt as if all the darkness inside of me had completely lifted. As if I was seeing the world through God's eyes, everything around me was holy and perfect. Never again would I be the same person, and soon I would discover that I had only glimpsed the tip of the iceberg.

It took me a couple of weeks to adjust to this new feeling, but *man*, it was incredible. I would feel completely fulfilled just looking at trees and being outside with the birds. I felt as if I was connected to ALL of it. As if I *was* the grass, I *was* the little squirrel running around in the yard, I *was* the homeless person on the corner. I was the Universe—and I knew it. And I hadn't even dropped any acid! My fourteen-year sleeping problem also disappeared, literally overnight. Looking back, my experience of learning TM was nothing short of miraculous—and I will be forever grateful to the man who suggested I try it.

After all, the real mindblower was that only a few weeks previously I had been planning to give away my dog, along with all my belongings, and *end my life*. Without my mom, I could not see how I could go on living. I'd sobbed and wailed myself to sleep, night after night, desperately praying for a balm for my grief and an end to the shitty sadness in my soul. I *never* could have guessed it would come in the form of something as simple as *meditation*.

But when I say this was the tip of the iceberg, I mean that things only continued to get more interesting. Once I repaid my sleep debt, my mind was clear as a bell. Not that I even really had to think—I could just follow the signs. Synchronicity was everywhere, and it would simply be obvious what I should do next. My destiny was being laid out before me, and I just kept walking into it.

I also began having visions, and I discovered I had the ability to communicate with people who had passed away. The day after I learned TM, I had an unclouded vision of my mom with Christ. In one second, all the terror I had experienced after she died was dissolved. I knew where she was; in fact, in that moment I felt like I completely understood death. And so, the fear of dying also went right out the window. I remember telling my meditation teacher two very profound things. The first thing I said to her when I opened my eyes was, "Everything I thought I knew was wrong." Days later, I explained that I felt as though all humans had the ability to know *anything*. Not like all of a sudden I was going to be a chemist; more as if a deep spiritual knowledge was baked into all of our cells. The *Deep Shift* that I had experienced was allowing me to tap into this cosmic information. I just knew things; I didn't have to ask why or how. I just knew. Like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, I realized I had always had the power—I'd just never fully realized it.



So that's my story. What's yours? We all have a different path, and you can find yourself in Deep Shift without reaching the kind of rock bottom I did. I clearly needed a big bop on the head to wake up, but I was always a stubborn

little bugger. Whatever it is that brought you here, what's actually happening is that you are ready to start living the life that's really *yours* to live. Given how challenging it can be to wade through Deep Shift, a friend or fellow traveler on the spiritual highway is an invaluable source of support on this glorious—and yet sometimes stinky—path. And while the people around you might not understand what's happening, I certainly do. So, it's very good we found each other, as things can get hairy.

For example, you may find yourself unexpectedly moving, switching careers, or leaving an old relationship. Perhaps you get involved with a new group of people, and gossiping and shallow chit-chat (if it's something you have engaged with) may start to feel icky or mind-numbingly boring to you. You may feel called to “bump up” your spiritual practice, and it's quite possible you will want to spend more time in nature. If you've been super-attached to a certain career path, this may come into question too, as you no longer see the point in working simply to make money. Hidden talents, interests, and passions can pop up, and, in a heartbeat, move you in a new direction. Supernatural abilities may also arise (sounds weird, yep, but discovering you are “psychic” can be pretty darn cool!).

Meanwhile, your nervous system is naturally becoming more sensitive, meaning it may feel like your whole personality is changing, as if you are seeing the world with completely new eyes. This part might be especially confusing, as if you have a *whole new brain*. Which, of course, means you will have to relearn how to use it! This will mainly mean developing the capacity to trust in all your own decisions, and no longer asking for permission or validation about how to do *you*. You are officially taking the road less traveled, and you're the one drawing the map! You can aid this process by paying extra attention to the food you eat, how much you drink, and generally fine-tuning your caregiving of your entire physical vehicle (your brain, your body, *and* your emotions).

The good news? I—as in this book—got you, boo! In these pages, I will be guiding you through each step of the process of being in Deep Shift, and sharing simple, clear-cut action steps that will help you navigate your way forward. The process of awakening can be defined in the simplest terms as a dropping of what's “false” in order to embrace what is “real” . . .

and each chapter of this book contains a beefy tool kit of action steps and paradigm-shifting ideas to make the transition as easy as possible.

I've divided the text into three parts, reflecting the different stages of a classic Deep Shift. This begins with acknowledging WTF is happening, and that from here on, this will never be the same again. As such, part 1 is designed to help you orient yourself on the Shifter path. From there, it's about gathering the tools to help you handle what's coming atcha with as much grace (and as little anxiety) as humanly possible. To this end, part 2 will walk you through my tried-and-true tools for staying grounded and sticking the landing. And finally, anybody who has experienced Deep Shift will essentially have to relearn how to be in a world that's been turned upside down and inside out. Part 3 goes deep (naturally) into how to navigate this transition and reap all the amazing benefits of making it through and out the other side.

Ultimately, I want to guide you to a place where you no longer feel the need to compromise yourself for image, attention, safety, money, or status. To a place where you begin to find more clarity and inner strength, as your attention naturally attunes with what brings you greater joy and fulfillment. As you read along, my hope is that you will find yourself living with more faith and less fear, a shift that will be reflected in both your day-to-day choices and your “major” life decisions. Woohoo, now you're cooking with gas! You will start feeling a sense of magic and unexpected grace creeping into all areas of your life. And all of sudden, you wake up one day and realize it's actually no longer possible for you to live an “ordinary” life. Trust me, when I found myself in Deep Shift, even going to the grocery store became an awe-inspiring experience. And what I quickly realized is that my sense of wonder had always been there—I just couldn't see or feel it.

Growing up in a Greek household, I had been fed a lot of set ideas about how things should be. You grow up, get married, get a house near your parents, and raise a family. On the inside, these “rules” never felt like they fit me—and as soon as the lights went on (i.e., the Shift started hitting the fan), the rulebook went right out the window. For the first time, I felt like I was living a life on my own terms. No religious dogma, no societal programming, and no family dynamic was going to pull me back in. I just *knew*—and continue to know—what was right for *me*, and that was that.