

\$19.97

A Delightful Companion for Living a Happy, Authentic Life

Turtle Wisdom: Coming Home to Yourself will uplift you on a bad day, remind you of your worth in moments of doubt, and give you a boost no matter what. Whimsically illustrated, this endearing keepsake is filled with comfort, encouragement, inspiration, and strategies for empowered living. It will help you build a dependable, resilient core of unshakable confidence and well-being.

Originally written for Donna's coaching clients as a touchstone between sessions, this precious book's encouraging message of treasuring yourself so you can design your very best life, unexpectedly spread through many countries, being published worldwide. Its timelessly tender words were shared, like a warm

embrace, from friend to friend around the globe for over eighteen years.

Donna DeNomme has cherished a lifetime dedicated to helping people claim their true voice. With an eclectic background in psychology, alternative healing, and indigenous practices, Donna is a conscious energy teacher, shamanic healer, ceremonial leader, and self-realization coach serving the community since 1987. She invites you to recognize "your wisdom story," so you can masterfully compose your next chapter. Donna is the award-winning, internationally published author of seven books, two meditation CD's, and several popular online programs.



www.YourWisdomStory.com



Self-Help, Inspiration, Gift

DeNomme

Turtle Wisdom

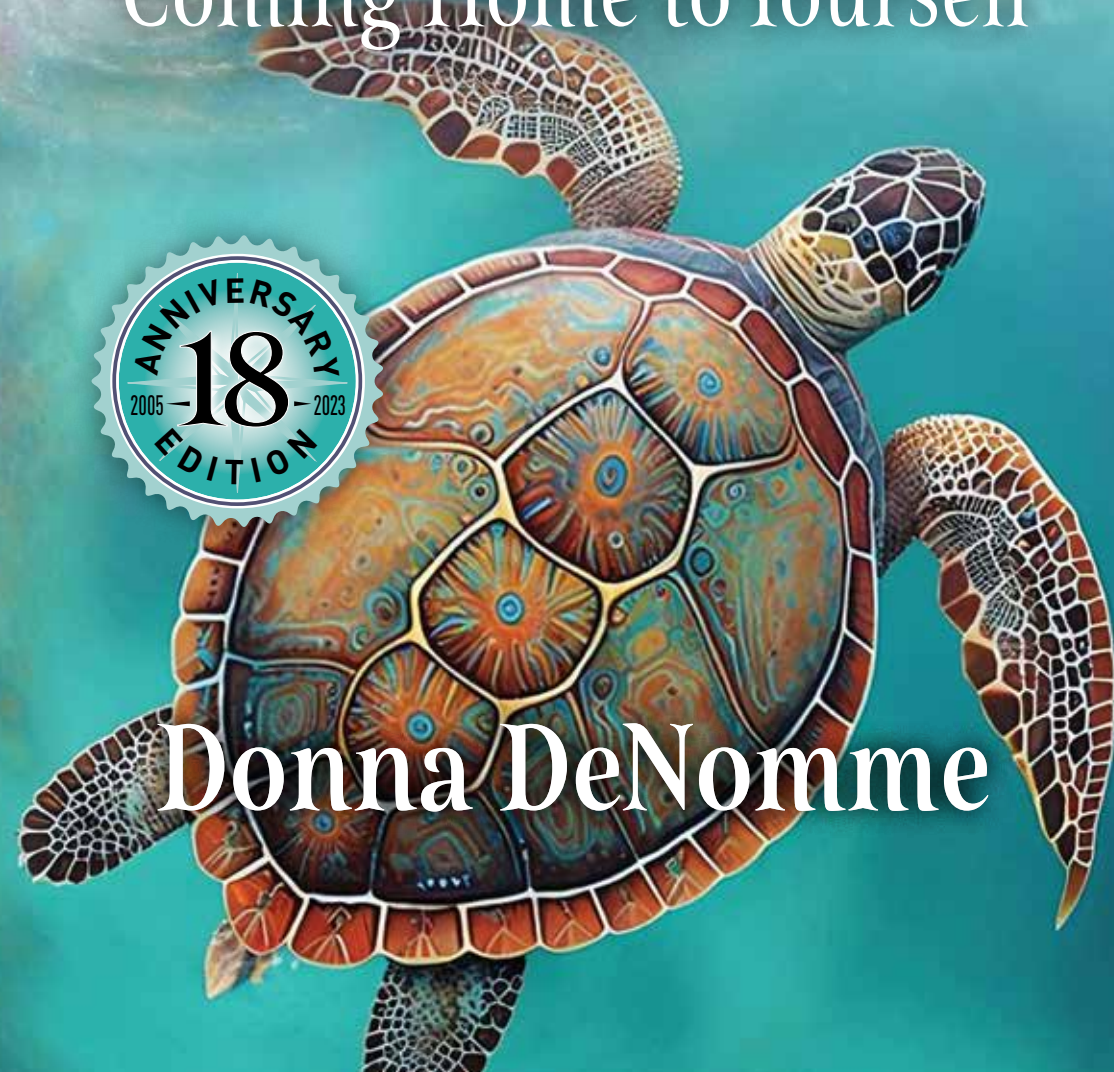
Turtle Wisdom

Coming Home to Yourself



Donna DeNomme

YOUR
Wisdom Story
PUBLISHING



Praise for Turtle Wisdom

Turtle Wisdom has morphed, just as I have morphed, into an even greater version of itself over time. This beautifully written book called to me many years ago at a time when I knew I needed something but didn't know what it was. Its precious cover grabbed my attention away from any and all other books on the shelf. Donna DeNomme has a way of letting the reader feel like she is sitting right there with you, looking directly into your soul as she invites you to come back home to yourself. And this little Turtle ... she just keeps on giving.

~ Holyce McIntire, Compassionate Photography

Donna DeNomme is the real-life embodiment of Yoda. Whether you're navigating through layers of personal trauma or simply seeking to up-level your life, Donna's ancient wisdom teachings are like a flashlight illuminating a clear path forward. They lay before you the wisdom to awaken the insight, the potent power, personal empowerment, and the love you're seeking, and reveal "the force" that was there all the time. ~ Becky Swenson, Radiant Living Guide

Turtle Wisdom crosses many cultures and is a timeless representation of how to live life. It continues to be a bestseller as #1 in the self-help category. All I have to do is put a turtle next to it and it sells! *Turtle Wisdom* is pure food for the soul. What a perfect gift. ~ Dianne Fresquez, Owner of For Heaven's Sake Books

Breaking away from the glut of self-help books that follow the over-used 'how to' formulas, *Turtle Wisdom* takes you on a journey that leaves you feeling as if your favorite grandmother has wrapped you up in a cozy blanket, gently placed you by the fireplace with a cup of your favorite hot chocolate, and lovingly rocked you to sleep on a frigid winter night. ~ Tom LaRotanda, Corporate Coach, Speaker

This book has inspired me over and over again throughout my life. I want to gift this book to all who need a life preserver. I can't wait to be the one who throws it out to them. ~ Coleen Hampf, Teacher of small children, Grandmother

I read a few passages as I fall asleep so I can seed my dreams with powerful positive affirmations. I applaud Ms. DeNomme's intention to encourage us to live consciously and celebrate what we are!" ~ Caryn Colgan, *Ancient Pact*

Donna DeNomme is a master at distilling important advice into small bites that make sense and will make you want to take action to achieve self-acceptance and understanding. Just hang onto those turtles and follow the path to where they take you! ~ Tina Proctor, Wisdom circles for aging adults, Wanderer, Grandmother

I often pick up my *Turtle Wisdom* and just randomly open a page to fill my love bucket. ~ Barbara Vande Berg, M.Div., Vital Energy Master

Turtle Wisdom is a book that I plan to read every year because I know it will meet me where I am at. It is a gem of a road map for self-care. Thank you for your transparency and wisdom Donna—may we all discover our extraordinary potential within. ~ Sharon Barrett, Grandmother, Gardener, Botanical Illustrator

Turtle Wisdom is a wealth of powerful spiritual knowledge that is approachable and inspirational. The book offers practical guidance on changes you can make today to lead a more fulfilling and resilient life. It encourages you to take the lead in your life so that you can celebrate all that your precious life has to offer. ~ Elisa Brossard, Leadership Coach

I love that sweet, precious turtle! I reached out to Donna because I wanted many copies to give to my friends. Everyone should have a turtle to inspire their day. I try to live life to its fullest ... and just like the turtle I keep moving on. ~ Muriel, Retired but busy at 105 years young

Love, love, love this whole series! I found each one delightful to read and useful for a quick daily boost ... and as a personal and business coach, I often recommend *Turtle Wisdom* book, playbook, and cards to my clients. ~ Sherry Ray, *Finding Traction: Recapture Your Drive at Work*

Turtle Wisdom is a gem. Donna's wisdom and techniques will guide you on your way to cherishing the magnificent being you are. ~ Susyn Reeve, *Choose Peace and Happiness*

I have been on my own spiritual journey for more than 30 years. I have come to believe that most of what we as human beings suffer from, whether it is mental, physical or emotional, is that we have lost or forgotten our essential connection to the sacred in ourselves and in our everyday living. It is a "spiritual hunger" of great magnitude. Donna DeNomme's beautifully written and inspirational book not only calls us home to that place within, but also creates the path of getting there. ~ Lynda Barbaccia, *Simple Wisdom for the Not So Simple Business World*

Donna DeNomme's comfortable and comforting style of wisdom and humor helps the bruised Soul, tender from damage, find healing, strength and a way forward to Self. ~ Carridwen Brennan, Spiritual Counselor, Tri-State Prison Project

It is 4 am ... I haven't been to bed yet, rest can wait. My Soul/Spirit was thirsty like a sponge. I have read the whole book. I have been reading all night ... With new hope, renewed strength, and direction, I believe in me again! Thank you. ~ Mona Rose, Workshop Participant

This book grows with you. You can't read it too many times and you can't get enough. And those little turtles make me smile! ~ Toni Grishman, BSN, RN

This is a simple and elegant prescription for living. It's thoroughly enjoyable and entertaining, with practical advice and suggestions for letting go of the past and truly living your life in the present.

~ Dr. Steven Farmer, Best-selling Author of *Earth Magic* and *Animal Spirit*

If you crave the comfort, love, and guidance that's like a friend or sister whom you can curl up with, grab a cup of tea and snuggle up with *Turtle Wisdom*.

~ Laya Saul, *You Don't Have to Learn Everything the Hard Way*

Donna DeNomme is a gifted writer and powerful spiritual practitioner, bringing commitment, creativity and powerful spiritual passion. Her compassion and connection with Spirit make her a tremendous blessing.

~ Dr. Roger Teel, *This Life is Joy*

Turtle Wisdom is a delightful pocket-guide for living a rich life!

~ Dr. Deborah Sandella, PhD, RN, *Releasing the Inner Magician*

It's obvious Donna has walked the long walk of learning how to love herself.

~ Tama J. Kieves, *This Time I Dance! Creating the Work You Love*

Your book has left me feeling as if I've had an emotional massage, as if I'm in a private session with you, wrapped in love and safety. The illustrations add a sweetness ... My heart is so full of joy! ~ Judith Lynne, Author

Donna's insights have the power to bring more joy to your life. Open up your heart, open up this book, and take it all in.

~ Jana Stanfield, Keynote Speaker, Singer and Songwriter

Donna DeNomme reminds us, in a gentle and practical way, that we have within us the essence of the Divine. By following her clear suggestions, anyone seeking to grow into his/her own spiritual skin can methodically peel away the dust of life to reveal the power, beauty, and wisdom resting in the soul.

~ Susan Schachterle, *What Would You Do If You Knew You Couldn't Fail?*

I have spent decades seeking safety and in just a few words, Donna has spoken truth in simplicity ... *Turtle Wisdom* blesses the world!

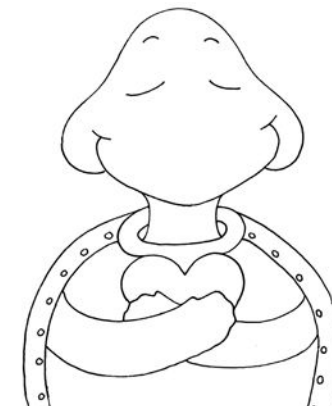
~ Rev. Nadine Cox, CSL, Artist, *How to Give Your Power Away and How to Reclaim It*

Thank you, Donna, for your incredibly intuitive cards and reading material that has helped me to process and grow as a more loving person in this world. You truly bring us closer to our authentic selves. May your future endeavors help us all be better beings. ~ Victoria Atwell, Massage Therapist

Turtle Wisdom

Coming Home to Yourself

A Delightful Companion for Living a Happy, Authentic Life



Donna DeNomme

Illustrations by Sue Lion

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1. Motivational. 2. Inspirational. 3. Personal Growth. 4. Transformational Activities.



Whoever you are,
Wherever you are,
Whatever is going on in your life,
This is the call ...
come home ...
to yourself.

Preface

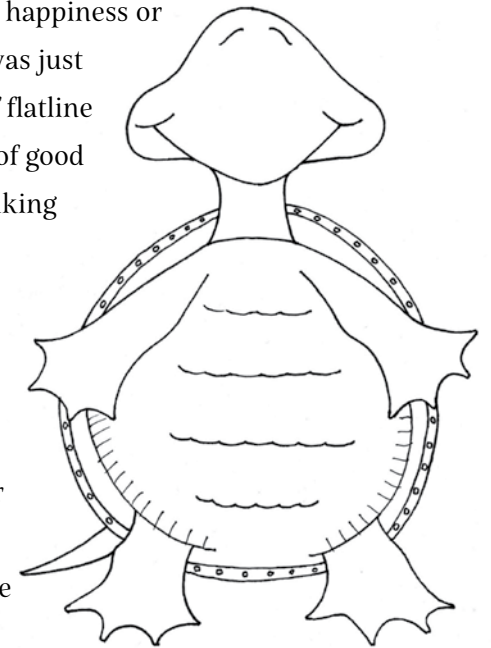
Coming Home to Yourself

This above all
to thine own self be true.

~ William Shakespeare



Years ago, the axis of my world tilted. I found myself gradually running out of steam, until one day I was so tired that it became a great mental and physical effort simply to walk across the room. My work suffered, my house was a disaster, but even worse was that I did not have the least bit of energy to feel happiness or joy, or any emotion for that matter. I was just too tired to feel. There was this sort of flatline emotionally that sucked every ounce of good out of my days. The natural act of thinking was overwhelming; the arduous slow-turning mental function took an extended period and sometimes didn't even make any sense. Later, during moments of clarity, I would realize that there was a simple answer that my brain simply could not access at the time it was needed. I would have been frustrated if I could have spared the energy!



With the help of my acupuncturist and my primary physician, I was able to re-balance my metabolism. It was fascinating to observe my brain function as it gradually returned. I was impressed by how many activities I could juggle at the same time without effort. My brain simply handled this and that and the other thing, without the tedious pushing I had now become accustomed to exerting—to experience this change so dramatically deepened my admiration for the human mind (and for myself).

I had almost lost me ... at least my sense of me. The “me” I could always depend on. The capable, get it done me. Just getting through the day had been a chore. I went to bed exhausted and woke exhausted, too. Yet, it was during this desperate time that the concept of “appreciating myself” fully developed. The roots of this understanding had formed much earlier.

When I was very young, my family entrusted me to people who were supposed to care for me. Instead, they hurt me in ways that weren't visible to the naked eye; yet these wounds ached and burned to the touch until I was well into my forties. Unbeknownst to my parents, I had been terrorized for several years through physical, mental, sexual, and even psychic abuse. Although my abusers had free reign over me, having me captive six days a week, they were never able to penetrate and destroy my innermost core. Despite all that was done to me, my spirit was not broken and what was essential remained intact.

And, in fact, for some peculiar reason, this horrific experience turned out to be a powerful catalyst for me, not only for my own healing, but in determining the life work I would pursue. The harshness I was subjected to caused me to reach deeply within myself and access a much-needed, sustainable inner strength. There was something unshakable and absolute that remained whole despite the fractured reality of my outer

circumstance. There was a thread of comfort right there, inside of me, right in the midst of my feeling abandoned and alone.

When a catastrophe hits, we are left to deal with the aftermath. Perhaps a life challenge or health crisis alters our outer reality or somehow changes us; yet always, we possess our own precious inner Core Essence. **What is essential is still intact;** what is essential never leaves or can be taken away. It remains somewhere within you, waiting for you to reach your hand out to beckon it forward.

Between insecurity and vulnerability, you can find a deeper level of assurance and trust—an assurance in yourself and a trust in life itself having an innate, enduring force that moves toward the good. You discover that you can draw on your own inner resources which remain dependably consistent and whole.

As you navigate through change or adapt to a new way of being, cultivate an expanded appreciation of yourself as you draw from those resilient inner resources. Just lean in ... and discover the gifts that are buried there. Move through step-by-step, ultimately trusting the path you have been placed upon.

When I was experiencing the thyroid shift, I tried to ride the wave, doing tasks when I had energy, and sitting when I did not. It was interesting that on days when I could not physically handle much, I could still garden for hours and sometimes write. It was as if my soul longed for these creative ventures and would force me in those

directions by taking away my work-worthiness. It was during this time of challenge that *Turtle Wisdom: Coming Home to Yourself* was born.

Regardless of the harsh difficulties they brought to me, I honestly feel ultimately grateful for both my physical health imbalance and my childhood trauma because they inspired me to shift my emotional atmosphere to a place of appreciation, confidence, self-directed security, and peace.

The enduring inner resource which enabled me to cope with what was done to me as a child later motivated me to choose a profession in which I could help guide others through their struggles. It is an honor and a privilege to work with clients on both their current difficulties and in dealing with childhood and early adult trauma.

I have been asked to share some of my insights and strategies for embracing ourselves more fully. My experience with clients has shown me that this perspective can be helpful during times of crisis and trauma; yet I've also observed this approach being relevant for those who are simply trying to navigate the murky channels of daily life. Many of us have challenging experiences which are a catalyst for our expanded appreciation of self. But for those who have not, my wish is that by shifting your attention to it, you will be able to embrace more fully your sense of self without having to fall off the face of the earth first. Perhaps you can be saved from that journey. Because when all is said and done, if you are left with knowing and appreciating yourself, no matter what, then "that ain't bad!"

As I write this anniversary edition of the beloved *Turtle Wisdom: Coming Home to Yourself*, I've been witness to more recent examples of resilience and strength, one of the most obvious being our unprecedented global catastrophe. When the coronavirus pandemic

hit, our world literally "shut down." People were confined in a way they hadn't ever been and new ways of being were forced to evolve. How we did business changed, how we related to our friends and family adjusted to the circumstance, and people found innovative methods to build community. In the process, there was so much loss ... many, many lives, old ways of living that no longer worked, and a sense of security that, for some, will never return.

Yet, within each of us is a great well of strength and wisdom which can help us meet and master difficulties far beyond what we think we can handle. Even in the most difficult times, we can find what it is we need not only to survive, but to thrive. The key is to look within you; therein lies the knowledge, the understanding, and the wisdom of how to make it through. Meticulously excavate your golden nuggets, drawing forth the very best of you. That is your most valuable treasure! You are constantly reborn, living through your successes and your challenges by drawing forth more and more of that precious essence of your truest self. From that understanding, life becomes a great adventure, one to be embraced regardless of its twists and turns.

It takes very little to make me happy these days. Me and my little mobile home—my "shell on my back"—are all I need. We will acquire the rest of what is desired in route on our next great adventure!

One secures the gold of spirit when he finds himself.

~ Claude M. Bristol

Turtle Wisdom began with my clients wanting a “touchstone” between sessions. I wrote this book (in 2004) from that request thinking it would be read by perhaps a hundred or so people. Through a bold act of faith, I had it published, printing a thousand copies. I sold books directly to clients and friends and was able to display them in three local bookstores. Within a couple of weeks, I was attending a women’s gathering facilitated by someone I didn’t know. I was a guest brought to this circle by one of my close friends. As I sat perched on an ottoman I shared with my friend because every other seat in the room was taken, I watched as a woman (I’d never met) sitting across the circle from us, pulled *my* book from her purse. “I just read this wonderful book!” she said. “It is so encouraging. I’m carrying it around with me so I can read it whenever I need a boost in my day!” My friend beamed. “*This* is the author,” she said as she pointed to me.

With no advertisement and no representation, in only five months I sold every one of those thousand copies. *Turtle Wisdom* had been shared like a warm hug, from friend to friend. And families often bought one copy, only to return to buy several so they could have one book for each family member. *Turtle Wisdom* was used as a reader in elementary schools, read aloud in community and social groups, and even used as the basis for an inspirational program in the county jail. The book started to gain interest internationally, too, as the timeless, universal message of *Turtle Wisdom* had a life of its own. And eighteen years later, still with very limited distribution, it continues to be a best-seller in some bookstores.

Now in 2023, *Turtle Wisdom: Coming Home to Yourself* has traveled around the globe, being published in 10 countries, world-wide in Chinese and Spanish. The turtle is a universal symbol of strength

and resilience, held dear in many cultures. And recognizing that you are enough no matter where you are or what is going on, that your most precious resource is “you” is a message with universal truth. I hope it is one with meaning for you. May the little turtle continue to venture far and wide, including right into your very own heart.

If I have lost every other friend on earth,
I shall at least have one friend left,
and that friend shall be down inside of me.

– Abraham Lincoln

PART I

1

The Golden Opportunity is Within You

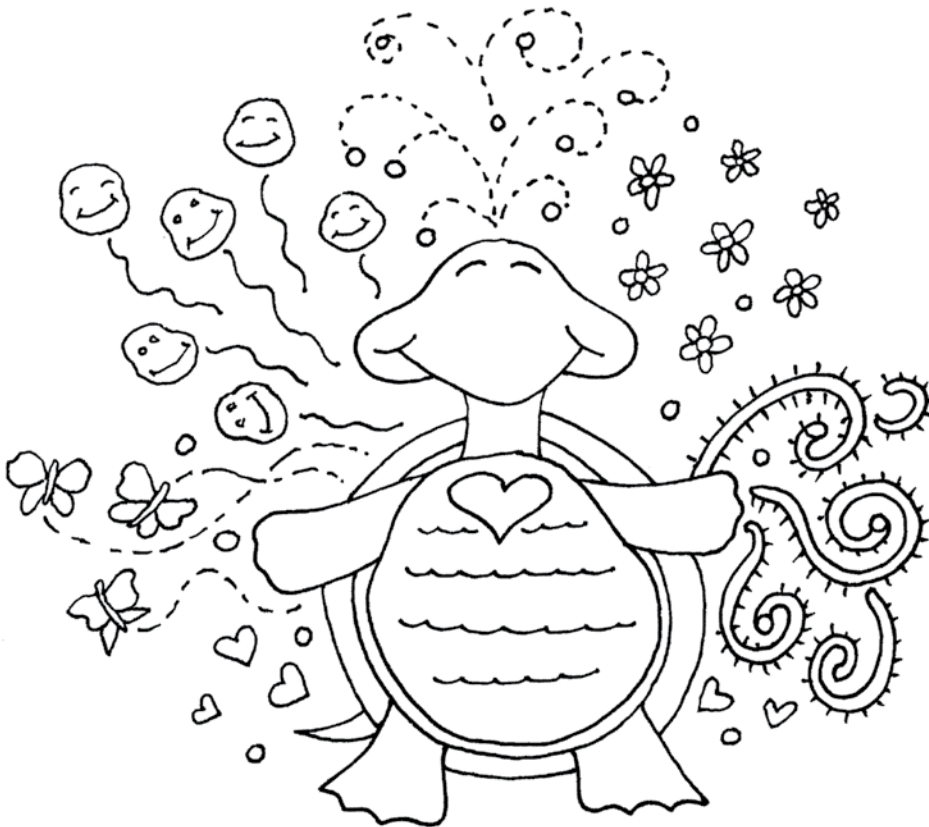
The golden opportunity you are seeking is in yourself. It is not in your environment, it is not in luck or chance, or the help of others, it is in you alone.

– Orison Swett Marden



No matter what your life experience, your challenge, your turmoil, your joy, or your success, there is always one constant. One person who is always there, consistently present to all your encounters. When you choose to cultivate and draw strength and wisdom from within, you will never be deserted, never be fully defeated, but rather will discover layers upon layers of resilience within you. Like a turtle carting its shell, you carry what is truly essential within you.

When inspirational illustrator, author, and dear friend, Sue Lion, woke on a bone-dry day in December 2021, it seemed like any other winter day, this one with 100 mph winds. Sue always had many projects on her desk, so she got her cup of tea and dug in to her latest on the computer. Just after 11 am, her neighbor called with an urgent message, “Look out your



window!” Flames were roaring at the fence line to the south. As Sue hastily packed up her computer and hard drives and ran to the car, she left with nothing else except the clothes on her back and her purse. She believed she would be returning to her cozy home of over 45 years—the firefighters were arriving. She had raised her children there and her grandchildren visited often. She did her design and artwork here, housed her fulfillment center, and hosted fellow authors and artists throughout the years. But hours later, after the firefighters had left to fight the voracious monster that eventually consumed almost 1,100 homes and burned 6,000 acres, chunks of fire burning in the ditch blew back into the neighborhood. Eight out of nine homes on the road lit up like torches and were fully destroyed, including Sue’s. Every physical part of Sue’s history burned up in an ominous black and orange cloud of fire—every piece of her personal belongings, her studio and original art, children’s book collection, all the family photos, important papers, and books, including a newly released book recently delivered, were all reduced to ash. Sue’s daughter’s home was also destroyed a few miles away, while they were out of town to celebrate New Year’s Eve. Sue hastily made her way through the back streets to save what little she could from their place in the midst of this unthinkable devastation.

Recovery took time. Another daughter and son-in-law opened their own home and gave her a place to heal. Friends and even strangers rallied. Local businesses provided aid. And Sue did a lot of inner work. It was not simple nor was it easy. But this resilient woman pulled herself through the

thick and the thin of it, and now, over a year later, is well into the building of her new home. She is also rebuilding her inventory of reprinted artwork and reissued books, for what was thought to be gone is now being replaced with something new. Of course, many treasured possessions will never be replaced but were lost forever.

You may not have ever met Sue. But you have been touched by her in a way. She is my graphic designer and has illustrated many of my books, including creating this updated version of *Turtle Wisdom’s* illustrations and graphic format. Sue continues to be an inspiration to those of us close to her as she begins anew in her seventies, rebuilding literally from the ground up.

Like Sue, you may have dear friends and family who support you, but when you lose a job, a marriage fragments, a loved one dies, or any event occurs that dramatically alters your life, no matter what, you still have yourself to turn to, to rely on. There is one person always available during the challenges and joys of every single day. Even in the most mundane moments when nothing particularly eventful is happening, who is there? You! By nurturing the evolution of the very best of that unique individual, you can develop a precious and rich commodity.

Many of us realize that there is an advantage to accepting and appreciating ourselves and striving to enhance that realization. When you nurture your mind with good thoughts and a belief that what you are doing is positive, even heroic, you create from that hero or heroine’s state of mind. You are the hero or heroine of your own wisdom story.



Turtle Wisdom deepens that beneficial understanding. A turtle carries what she needs for shelter on her back. She chooses when to retreat into the protection of her shell and when to poke her head out; when to stand still and when to purposefully move forward.

People put their faith and trust in many outer things. They seek security, even validation in money, love from others, the kind of job they acquire, or some other aspect of outer-oriented security or prestige. Yet, these things are constantly changing and evolving. Nothing external can be counted on 100% to be there to support or nurture you. **There is only one thing that you can absolutely know and believe will be there for you no matter what. The one thing you can count on is YOU.**

Every day we are each presented with a fundamental option—to live from fear or from a sense of faith. Life is uncertain. Things change. People go away. Even the most unexpected may occur. How will you react to the shifting landscape? Cast your line upon the one constant. Why not develop the security you crave from others by finding it within yourself? Why not provide the nurturing you long for? Stop searching for it outside in the “hard, cruel world!” Instead of investing in one more self-help book or workshop, spend your precious time developing the most important relationship you’ll ever have—your relationship with yourself.

Create the tenderness, support, and security you need from the inside out. If you weave an intricate web of safety based on who you are, what you stand for, and what you can contribute to this world, you will always have some semblance of security. If you base your thoughts, words, and actions on your own integrity, you will not be disappointed. And if you dwell in the presence of your Spiritual Source, in whatever way that has meaning for you, you will never be alone.

Like the turtle, you carry your wisdom on your back. And as the wise old saying goes, “No matter where you go, there you are!”
And no matter what happens, you will always have “you.”

6

In the Moment

Embrace Life!



The secret of health for both body and mind
is to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.

~ Buddha



Have you ever noticed someone not being present to what he is doing in the moment? “The lights are on, but no one is home!” We are all guilty of it from time to time. Someone is talking and our mind wanders elsewhere; we bump into the wall going round the corner because we’re not seeing where we are going, but instead focused on the task ahead; the toothpaste goes in the freezer and the ice cream in the medicine chest! With all the responsibilities of the day weighing on us, it is understandable that we are preoccupied.

Yet, there is a sweetness to being in the moment, a relief to letting go of everything else and focusing on the here and now. You will never have this moment again—and whatever is happening is significant and holds meaning. If you are oblivious to it, you might miss that point. When you turn your acute awareness to your individual moments, life takes on a richer sweetness. If you are looking ahead ... or behind, you miss the importance of Now. Be here, now. Be more present; be more conscious. Drink in your experience, swallowing every last drop. Totally immerse yourself and swim in it. This is not a dress rehearsal; this is your life. You will never have *this* moment again. Live it!

If we consider life as a production—a play, a movie, a grand adventure—are you the script writer, the producer, the director, the lead, or simply a supporting cast member? Honestly, you are all those roles at various times, but be sure you accept the lead role in your own life.

Some people wait for life to happen to them, poised for the challenges and successes it may bring. And when those challenges or successes come, they react to what's set before them, dealing with it the best they can by following the trail where it leads. They take the script that's been given them and do their best to pour their heart and soul into it, hopeful of a winning performance.

Others take a more pro-active stance. They grab life by the hand and encourage it to move down a chosen path, or perhaps encourage it to travel deep into the uncharted wood, or invite it to dance delightfully in a field of wildflowers. These seekers actively engage with life, squeezing the juice right out of it; savoring its sweetness, and licking their lips to take in every last bit. These are the script writers, actively designing what they imagine possible; the producers investing in their chosen direction; and then, they step right into the lead, bringing their ideas into action while helping to direct the story as it unfolds. Everything might not be within their control, but they masterfully orchestrate what is within their circle of influence. They are fully engaged with life.

Notice what makes you happy ... and what does not. Be aware of what drains your energy ... and what puts a pep in your step! Observe what efforts return to you successfully ... and when they do not. With your earnest attention to your daily living, you can shape and reshape what you're pursuing and how you are doing so—to assure that you are living your very best through the conscious choices you make.

By taking what is given and claiming it as your own, you can sculpt it into what you'd like it to be. It's impressive how much you can accomplish when you actively assume the nuances of your character. After all, it is your very own wisdom story. And by being present to your moments, you can optimize your health, wealth, and happiness.

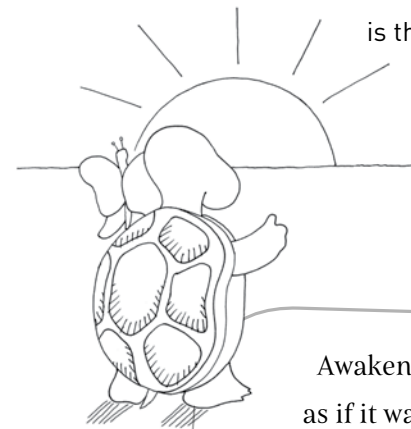
Let your outer world reflect your inner vision: the truest pathways stretch from your heart and soul to dreams come true.

~ Donna DeNomme

Good Morning, Sunshine

Write on your heart that every day
is the best day of the year.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



Awaken to each new day with anticipation as if it was your birthday and today, you'll be receiving many gifts. Some may even be quite unexpected like stumbling into a surprise party!

When you greet the day in this manner, you establish an energetic field that attracts goodness to you.

You expect ... and then accept ... goodness.

For we honestly do receive gifts every day, yet many slip by unnoticed because we are so distracted by our daily activities. Recognize the kind words of a co-worker, the infectious smile of a child, the quarter you find on the street corner, or the sun playing peek-a-boo behind a cloud. As you savor this sweetness, you set up a field of receiving that grows and re-seeds itself. Every day is filled with wonderment.

Pull out all the stops! Open the space for a richer expression and expand in ever-widening circles. Risk. Explore. Expect and accept all the gifts that come your way. Believe in miracles. Then, life might surprise you with even more-than-you-expected good! Life truly can be a glorious adventure when you let go of your small attachments and open to the greater possibilities of what might be.

Psychologist and spiritual teacher Ram Dass tells a well known story about the way you catch a monkey in India. You place a handful of nuts into a jar with a small opening and leave it nearby. The monkey puts his hand into the jar, grabs the nuts, and tries to pull them out through the small opening. He refuses to release his hold on the nuts, which keeps his hand stuck in the jar. If he let go of the nuts, he would be able to remove his hand and escape. His attachment to what's in his hand leads to his capture.

How often do you behave as the monkey, unable to let go of what you hold tightly in your hand? If you did so, might it lead to you being able to escape an undesirable condition or a destructive situation? Is this the path to greater freedom?

You are holding a cactus plant in your hand. You are bleeding and cursing the cactus but not letting go of it. Cactus is not hurting you.
Your own attachment with the cactus is hurting you.

~ Shunya

To let go does not mean to get rid of. To let go means to let be.
When we let be with compassion, things come and go on their own.

~ Jack Kornfield

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.

~ Lao Tzu

So, we learn how to let go of attachments, how to surrender, and how to trust the process of our becoming. On the other hand, we must also consider how we can embrace ourselves and how we can give ourselves what we need.

Self-Care is Essential

How do you care for yourself? Self-Care is important for cultivating your happiness and well-being. It is not a "one and done" kind of thing, but is something that is necessary ongoing, especially in times of stress.

Self-care relates to what you do for your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. It includes the basics like eating healthy, maintaining a regular sleep schedule, and getting proper exercise. It also stretches into enrichment activities like developing healthy relationships, being in nature, and doing activities that feed your heart and soul. It includes the recreational and the social. You might even include getting a massage or visiting a spa for relaxation.

Being mindful of where you are and what you need (in the moment) is essential. Neglecting self-care is simply put, not loving yourself. Self-care may look different for each one of us, but it must promote your health and happiness.

Self-care is not necessarily a natural endeavor but can be a learned behavior—one you purposely develop:

- Experts teach us that it often takes at least 21 days to create a new habit.
- Assess where you are right now with your self-care. Also notice how you feel. Are you relaxed, rested, energized ... or frazzled, harried, drained?
- Make a list of what areas need improvement in your self-care and think about a routine that fits them into your daily schedule.
- Commit to try them faithfully for the next 21 days.
- Then reassess how you feel. At this point, you can adjust your self-care to optimize its effectiveness.
- Practice, practice, practice the sacred art of self-care. You'll fine-tune what's best for you.

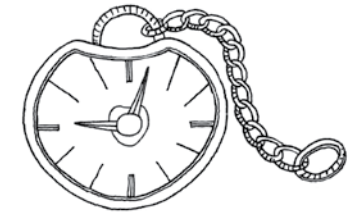
What one or two things are you doing today—just for you, your health, and your wellbeing? Strengthen your self-care understanding and your self-care commitment.

Put yourself on your to-do list! You know, you don't necessarily need to be at the very top of that list—but you must be on it ... regular, consistent self-care enriches your life and in turn, the lives of those

around you. Being present to your moments enables you to notice when your self-care is slipping through the cracks. Commit to taking care of yourself.

Better keep yourself clean and bright;
you are the window through
which you must see the world.

~ George Bernard Shaw



Take the Time

Here are a few suggestions for enhancing your ability to be present in the moment as a part of your self-care:

- Find peace in solitude. Practice being at home with yourself.
- Make time to listen to your own thoughts. You might have something fascinating to say. This is important for your mental health, too—listening to the small whisper asking for help is much better than ignoring it until it turns into a blood-curdling scream. Give your precious thoughts the attention they crave.
- On the other hand, you can also take time to be in stillness—so you can let go of your thoughts, so you can be present to and then let go of your emotions, so you can sink further within, beyond thought and beyond emotion ... and open to what might be there.

Take the time to discover the things that feed your soul. It is imperative to your physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

- Take ten minutes. Time yourself so you take a full ten minutes.
- Jot a list of endeavors you would like to pursue. These can be simple and easy-to-complete or more complex, requiring forethought and planning. Enjoy ice cream at the park while sitting under a tree. Call a friend and have a short chat. Sing with your full voice while cleaning the house. Visit ancient ruins in Greece. Take an Alaskan cruise.
- Allow yourself to write down anything that pops into your head. You can edit to refine it or delete it later if you choose to strike it from your list. Write continuously until the allotted time is up.
- Reread your list and see if there are any surprises. Add any last-minute thoughts or revisions. Keep the list handy and add to it when you are further inspired.
- Note: I often engage in this activity or offer it as a birthday process for others. You can do this by numbering a page with your birthday numbers—if you are turning 20, your number is 20. If you are turning 60, then you get 60! Nudge yourself to imagine something you'd like to have or do, and then record on each numbered line. The bonus, of course, is that the older you are the more “birthday wishes” you get to record.
- Believe you can (and will) engage in what's on your list, simply because it's something you'd like to do!!! Choose from your list whenever you can and pursue your simple pleasures and wildest interests.

Time Out

Some pursue happiness, others create it.

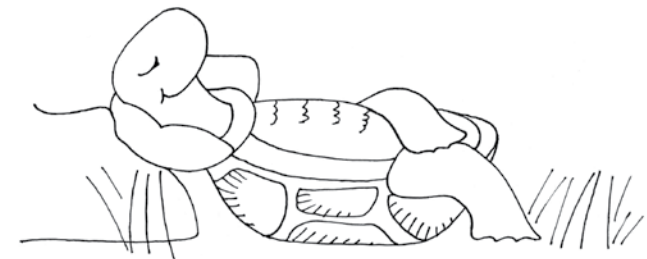
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Do you enjoy hanging out with yourself? Not exclusively, of course, but periodically taking some time out to see a movie alone, go to an unfamiliar or favorite museum, or visit a farmer's market with all the time to browse at your leisure. What a delight to go on an adventure with yourself, following your own whims and patterns, leaving early if you are finished or lingering if you desire. Experience the place, the event, and the people you encounter through your own filters and your own timing. The most ordinary endeavor, like strolling in the park or visiting a library can be a fun adventure if you fancy it as a special date with yourself. Give it the same attention you would if you were out with a loved one. Simply divine!

Unstructured Time

Have a “sunshine on your shoulders” day!

~ My friend, Cam Goodman



One way to practice personal freedom is to take a day (or a few hours if a whole day isn't possible) and allow yourself to effortlessly flow from one project to another, or from one whim to another without a specific agenda or timetable. It's a summertime-out-of-school kind of day. Include one in your schedule every week, month, or quarter—anytime you can squeeze it in. Guaranteed to recharge and renew your zest for life.

Wisdom is found in doing
the next thing you have to do,
doing it with your whole heart,
and finding delight in it.

~ Meister Eckart, *Medieval Mystic*

Mind Memory Moments

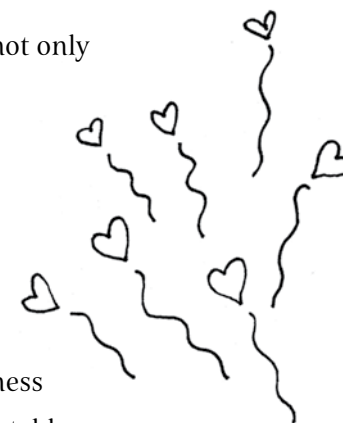
So, what about your *absolutely delightful* moments? The fleeting moments when things align in the best of ways, and you experience happiness ... or joy ... or contentment. Or perhaps you achieve something you've been striving for, working toward. What do you do in those moments? Do you pause and soak in the sweet essence of them? Or do you rush right on through to the next task in front of you?

Some of us are comfortable with those good feelings; others are not. For some, life has been wrought with mistreatment, trauma, abuse, or overwhelming challenges causing them to distrust the "good" when it comes their way. Their focus may instead be on wondering and worrying what might come next, waiting for the other shoe to drop. They just don't trust the good.

We may need to practice happiness. Even if you are able to let yourself be happy, you can still enhance your ability to accept joy or success. You can amp up your ability to *feel* what you are experiencing—to really feel it, every bit of its goodness, and to stretch that feeling so it lasts longer than just in the moment it occurs. You can repattern your brain to let go of the defense mechanisms that hold your good a hands length away ... and teach yourself instead to trust the good feeling so you might truly embrace its dear essence.

You can take that even further as you practice coding those good moments in your mind and heart, so you might "call them up" or revisit them when need be.

Learning to accept happiness is not only an individual endeavor but is our collective evolutionary growth. As we cultivate goodness, it will evolve in greater and greater circles of being, uplifting our planet. Embodying light can help tip the balance and heal the darkness in our world. And the more comfortable we are with goodness and light, the more inclined we are to share that with others, spreading goodness and light through our thoughts, words, and actions.



Here's an easy practice for those times when you want to remember a happiness, a joy, an accomplishment, or an inspiring moment, so you may call it back to you when you need a lift or a boost to empower your day.

I call them "Mind Memory Moments:"

1. Pause. Take time to notice when something is sparking joy, when something is making you happy, or when you achieve a success.
2. Be present to those moments when they are happening and savor them.
3. Anchor them in your body by noticing where you feel them. Where do they live?
4. You can also touch your forefinger and thumb together which helps to anchor them in your brain.
5. When you stretch the moment and encode it in your awareness, it will live within you long after the moment has passed.
6. Then you can call them back and revisit the experiences and the good feelings, drawing on those in times of need or when you want a boost.

You are literally exercising a particular part of your brain that houses your overall capacity for joy and happiness. We feel joy in our bodies because of the release of dopamine and serotonin, two types of neurotransmitters in the brain. Both chemicals are heavily associated with happiness; people with clinical depression often have lower levels of serotonin.

Although joy and happiness are natural emotions, they don't always happen naturally, which is why it can be helpful to practice.

- Is your happiness dependent on outside factors?
- Can you be content, even happy, when things aren't "going your way?"
- Do you notice any flickers of goodness right in the midst of dealing with challenges?

Jill Bolte Taylor, a remarkable neuroanatomist, observed her own stroke in her thirties while she was actually having it. She later documented that experience in *My Stroke of Insight*, speaking about the changes she has observed in her own brain, evidenced by her behavior before and after her stroke.

"... the most fundamental traits of my right hemisphere personality are deep inner peace and loving compassion."

A Harvard-trained, self-driven, and accomplished scientist before her stroke, she delighted in noted changes after her stroke that engaged other areas of her brain, such as the creative side, never before as prevalent.

Calling herself a "brain enthusiast" she goes on to say, "I believe the more time we spend running our inner peace/compassion circuitry, the more peace/compassion we will project into the world and ultimately the more peace/compassion we will have on the planet."

**Practice. Practice. Practice. Compassion. Peace. Happiness.
Let's spread it across the world.**

What you think matters. What you do matters. Your thoughts, beliefs, and actions are ripples on a pond moving outward and washing up upon the shore of the world around you. They seep into the ground and nourish creation in your outer life, too. You have the power to make life happen. This moment impacts others. Be more aware of your choices, moment by moment, so you might season the creation of what you desire.

When you do things from your soul
you feel a river moving in you, a joy.

~ Rumi

Gratitude

Do you approach your day from a glass is “half full” or “half empty” point of view? Do you habitually notice what is wrong or not working or do you count your blessings?

One of the best ways to treasure your moments is to focus, often, on what you are grateful for in your life. By noticing and calling out that goodness, you celebrate it. And, in a way, you perpetuate it by sharing that positivity when you acknowledge it with others—especially the good you see in them. Encourage and compliment people freely and honestly. You will be glad you did. Remember to encourage and compliment yourself, too.

A Daily Gratefest

A gratitude focus is not meant to be a denial of reality, one where we only look at what's blooming rosy. Rather by appreciating the gifts that

are found in even the most challenging times, we stay present to the moment and its potential for good. Sometimes, from our point of reference, what looks unfavorable, even downright awful, may contain an advantage of some sort.

An old Sufi story tells of a man whose son captures a beautiful, wild horse. All his neighbors exclaimed how fortunate he was. He replied simply, “We will see.” One day the strong horse threw the son from his back. The son broke his leg and now, the neighbors proclaimed what a curse it had been for the son to ever find that horse. And the man said once again, “We will see.” Soon after, soldiers came to the village and took away all the able-bodied young men, enlisting them to do battle, but the son with the broken leg was spared. Again, the neighbors observed how fortunate the man was for his son to be left with him. Once again, the man patiently said, “We will see.”

This being human
is a guesthouse,
every morning a new arrival.
a joy, a depression, a meanness
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows
who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture.

Still, treat each guest honorably.

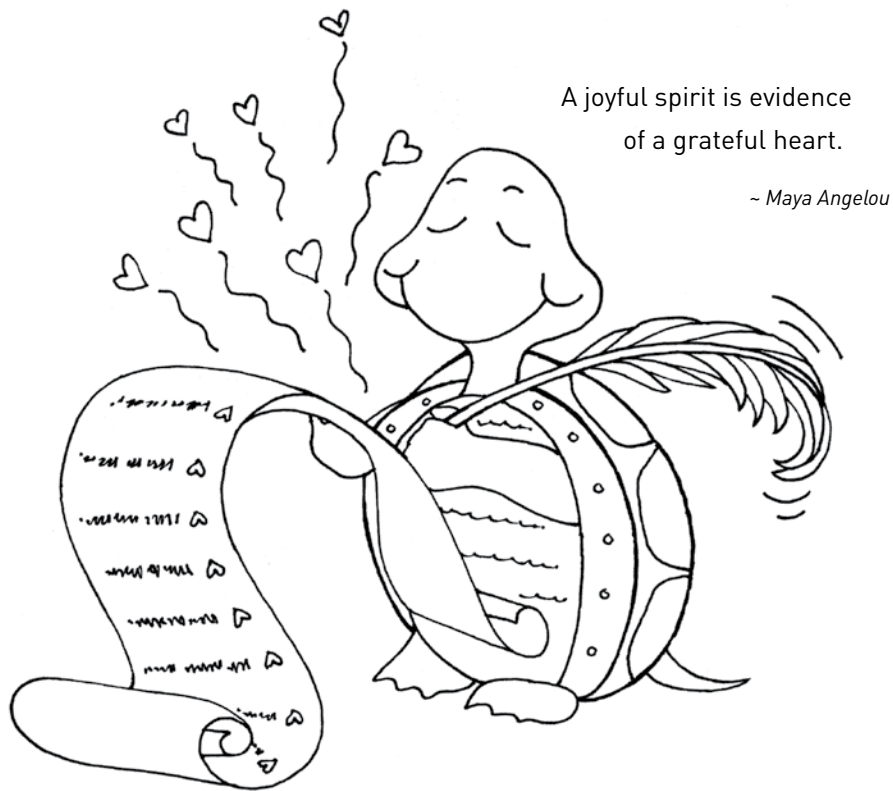
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

~ Rumi, *A Sufi Poet*

We never know how events ultimately will unfold. So, even in times of turmoil, an approach of gratitude can be useful. That lens brings meaning to the challenge and comfort to the pain. The practice releases the struggle and acknowledges it as having purpose. By finding the good within the challenge, we can rejoice amidst life's suffering as well as its joys.

I recommend a gratefest before breakfast or before bed:

Make a list, write in a journal, or speak aloud what you are grateful for in your life. You literally create an atmosphere of appreciation, which builds on its own vibrational momentum, creating even more to be thankful for!



All of Life is Precious

I have encountered those who have said, “I have been on my spiritual path for three years now.” Oh, my, NO! You have been on your path—the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual path—since you were born. Whatever you have done and whatever you are doing is important. Everything is a part of your vast picture, a part of your personal story. Everything has significance. Whether you are accepting an award, discovering a new theory, breaking an athletic record, drying a child's tear, sitting in a chair reading this book, cooking a meal, planting a garden, or cleaning a toilet—you are on your path.

Life is precious. We are all headed somewhere in our lifetime. Our lives have meaning and purpose. Along the way, we are presented with many choices. Some are mundane, a part of our everyday ... and others are monumental, setting the tone and rhythm for years to come. There is no one right and perfect direction, but rather endless possibilities, a vast potential for your personal experience and individual expression. If life is a canvas, you hold the brush. And you get to choose the colors and the textures for your own masterpiece! It is your birthright to decide how you wish to shape your reality.

Even the most challenged person has choices. When he dives in and seizes the choices of his choosing, a pivotal shift occurs. No longer shipwrecked, grasping to a small piece of security as he floats along on the ever-changing tide without any control or direction, it is as if he has been given a paddle or an oar and can now row toward the shore. He may even acquire a sail or a motor and tool along at great speeds in the direction of his hopes and dreams.

There is value in all you do. Do you realize that? Do you live in that place of knowing everything matters? It is the way you approach your moments and the value you attach to them that colors your experiences. Being productive. Resting. Discovering something new. Battling an addiction. Disagreeing. Tormenting or anguishing over a deep wound. Finding solutions. Playing. Loving. All of it has meaning—it is living. And doing it your way rises to the opportunity of life.

Be yourself. No one can ever tell you you're doing it wrong.

~ James Lee Herlihy

My Native American teachers taught me that there is a line of souls just waiting to incarnate into this earthly plane. The nuns at my Catholic School professed the same message. I have a feeling many traditions do. The meaning is clear; there is an understanding that life is precious. Regardless of your spiritual orientation, or whether you even have one, do you feel that way?

Do you know that this life, *your life*, is so very precious?

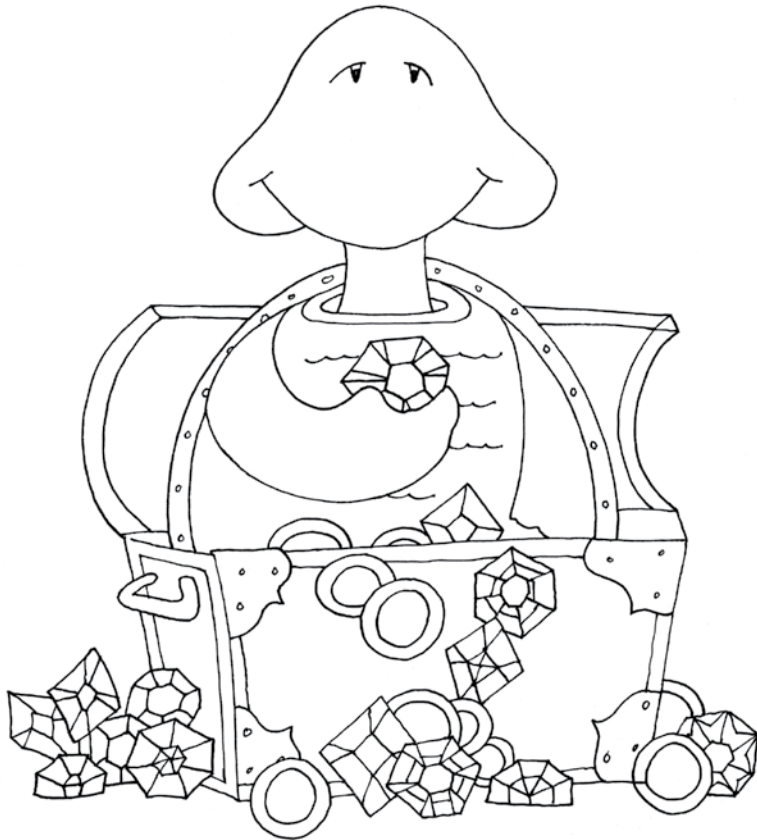
Even if you believe in other lifetimes, you will only have this lifetime once. That time is now. So, don't waste your precious time. Appreciate all your moments because when you connect them together, those moments shape you ... **and Turtle Wisdom reminds you that it's pretty incredible that you get to be you in this life. Out of all the possibilities, YOU are here right now.** You've got to love it!



To finish the moment,
to find the journey's end
in every step of the road,
to live the greatest number
of good hours,
is wisdom.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

No one else has
exactly what you have ...



... without you those pieces
would be lost.

7

I'm Stuck with Me!



OK. So, I must ask, do you ever feel “stuck” within your body, limited by the scope of your character—wanting more than what you, so far, get to be? Are there days when if you could, you would step aside, go in another direction, or even run away from yourself? In fact, some of us do, in one way or another, run from knowing ourselves, from truly knowing who and what we are and how we wish to express ourselves. But you cannot escape! No matter what—when you stop avoiding, moving away, or running—there you will be.

So, what can you do when you feel that way, when you feel victim to your own circumstance, and powerless to change it:

- Begin by standing in the presence of where you are, owning your personal ground, and being honest about what you see.
- Be true to yourself by claiming a welcoming space where you can be exactly who and what you are, without judgement (even if it doesn't look pretty).
- Then, honestly feel the feelings. Feel all your feelings even the uncomfortable or distasteful ones.

Among the most basic emotional needs we have is being allowed to experience and express our true feelings. We need to know that someone accepts, perhaps even understands those feelings, rather than trying to suppress or change them. We need to provide an atmosphere of safety for ourselves.

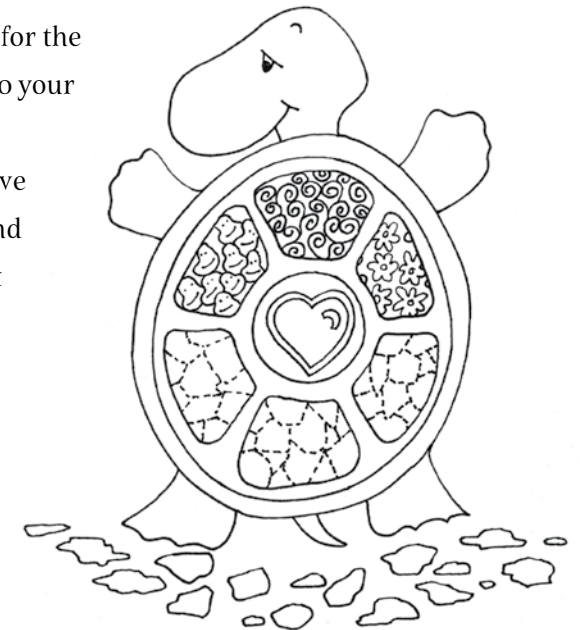
- It is from that place of acceptance that you can clearly assess where you are ... and where you would like to be. From that honest perspective, you can strategize how to move in your desired direction and who might help you in your evolution.
- Be true to yourself. Give yourself some slack as you are in the process of becoming, as you reveal more and more of your true self. Honor the process of evolving into the great potential that is You.

Becoming
 Tossing and turning
 In life it is that way
 Move forward, set
 sometimes a slow pace
 Make choices, hear voices
 which ones will you choose?
 Decisions, revision
 is changing your views
 You recreate yourself everyday
 Unbecoming, becoming, what you choose
 There are no mistakes
 there are no regrets
 You just re-choose to be you
 Finding yourself.
 ~ Author Unknown

And for those times when you feel captive in your own skin, a prisoner within your own life, I suggest working with the example of the snake, which sheds a layer of her skin to bring forth a new one. Turtles don't actually step out of and leave their entire shell, but adult turtles do shed shell pieces known as scutes as they grow.

Whether you shed pieces of yourself or an entire layer, you, too, can refine and recreate yourself. You can reshape your attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. Try on and play with your different "skins" as you see how the energy of them affects you and affects others around you. Try changing a habit or pattern of expression—if you are perpetually grouchy, try putting on a smile. With practice, it may become your natural way of being. If you talk incessantly, try being still to listen; observe what you learn in the silence of your stillness. Do something uncharacteristic: alter your outer expression or your way of being in the world. You might be surprised how different the world around you seems when you shift your way of relating to it.

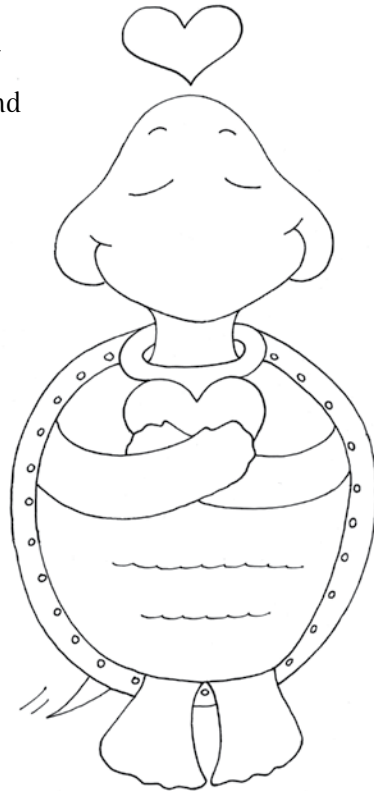
Shed the old and make way for the new. Transform yourself into your next phase of becoming by consciously choosing to move in that desired direction. And if for some reason you don't like what develops, you can always peel another layer, make further changes, and continue refining yourself.



Let's accept our humanity, with all its foibles and vulnerabilities, as well as its wisdom and power. There is perfection in your imperfections! You are who you are. Whoever you are has value. Look at yourself in the most open manner, so that you can get to honestly know yourself more fully and welcome that unique person with open arms. You are that magnificent masterpiece taking shape and form.

The Power of a Hug

In doing yoga one day, I discovered how wonderful it was to wrap my arms around my upper torso and stretch—literally giving myself a hug. It's fun to see how far you can stretch, and it feels fabulous to be hugged, even by yourself. Try this. Do it first with one arm on top ... and then switch with the other arm on top. Pause in each position, taking time to sense how it feels physically and emotionally. No matter what's going on or how you're feeling, you can always nurture yourself by pausing and giving yourself a little hug!



When You Stand Alone

I suspect that most of us, by nature, are people oriented. Certainly, we are raised in our culture to care about what others think. We value being accepted and liked, and at least part of the time, we try to comply with what others request of us. So, it seems that it may take an effort to learn the skill of standing alone—to learn to be alone and to appreciate being alone. It has been said, “We come into this world alone and we leave it alone.” Yet while we are here, we often crave companionship, outer validation, and love. What a powerful stance to learn to provide validation and love for ourselves. Then, anything else can be the whipped crème and a cherry on top!

When you are content with yourself, there can be a peace to being alone because there is less static from outer activity, enabling you to sculpt your environment in the best way for your safety and comfort. And you have the silence to hear your own blessed thoughts.

Confidence and Self-Esteem

How confident are you in who you are and in your ability to navigate through life? How would you rate your self-esteem? Would you say they are high or low or somewhere in between?

Self-confidence and self-esteem are related, but they are not interchangeable. When you possess valued characteristics or abilities and believe you can perform well in certain situations or certain roles, you typically develop confidence. When you are proficient, there is often a sense of having some positive control over your life and a consistently dependable confidence may ensue. But positive self-esteem does not naturally follow. It, too, needs to be cultivated.

Let's take a deeper look. Warning signs of low confidence may include:

- Feelings of self-doubt
- Passive or submissive behavior
- Difficulty trusting others
- Feeling inferior to others
- Overly sensitive to criticism
- Feeling unloved

Confidence is your belief in yourself and your abilities, while self-esteem refers to whether (or not) you appreciate and value yourself. Self-esteem may be affected by those around you and how they react to you. Do they seem to value you? A person can be very confident in their abilities, but still have low self-esteem. Self-esteem is related to self-love.

If you want to have good self-esteem,
you must learn to love yourself.

Here are a few signs of low self-esteem. Notice if any of these seem familiar:

- Negative self-talk, harsh judgment, constantly criticizing and putting yourself down.
- Avoidance of social situations or feeling anxious and uncomfortable in social situations. May avoid eye contact, feeling unworthy of others' attention. Feel lonely, yet unable to reach out.
- Need for validation; may seek reassurance from others.
- Procrastination or lack of motivation.

- Difficulty making decisions, second-guessing yourself, and relying on others to make choices for you.
- Difficulty setting boundaries; often saying yes to things you don't want to do or allowing others to treat you poorly.
- Fear of failure; may avoid taking risks or trying new things because of the possibility of failing.
- Perfectionism: striving for perfection in everything you do, setting yourself up for disappointment and feeling like a failure if you fall short. Feeling like nothing is ever good enough. This one, unfortunately, is very common.
- A people pleaser; striving to feel good enough.
- Self-blame for things that are not your fault or taking on too much responsibility for negative events.
- Difficulty accepting compliments or positive feedback, feeling like you don't deserve it or that the person giving the compliment is just being nice. We've already looked at this one and considered how to change it.
- Comparison to others; feeling like you don't measure up or aren't good enough.
- Overall feeling of unworthiness and/or feeling unlovable.

Low self-esteem can have many root causes. Here are a few of them:

- Difficult childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, constant criticism, or rejection can leave a lasting impact on a person's self-esteem.
- Cultural and societal pressures to conform to certain standards of beauty, success, or behavior can cause individuals to feel inadequate and lower their self-worth.

- Comparing oneself to others and feeling inferior can contribute to low self-esteem.
- Traumatic events such as accidents, illness, or personal loss
- Being in unhealthy or abusive relationships
- Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders
- Failure to achieve goals or meet expectations
- Difficulty in completing tasks and a lack of confidence in one's abilities
- A lack of recognition or positive feedback from others can cause people to feel undervalued and unappreciated.

Low self-esteem can affect every area of your life including personal relationships, social interactions, career, and overall mental well-being. It can also manifest as eating or other disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and self-harm. If you recognize the signs or behaviors of low self-esteem, I urge you to seek support to address the underlying issues.

Building self-confidence and self-esteem is critical for living a happy and fulfilling life. If you don't believe in yourself, life itself is a challenge. Even the smallest task can seem daunting. And a sense of happiness seems miles away.

I watched as this woman entered the store, coming in the exit door and walking in my direction with a strong purposeful gait, as if she were on a great mission. She quickly approached me and pointed to the stack of books to the right of me asked, "Are you the one who wrote that book?"

"Yes, I am," I replied as I watched her face soften. She told me her 15-year-old daughter had been meticulously planning the details of her suicide when her best friend gave her *Turtle Wisdom: Coming Home to Yourself*. The young girl told her mother it was why she didn't do it. The grateful mother came to my book signing to buy three copies: one for her daughter, one for herself, and one for the teen's therapist. It was a relief to hear the girl was getting help for what led to her wanting to take such a tragic step. If you or someone you love is on that dangerous precipice, please, reach out for professional help. Talk to someone. Tell them what is being considered. This is not the time to keep secrets.

Both confidence and self-esteem are inside jobs. Monitor your inside chatter to neutralize negative words and encourage positive ones. Find ways to acknowledge and appreciate your own value. And even if it doesn't seem completely real yet, encourage yourself to act more confidently, stretching into the experience of it.

Foster positive self-esteem by practicing loving yourself. If it is difficult for you to think about loving yourself, try this: when you think about someone or something you love, imagine drawing an energetic thread of that feeling—that love—and connecting it to yourself. Anchor it right to you! And then be aware, so you can recognize those moments when you feel a sincere sense of love for yourself and then, praise that feeling. Appreciating and loving yourself can be a learned behavior.

Confidence and self-esteem are a part of the core of who you are: they color all you experience and all you do in the world. Without a doubt, others may try to knock you down by projecting negative thoughts unto you. They may sometimes criticize you or convey a message

of you not being good enough. You must attempt to combat those erroneous influences. Watch also for the feisty inner critic throwing self-defeating thoughts your way. In these situations, you can note the input without allowing it to take you down. Remember those comments can roll right off—like rain on the turtle’s back.

Reach in and touch your worthiness, so you can fill your cup of confidence. Tell yourself how precious and deserving you are, even on the days you don’t do your best. Believe in yourself and trust in your own abilities.

Greet life with a more positive outlook and a confidence that overflows. Draw on that resilient inner core and there will be no stopping you, because like the turtle, no matter what, you just keep moving on.



Do You Ever Ride the Superiority/Inferiority Wary-Go-Round?

There is no private ‘good’
in God’s neighborhood.

~ Michael Beckwith

Have you ever noticed another’s faults or inadequacies with intense fascination? Or compared yourself so you could feel better, more

accomplished, more evolved? When we feel our worthiness at another’s expense, we play into the superiority/inferiority cycle.

We don’t need to draw on some false sense of superiority at another person’s expense. What is behind our critical thoughts? Typically, it is an underlying fear of others discovering our insecurities, our faults, our weaknesses. Therein lies the subtle panic of being seen, revealed for our imagined weakness, exposed for not being smart enough/capable enough/pretty enough/ strong enough/or _____ enough. Underlying a superiority stance is a deep dark layer of doubt. By comparing ourselves favorably to another, we somehow feel better, but it’s fleeting; our comparisons ultimately add to that looming sense of inferiority.

The antidote is to realize that we are all works in progress. We are each valuable just as we are. What may appear as flaws can now be recognized as “under construction” while we enhance our personal character. We can envision and stretch toward the potential of the greater expression; the person we might be.

Shadows are illuminated with the light of our kindness and good intention. As we embrace a perspective of self-acceptance, we can see other people in a brighter light, too. Supporting each other offers a positive contribution to the overall human balance. Being patient with others perceived shortcomings—and understanding they are continuing to evolve—positively seasons the human condition, enhancing interconnection and strengthening our natural human kinship. This approach is a simple, yet truly profound life practice.

Life never has to be overwhelming when you have someone that you can depend on, someone whose assessment you trust and whose opinion you value. Risking change is easier when you know that you have “you.” Pack your turtle shell with confidence and keep moving! Your little mobile home with all you need goes with you ...



Perfectionist Perfect

What do you expect from yourself and others? Are you constantly imaging “if only” ... if only he would; if only I could; if only, you know, she really should ... When we project our imagined idea of perfection onto people and situations, we limit our ability to enjoy the richness of what is happening in those precious moments. We create a setup for failure because it can only look one specific way or else it’s unacceptable. No one and nothing will ever be good enough. Most especially, ourselves.

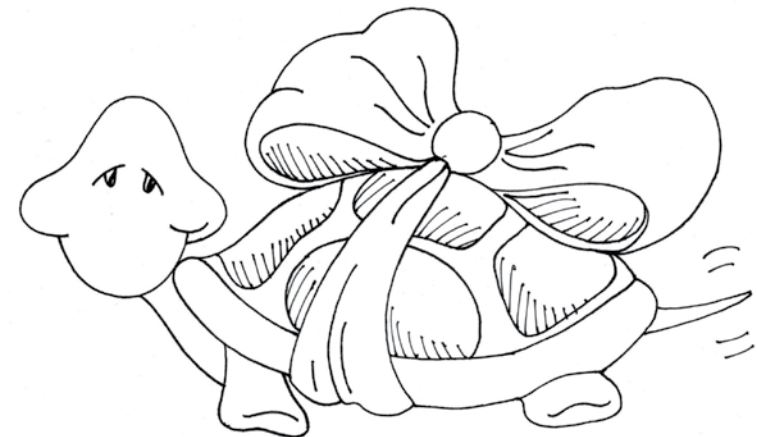
Develop an awareness of when you are polluting the moment with limiting expectations. Stop yourself and notice what is before you—just as it is. If you can find one positive aspect about what’s there, then, you have made a start. A guru once commented about another, “He feeds the plants with his out breath!” Now, that’s stretching to find something good to say!

You know, even our “imperfections” *are perfect*, for in those shortcomings—mistakes we make, or failures we experience—we learn. We learn valuable information and insight that helps us to grow. So, allow yourself the space to just be. Your birthright is “the right to be.” Begin with a sincere appreciation of where you are right now with the vision of how you are evolving toward your next greater-yet-to-be.

Life truly is precious. And you get to live it. So, live *your life* instead of missing it by living in the longing for something different. Know that all is ultimately perfect, every person and every moment precious.

There is beauty in the onliness of our snowflake selves—
the unbeauty comes in not knowing it.

~ Rusty Berkus



The Process of Becoming

When you look at a baby, all fresh and new, do you ever think about what she can't do? Do you focus on the fact that she cannot walk or talk or build a sandcastle? Or do you simply view that baby in appreciation for all her potential ahead of her? It would be helpful if you could look at yourself in the same manner—recognizing the potential for becoming more of who you are and expressing more of your goodness, even your greatness. When you still have life ahead of you, it's never too late to be who you might have been. As long as there is life's breath within you, there is time. Seize the day.

And just as you wouldn't expect the baby to learn everything they have to learn without ever making a mistake, you need to muster the patience to be kind through your own process of discovery and learning, too.

The great inventor and celebrated genius, Thomas Edison, taught us a lot about "failures." Although he did love to read, he did not do well in school so he was home-schooled. Edison was fired from his first two jobs for being "non-productive."

He made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" Edison replied, "I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

He said that many of life's failures were experienced by people who didn't realize how close they were to success when they gave up on their idea or their dream. A perfectionist would not try and fail 1,000 times. A perfectionist would give up in despair when the first few tries seemingly didn't work, thinking himself a failure.

The most important thing, I think, is to fail at some point, so when you work your way back, you can say it wasn't all luck!

~ Barbara Walters

Be courageous. I have seen many depressions in business. [We have] emerged from these stronger and more prosperous. Be brave as your fathers before you. Have faith. Go forward.

~ Thomas Edison

Rosie Rottencrotch

With her face just inches from mine she looked straight in my eye, pointing her finger at my nose, almost touching its base, and said, "You, Donna DeNomme, will never amount to anything." I blinked. She was the vice principal in charge of the girls at my high school and I was a defiant, acting-out teenager.

Still, in that moment, when I blinked, I knew it wasn't true.

Regardless of my physical reality, I believed that there was more to life ... and that someday I would experience it. I still had hope.

Okay, her name wasn't really "Rosie Rottencrotch," but that was honestly how we referred to her—because despite being a pretty young woman, she had a stern demeanor and was quick to judge, quick to hand out reprimands or punishments. Miss Rose never seemed fair to me; certainly not understanding or wanting to encourage us to become our best selves. As a teen, she was a harsh part of what I saw as those in charge.

But I have to say, years later, as a single mother—when I graduated first in my college class—it was her face that flashed in my mind’s eye. I once again felt the defiance of my youth ... and I cut out the newspaper articles showing me receiving several awards and the highest of honors, stuffed them in an envelope, and mailed them to her.

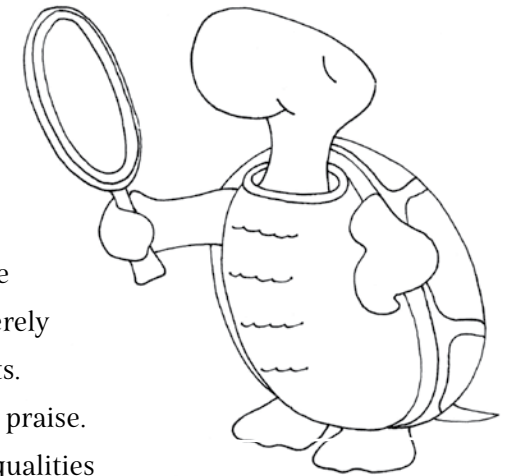
“Don’t you ever tell another kid that they won’t amount to anything.” my sticky note read.

Bright Reflection

A mirror practice can be used to develop self-acceptance. We can utilize the process introduced earlier in this book with the added addition of looking deeply into our own eyes. It’s not necessarily easy to do! But it is something that gets easier with practice. Approach looking at yourself in the mirror with acceptance and curiosity. Who is this precious one before you? On your worst day, look at yourself in the mirror with kindness and compassion. Be patient with her; she needs your tolerance most of all.

- Compose a positive statement about yourself. You might think it in your mind or write it in your journal first if you need to practice it.
- Look at your reflection in the mirror.
- Now, speak your affirmative statement out loud with honesty and conviction.
- Repeat. Speak it out loud with honesty and conviction.

- Notice if you allow those words to penetrate inside of you. Do they reach your heart?
- Or do you block them, resisting their entry. Do your words bounce back off you? Do you let them drift away before they penetrate to your core?
- Monitor your reactions and strive to be more comfortable in accepting and believing warm sentiments. Practice your ability to sincerely receive compliments. Be willing to accept praise.
- Be grateful for the qualities you possess and the person that you are sharing with the world.



Jean Houston recounts the story that every morning anthropologist Margaret Mead would bellow in her largest, affirming voice, “Thank God, I’m Margaret Mead.”

Go ahead, try it, “Thank God, I’m _____.”
(And don’t you dare say Margaret Mead!)

“Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained”

Be like the bird,
who halting in his flight
on limb too slight
feels it give away beneath him
yet sings, knowing he has wings.

~ Victor Hugo

A long time ago a friend listened to me describe what was then a very limited lifestyle and heard me describing it as “safe and predictable.” This friend looked at me shocked and horrified and remarked, “How boring! Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” That statement was a catalyst for a two-year exploration that took me where I never dreamed of going. I received a scholarship to Cornell University and left the security of the small-town I had been living in to be in a city filled with people from all over the world. It was my awakening to a much larger community.

From then on, I adopted the same philosophy of “nothing ventured, nothing gained” and the adventures have continued. I have taken people to swim with the dolphins, led sacred ceremonies on remote, ancient Mayan ruins, taught Divine Feminine appreciation to teen girls, shared open conversation with incarcerated women, and written this book inspired by that philosophy.

In turn, I, too, have challenged many others tucked in their comfortable ruts to climb out and stretch further. It was as if one dear friend encouraging me to reach for more, dropped a pebble in that proverbial still pond, which continues to ripple onward today. Her comments altered my life, and in turn, touched others through me.

So, what would you do differently if you adopted this “nothing ventured, nothing gained” approach?

What is it you dream of doing?

What is it you long to be?

How might fear be holding you back? Or limiting you?

Choose to be bold in your next steps.

Claim expansion in your life.

There is a reason why you are in human form in this particular place at this specific time. Embrace your humanity; rise above the human condition by knowing that despite your imperfections or limitations, you are a perfect and brilliant work in progress. You have a gift to share that no other can give. You were created perfectly with all the means to bring forth that contribution from within you. Enhance and expand your outer expression based on your true inner core, following your own inner compass which will lead you to your best future. Allow yourself the consideration, the time, the space, and the nurturing to evolve into all that you can be. Be gentle with yourself and honor each and every part of your becoming. For every step has value, every stage merit.

The journey in between
what you once were
and who you are now becoming
is where the dance of life
really takes place.

~ Barbara DeAngelis, Real Moments

Shapeshifting— Powerful Personal Transformation

We are at a pivotal point in our human evolution. It is time to expand our ability to shape and reshape who we are, and to maturely sculpt our future from a place of conscious choice. We can no longer be at the mercy of what life gives us. We cannot allow ourselves to feel trapped within our own skin, prisoners to the human condition. Rather, we must be empowered to create the life we envision and manifest our dreams. We possess the potential for shifting into a dynamic way of being—if we can recognize our personal responsibility for how we are living and our ability to successfully effect change in our own life and beyond.

There is inherent goodness that seeks a path of expression through you. Explore the great unknown and live in a way which brings forth a planet that we have never seen, a reality we have only glimpsed, and a future bright with potential. If you want to experience what you have always experienced, then keep doing what you have been doing. If you can envision a grander scheme, then shapeshift!

If you don't like who you are and where you are,
don't worry about it because
you're not stuck either with who you are
or where you are.
You can grow. You can change.
You can be more than you are.

~ Zig Zigler

