

spiritually sassy

8

Radical Steps
to Activate
Your Innate
Superpowers

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sounds true
BOULDER, COLORADO

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Introduction

Hello, my love. Welcome to *Spiritually Sassy*.

Spiritually Sassy distills the art of living well in our modern world in eight radical yet entirely attainable steps. The eight steps in this book lead directly to the heart. *Spiritually Sassy* is the *now* guide.

The steps in this book are not a quick fix. *Spiritually Sassy* is not some cute slogan for spiritual bypassing. It is an invitation to do the Work with a guy who's been there, with a guy you can relate to. A blend of Tantric Buddhism, evidence-based psychological knowledge, and my special sassy sauce, *Spiritually Sassy* is the modern answer to your suffering. You might be asking, "WTF do you mean by this big word, *suffering*?" I mean all of it: all the confusion you might have about who you are, all the past pains, the guilt, the shame, the hatred, the cruelties, the indifferences, the complacency, the list goes on—all the stuff that you might unintentionally be carrying with you and that is unfortunately running your life. It's a new approach to spirituality that wants you to start to heal your shit, reconnect with your heart, activate your innate superpowers, and make an impact in the world by being who you truly are. How shall I say this? *Spiritually Sassy* is about being your motherfucking self! I want you to remember how to be bold, to take up space, because deep

down at the base of your being, you know all of it. It's time to remember, because the world needs your magic, your gifts. This is a new curriculum, and your homework is to be yourself fully by expressing your heart creatively.

I began seeking in a real way for something more when my life started to crumble. I was in my twenties then, a high-performing, anxious, depressed person working in the fashion industry as the cofounder of a successful magazine. I was living the life I thought I wanted, a life society told me I should have. I was making money, hanging out with celebrities, and I seemed to be successful. But I was deeply depressed, and I was starting to lose myself in drugs and alcohol. I was feeding my body crap, and I was completely out of tune with the real version of myself. What did I want? Who was I? And why, if I had everything I'd wanted, was I so damn unhappy? Who would I be without my social status? These questions were what drove me at first. As an immigrant in America, as a brown and queer individual, I had put a lot of emphasis on having stuff, and this had become my main vocabulary. As a result, everything I did was rooted in the drive to achieve a particular kind of success. This drive dictated the quality of my experience and my sense of self-worth. I was drawn to spiritual ideas, but I didn't know where to start, and I certainly didn't know how I could ever fit in with those circles. Where was my place, and what did I believe?

If you're like me, a linear path to inner freedom doesn't work. The path I needed was intersectional. It was not this or that, but everything in between, because I don't fit neatly inside any box. The definitions of spiritual life I saw around me didn't fit me, so I began to search for spaces that felt like home. Eventually I created the spiritually sassy way. I found home for me, and I want to invite you to it. Everyone is welcome here.

My search has led me all over the world. It led me to leave fashion and find a very different path in teaching, learning,

and working every day to free myself. It led me to sit with and learn from spiritual masters, neuroscientists, contemplative psychologists, trauma experts, and all the wild and amazing people I met along my travels. And it has led me to a way of living that is drawn from all of my studies but that feels like me. I want to share with you the steps I have developed with the hope that in trying some of these practices and reading about what has worked for me, you will feel more like you. It is my mission to help you come alive.

I call *Spiritually Sassy* a curriculum because you will learn how to redesign your life and, ultimately, graduate from old ways of feeling, thinking, and acting. You will be able to fully step into what's in your heart as a way of life instead of being trapped in the habits of your conditioned mind.

Your Work may be messy, loud, flamboyant, or fabulous. All of that is okay. All that's required is that you show up with your whole self, especially all the parts that you are not proud of. I had an awakening of my own that I'll describe more in later chapters, but the point is, the result was not me becoming silent or Zenned the fuck out. My version of spirituality is fierce and fun, as spirituality should be. I invite you to do you as fuck. This may sound selfish and not very spiritual, but let me assure you, it is the opposite. When you are truly you, you give others permission to do the same. Because we are all deeply interconnected. As you uncover your sassy heart, you impact everyone. You can't see it with your eyes, but the knowing that arises from your heart tells the whole truth. The more you transform your internal world, the more you can help others do the same, and the more you help others, the more your inner world is transformed—the spiritually sassy path is a sustainable, healing cycle. When you meet someone who is living in their full power, there's something so beautiful about it. We're immediately drawn to them, and we're in awe of how they carry themselves. You are that person. I will help you to remember this.

Take a moment right now to pause. Visualize yourself completely free. Visualize yourself completely liberated, with all the answers, all the support, living your dream. Just for a moment, visualize this. This glimpse is one example of how you can access the beautiful technology of the heart. Your heart wants you happy, my love. Be with the feeling. Know it is your birthright.

Now take a walk with me. I want to be your guide across the bridge to your heart.

Are you ready?

GLOSSARY

Before we begin this journey, I want to let you in on some of the key vocabulary used throughout the book, just so we're on the same page.

Bitch

Bitch, in the way I use it in this book, is totally removed from the traditional, offensive definition. It is genderless. When I use it, I am referring to myself in a sassy way. It's sort of a nickname for myself or someone else, almost as if I'm saying "me" or "you," but affectionately. It's important to recognize its negative connotation and that it can offend people, but in this book, I am taking the word back and mean it in a positive way.

Girl

Much like *bitch*, *girl* is how I often affectionately refer to myself and others. It is also not gendered. It does not literally mean girl. On the sassy meter, while *bitch* is a ten, *girl* is maybe a six. Both are sassy, but *girl* is slightly tamer, only because it's not a curse word.

Heart

I'm not talking about your thumping, physical heart when I use this word, though that is where this heart is located.

I am talking about the spiritual heart. I believe this heart holds our true essence and the deepest wisdom we'll ever know. If there were a spiritual goal, it would be to know this place in yourself, learn to access it. All the practices, theory, and wisdom in this book are centered around this, and my mission is to have you know your heart, or at the very least, start giving it more attention.

High Vision

Living in the high vision means you are in alignment with your purpose and heart. You are living a heart-led life, and you are taking care of yourself emotionally, spiritually, and physically. You are in balance.

Karma

I will talk a lot about karma and karmic seeds, and when I do, I'll use the metaphor of the garden, meaning the internal karmic garden of your mind. We come into this life with our canvas far from blank. One can say karma is like our genetic, biological predispositions passed down from our family tree, which is not to say we should blame our parents and ancestors for who we are. Although at some level that is real, I want to bring attention to karma as it was understood by the historical Buddha. This karma places no blame; instead, it gives us complete ownership over who we are. What I'm about to say next is not for you to drink as spiritual Kool-Aid. I want you just to take it as a hypothesis: What if our karmic dispositions are inherited from our very own past actions from previous lives, and what if they have a direct impact on our current life? They are shaping the current version of YOU (but the good news is, they don't have to anymore!).

I won't get too technical in this book about karma, but I invite you to think of it as a bunch of wholesome and unwholesome habits you have inherited. These tendencies are creating everything you experience: the good, the bad, the happy, and the sad. It is our work to bring our

agency to this creative process: to understand it and to find tools to support us in not allowing that stuff to run our lives and make decisions for us. Your karmic garden is where you have the power to decide which seeds you want to nurture and grow from moment to moment.

Mega Boss

A mega boss is someone who is living their purpose, inspiring others, and bringing positivity wherever they go. On a basic level, it is someone who is honest with themselves and doing the Work. They are on their path, they're doing their Work, and because of that they are in the groove of life, reaping the benefits of all the opportunities they are tuned into, big and small. It doesn't matter what profession they have; all that matters is that they love what they do. Love radiates from them.

Merit

Merit is directly related to karma. Merit actually helps to counteract unwholesome karma (or bad habits). Think of merit as spiritual money being added to your bank account to offset a negative balance. Some actions have higher merit than others. Cultivating merit can be done with your thoughts, speech, or actions. When you think, speak, and act kindly to yourself and to others, you are cultivating positive merit, you're watering beneficial seeds in the karmic garden of your mind, and you're weeding out the harmful seeds.

And at some point, those beneficial seeds will blossom into a happier, more relaxed version of you. Don't believe me? Try it for yourself!

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Coming Out of the Spiritual Closet

Congratulations, my love. You have taken a step in the direction of your well-being, in the direction of your heart. I am honored to have your trust as I share with you what I know to be true about what it takes to heal and be happy. Your wellness requires all of you: a trained mind and body so that you can listen to your heart. I promise to be honest and vulnerable and to hold your hand as we walk across the bridge together. Are you ready to go on this journey together? Are you willing to do the work?

This will not be easy, but I promise it will be worth it. In fact, sometimes it might be fucking scary. But guess what? You are worth it. Take a vow now. Repeat after me: *I am worth it.*

In this chapter, I'll go over the eight steps of the *Spiritually Sassy* curriculum so you know what's to come. I'll share what my spiritual coming out looked like, and you will begin to map out your own unique way of coming out of the spiritual closet, because being spiritual for ten minutes in the morning won't cut it. You are a mega boss, honey! You are a living legend, and you can spiritualize everything.

A NEW KIND OF SPIRITUALITY

So, what the heck do I even mean by “spiritually sassy”? There are many paths to freedom; what’s so interesting about the sassy path? *Spiritually Sassy* is the culmination of all of my studies, from the West to the East and back. This vocabulary is not Buddhist per se. Rather, it’s my own interpretation of everything I’ve learned through my study of Tantric Buddhism and contemplative psychotherapy, and through being a total junkie of liberation. It is the wisdom that I live by and that has become my guiding force. My teachings in this book will digest all of the things I’ve learned through the Buddhist path, and I’ll share them with you in a very accessible, revolutionary, and rebellious way. While this book uses some Buddhist principles, it is not a Buddhist book. In fact, I’m going against what some of my teachers are telling me. It’s a rebellious act but it’s what I know and what has worked for me.

It’s no secret: I am queer as fuck, I am brown as fuck, I am long- and curly-haired as fuck, I am Brazilian as fuck, I laugh loud, I’m extra, I love to dance, I call everyone “my love,” I will tell you I love you after meeting you just once. These are also real things about me: I used to be an addict, I had shame about my sexuality, I thought I was worthless, I was severely depressed and anxious, I thought no one would ever love me, I fed my body garbage. These things are also real: I’m Buddhist, I meditate every day, dancing is one way that I practice freedom, I have studied with spiritual masters around the world, I practice kindness and forgiveness of myself and others as part of my daily work, I am not perfect. All of these things are parts of me. *Spiritually Sassy* makes space for all of this, and goes beyond to discover what is underneath all of it, the truth of who you are—your sassy, awakened heart.

My love, there is a place for you in the world. You deserve to have the life you want. You deserve to heal the parts of

you that are wounded. You deserve to know that you are not your mental clutter. You deserve to know your awakened heart; you are worthy of hearing its plans for you. No two people have the same path because no two people have had the same experiences. We each have different gifts we have come here to share. We each have different wounds we have come here to heal. I'm tired of teachers saying, "This is the only way . . ." There are many ways of being free. The beautiful differences in all of us are ones the spiritually sassy path honors. I want you to be different. I want you to be YOU. Full power, honey! Because the true and genuine expression of you (the you that emanates from your heart field) is what will set you free, my love.

THE SPIRITUALLY SASSY APPROACH

My approach is guided by two questions: How can YOU be better? And how can you share your gifts with the world? I'm no guru, but I do have a few tools. I may be one, *maybe* two steps ahead of you on the bridge, but we're walking over it together. My way is inclusive: it honors you exactly as you are. My way has respect for your innate wisdom. Who are you and what have you come to do? The beautiful thing is that *only you know!* I am the conduit, here merely to give you some tools to help you shine the way you were put on this earth to. I will help you along the way in a language you can understand.

The *Spiritually Sassy* way is not a passive journey. Just because I love you doesn't mean this is going to be easy. It requires your full participation. But don't be scared! I'm not going to ask you to be silent for thirty days or meditate for long periods of time (though don't get me wrong: you totally can if you want to! I'm not knocking it), or stop enjoying life, or wear all white, or get talked at for an hour (but if that's your thing, that's cool). The *Spiritually Sassy* way asks you to fully participate in your evolution. This is where the fun part comes in.

My teaching method is all about bringing fun and lightness—joy—back into spirituality. I am going to ask that you use your whole self in this process. Mind, body, and heart wisdom. I will ask you to move your body. I'm serious. You're going to dance and jump up and down at times. You're going to remember you have a body. Why? Because I believe, and science proves, that trauma is stored deep inside of us and movement gets it out of our system. Things will get messy, and you will whisper to yourself, "I feel like crap, but I'm OKAY!" We are going to play. Why? Because we are all creative beings. Creativity is so fucking spiritual. By the end of this, we are going to remember that we are creative, innately genius beings who have simply forgotten how to live from the heart field.

It's all about uncovering the part of you that is fully awake, the heart. The heart is the essence of anything remotely spiritual. The function of meditation, mindfulness, and the essential teachings of Buddhism are about leading with your best qualities, and your best qualities live in your heart. We suffer because we lead with the untrained and deeply conditioned mind and not with the heart. Period. Truly, I've got nothing to add. The Buddha said it all. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said it all. The great teachers have said it all. What I *do* have is an approach that people can hear. All people. One that people can understand. As I said, I'm the conduit—the brown-bodied, queer, immigrant, flamboyant, joyous, dancing conduit—giving you a few tools so you can learn to train, pacify, and purify the mind to recognize your heart essence. It's not as easy as it sounds. But doesn't it sound oh so good? The eight steps in this book are an integrative approach that includes a modern twist on the steps to freedom the historical Buddha taught. Think of me as a sassy translator. The wisdom remains the same, but there is a new teacher in town. My steps, like I've said, are inspired by Buddhism and other modalities, but they're my own.