The Girl Behind the Fence:
Loneliness

PDF VERSION
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Foreword

While working in the substance abuse field I have looked for reasons why people continue to use and self-destruct. Like many, I am a product of my environment and have suffered unspeakable loneliness, yet never to the extent of wanting to take my own life. Many take their lives by suicide or more slowly… risky behaviors. However, I did find comfort in drinking at an early age - long before it was legal. Like many in the mental health field, I too entered the career in search of the answers to my own questions including if dad loves us, why doesn't he just stop drinking? Yet, despite years of seeking and studying, I did not receive the answers I wanted.

Later, while working in a 300-bed correctional facility, I witnessed the incarcerated individuals diligently try to change their life, yet repeatedly fail despite having supportive loved ones cheering them on. The question still haunted me as this repetitive pattern of self-destruction was prominent each and every day. These men and women lost everything – cars, houses, and relationships - for drugs and alcohol. As a result, most also ended up with a criminal record.

This is when I met Mozelle Martin; a young caring person, eager to help the lost and forgotten people who lived behind bars. She worked hard to help them find their way through the loneliness and despair, guiding them to seek and find a glimmer of hope to hold on to. She was passionate and, because her father was similar to my own, she sought answers to the same questions that I did.

“Loneliness” - the word itself is simple to say, yet it is difficult to define. People feel loneliness even when surrounded by hordes of loved ones. The definition changes based on whom we ask and their unique circumstances, but the underlying meaning was consistent throughout - the unexplainable yet painful feeling of emptiness inside and the prevailing voids that are never filled.

Mozelle and I are not exceptions to the pain of loneliness and just like most inmates, we know what it is like to feel as if a key part of our lives are missing. Like she and I, the inmates needed to feel alive, needed to feel fulfilled, and needed to feel as if they mattered to someone – anyone. Perhaps most importantly, they needed to believe in themselves. But adult inmates are not the only population set to struggle with the pain of loneliness.
Children and adults cry out for help behaviorally when they are in pain. Many children and teens turn to gangs in order to feel a sense of belonging, while others may turn to substances to fill their voids. Whether anger, grief, shame or loneliness, we all seek the same.

In addition, technology has deepened the gap between feeling alive and dismissed. I’m sure you have noticed at any restaurant you dine in, most children and their parents are on their cell phones with very little meaningful conversation. Like you, I watch a society full of people – both young and old - who are near-constantly disengaging from each other, and instead choose to bond with their electronics.

This has added to the difficulty of defining loneliness.

Even on the rare occasion that we do ask for help, we don’t really want anyone to know. We want help, yet we are often too ashamed to share our thoughts, emotions, and struggles for fear of being judged. Instead we just continue dying a little bit more every day, and eventually believe that we do not matter to anyone at all – not even ourselves.

Both Mozelle and I know that it is never too late for someone to shed the loneliness and find true happiness. We know that loneliness does not have to be a mask we continue to wear.

That’s why this book exists. Due to the seemingly ever-growing epidemic of loneliness across the continents, Mozelle is reaching out to help you find the answers to your own questions surrounding the feelings of loneliness.

This timely book, the one you are now holding, was written out of her own struggle and desire to help people find their way to fulfillment, so that they can live a life of hope and purpose.

Like me, it is Mozelle's dream to offer tips and tools to help educate the reader on how to live their lives... not just merely exist in them.

Dr. Martha Amos  
Certified Addiction Counselor  
Doctorate, Forensic Psychology
Martha (aka: “Marty”) works with clients who suffer from addiction and mental health issues. Part of Marty’s mission is to empower them to overcome their personal obstacles so they can improve their life. Marty uses evidence-based practices, and some clinically-tested interventions. She has worked with over 500 clients since opening her private practice in 2012. Marty works with elementary students to try to help with their symptoms of mental illness - to give them a fighting chance at life. She has conducted research which verifies children as young as five years old also suffer from loneliness. Marty believes that, with the right tools, techniques, and supports, anybody can recover from feelings of loneliness.

Marty used to be the supervisor of Mozelle Martin while working at a Colorado Jail as Forensic Mental Health Professionals.

Reach out to Marty at:
www.AmosCounseling.com
Preface: About the Series

When we compare ourselves to gurus such as Marie Forleo, Brené Brown, Mel Robbins, Oprah Winfrey, Danielle LaPorte, Byron Katie, or Gabrielle Bernstein, we often feel worse and more hopeless - thinking our life will "never change" or that we "don't deserve happiness or success".

Why?

Because comparing ourselves to someone who seemingly has it all usually best serves to amplify the differences between us and them.

As women, we are notoriously self-critical. Those uncomfortable thoughts and feelings of being undesirable, unwanted, unloved, broken, not good enough, undeserving, too fat, too ugly, not smart enough, and unsuccessful can haunt our minds until we wholeheartedly believe them. Since the beginning of time, and not just occurring in middle school, females both young and old around the world have compared themselves to each other. In turn, unless we choose otherwise, we become stuck in these toxic beliefs.

When we feel unhappy and undeserving, we settle for a life we hate – a life full of unwanted thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

However, if we finally decide to seek help for our misery, we often turn to books written by powerful women such as Kris Carr, Elizabeth Gilbert, Sheryl Sandberg, Rhonda Byrne, Colette Baron-Reid, or Gretchen Rubin.

Yet after reading books by typically unreachable women or gurus, we often continue to lose even more hope while settling even deeper into our unhappy, unfulfilled, or miserable life.

Why?

Because we justify our situation by saying things such as:

"Of course Oprah is happy and stress-free at age 64. If I had millions of dollars, I would be happy and stress-free too".

or

"Brene's husband is super supportive. If I had a loving husband or an understanding partner, I'd be happy and successful too".
What we don’t see are the parts of their lives that these unreachable women keep hidden. Sure, they can pay others to handle many of their problems while they play a passive role. However, no amount of money can remove their own troubling beliefs, outlooks, or sentiments. To help combat those, these same powerful women must play an active role if they are unhappy… just like you and me.

When we reach out for help, we are really seeking to connect with other women just like us in which we can build a sense of community… a supportive “sisterhood”.

That is why this series was created.

In this series of 15 books, you will read real stories written by real women for real women just like you.

Like peeking into their personal diaries, you will read true stories of women around the world who have confronted and embraced their vulnerable side, while learning some tough lessons along the way.

Life will never stop tossing mud at you, but you don’t have to become paralyzed by the emotional quicksand. Although perhaps counter-intuitive, it is during the most difficult times when it is even more important to never give up on your hopes, goals, and dreams.

In fact, by being able to contribute to this series, many writers have been able to fulfill goals of their own. For some, it was to become a published author for the very first time. For others, it was to collaborate on an empowering project. While each author has their own unique reasons for contributing, they all shared one common goal – that of providing you with powerful tips and tools to help you create a life you love. Because you are holding this book in your hands, you know that goal has also been fulfilled.

But that’s not all…

If you have ever tried to reach out to gurus such as the assumedly unreachable women mentioned earlier, you likely received a generic response. Because they are considered someone of significance within society, many seem to forget where they once began, and just ignore those they may consider insignificant.

That's why the authors within this book will respond to you. They know what it is like to feel unimportant and small - unaccepted and invisible. After reading their stories, you will be able to reach out to them using the contact information provided.
One additional mission of each book within this series is to highlight and help support an applicable non-profit. Each non-profit represented started as someone’s dream or goal. Within this book you will learn more about the people behind the scenes, and how their idea went from inspiration and concept, to a passionate and ongoing mission.

Finally, if you would like to become a contributing author in the series, please visit www.GirlBehindTheFence.com.

P.S. **We need your help** so that together we can continue to spread healing to the women of the world. **Need inspiration?**

Here are some ideas:

- Start a “Girl Behind the Fence” **book club**.
- Start a “Girl Behind the Fence” **Meet-Up group**.
- **Give a copy** of this book to all of the women you love.
- Acquire copies to **give randomly** to women to make her day.
- **Invite the authors** of this book to speak to your group or appear on your podcast or show.
- **Post about** this book on social media using the hashtags: #GirlBehindFence #MustReadBooks #BooksForWomen
- **Invite the women** you know to become a contributing author in this series.
- **Get creative** – tell us how you are helping further the “Girl Behind the Fence” mission and we will feature you in our newsletter.
As of 2017, approximately 42.6 million adults over age 45 struggle with feelings of chronic loneliness. Twenty-five percent of the population lives alone, and over 50% of the population is unmarried. Results from a recent study of 300,000 participants prove that individuals with weak or non-existent social connections actually increase their risk of early death by up to 50%. As a result of these shocking statistics, more social outreach programs have been put in place to help conquer this nearly-imminent worldwide loneliness epidemic.

Since life began, we have had a strong sense of belonging. Whether to a small family or a large community group, this fundamental need powerfully affects our mental and physical health. However, even if we interact with co-workers all day, surround ourselves with a large family, and are in a decades-long marriage, we can still feel very alone.

With the click of a button or the help of social media, within seconds we are provided with more opportunities than ever before; among these opportunities are thousands of ways to connect to fellow human beings. Logically we know that reaching out for help is key in combatting this deep and pervasive feeling, yet we don’t do it. Why?

Typically, we dislike admitting to ourselves and others that we feel lonely for fear we may appear unlikeable and vulnerable. Moreover, we have been conditioned as a society to not show our feelings. Instead, we try to ignore our uncomfortable thoughts and emotions, hoping they will go away on their own. They usually don’t.

Consequently, we feel anxious and rejected as if a fence separates us from the popular crowd, thereby allowing us to secretly obsess over our perceived defects.

Despite all of us having an innate need to connect with our fellow humans, the degree of that need varies. For example, you may feel lonely when not around other people. On the other hand, I may feel completely exhausted when I am. Yet, despite our individual differences, our DNA strands are programmed to satisfy our need for belonging, whatever our unique need is.
So, to help determine if you are feeling lonely, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I hoping my current partner will *eventually love me* as much as I love him?
- Am I upset because my partner won’t *officially* commit?
- Am I staying in a *miserable or unhealthy relationship* because I don’t want to be alone?
- Do I frequently compare myself to the happy people I see and wonder if that will *ever be me*?
- Do I have a history of “*attracting the wrong type of people*”?
- Do I *sacrifice quality* in order to avoid feeling alone and unwanted?
- Do I *settle for what I dislike* in relationships just so I can have someone in my life?
- If I am not always around others, does my life seem *empty and less satisfying*?
- When I am alone, do I find ways to *stay busy to avoid* my feelings?
- When I am feeling unloved or rejected, do I become *viciously sarcastic or critical of others*?

If you answered yes to any of these, this book is dedicated to you.
The Stories
A Well-Loved Woman

by Ann Cabano

My very first memory of feeling lonely was back in 1978 when I was ten years old. My mother had just transplanted our family from Michigan all the way across the country to the great state of Arizona. We left behind my entire extended family including two of the most important people in my life, Grandma and Daddy-O Kelly. The Kelly’s were my great-grandparents and the source of all magic, safety, nurturing, and love any grandchild could ever dream of. I was extremely grateful.

Our little family consisted of my mother, my baby brother Adam, and me. My brother and I had different fathers; our fathers had more than just our mother in common. They also shared a general lack of financial responsibility for their children. As a single mother with two young children and no assistance, my mother had to work long hours over several jobs to provide a home and necessities for us.

For me, this meant I was part of the new wave of what was referred to as ‘latchkey’ kids. Latchkey kids came home to an empty house and had to be self-directed to finish chores, homework and take care of personal needs. I definitely fit that mold and found myself emotionally navigating my own world full of fear, wonder, daydreams, and loneliness. My mother did the absolute best she could to support us and my brother and I never felt unloved or uncared for. However, I did find myself feeling rather lonely quite often, and as a result, when I got news of my grandparents coming for a visit from Michigan, I could barely contain myself or soothe my impatience while counting down the days until their arrival.

Back in the days before the September 11th tragedy, you were allowed to meet passengers right at the airport arrival gate and literally watch your loved ones come through the gate door. In my entire childhood, the biggest moment of absolute joy, excitement, and anticipation was the feeling that I was going to bust out of my own skin upon the arrival of my Grandma and Daddy-O Kelly. I waited with baited breath to see their faces emerge from behind the door. My entire world was complete and whole when I was physically near my grandparents. They were my heroes, my sources of much desired approval, and the absolute epitome of the love I could never get enough of. They gushed over me, gave me hugs,
kisses, attention, and of course, presents. They sat through every single show-and-tell moment I offered them; I felt unbelievably loved and appreciated for all that I was, and all that I did.

Daddy-O was tall and thin as well as grouchy to almost everyone except his grandkids. He had piercing blue eyes and, even as a child, I could appreciate how handsome he was. He always played practical jokes on the family, loved to dance with me, and sang on command.

Grandma Kelly was short and stout and well-known for her baking skills, particularly her amazing cinnamon rolls. She taught me the Lord's Prayer and made me promise that when she got too old to care for herself, I would never leave her alone. I made that promise with all the honest truth a child could muster.

When the day came for my grandparents to leave Arizona and return to their home, I was completely devastated. It was like someone was ripping my heart out of my chest and the rest of me shattered into a million little pieces. I could not breathe or think about anything other than the feeling of a huge gaping hole in my chest. My mother was unaware of the depth of my sadness because I did an excellent job of hiding my feelings. This is the time when my “latchkey lessons” benefitted me. I had so many moments alone; in those moments, I wailed aloud in sorrow. As the tears soaked into my pillow, I inhaled the smell of my grandma’s Esteé Lauder perfume from where she’d slept. Sadly, the scent eventually faded away.

For many years, my grandparents’ visits were the complete source of my greatest joy and my deepest pain. They were unconditional love, a safe place to land, and they represented the stability of life as I believed it should be.

Time passed, life passed, and eventually Grandma and Daddy-O passed. Sadly, I was never able to keep that promise to my Grandmother and to this day I get a small pang of sorrow thinking about her leaving the planet without any loved ones around her.

As I trudged on in my own life, trying to unconsciously fill the void of the many unfilled figurative shoes acquired through several failed relationships and a divorce, it was the gift of children that began to offer a new lens of perception about love. And I was grateful once again.
It wasn't until 2015 that I experienced that deep feeling of loneliness again. I had just walked away from a life and business that I had worked heart and soul to build. In the middle of that creation I realized that I was engulfed in an abusive relationship. Again I forged forward, only this time my body, mind, and soul were not connected fully and I found myself in the middle of a deep depression with a side of PTSD.

Once, in the middle of the night, I was thinking how completely alone I felt in this world. I jumped on the self-deprecation hamster wheel and started to go through all the reasons why I was failing at being a human being. I was a holistic educator, I facilitated empowerment and transformation for a living, and I had all the tools I needed to NOT feel that way. Yet I did. I was also surrounded by supportive and loving family members and friends, yet I was embarrassed and humiliated. I was also full of shame and could not bring myself to ask for help. I remember lying there taking inventory and wishing someone - anyone - would just come and hold me.

And then my car got repossessed. I was already two months behind on my rent with a utility disconnect notice. I was eating food donations someone had dropped off for me to give to the homeless. I had hit rock bottom, MY rock bottom.

I needed help, so I put my fear aside and asked for it. My family helped get my car back. My friends helped me catch up on my bills, and my landlord let me stay on as a tenant. But that was the quick fix. The real work came when I dropped everything I was doing for everyone else and started focusing on ME - starting with exercise and ending with counseling.

My path to healing involved physical activity such as squats, biking, lifting weights, walking, dancing, and running. It moved into eating healthy, and began to include meditation and prayer. Then, counseling.

But one of the biggest tools I have found is surrounding myself in gratitude for the strong, unconditional love I have in my life. The tribe of wise women, the support of an amazing family, and the love of my children and animals helped changed my entire life. Instead of focusing on what I did not have, I connected to the love that was in my life and had never left me.
As a verbal processor, it is imperative to surround myself with safe people to hold my process. There was a moment when I was reflecting on the support and kindness of the people in my life, and how delicately they held my emotional state. I decided to write a little vignette about the experience I had moving from devastation and anger at the end of that horrible relationship, and how seeing my own grace had reflected back to me.

For it was in writing this vignette that I discovered and accepted for the first time in my life, that I was a well-loved, graceful and strong woman.

Grace

It was ugly, messy and downright mean the way my thoughts were pouring out onto the paper. I'd been wronged. And I was going to stand up for myself damn it. If I was going down, I was going to take the entire fucking ship with me. Be damned if all my hard work was only to benefit the glory of another.

And so I wrote. I comprised. I explained in great detail PRECISELY why I was resigning. How the unethical actions of another, the hurtful and abusive full throttle of the sick individual I worked with was the cause for my final-straw exit.

I wrote poetic hate words. With a cadence that sliced and a curve in the ink that was sure to kill the reputation of the entire organization.

It took me four days. And my tribe of five women individually helped me structure the letter, correct the grammar, insert more effective punctuation, and fully express my pain from deep within my broken soul.

Draft after draft, line after line, detail after detail...until I had no more to say. Until I had nothing left inside me to express. Until every soul crushing tear had dropped.

And not once did they try to change my mind. Not once did they deter me, or warn me of a wrong doing. Or try to shift my thought, alter my feelings or correct my behavior nor take it personally.

In fact, they applauded my bravery in speaking my mind. Told me I had a right to my feelings. Read the letter out loud a hundred times so I could hear my own words.
And they loved me through it.

You see... I know what divine witness is. It is unconditional. It doesn't try to fix, alter, shift or control. It observes with love, with acceptance and strength, and with faith.

They all knew in their souls that in the end I would destroy it and send a proper professional standard letter.

They knew that at the end of my emotional state, which they let not define me, I would do the right thing.

They had faith.
They had faith in me.

And because that never wavered, not by one of them, that was the moment I truly understood I had been seen, and I had been witnessed, and I had been freed. In that place I came undone, and in that place I was reborn.

They stayed the course, rode the waves and honored the pain until I found my way back to grace.

That was the day I embraced that I was a well-loved woman.
Ann is a passionate advocate for humanity, giving voice to the human experience as a documentary film maker, holistic educator, published author, and public speaker. She hopes to spread her message of love and social awareness through creativity, outreach and human connection.

Ann is the founder of The Just Be Love Project & Ann Cabano Films she is on a grassroots mission to spread love & kindness, to demonstrate tolerance & compassion and to BE the change.

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“And you find that sometimes you search to fill a void that doesn’t exist until you venture out far enough to create it.” ~Liz Newman

Nurturing Voids
by Celeste Burruel

When thinking about loneliness, I closed my eyes and reflected on how the feeling has weaved within me throughout my life, and it took me back to childhood. It truly is in the formative years that we experience our first feelings. How feelings begin to stitch themselves into our soul looking for an expression in hopes of regulating themselves. It reminded me of the relationship I established with loneliness. The relationship that held me hostage from connecting with myself and resulted in experiencing the absence of my desires, is what created voids of longing. I nurtured the feeling of loneliness because it became a companion, a confidant, and an accomplice. In my darkest moments, the feeling of loneliness in some way gave me comfort, as it reinforced the idea that the void still remained, yet it only needed to be filled. I continued to let loneliness caress me in my nights of despair, my heartache, and my unfilled desires. There was a payoff to this process; it kept me safe from connecting and most importantly from allowing others to hurt me. My confidant was always there when I needed to escape from a harsh reality or a situation that I was unwilling to commit too.

During childhood, I was disciplined for not following the social norms let alone rules that were implemented. I was a hyper child, that most of the time was too excitable to connect fully with another, as I began to regulate these emotions, a maladaptive coping skill emerged. It allowed me to escape into loneliness. I felt safer to not fit in and be awkwardly “too much” than to put myself in harm’s way. I can reflect on this behavior now as an adult, but when I was a child it was the repetitive behavior and experiences that led me to strengthen my relationship with loneliness. As I transitioned into the developmental stage of adolescence, the feeling of loneliness not only began to embody me but I also began to create the idea that external validation was the only way I could be accepted. As a result, pleasing others began its birthing process. It lessened my longing of connection because I did anything in my power to make others like me. This behavior continued to be reinforced and I felt
more integrated into my family, school, and community. I seemed to only feel lonely when I felt the external mirror was not filling me up. When I was thirteen years old, I bought a rose quartz crystal from a woman in Mexico. She told me that the crystals healing powers were of unconditional love. That crystal would activate not only love in my life, but that I could attract a soulmate, and never be without love in my life. I immediately was attracted to the rose quartz; I was already deeply into astrology so that crystal made sense to me as it would complement my sun sign. I began to wear around my neck because I had a longing for love. As a thirteen-year-old the fantasy and idea that I could fill the loneliness was amazing. The desire to be connected and to be fully accepted in someone else’s eyes became possible. At a very young age, I birthed the hopeless romantic in me and wrote poems about being broken-hearted, via experiencing rejection. The identity I was continually nurturing and evolving too was that of a people pleaser that would do anything for others to fill in the void that would take away the feeling of lonely.

With respect to everybody’s belief systems, religion was very appealing as well, as it gave me an outlet to get filled from an outside source - believing again love outside of me would stop the loneliness from returning as my life’s companion. Although many can say that religion is not something outside yourself, but we all experience early religious formation differently. When the teachings are about giving everything to an iconic figure to be healed, then it does become an outside source of healing in my perspective. When things did not go as I expected or planned in connections, I would retreat back to that “safe place” of loneliness. Everything that gave me external reassurance or gratification had a huge influence on how I felt or how I perceived my worth to be and my value in life. Loneliness was the unconscious drive which dictated my connections in life, not the healthiest due to this mental construct. I was constantly manifesting the deep voids in my life. The voids seemed to get deeper at times, yet I always found a way to justify anything via my accomplice of loneliness.

I feel that when we begin to experience an emotion that we are unable to understand or create a positive experience around, we will always look and need a completion process in our brains as to how obtain the ability to regulate emotion and how that can be accomplished. This is how the subconscious will always have a voice in our lives. As an energy healing facilitator, there is a statement that says, “energy goes where attention flows”. Our mental health is so integrated with our emotional health. Deception
became another of my good nurturing companions in life through the process of loneliness. I also call those half-truths, meaning that there is still some unconscious aspect of the original emotion being processed seeking completion, but has not gotten there fully in the rewrite mental process. I became an amazing actress as I pleased and denied my desires more and more to where the overwhelming feelings were converting into prolonged loneliness, that we can maybe identify as depression. I believe I then had spontaneous bouts of depression, to where I would acknowledge and nurture the loneliness, yet I was also in that space of change. Repressed emotions hold our energy hostage to which then builds up within our bodies. The energy has to go somewhere, so it often manifests in physical ailments or mental conditions that begin to take over our lives. The more we nurture the emotion, the more the energy will persist within ourselves. This can also be identified as trauma, based on early experiences or events that have contaminated our ability to regulate naturally. We continue to mal-adapt based on what we need to do to survive at the moment. Prolonged voids or loneliness can be seen as a continuous focus in our lives if we operate under the model I did for many years.

So how was I able to overcome loneliness? Was it even possible? What did I do that allowed my mental construct and emotional being to shift? Well, there are many parts of my healing process. One of the first things was to identify the root cause of my loneliness, which in my story is complex as trauma is related, but many may have walked a similar path, yet identifying the layer of the belief of voids was crucial. The internal process began, in knowing that I had the ability to heal myself and did not need any outside source to take away the loneliness. I was the person that needed to restore that misguided life-force inside of me, the one that was constantly looking for acceptance and love. It was not an easy task to begin to shift and let go of what was my companion of safety throughout life.

It was the beginning of vulnerability, of courage, and of looking at myself outside of what others thought about me. My identity was under construction; there was a lot of grief as I was letting go of the persona that everyone picked out for me. In reality, that lonely person was ready to break free from all of the external influences. It was very cathartic to have a blank canvas – especially one that took years to recreate. The biggest part of that process was learning how to be patient and compassionate with myself. When we have allowed other people to determine who we are and that gets stripped
away, we are left with an empty cup, yet the difference is that we don’t rely on others to fill us up again. That is where I began to build and reconstruct everything in my life. I had many health challenges during this process. Inner work is not for the faint of heart, to begin to see myself without voids and leave loneliness in the past required me to be brave. I had to slowly begin to expose the parts of myself that were in hiding… the parts that were my real identity and not the fabricated ones.

Feeling whole from the inside out was not gained via a summit or weekend retreat. It was an everyday commitment to healing and the practice of mindfulness in my life. It was practice, there was times where I would revert back to the “old ways” because it made me feel safe, but that was the false safety I learned early on to rely on. So the daily practice was doing things that required living a wholehearted life, taking risks when needed, and dealing with all the uncomfortable feelings that came with that. Now I have a great support system, a self-care regimen, and the ongoing awareness that loneliness can invite itself back into my life at any time to rekindle our relationship. I now have the tools that I built with the help of my own practitioners to establish healthy boundaries with loneliness to where the expression is balanced and that void does not dictate my life. The biggest reminder I have of this process is that I currently still wear the crystal rose quartz around my neck, but it has a different meaning now. It is still about unconditional love, but to the love and commitment that I have for myself.
Celeste is a dedicated and passionate advocate, holistic practitioner, educator, group facilitator, teacher, writer, and public speaker. Her passion began at an early age with a strong vision of service, and desire to change and challenge the status quo. What life has taught her through loss and grief, life has also renewed, transformed, and re-ignited through love. Celeste’s vision of making the world a better place led her to her personal commitment within the community.

As a student of life, Celeste holds a Bachelor's degree in family studies and child development. She has a Master's in Early Childhood as well as various certifications in healing and therapeutic modalities.

Celeste is the founder of Grief Speaks Project: the untold stories of emotion. She owns Mystical Zen Wellness, and Celeste Burruel LLC, where her mission is to empower others as they embrace their own resiliency, move through life with peace, and continue to shape love into their daily practice.

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Like a Lotus  
by Christina Beckley

Loneliness is quite a heavy feeling for us all, like a muddy quicksand, yet still uniquely our very own subjective struggle. Quite the unclear and dreary picture I have painted for you, right!? But I promise that if you find solace in just one tool that has worked for me, then you are off to a beautiful start to a new foundation. The way I see it, Spirit has brought this book your way to guide you even further on your quest back to acceptance, back to happiness, back to looking in the mirror and enjoying the wonderful person looking back at you.

So, here we go… you are beginning a journey that you are not alone on! You see, I have been where you are, and it took Spirit finally pushing me on the paths of great teachers and books that gave me the tools to work within my healing mission. Together, let’s jump forward into the process of re-igniting that light within you, using the tools that helped me to cross back over into love.

“Attraversiamo”!  
(Let’s Cross Over)  
Eat, Pray, Love  
~ Elizabeth Gilbert

I have always wanted to tell my story. I knew that one day I would be called upon to share with the world, even if it was one magnificent soul at a time, how I managed to overcome emotional endeavors. Even now, I tussle with how I can relay the messages effectively, nevertheless I know that Spirit will guide me just like when I was growing up. I never felt like I fit into any certain crowd, and saw myself as a genuine part of each character in the movie The Breakfast Club, not wanting to be a forgotten memory. I was eclectic with introverted ways, yet an extroverted no filter personality. I never had “friends” in my high school, but I had numerous acquaintances. This is not to speak negatively about any one person I had in my life, because this was my own protective measure not to get hurt. I had a fear of being rejected for not being attractive enough, athletic enough, intellectual enough, or just being enough. All these people, however, were part of my life for higher purposes. They were either around temporarily to be a lesson for personal growth and understanding, or were the ones who stuck around (or periodically started showing up again) to be a constant reminder of the One
loving energy we all come from. My faith now allows me to hear when Spirit speaks and I accept even the sticky, muddy holes that are put in my way at times because it is a reminder to slow down and enjoy the “fertilizer”.

So many subjective words used in my lessons that are interchangeable with others. My faith is not based on any one doctrine of religion, but from pure love of knowing that spiritually, there is a Higher Power blessing me. Spirit is used to describe the One who communicates with me through a sort of “radio frequency”, getting filtered through the speakers which I will call my Inner Guide. I shut this radio off as a young adolescent and teenager because of strong, hateful judgement by those who were shielded from feeling the Love that came from this communication. The curiosity to keep learning about all religious doctrines, ancestral cultures, tribes and ways of life in history ceased, and I went into spiritual hiding for fear of being called “crazy” or “weird”. I then met the friend that would ignite that flame again; Kelli understood me! Finally, I was not alone because I had someone to share my thoughts and ideas with. She listened and was supportive of the fact that I could see and hear “ghosts”. An incredible hippie father was raising her following the abandonment by her mother, and I seemed to relate to these emotions because I was struggling to comprehend my own mother-daughter relationship; in which I felt a strange abandonment even though she was physically present in my life. This will be another story to tell, because as I have healed, I have learned that my mother’s own traumas stood in the way of the bond we could have had (and I have forgiven her for that). Regardless of my struggles with my mother, I was grateful that I lived where I did, that I was getting a great education, and that I had my best friend. Who could have seen all that coming to an end?

Let me digress a little. I was born to a teenage mom who did the best she could with the knowledge she had about being maternal. This could have set us up for one hell of an amorous bond, considering the angelic soul my maternal grandmother is but my maternal grandfather (rest his soul) created chaos at times. Consequently, this encouraged my young mom to move in with my father and my paternal grandparents. Well, my paternal grandmother (rest her soul) was also a force to be reckoned with… Regardless, I ended up being very close to her and my paternal grandfather. In fact, my grandfather became my best friend. I was a tomboy, wanting to be with him and my father fishing and hunting, but my
mother did not want me stomping in the “mud”. Fast forward to the loss of both paternal grandparents, then learning that my father would be moving out because of irreconcilable differences with my mother. I wanted just to let the muddy quicksand take me, to hide me, to hold me tight because although I felt like I was drowning; it was this loneliness that also comforted me. It was in this solitude that I could speak to my grandparents, and “angel radio” would bring them through loud and (most times) clear. I would pray and then sit and wait; if I could not hear words, I would smell their scent. It was consoling. I had no one to share this with though… until Kelli.

Now, I am 14 and Spirit had been swinging the “cosmic 2x4” around just waiting for the right time to knock some sense into me. I was closed off, angry and frustrated. My father was coming and going, with visitations starting to seem forced because we both feel energies around us, and the sadness of him not living with us created anxiety. I could never seem to make my mom happy, and so I found contentment at Kelli’s place. We read books, sang songs, danced, wrote poetry, and spoke of being soul sisters. I was at peace with her presence, and although we would walk up to convenient stores past the appropriate times for us to be out, we were behaved, kids. As a matter of fact, she is still in my life, and just recently reminded me that I never did anything debauched with her (except for one time). She and I undeniably received some lashing for drinking; at least I did. Hence things coming to an end! I was not allowed to have her as a friend anymore, even though it was my choice to do something bad. Fast forward to my mother meeting someone who soon became my step-father. Somehow this union lifted my restriction of having my best friend in my life, and so we remained almost inseparable until we were 17.

Inseparable, yes! Physically however, I began to check out emotionally and not be “there” with her, all our friends and my first real love, even though I was surrounded by them. I started to keep the biggest secret of my life. I shared so much with Kelli and my boyfriend at the time, although this situation was hard to process within myself; how was I supposed to confide in them, or anyone? I was so alone in this battle against my step-father and his iniquities towards me. These acts went unnoticed by my mother because my fight to stay out with friends or stay the night elsewhere was just perceived as rebellion against her parental authority. I was screaming inside, yelling for her to help me. I was trapped inside my own head because I did not have the words to explain that a man whom she loved so dearly, who had fathered my amazing twin
brothers, was scarring my innocence. One day Spirit finally spoke up for me, and words just started to pour out. I remember that day, and it used to haunt me. It was that look on my mother’s face; she was just as alone as I was in this moment. Nonetheless, I left, bouncing around from couch to couch (or sleeping in my car). I finally confided in other family members, and none of them seemed to believe me. I could not understand. I felt like I could disappear and they would not miss me. My mom stayed with this man, and I… well disappeared into the abyss of loneliness.

As I grew up quickly, trying to find out who I was as an adult, I trudged through a lot of mud. I kept getting stuck in emotional quicksand, telling myself to “just keep swimming” and recall where my innocence went. I forgave my mother a million times in my mind, but could not forgive her husband. Not at that time couldn’t. Spirit had a different plan. This Higher Power had been ringing that “cosmic doorbell” trying to get my attention, but I would not answer, so into my life came the necessary teachers that imparted on me that releasing the hurt and pain was a process; to be utterly cliché, “Rome was not built in a day”! I knew that I needed to learn how to get past the hurt and the feeling of betrayal because at that time I still could not understand why every person I confided in kept stating that he was a nice guy, and they could not picture him doing things of the nature. I knew that one day the truth would come to surface, and I had to be ready, without the memory of this trauma affecting my well-being, to say that I started by forgiving myself first and learned to love again by going within, accepting who I was as a human, as a healer; then forgiving everyone else after…

“Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward”.
~ C. S. Lewis

My process of healing started with meditation. I would like to say that this was easy… Even now I chuckle at my struggle with how difficult just sitting still and “quieting” your mind of chatter truly is! I mean, I could very well be diagnosed with an attention disorder if you watched me through my first few (hundred) attempts to meditate. We, humans, live busy lives, and if you’re a woman reading this, we do NOT compartmentalize like men do. Even if we write everything down on paper, we are still repeating it in our heads, looking at the
list a million times, visualizing how we are accomplishing these tasks, and with each breath mapping out every step to finish this to do list with efficiency. If this is just me, then please, let the teacher become the student. I would beg my teachers for books or picture guides to find the perfect way to meditate. They would just calmly explain (over and over and over) that books can only show you numerous techniques, but to be impeccable is to search within and find what brings you peace and allows you to be quiet enough to hear Spirit answer your prayer. I finally learned that meditation could be your own; sit, stand, walk, lay down. It is about getting comfortable and setting the intention (of love, joy, forgiveness), and then choosing a mantra to repeat, which will bring you to that place of silence where peace warms your body. Your mantra can be one word, like: love, peace, health. Your mantra can be a statement, like: I am loved, or I am healthy. I love – love – love the “I AM” mantras! You are manifesting precisely who you are. The Universe applauds when you accept your power to be you, and you are blessed with open doors and answered prayers.

**Let’s start with a simple breathing meditation for mindfulness and a calm mind...** (if you’re like me, you’ll google other ways or make this your own anyway):

- Find a comfortable spot. You can sit in a chair with your feet flat on the ground and your back straight, but relaxed. Place your hands on your knees. *(You can play calm music or nature sounds softly in the background)*
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, expanding from your stomach, hold this breath for a count of 3-5 seconds.
- Release this breath out of your mouth with enough noticeable force to be aware of your expulsion.
- Become aware of your feet, breathe in and hold for the count, and out with mindfulness.
- Become aware of your hands on your knees, breathe in and hold for the count, and out with mindfulness.
- Become aware of your lungs expanding, as you breathe in and out with mindfulness.
- Become aware of your shoulders and their relaxed state, breathe in and out...
- Become aware of your head, breathe in and out, staying fully aware of each breath through your nose and out of your mouth.
- State your mantra at this time for as long as you are able, staying aware of only the breaths you take in through your nose and out of your mouth.

*When you feel like you have lost concentration, I suggest thanking yourself for accomplishing this for the length of time that you did, and feel proud of who you are.

The second step in my process came to me in the form of Reiki Energy Healing. Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. It is administered by "laying on hands" (or not) and is based on the idea that an unseen "life force energy" flows through us and is what causes us to be alive. If one's "life force energy" is low, then we are more likely to get sick or feel stress, and if it is high, we are more capable of being happy and healthy. The word Reiki is made of two Japanese words - Rei which means "God's Wisdom or the Higher Power" and Ki which is "life force energy". So, Reiki is actually "spiritually guided life force energy."

Once I understood what this modality was, I realized that I have innately been able to perform this healing technique since a young age. I quickly accepted this gift of healing and knew that I too needed to help others with this therapy. This process is preferably an hour long, and can be done while you sit in a chair or lay on a massage table or even from a distance (I have clients as far as California right now). If the client is comfortable with my hands touching their head, shoulders, back, stomach, knees, or feet then I will if guided by Spirit. If not, I can hover over any area that I feel blocked energy or illness and can cleanse the Chakras; as well as the body tissues and organs down to the cellular level. Keep in mind that this process is very much like meditation, in the sense that you will consult first about your intention, and have a desired outcome. It is not uncommon for clients to feel emotions rise to the surface; it is normal to cry or laugh or express any other sensation felt during treatment.

These first two tools allowed me to reflect on who I was, authentically, and to release negative emotions toward feeling alone in my journey. Some journeys are meant to be walked by yourself; with the exception of your teachers or healers if you have them, although most times they only point the way. Just like with the guidance of Spirit, you must have the will to make a change. One of
those times would be when you have to look deep within yourself to understand why specific experiences are in your life’s blueprint, and that cutting ties with people who drain your positive energy and are keeping you from letting go and moving forward. This is when our Higher Power sent another tool my way with a clear message that things would get muddy, but I had to stir up the “dirty pond” again within myself in order to allow it all to settle crystal clear. This third step in my healing was saying the Ho'oponopono prayer. It is an old Hawaiian Mantra Prayer of forgiveness. It is used for total release and cleansing. It allows you to forgive, let go, apologize, and move on. This mantra prayer is about forgiving yourself first, for anything you blame yourself for, but then addressing anyone else that you feel you have tension with. Always set the intention before the prayer by reflecting on what you are forgiving or needing to overcome, then tell yourself that you love yourself, and always thank yourself for becoming aware of needing to persevere. This can then be done regarding anyone or situation in your life. There are many books out there that talk about this mantra prayer, but I recommend At Zero: The Quest for Miracles Through Ho’oponopono by Joe Vitale. It’s a transformational book on how to connect with the Divine; with teachings by Dr. Hew Len and Morrnah Simeona. It is a very powerful process!

To sum this all up, **be your own friend first.** Enjoy the mud. Be in your own power; Divine Spirit will light the way. Persevere like a Lotus through the muck, and bloom one process at a time!
Christina is a divorced mother of two, who in the third decade of life, found herself reflecting on the darkest periods of her past. In 2005 she knew that it was time to draw back the veil (again), shedding light on the rawness of her pain, releasing herself from the chains that had been keeping her down, and confronting those responsible for her abuse.

She was restored and found a way to heal, which led her to studying the alternative healing modalities that saved her; such as, Reiki and Shaman energy work.

With these modalities, along with becoming an Ordained Minister and Spiritual Counselor, she can now help others who are hurting; guiding them to find their voice and use their own light to heal.

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Lonely Little Lavender
by Christine Nicole

My extreme loneliness started on the day that I was born. That was when I was taken away from the women who carried me for ten months and the brother she spoke of. I thought that my brother would love me, protect and play with me every day but I was wrong.

Instead I was placed into a home with very loving parents who just couldn't love me enough to heal my loneliness but, boy did they try! My adopted father died when I was 13 years old. This became the saddest day of my life and has continued to haunt me with never-ending grief. My father was my best friend and sometimes the only person I wanted to be around.

My adopted mother was a workaholic; she wasn’t gifted in providing me the emotional support that I had longed for. She was a professional businesswoman and had a pragmatic point of view that was difficult to translate for a sensitive child like me. She sure did try her hardest and I will gladly give her credit for that, but if you don't love yourself, it’s hard to love others including the child you waited over 40 years to have!

When I was 16, I asked my mom to help me find my siblings and birth mother. She was not in favor of this at all, but gave me a tape that my birthmother made for me when I was just five months old. The tape explained why she chose my adopted parents for me. It also included other personal family details and said that I would always be the star of the family. She felt that I was always going to be the successful one of her children and she was very accurate in her prediction. I discovered that my biological mother was also a psychic-medium like me, so she knew more than most mothers may have at that time. Whenever I become hard on myself, I replay her words and trust in them.

I often would find myself going to the library to look up every website I could, trying to find her, using her maiden name which was very common. Once I did find her, I was shocked to learn that she passed away just a year before.

I felt my heart fall out of my chest. How could I have missed meeting my mother by one year?! I was so upset, how could that be
possible?! I was in complete denial for months until I found her sister (my aunt), who confirmed my mother’s death.

Never did I feel so devastated and alone as in that moment. This was the lady who I dreamed about every day. I knew she would look and act just like me, and I would be able to hear the story of her life. I felt robbed of the opportunity to talk with her, and to hug and thank her.

Once I accepted the fact that she was gone, I went forward searching for my siblings. Nothing seemed to be available about my older brother or older sister. I searched for them every week for a year. Even though the library computer would tell me my time was up, I could not quit. I would switch computers and go back to my searching for another hour.

One day I found my brother's parents’ address but no phone number. So I called his next door neighbor crying, asking her to run next door and ask if they were my birth brother’s parents. Twenty-four hours later I received a call from my brother who confirmed that he was the brother I had been seeking. He was crying and asked when he could meet me. My adopted mother drove us to San Diego so we could learn all about him. We went to Legoland to just hang out and take pictures, then to the ocean and collected seashells. Those shells are still very special to me.

He looked just like me and liked the same food as I did, that was the best moment ever! But unfortunately after two months, he wanted nothing to do with me and my heart was completely shattered! The person that was supposed to know me most wanted nothing to do with me yet we shared the same DNA. I waited 17 years to meet him, and then nothing. He didn't like me enough to keep contact? Why wasn't I good enough?

My profound loneliness was in full swing and no one understood, not a single soul. I was alone all over again! I decided that if I found the other two siblings, maybe they would like me or possibly, even love me.

I then found my younger brother on “MySpace”, and his response was that he wanted a DNA test in case I was lying. I thought to myself, how would I know your birth mother's name if she wasn't also mine, and besides, you look just like me!
I was able to travel to Utah and meet him and his wife. He was very loving and very fun. He talked like me and used the same hand gestures. I thought finally, I have met the brother that will love me, just for me!

Fast forward two years later when I hired a private investigator to find my sister. They found her within 48 hours. I was unable to provide much information as she was adopted also. I then called her crying and asking if she was my sister.

I said, “I am your sister and I have been searching for you my entire life”. She cried; she was 20 years older than me and was unaware that she had siblings. She wanted to meet right away. I called my younger brother first asking if he’d meet her with me. We all decided to meet in Phoenix. I was so excited until they both told me they couldn't afford the flight or the hotel!

This was the moment I waited for all of my life. Growing up an only child, I had always dreamed of siblings. So I said that I would pay for the whole trip; all they had to do was show up for their flight.

Then, I called my older brother who I had not spoken to in several years. “Please come to Arizona meet with us”, I begged. I explained that everything was paid for. He agreed; I paid for that as well.

I was now living my dream. I wouldn't be an only child anymore. Within a short amount of time, I was now the middle child with siblings who understood me.

I spent three days with my siblings who talked continually about themselves. Unfortunately, any time the conversation came around to me, they would interrupt and make it about them again. They really didn’t care about me or my life, or how I had waited my whole life for this moment. I realized during this visit that the grass is not greener on the other side.

I learned that the contentment I was searching for my whole life comes from being grateful for what I currently had in my life. I had an adopted mom who loved me so much that she would do anything for me. My friends became my family, and I have a wonderful career that allows me to live my souls’ purpose.

A week after this disappointing encounter, I found out that I was going to be a mom through adoption! One of the most important
things I can teach my son is that he was blessed to have two families and instead of searching for the one he may one day dream of, he already has it.

There is no perfect family or perfect life, but if we can be grateful for what we have, we find that the lonesome feelings fade away if you allow the happiness and contentment to shine through!
Christine was blessed with the gift of being a Psychic-Medium and began giving readings at age two. Her earliest memories are of hearing, seeing, and feeling those in the spirit and angelic realms.

She has helped many with the grieving process by connecting with loved ones who have passed. Her messages have brought messages to assist with healing, closure, and a deeper inner peace.

She has a uniquely clear, straightforward and honest presentation of information that she receives and delivers details with clarity and ease. She does not use Tarot cards or any other divination tools in her sessions as she is a clear channel to spirit.

Christine also helps clients gain a broader insight into their soul purpose and life path regarding love & relationships, business or career, and family. Christine also offers business and life coaching, matchmaking, and mentoring for Intuitive Kids. She is a Certified Mind, Body, Spirit Practitioner and Enneagram Personality Coach.

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"You want thingamabobbers? I've got 20. But who cares, no big deal, I want mooooore. Wish I could be part of your world."

If I had to select a movie that described the majority of my life, it would definitely be The Little Mermaid. However my soundtrack would definitely be Part of Your World.

Being an empath all of my life, I always felt like Ariel; filled with curiosity and wonder yet never knowing where or if I ever fit in. I didn’t fit into the mermaid world but I also didn’t fit into the human world either.

I was living life in a bubble as an outsider looking in. Always hiding in the background out of fear of being discovered yet appearing happy and inspired on the outside. I was living in the deep sea of loneliness, even though I had tons of friends and was surrounded by many supportive and loving people.

There is a proverb "The fish is the last to see the water." It is this proverb and my curious mermaid nature that inspired me to begin to see life differently and explore a whole new world.

That was five years ago and, prior to this time, I was a medical intuitive who was focused on helping people heal and navigate through life. I absolutely loved what I did and was passionate about helping people discover their inner joy and zest for life.

However, even though I had the most amazing clients who were filled with gratitude and appreciation, I often felt drained, alone, and unsatisfied. I wanted more.

I wanted to help people before they got to the stage of dis-ease. I wanted a new reality, not just for my clients, but for me as well. Most of all I longed to surface from the deep depths of loneliness and actually connect with others.

I had lived my whole life in a bubble to protect my energy which is important for an empath. However, I did not want to live a life on the lookout for energy vampires (the not-so-nice people).
As Ariel says "I want more" and that is exactly what I desired. I knew there was more to life but it was up to me to create a new reality.

As you study energy, you learn that your outer reality is a reflection of your inner reality. So I began to notice the common theme amongst my clients and their reflections back to me.

I realized the price tag that comes with a plush comfort-zone. I realized the price tag that comes with loneliness, and I also realized what my oh-so-dear protective bubble was costing me.

I realized that this bubble kept me oh-so-safe, yet was also causing me the deepest amount of pain; it was the reason why I felt oh-so-lonely. It was then with the help of the Universe and it's synchronicities of events that I was able to realize what I truly was protecting myself from.

The whole time I had been lying to myself, convincing myself to fear the outside world, and to be on the lookout for those energy vampires, trolls, and other not-so-nice people.

But in reality, what I really was truly afraid of, was my inner Ursula. My ego was in full command and was the size of Godzilla. As long as I was in my little bubble and stayed in my comfort zone, I was safe from my own inner critic. This critic hiding under false wisdom provided me with enough negative self-talk to fill the Grand Canyon 10 times over.

I was a prisoner to my own self. I was a prisoner to my ego. I was trapped in a prison cell with the door wide open, yet was too afraid to leave. Why? Fear of the consequences and inner bullying that would result from my inner ego. I was stuck in the state of being a dreamer - wishing and hoping to live the life I so desired and help people in the way I wanted to be helped.

I longed to become a doer but was paralyzed by the fear of the haunting of my inner Ursula. Fear reared its ugly head whenever I felt good or accomplished something I had longed to do. First my ego was alerted, then I received a deep lashing which paralyzed me with even more fear.

I wish I had some magical story to tell you - one that involved a unicorn, some glitter, or a lightning bolt but I don’t. It was a
simple phone call from a friend out of the blue which, in my opinion, was magical because we had known each other for over 10 years.

When I answered the phone he asked, “Cris, will you be in Arizona in August?” I was confused but confirmed that I would be thinking how great it will be to see him again.

He then told me that he was part of this Millionaire Mastermind. He said he couldn’t make it, but asked if I would like to go in his place. At this time I had just moved back to my parent’s home and was struggling to find my way. I had no idea what this was about but I trusted him. Because he caught me during a rare moment of courage, I replied, "Sure, why not?"

I don’t know what I was thinking; I felt intimidated but was curious to embark on this new adventure. I showed up to the resort with my parents old F-150 pickup truck while others were parking their Bentley’s, Rolls Royce, and other exotic, customized cars.

Even though my confidence was squashed, I made a promise and was open to the experience. I walked into the room, and was a bit of an Ariel - observing from afar. People came up to greet me, and ask me what I do. I had no idea what to say, or how to relate to these people, as I didn’t exactly think angels or chakras would be a common-ground conversation. Plus, admittedly I had a pre-judgement. After all, these were the very type of people I feared.

The Mastermind began in this group of 30 in which I was the only female. As I began to listen, I became fascinated. These men were spiritual, just on a different level. Not only did they understand how the Universe worked, they were putting their concept of spirituality into action. They saw the bigger picture, and these guys were not only dreamers and visionaries, they were doers. They knew how to bridge the spiritual with the material world. The very type of people I feared were living my dream life; my eyes and ears were wide open and I was hooked.

I realized the power of being a visionary, and why it was such a lonely world, and why I never fit in anywhere. The reason I didn’t fit in, is because I was supposed to create that new reality. I was supposed to create another option in this world. I am not talking grand; I was just supposed to create another field. As Rumi once said, “Outside of wrong or right, there is a field, I will meet you
there.” My mission was to bring this field to reality. Just like the *Field of Dreams.*

It was this WHY that opened my eyes and became my fuel. More than that, it launched my escape plan and I grabbed onto my claim to freedom - freedom from my inner Ursula. I was now committed and no matter how rough, the realization of all of the people I could help, and HOW, became so much more powerful.

**When you are in your ZONE and when you BELIEVE in yourself, this is the ultimate FREEDOM that so many people crave.** It is this FREEDOM from one’s inner bully that people so desire and spend a lifetime searching for. It is the lack of BELIEF, and the lack of PASSION that leads to DIS-EASE and keeps people oh-so-LONELY. Not only had I found the remedy for me, but also for my current and future clients as well.

My creation, my new reality involved bridging the spiritual and material but also my passion through marketing to help people go from being a DREAMER into a DOER, and actually beginning to see the tangible difference they make. Through helping others with my knowledge and skills, I help them create a new reality for themselves and others.

My passion for helping others continued and graciously gifted me with the ability to not only move out of my bubble and leave my negative self-talk behind, but also to fly across the country for marketing conferences and more masterminds. I was on a mission to connect and help provide a different belief and a different reality for others through marketing. I was on a mission to help people BELIEVE in themselves once again.

I had created a whole new reality, and was surrounded by others who were on the path of finding their own inner FREEDOM from their inner Ursula. I was surrounded by people who were actually DOING, and their DREAMS had become a reality. Most of all I was surrounded by others who were honest with themselves. Gone were the days of constantly lying to myself about the dreams I would one day fulfill. Instead I BELIEVED in myself and had the courage to not allow my inner bully haunt me, or keep me prisoner anymore.

If you feel like you are in the deep sea of loneliness, I am excited for you. I know that may not be something that you want to hear but if
you hear the proverb, “You have to crouch low to jump high,” then you can decide if you have crouched low enough to soar into the endless possibilities of life.

Once you hit your lowest crouch, you can only go UP. Yes, there will be bumps in the road as you grow, but the reward of being honest with yourself, and actually BELIEVING in YOURSELF is priceless.

Cheers to the journey ahead my friends, you can do it.

I believe in you.

However the only person in the world who matters when it comes to believing in you, is you.

So…

“Do you believe in YOU?”
Growing up being an empath in a time where being sensitive and intuitive were not understood and accepted, Cris couldn’t help feeling like Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*. Like Ariel emerged from the sea excited to explore her world, Cris did as well. Exploring was challenging due to being misunderstood so instead she found herself alone with her spiritual gifts and a collection of dinglehoppers.

As a medical intuitive, Cris has always been passionate about helping people heal and live a happy, healthy life yet had her own inner struggles and health challenges to deal with. Cris found herself on an extended tour of her inner reality where she challenged her Ursulas (limiting beliefs).

Since that time, she has been able to break free and bridge the spiritual world with the material work and believe in herself. Due to her own transformation and self-awareness, she has helped thousands of earth angels do the same.

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I have been terribly lonely many times in my life. My first memory of painful loneliness was as a child who was abandoned emotionally by her mother. My mother and father were married to two other people when I was born, which was quite scandalous in 1946 and I was an unwanted and hated pregnancy from my mother’s point of view. On top of that, I tried to enter this world feet-first and that was a source of great physical pain and suffering to my mother while they turned me around using forceps. It also caused me to be born with a collapsed lung and that meant that I spent a week in the hospital in an incubator even though I weighed almost ten pounds at birth. Being in an incubator for one week deprived my mother and I of the bonding experience that normally occurs.

And then at age seven, my mother’s son from a previous marriage, who was fourteen years old, forcibly raped me one night while my parents were out to dinner celebrating my mother’s birthday. He made me promise not to tell them, but I had blood all over my beautiful petticoat and I did not want to get in trouble about it, so when my parents came home I told them. He squealed “You promised not to tell them”. My father proceeded to take him down to the basement where he whipped him with a leather belt for a long time. My mother kept screaming hysterically while this was going on, “You ruined my birthday”. That is all she ever said to me about it. She never consoled me in any way and from that day on, she avoided all contact with me and was cold and verbally abusive to me as I was a reminder to her of all of the pain that my father continued to inflict on her son throughout our entire lives.

Neither one of my parents ever held me or kissed me or told me they loved me during my childhood. I always felt like I must have been adopted or something because my parents never showed me any affection. My father at least paid attention to me at times, and while he was strict with me, he was never verbally abusive to me like my mother was. He was simply a very introverted man who preferred to work on his projects around the house and go to the swap meet very early every Saturday morning to buy junk.

My parents married each other one year after I was born and later on had two more children, who were six years and seven and a half
years younger than me. My siblings were both very badly behaved and fought each other constantly while they were growing up. I avoided them as much as possible. My older half-brother was killed in an airplane crash in the army when he was only 25 years old and that event totally destroyed my mother and affected the entire family structure. It happened exactly one month before I graduated from high school.

After his death, I was able to leave home in a few months to go to college, but things at home got worse and worse for my younger brother and sister. My parents fought constantly. My younger sister ran away from home with her boyfriend when she was around 15 years old and around the same time my younger brother broke into a liquor store, which was the first of many crimes he committed during his lifetime. Both my brother and sister are convicted felons and I had to completely disassociate with them most of my adult life as my 50-year career was in finance and every job I ever had involved extensive background checks. I talk to my brother and sister occasionally, but I never visit them in person because of their lifestyle.

The greatest source of loneliness in my life has come from my two sons. My oldest son was born in 1968 when I was married to my first husband and my youngest son was born in 1977 when I was married to my second husband. My oldest son has an extremely high IQ and was always very precocious as a child starting with the day he was born as he could immediately hold his head up all by himself. He was a straight A student academically and totally unsatisfactory in all of the behavioral areas. I spent more time at his school than most parents because of his disruptive behavior. He became extremely agitated around age 8 when I became pregnant with my youngest son and attempted to kill the baby in my stomach by hitting me as hard as he could on my stomach over and over. He also attempted to harm the baby after it was born. His destructive behavior affected my second marriage greatly and was instrumental in causing that marriage to end. He subsequently moved in with his natural father at age 12, whom he had not seen since he was one year old.

At the same time, my second husband wanted custody of our three-year-old son and I voluntarily agreed to give him custody because I was going to college at night getting my M.B.A. while working full time and because my older son had left, I was without any help. I never thought that my second husband would deny me access to my
younger son, but once my son was in his possession, he did everything possible to deny me from ever seeing my son again and it is very, very painful to me, even to this day.

Neither of my sons ever married and so I have no grandchildren. My oldest son was in the Gulf War and has been homeless for the last five years as he is not able to hold a job. He stayed with me for three months a year ago because he needed surgery and asked if he could stay with me while he recovered. He subsequently refused to have the surgery done and became violent on a daily basis and he is now receiving professional care at the Veteran’s Hospital some twenty miles from me. My youngest son has a very successful career in the San Francisco Bay area of California but chooses not to associate with me, for reasons unknown to me. So, the bottom line result is that I have no family to speak of and it has always created a void in my life that I have never been able to fill, even though I have tried to in so many different ways.

Loneliness in my life has come from many sources, but the one that has always puzzled me the most is the sudden loss of my friendships throughout my life. Many of my friendships that I have greatly cherished have ended abruptly without any warning and without any understanding on my part of why the friendship ended. I have mourned the end of some of my friendships with girlfriends more than the end of some of my romantic relationships.

My first loss occurred during high school. I had a very close long-term friendship with one of my classmates that began in the 5th grade. We were best friends throughout all of elementary school, junior high school and the first couple of years of high school. We were virtually inseparable and spent all of our time together at school and after school each and every day. We spent a lot of time at each other’s houses including sleepovers and weekends together. Every year, we spent our entire summer together. When she was old enough to drive, she picked me up every day and took me to school and we went out to lunch together every day off campus.

And then, suddenly one day, she got mad at me for something I said, and she never spoke to me again until about 50 years later when I first joined Facebook and sent her a friend request. Neither one of us remembers the exact conversation that occurred, but I am sure there must have been some undercurrent going on because I
had started dating guys at school and that was interfering with our relationship.

My next loss of a close female friend occurred after the tragic death of my brother I mentioned previously. His widow and I became very close after his death and I lived with her in her family’s residence for a few months during the summer immediately following his death and then continued to live with her the next fall while we both went to UCLA. Shortly thereafter, she met someone else and got married and moved away to Northern California and did not want any contact at all with me or the rest of my family. The only thing I could surmise was that she wanted to completely forget about my brother and start her new life on a completely fresh basis.

The most devastating loss of a female friend happened years later. One of the gals I worked with at my first job when I was about 19 years old was living with her parents and she wanted to move out and so she moved in with me even though I only had a one-bedroom apartment. After about a year she married a fellow that we both knew at the same company and at her wedding I met his brother who became romantically interested in me. I married him two months after her wedding, mainly because I wanted to remain as part of her life since we were so close, but also because she talked me into marrying him.

We divorced the two brothers within a few years and she went on to marry someone else and on their honeymoon in Europe, they bought a Bentley from a British mechanic and they arranged for him to come to America to put the car into good order after it arrived here. Long story short, she talked me into going out with him even after I turned him down two times as I was dating someone else. And, eventually she talked me into marrying him and we had the wedding reception at her house and she became totally immersed in planning my wedding including providing me with the wedding dress. Her second husband died and I got a divorce from the British mechanic after he got the seven-year itch. She went on to marry her third husband and shortly thereafter she lost both of her parents and inherited a great deal of money. She and her third husband moved away somewhere in the state of Washington and she would not tell anyone her forwarding address. Her first husband has tried to make contact with her and she stated that she does not want any contact with anyone from her former life. I think of her constantly and miss her very much, even today.
The most recent loss of a long-term friend happened just a couple of years ago when my best friend of over ten years died suddenly from a heart attack at a rather young age due to an underlying condition called Crest that hardened the walls of her heart and her lungs.

When I was 47 years old I began a long-term relationship with a man who I eventually married. We lived for 23 years in our home in California until one day in mid-2015 when he very abruptly told me he wanted to move immediately to Arkansas because his golf buddy was going to move there. Primarily for health reasons, I could not move there even though he asked me to move there with him. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think our marriage would ever end and so he really pulled the rug out from beneath me. Because I had no family, he was my whole life and in just a couple of months, it all ended. Our house sold the day after we put it up for sale and he took the next air flight to Arkansas while I packed up the house and put all my belongings into storage while I look for a place to move to. I ended up in Arizona because the hot dry climate was good for my health, but I knew no one in Arizona and lived in a hotel for six weeks while I bought a house.

I found myself completely alone while trying to piece my life together. I have gone through a complete identity crisis over the past couple of years; I am no longer someone's wife and I no longer have a career. My entire social life was my married life at the country club, where we played golf every weekend with all our friends and traveled with those same friends while golfing around the country. Those friends are now all gone. My other friends were all business associates and those relationships too have faded away. I keep in touch with some of my business acquaintances and friends from high school on Facebook, but that is a very casual connection.

**Bottom line is that I still have no love interest, no family, no children, no grandchildren, and no close friends.** I used to sit here some days in total amazement at how absolutely alone I was in this world.

I believe that there are many of us souls who find ourselves this way in our golden years and we all have to find ways to handle our loneliness in constructive ways rather than to resort in overeating or compulsive shopping, etc. or to accept unhealthy relationships just to fill the painful void.
I have been focusing on my spirituality and that has helped me enormously. I have recently embraced reincarnation and astrology, the combination of which teaches us that we choose each lifetime experience and the lessons to be learned. It is clear to me that one of my lessons is how to handle loneliness.

I am focusing right now on transforming my loneliness into productive solitude. I meditate daily, eat a very healthy diet, get as much exercise as my health allows, and seek out social situations and relationships that I find stimulating and emotionally fulfilling.

Even more important is what I don't do. I am no longer trying to fill the void in my life with companionship that is not beneficial to me emotionally or spiritually. It's only been in the last couple of years that I have learned to set boundaries and to accept the fact that occasionally setting boundaries might result in unhealthy relationships ceasing to exist. I think that it is especially difficult for women to do this. I believe that we frequently stay in abusive relationships too long just because of our fear of being alone.

And, the most important thing of all is that I am now a recovering hoarder. For the last 25 years of my life I have hoarded (I call it “collected”) many things to compensate for the total loneliness in my life. I did not realize why I was accumulating so many things but today I understand completely and therefore I can now begin the process of healing and working towards full recovery. Buying a beautiful thing just because it is beautiful is a very temporary “fix” for loneliness but it can never fill the void.

Only you can.
Meet the Author

Born in Chicago, her family later moved to Hemet, California when she was just seven years old. She left Hemet after high school so she could attend UCLA for her M.B.A. She then worked in a large title insurance company in the Los Angeles area. She became the Sr. Vice President of the mortgage insurance division and, later in her career, she switched back to banking where she assumed several executive positions. In total she lived in the Los Angeles area for the next 50 years.

She retired in 2013 and relocated to the Phoenix area shortly thereafter. She is a dedicated student of astrology and attends the Unity of Sedona Spiritual Center in Sedona as time allows.

Cynthia is hoping to begin a new career as a financial astrologer upon completion of her study.

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Where Do I Go From Here?
by Deborah Kagan

I'm on a train from Firenze to Napoli in Italy. The landscape shifts from the soft rolling hills of Tuscany to the ancient walls around Rome to the steeper and more intense terra firma of Southern Italy. The land tells all. Life is more rugged down South. The hills are larger, more commanding and less generous in their embrace.

It's May 2003 and I'm on a life hiatus.

I am 32-years-old, five years into a marriage with a lovely man I don't want to be married to anymore yet unclear of where to go with my career, and feeling like I've lost my mojo. Hence, taking the little savings I have to wander solo in Italy for a month. Next stop—Napoli.

Upon arrival, the station is full of hopeful people offering taxis to town or Sorrento on the Amalfi Coast. This is a bustling town so I approach a taxi and, in my limited Italian, ask the driver to take me to my hotel. The traffic is intense—people everywhere - things look dirty and hard. Faces are fraught with days of challenges and vespas scoot in and out every which-way. In the taxi I feel secure, but the energy outside is harsh. We pass the port area, through a tunnel, and loop around to the main road on the bay. We arrive at my hotel and I check in. The room is right off the lobby—dark, tattered and noisy. For this I'm paying 132 Euros?! Upset with a bit of fear rushing through my veins I think... what do I do now?

A large part of the hiatus mission is to get connected to myself... to life... to aliveness. At home with all my people, husband and pets, I was suffocating and feeling alone. The last few weeks in Italy surrounded by strangers, being anonymous yet faced with myself, I continued with the awareness of wherever I go, there I am.

I get it together; ask for a map from the front desk and venture outdoors. Streets seem to lead nowhere and everything seems backwards. Street signs are barely visible; I feel lost and afraid. I go in another direction and walk through a huge piazza where lots of kids were playing, yet in Napoli even the kids look sketchy like hoodlums. Everyone’s a character; wherever you turn there’s something to look at in the people. With each turn, I find myself trying to overcome this panic that incessantly floods through my
body. It seems as though it might paralyze me because my heart is tight - as tight as the little stradin as (small streets) with all the laundry hanging outside, and people peering out windows. I feel hopeless and terribly alone. How will I survive this? The whole world seems like an enemy and I am the all-too- obvious and strange foreigner, la straniera.

I keep my best street-smart pace and face about me, but under that thin shell I am falling apart….or, breaking open.

I head back towards the hotel after the overwhelming mass of tiny streets with hundreds of stores piled on top of each other when a pang of hunger hit my gut. Should I try to eat something despite the early hour? I do not want to be far from the hotel past dark. Death and doom are the thoughts that come to mind if I find myself in that situation.

One spot with blue tablecloths has an enclosed patio that seemed like I’d be on display in a window eating. Regardless, I ask for a table. The waiter said abruptly that they don’t open for another hour. Whack! His curt manner and resonant voice are an energetic wallop that slaps my system and I scurry off, filled with victim energy. A few short blocks away on a smaller pedestrian street is a pizzeria, Amore e Fantasia (love and fantasy). Who can beat that? It’s a sign. I sit and order a pizza and some wine. Due to my stomach still being so nervous and my body on pins and needles, I did not enjoy it.

When I finally get ready to go, a group of Asian tourists come in. Almost 20 of them and, in that moment, I think it best to travel in a group so I wouldn’t be alone. Connection would be made, and this soul-gripping malaise would be a figment of my imagination. But alas, that’s not the mission here. And that’s not the truth.

I scamper off to the hotel and promptly fall apart in my room. Crying and crying and more crying; feeling off-kilter. My whole energy system whacked out; having physical repercussions because of it such as diarrhea, headache, and muscle pain. All the while, I’m clear that something is shifting in me.

Back and forth in my mind is do I call home? I know I’m looking for comfort. Do I make this move for safety or stick it out on my own?
I call. It’s midmorning in Los Angeles and he’s home. He’s happy to hear from me and it’s good to hear his voice. This was something familiar to my system, something to bring me back to the ground. I don’t want to admit how scared and alone I feel—and yet it’s pretty obvious. My thoughts are jumbled; I am definitely out-of-sorts. I repeat, “I don’t know. I don’t know” as if it’s all I can muster.

He tells me about home and despite wanting to hear about familiar things, the entire time I sit on this bed in room #6 and suffocate.

When I open my eyes the next morning, panic instantly strikes me again. OK, Deborah. Get up. Do your morning practice. Get grounded. Then shower and get some breakfast. After doing so, I look through guidebooks and maps to get an idea of where I’d go despite the fear, panic and extreme loneliness still ripping through me. Where is this coming from - this sense of being out of control? It’s as if I am a target with everything foreign and no way out. What am I doing here? Who do I think I am? Why do I feel this way? Where is this emotion coming from?

Geared up, I head to Spaccanapoli - the tourist attraction consisting of an ancient street running horizontally through the middle of town. Not wanting to pull my map out in public, I dodge into a store one moment and later, huddle in an unsuspecting courtyard to try and get my bearings.

This confusion and being out of sorts in an unknown place punctuates the extreme sensations of being on my own. It’s chilling to my soul as I force a protective barrier that silently shouts ‘STAY AWAY FROM ME’ while my heart craves connection.

Finally on the street, I’m underwhelmed. Another tight street with little shops that all look run down. People were all around me; even those a little more well-dressed were still suspicious like hoodlums, and every direction I turned, there were street vendors hawking their wares, beggars, and dogs with puppies suckling at their milk.

Next, I decide to go see the actual Duomo Cathedral but it’s closed. Closed? The main Duomo? OK; that’s a first.

I tell myself, keep walking, Deborah. Don’t make it mean anything. Despondent, I carry on and decide to visit Capodimonte, a museum up the hill with a huge public park. I am exhausted and grateful as I walk in. Grateful to be amongst some nature after the intensity of the
city, and in that moment, I immediately start to cry. *What is this? Fear? Loneliness?* I can’t identify it. I just let it have its way and pass through me.

Not knowing where to go, I wander a bit. Tired from walking and somewhat hungry, yet nothing seems to fit.

The museum café appears like a good option. I attempt to eat a sandwich of white bread, chopped veggies and way too much mayonnaise; I couldn’t eat it. Now off to the ticket office for the museum, only to be told they don’t take credit cards. That’s the last straw for me; I don’t want to go to the museum anyway. How could I appreciate it feeling like such a stranger in this strange land with all this inner distress and existential angst?

Tail between my legs, I hurry back to the bus stop and, on the next bus, ask the driver what stop to get off for the Piazza Dante, near my hotel. He tells me and I ask him to please let me know when we get there. A nice man, older, stands behind me and smiles a few times. He lets me know he’s getting off the same stop. He’ll show me. *Grazie* (thank you), I reply.

At the stop he walks me to the Piazza Dante where I can take the next bus to the hotel, but I opt to walk. I thank him for his time and help. We shake hands goodbye and the oddest thing happens, I am teary eyed and emotional. In that moment, I feel like he’s an angel, my personal messenger guide because suddenly I’m bursting with the feeling that everything will be better. He floated into my sphere offering the divine gift, reminding me there’s help and connection everywhere. To trust and know all is well, and that I’m never alone.

The remainder of the journey opens up to the beautiful mystery of life. Some days are magical, where I feel deeply connected to my soul and everything and everyone around me. Some days offer the rubber band back into fear and questioning. What I know for sure is that, wherever YOU go, there YOU are, and the feeling of loneliness is a choice.

As I look back while writing this story, it is clear these moments were the seedlings to the life and business I now have—supporting women in reclaiming confidence, feeling incredible in their skin and living a turned ON life (aka: *rockin’ their mojo!*).
Four crucial branches grew from this experience:

One = Mindset. The way we *think* about things creates the experience. It’s like ordering a latte. You say the specifics, you get them. Once I was greeted by the angel man on the bus and had a shift of mind, the intense feelings of aloneness, fear, doom and gloom transformed into possibility, adventure and fun.

Two = Oracle. The oracle is the all-knowing, all-seeing being. Our body is the first place of connection and fullness. Realizing the bulk of my experience for more years than I could count was only in my head, the rest of the trip I consciously spent time *with* my body. Yoga practice, dancing, and other embodiment practices became the norm to support the shift from feeling out of control and going into power, pleasure and connection.

Three = Joining the Roles. We all play many roles in life, especially women. We are thirty-one flavors and then some. The first half of the Italy journey was spent in the role of victim. We all have one of those in us. However, the victim gets what it’s always had and does not create anything new, which is why it constantly feels so very alone. Once that realization is made, there’s room for a deliberate, chosen role to come forth. In Italy, I dug down and pulled up my Adventure Girl role that is curious about life and always connected to people and places. She is extremely fun so she lets things roll right off her back. Once I identified her consciously, it became much easier to experience life with a full heart and open arms.

Four = Oasis. Meaning, make your environment one. No matter where you are - traveling, home, in a car, or at the office — your environment affects the way you feel. After leaving Napoli, I went to the Amalfi Coast and in the hotel room I created sacred space. I bought fresh flowers, a few candles and set out some items I travel with to make an altar. This simple gesture grounded my energy and transformed the basic room into one of intention and spiritual connection.

Year after year, these four truths have become the foundation for what I call: *living a mojolicious life*. Wherever you are on your journey, I invite you to fold them into each day. It may not feel easy but I promise you, it’s simple. Besides, you are worth it!
Deborah Kagan is the best-selling author of Find Your ME Spot: 52 Ways to Reclaim Your Confidence, Feel Good in Your Own Skin and Live a Turned On Life. Her methods combine over 20 years of information and experience in the fields of personal development, metaphysical studies, and embodiment practices.

For 12 of those years, she exclusively focused on “Healing the Planet – One Space at a Time™” through her career as a high-end Feng Shui consultant for clients including NBC, Disney, Bellagio Hotel, CAA and William Morris Agency. She has also been interviewed on shows such as KTLA Morning News and Dr. Drew Midday Live.

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Irony of Loneliness
by Deborah Colleen Rose

Irony is a word that I am much familiar with and this story comes complete with the latest bout of irony in my life.

The irony I speak of is that I have never felt more alive and more connected to God and more in touch with who I am, holistically.

What I mean by that is I know who I am in regards to my body. I know what my body can do, what limitations it has, and how to work around or through those limitations.

For example, I was told I would be in a wheelchair 15 years ago. I am not in a wheelchair though and I walk (not run) nearly as much as I want to. I lost 254 pounds five years ago so I do have diet limitations, but I also have a freedom around food and enjoy it tremendously as I savor every bite. I eat with purpose.

I am confident in who I am, both emotionally and mentally. Yes, I had many challenges that I have taken head-on in which received mostly-positive outcomes in the end. In fact, I could write hundreds of stories for this book, showing a time of loneliness and strife and how I was able to move upward and onward.

As I write today, though, I am thinking about where I am now and who I now am.

I had a near-death experience three years ago. I have had a love for God since I was just eight-years-old, but did not really exhibit that love or my faith to the world.

I wasn’t in the spiritual closet though; I just never went out. I preferred to say in so I never had to go into my closet to get dressed. After my near-death experience, my love and faith for God become my main meaning in life. It is no longer in the back of my mind but is now the foundation of all that I do and how I act.

My love and faith in God is the reason I am kinder to myself and others; the reason I am even more passionate about human rights, and the reason I strive to share with people how they can bring more respect and dignity into their lives and those around them.
As my relationship with God grew, I became even more gifted. I truly am immersed in my spiritual gifts. I teach, I prophesize, I interpret dreams, I uplift, and I share all the things that spiritual gifts imply in the Christian faith. “Go forth and multiply” may have meant child-bearing in the Bible, but for me, as I went forth to share my gifts with the masses, my gifts multiplied and my happiness grew.

I fully believe that I have a truly personal relationship with God. Yet, even I still suffer from feeling isolated and lonely at times.

It is difficult to find like-minded and like-spirited people who are Christian-based to share thoughts with. I yearn for a physical mentor who can guide me as I grow. I hunger for genuine conversation without having to define or defend my ideas and beliefs.

Yes, many people seek me out and honestly, sometimes I feel like a freak in a side show. This can be further isolating; like the rich man who does not know if his friends love him or love his money. Yes, I seek comfort with God but He made me to be holistic and part of being holistic is being physical and emotional.

I am married and fortunately my husband understands who I am and why I am the way I am. However, he is not on the same journey as I am and his work takes him away for weeks at a time. So where is the happy ending and the great, easy answer here?

There is and there isn’t one.

First of all, it was difficult to even admit that I was not living heaven on earth but I do more than just cope with this isolation. I have found a way to thrive. None of the answers are rocket-science. I pray. I look for ways to stay connected with my husband, not just for his sake or for our marriage’s sake, but for my sake. This means we have to talk and get creative and the best part of all, we both have learned to be completely transparent in how we feel. We don’t protect each other from our loneliness. Instead, we ask for the other’s help in any way we can. We have also learned to put petty thoughts and emotions in the trash pile.

We live by the mantra, “Do you want to be right or do you want to be happy?”
I read, a lot. I help others every day. Sometimes I get paid for it, sometimes I don’t. I try to always tell the truth but present it in a kind, uplifting, and encouraging way. As a result, I am the “Queen of Reframe”. I share who I am, even when I am out of my comfort zone and not surprisingly, that is when I get the best surprises such as unexpected validation from strangers.

Just last week, I met a Vet on the streets of Hot Springs. Because of my gifts, I knew he was very ill. As we talked, he confirmed it. I was so sad to know this and I asked God, “Why do I know this if I cannot help?” And the Vet and I continued talking he said, “I have been all over the world and you have the most beautiful smile I have ever seen. You are my angel.”

OK God, I get it.

I don’t have to know everything or all of the reasons why. I just have to do and keep believing.

That is my lesson for you.

Do your best and believe in whatever purpose you can fulfill. If that is your focus, the rest will take care of itself.
Deborah’s background includes that of being an investigator, paralegal, mediator, life coach, and NLP Certified Masters Practitioner. She has been acting Director of Educational Development for the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) in Texas.

She is passionate about the needs of children and their caregivers regarding mental illness and is an engaging and memorable teacher who has been a public speaker for thousands. Deborah also trained under Lisa Nichols, most recognized for her role in *The Secret*.

Deborah is a contributing writer to Chicken Soup of the Soul: Children with Special Needs. She is also currently writing children books that educate on the effects of mental illnesses within the family. Deborah has over 10 books available on Amazon. She also helps others publish and promote their own books as well.

Personally, Deborah is active in her community by serving as a child advocate, providing pro bono services to women in need.

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Diary of a Dead Housewife: Loneliness
by Diana Balistreri

Loneliness is an emotion, like all other emotions, felt by everyone on earth yet loneliness has different levels, and there are many situations that would make one feel lonely. Whether being the "loner" at school, being bullied with no friends, living in and out of group homes or foster care, the inability to bare children, or repetitive failed relationships, you would have a right to feel lonely.

But what about the person who has children, and who has been in a long-time marriage, who has a nice home, and who is debt-free? What about those who have a house full of loved ones of which the only living beings happy to see her are the pets?

Most people would not think of her as lonely, but she is.

It is no secret that relationships are not all fun and happiness. In fact, many are riddled with conflict. Yet, during those times of conflict, we want to feel even more connected and cared for.

In most societies, when you are in a relationship, it is similar to a contract – one in which you each expect to have your needs met during the good times… and the bad.

You see, I am that housewife and that mother, yet I have felt alone for many years. My husband and I grew up together, my children are well-behaved, and so are my pets. From the outside, it would appear that we have a decent life but, what nobody can see is that I was empty, and emotionless and living my life with a numbness that helped to succumb my near-uncontrollable anxiety. I also lived my life robotically and went through the motions that a good wife and mother is supposed to do albeit I was oblivious to almost all of it.

Until our accident in 2010 (see bio that follows), we were happy and having fun. We were both working and had a life we enjoyed. Not only did our physical and mental states change due to the accident and the resulting PTSD, but we found ourselves spending too much time together.

In not too short of a timeframe, I had died… I was still breathing but I felt dead. I was surrounded by living beings – my husband, children,
and pets – yet I still felt alone as if my life would never be anything more than it currently was. I didn’t feel like I was a part of anything bigger than myself. I felt there was no more we, and instead only him, them, or me. I didn’t feel connected, secure or safe during any part of my awake state.

When I looked at my husband I sometimes loved him, yet missed the we that we once were. At other times I hated him for being worlds apart on some basic values. Those were the times when I was not only feeling insecure and scared, but I wondered why I had married him at all. He always seemed to say or do the wrong thing which caused arguments. He only paid attention to me when I was angry or volatile or in such an emotional state that he could not ignore me or the current situation no matter how hard he tried.

Conversations were going nowhere; instead he would become annoyed whenever I tried to talk to him to see if we could make our life better again. We would argue about insignificant things because right after the blow-up, there would be a honeymoon phase… a time when he was attentive and loving… the man I married. But a few days later, it returned to the painful, lonely relationship I hated yet had gotten used to. Eventually I just learned to talk about the safe, non-emotional topics like politics, local news, or a song on the radio.

Here I was again, over and over, repetitive alternations between loneliness, emotional outbursts, fights, honeymoon, loneliness, emotional outbursts, fights, honeymoon…

To help fill my voids, I became a more attentive mother to both my human and my animal children. However my anxiety, anger, depression and ever-growing resentment caused me to randomly and sarcastically snap at them in irritation.

I tried attending church and reading the Bible, I tried therapy, and various other options. During that process I realized nothing was working because it wasn’t something that needed to be fixed. Simply said yet difficult to achieve… I wanted more for myself. I had grown depressed and had become a reclusive perfectionist.

So, I focused on keeping busy and creating hobbies. I signed up for online and in-person classes, I learned baking, knitting, became a licensed nail technician, and much more. I thrived in all of these
environments and hobbies. By the time I got home or had completed my day, I was exhausted and would usually go right to sleep. As a result, I grew even more detached at home and was never truly present.

After learning so many hobbies, I found my meditation when I was baking, knitting, or working on someone’s fingernails. However the awareness of us women, taking on too much of the responsibility for our relationships and doing all the work ourselves, is not representative of a healthy relationship, nor one that will need lead to fulfillment. It takes two people to be fully present and committed to a relationship in order to make any partnership work.

I then realized that I was so busy trying to love him that I had stopped loving myself along the way, or perhaps I never did. In fact, that is why I stayed in this stressful situation. I hated being alone, I did not enjoy my own company.

We got divorced but financially needed each other so, with the divorced and pretending we were roommates, it took a lot of the pressure off of me. In the “me time” of learning various hobbies, I was also able to identify some hidden abilities and appreciate my strengths. Soon thereafter, I stopped expecting him to fill my voids. I mean, nobody can be a best friend, emotional confident, lover, domestic partner, co-parent and my primary intellectual stimulant… not even him.

So instead of feeling disappointed, I started being my own best friend. I did what I wanted to do, I ate what I wanted to eat, I lived for me. The best thing was that, because he had already become so distant from me, he didn’t see that I was only with him now for financial stability and physical safety… even though I have told him on numerous occasions. Maybe that sounds wrong or dishonest but I have given so much that I have the best of both worlds - a partnership without pressure, and most of my independence. Yes, I chose to stay and enjoy life on my terms.

Life will never be perfect; I don’t expect it to be. I just do my best to cope with chronic pain from the accident each day while still trying to be the best “roommate” and mother that I can be. I have an extra-important role now though… that of being my own best friend… because together, she and I can do anything.
Diana’s life changed on Christmas 2010 when an illegal citizen working as a semi-truck driver rear-ended her small car along the I-35 interstate outside of Dallas. Due to his intoxication, he had fallen asleep and didn’t know that he hit a car with this young mother, her husband, their 4-year-old son, and their puppy inside.

It was then that her career in auto mechanics ended due to her severely broken spine and neck. Her husband and son both also suffered severe permanent physical damage. Their dog was thrown out of the car and had to later be put to sleep due to PTSD.

As you can imagine, along with the permanent physical and mental scarring, it was also then that their entire way of life became dependent upon disability. Now, forced to live by counting pennies, she found herself alone with too much time on her hands.

As a result of these life-changing events, she had to begin homeschooling her son, and has since become an expert at baking custom homemade pastries, knitting, is licensed as a professional nail technician, and also offers Jaqua body designs. Even the small tips that she receives help to supplement a bit of their income.

Reach out to Diana at:

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I knew something had changed. I knew I had changed, but what I was seeing was the outer changes. Those changes were the direct reflection of what was going on inside. It’s not always easy to see what is going on inside, it is so much easier to focus on what is happening around us.

I was living with an elderly woman; I had no car, no job, and no money. The “man of my dreams” was living in the RV on the same property yet I could feel him pulling away and I knew that he was severing the ties between us so he could live alone, on his own. He told me when we met that this day would come. I thought I was ready to support this courageous and necessary move for him. I wasn’t - not at all - but why? What had changed? I did the most natural thing, I grabbed on even harder. I became needy, dependent, and depressed.

After about a year of pulling away, the day came and I was navigating this new land on my own. This man of my dreams, the love of my life, left the “WE” and created the world of “I” for both of us. I fell into a pit of despair; I had never experienced such heartache. I always thought that the term “broken heart” was a metaphor but here I was experiencing it as a reality. In fact, the pain was so powerful that I wasn’t sure I could live through this new reality.

Suddenly alone, I moved into a cute little house. It was April 1st, and given that I was feeling like a proverbial fool, this new step forward felt like the best April fool's joke ever. The WE was supposed to move in together and, just two weeks prior, we parted ways. Truth is I was not alone, although it felt that way on many days. I had three women who rallied around me, checked on me, kept me fed, and kept me distracted. It really wasn’t about being alone, it was about experiencing loneliness.

Loneliness is so different than being alone. I loved being alone, I liked my company. I had learned to like myself yet now I wasn’t so sure. I wasn’t sure who I was or who I had become. In the three years of living in my little sanctuary I started to understand. The self-awareness would come as I laid on the couch or on the lounge chair.
in my beautiful back yard. I believe the hummingbird that would visit brought me messages of joy.

But what happened to the joy? Why had I become so unhappy?

As I navigated my way through the days I felt the same deep black hole in my gut that I had felt before. In my adolescent years I had the same feeling, a feeling of being disconnected. Then I surmised it was the disconnection from the church, my family, and my school. At the time I felt that disconnecting from these things was in my best interest. After all, I was different and didn’t belong. The pain of this big black hole was too much; soon drugs and alcohol filled the hole with a numbing sensation I could live with. Well, actually anyone who has been there knows you are not living but rather existing.

Here I was experiencing this “disconnected” feeling of an empty black hole again. I disconnected from love, from being a “WE”, from the chance of having a loving and fun relationship. This all felt too shallow; it had worked when I was an adolescent but now I had been on a path of self-discovery for more than four decades and considered myself to be awakened and aware.

What was the real cause and what exactly was I disconnecting from?

I have used meditation for decades and find quieting the mind a useful and necessary tool. As I got quiet, I began to understand that the disconnect was from ME. In being in this all-encompassing relationship of WE I had lost the ME. Take a good look at that…

**Turn the M in ME upside down and you get a WE, or the other way around.** Yes, I had gotten so lost in the relationship that I lost ME. Years ago several of my girlfriends and me discovered that in each romantic relationship we engaged in, we “lost ourselves”. We only thought about the WE and forgot to take care of the ME. We vowed to help each other never do that again and to stay connected to each other as a reminder to take care of ourselves. I wish I could say it was easy for us but it wasn’t. So here I was doing it again.

In reflection, using “quiet” time, I could see how I began to rely upon my “man”, making him my “all that is”. I relied upon him to provide all my emotional support, provide my entertainment, and provide my connection to all things. Wow that is a lot to ask of one person. The
weight of being “my everything” had taken its toll. The worst part is, I had lost my connection to what I call “Source Energy”, the Power that is bigger than any of us, bigger than our ego, bigger than our minds can comprehend. When we lose our connection to “Source” we have no place to “plug” in for those things we need the most.

Faith, Trust, Courage, Acceptance, Creativity, are only a few things we receive from Source Energy. Some people may refer to this energy as God, the Universe, the Great Almighty, Jesus, Mohammad, Great Spirit, Yeshua, Buddha, etc. It is the core of our essence and of who we are yet, if we are disconnected from that Core Essence, we are an empty shell with an ego and a brain. For me, that was a very dangerous place to be.

I am not a religious person, even though I grew up that way. I have always known deep inside that there was more than a building with rules. I have ALWAYS been a spiritual person. My mother told me that as a small child I would lie in the grass or sit on my swing looking up at the stars and sing songs about the Earth and the Universe. Spirituality was conditioned out of me and only through a long road of recovery from drugs and alcohol did I discover the deep devotion to my spiritual nature. Once again I began the devotion to the bigger picture. My meditations took on a deeper meaning as I walked and swam. Swimming became my solitude and my sanctity and, when I was under the water, I could clearly feel my true self. Everything became clearer and clearer. I would swim laps for an hour covering more than a mile and emerge refreshed and feeling at peace. Those around me could see a remarkable difference.

I believe water is a representation of emotion and it was as if I was getting a reset of my emotional body each time I entered a body of water. Being in nature was another way I was able to reset my connection with Source Energy. It was easy for me at home while living in the State of Washington. It was easy to find trees to embrace, but here in the desert I had to search out my sources. Soon all trees, rocks, and outdoor vegetation was a constant reminder that I was alive and thriving. I persevered and each day I became more and more connected to Source Energy and to my core essence. I became happy and full of joy once again.

In understanding the process of losing myself and re-connecting to Source Energy, I found my true self. I truly know that I will never again loose myself for any reason. My connection with the Universe
is strong. I am reminded daily of just how important I am to the world around me.

I know my worth and how to navigate through the valleys and the hills. In the three years it took for me to fully understand and implement behaviors conducive to a spiritually-connected being, I always kept my heart open to love.

I also realized that, for me, love really was and still is all there is that is true. Everything else seems to be an illusion created to bring us our life’s lessons.

I learned that loving me is all that is necessary because everything else will follow as long as I can just remember that.

In all my experiences I use awareness to focus on the lessons. Sometimes experiences are unpleasant and painful. If the lessons learned can be shared to help another then it was all worth the journey. Even when I didn’t realize it, that was always the payoff.
Diane has been called a Free Spirit for most of her life and is an Ordained Minister who is known for her integrity in walking her talk. Diane currently enjoys her days working with clients to remove obstacles that keep them from moving forward.

Diane embodies the energy of a teacher, healer, spiritual goddess, gypsy, international speaker, artist, and child of the universe. Diane has been leading group and individual healings for more than 4 decades and holds a Doctorate in Esogetic Medicine, is a certified TNT coach, Colorpuncture Practitioner and uses light, crystals, drums, essential oils, sound, and meditations in her journeys. She has written, produced and promoted programs, ecstatic dance and other workshops. Diane is a master at creating and holding sacred space for healing, laughing, integrating, letting go, and moving forward. She loves spending time with her husband and loves being outdoors playing in the sun.

Reach out to Diane at:

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Growing Up in the Bubble
By Rev. Elizabeth Johnson

I am a typical American girl from a typical American family. I was raised in a strict religious home where everyone knew their place and what was expected of them. The world was a safe place to be, and I felt a great level of trust in that protected environment. In short, I was very naive.

I married my high school sweetheart at the tender age of 18, pregnant too so that was the expected thing to do. Our daughter was born in November of that year, and the following March my very young husband was diagnosed with cancer. It was a harrowing two years of chemotherapy and radiation. In the end, his body lived but his soul died. He became abusive and addicted to anything he could get addicted to! Sex, drugs, alcohol… those were the biggest ones. I felt lost, scared, and deeply alone. I could not tell my family because I knew they would not understand. Because of shame, I suffered in silence. I felt responsible for everything… the abuse, the drinking, the utter failure of my marriage. The message that kept replying in my mind was you are unloved and unlovable.

For 18 long years I put up with the lies, abuse, cheating, and drinking. Then something wonderful happened. We purchased a combination bar-restaurant in a beautiful mountain town and moved. I personally believe it is every alcoholics dream to be the owner of a bar; my husband was now living that dream. So, there I was in a quaint little cottage in the mountains, with my daughter and our dog. I felt more alone than ever before. My family was a thousand miles away, and I did not know any of my neighbors. Seven feet of snow is what welcomed us to the area and, our first weekend that we lived there, my husband was in fear of not being able to get to the bar. In fact, he was desperate for that drink that he left us stranded in the storm, and he wandered into the weather just to get there.

I would often walk with my dog in the knee deep snow. Cold – yes, usually – but it was also breathtakingly beautiful and somehow escaping into nature soothed my soul. I felt a level of peace in the chaos that my life had become.

One beautiful spring day as I was walking in the forest, I stopped and sat on a huge rock. The air was crisp and clean, and the sun was shining on the snow like a billion diamonds. Nature’s beautiful
silence surrounded me and all I could hear was the trickling of a small stream which had been created by the melting snow. From somewhere deep inside me, all the anger, fear, sadness and loneliness consumed me. My heart broke and I cried for all the lost dreams, all the lost trust, all the lost sense of safety over the year. I cried and cried as if I would never stop. Then I did something I hadn’t done for a very long time... I prayed.

“Dear God, is this really the life you meant for me to have? Is this all there is?” “Please help me.”

A voice inside me said, “No, it’s time for you to go.”

There was a tremendous sense of peace, I felt like someone had wrapped a warm blanket around me. Somehow I knew it was all going to be okay. It took some time, yes. But I was now free and, for the first time in my life, I was discovering who I was.

Today I am myself. I have learned to love me... even the things I felt were not lovable about me. I have learned to love my personal time alone, and now know that it is okay to be afraid. I also believe that, no matter what, God has my back and I am always safe.

I broke through the bubble of my childhood and embraced the love that I am. I am no longer encumbered by my family’s beliefs. I am free, I am loved, and I am never alone.
I am an Ordained Minister, Healer, Teacher, Spiritual Advisor, Intuitive, Aura Photographer, Clinical Hypnotherapist and Event Planner. I have had the wonderful opportunity to plan and execute many holistic workshops and classes. I teach classes on The Three Principles of Dr. James Martin Peebles and I hold monthly Meditation gatherings. I have been taking and interpreting Aura Photography for 18 years.

There’s so much more to you than meets the eye. It is my soul desire that we come to see and know the magnificent beings that we are.”

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Loneliness of Pain
by Eva Louis

Many people suffer from the pain and the loneliness of the struggle that can be all-consuming and unbearable. However when you've suffered from pain both mentally and physically for more than three decades, how do you overcome and survive on a daily basis? Finding the power within you to make the best choices and create the energy to channel, change, and mitigate the pain is something every individual can learn.

Self-Diagnosis and Understanding Your Loneliness & Pain

According to the National Health Institute research shared in 2015 over 11% of the U.S. population suffers from pain and about 17% suffer from very severe pain. Those same individuals will also fall in the category of experiencing loneliness as well. Those percentages are harder to measure and a wide range exists depending on how it’s looked at across the age and demographics spectrum. However, the chances and odds for most individuals is that at some point in their adult life they will experience pain and loneliness. The journey each individual has and how a person’s life is can be directly impacted by these very powerful things.

No matter how you choose to look at it, you will oftentimes hear about another person’s experience and find that they have gone through similar combinations of the three for which I will refer to as “black hole(s)” in our lives. The most commonly recognized definition of a “black hole” as stated by the “Google” dictionary: a region of space having a gravitational field so intense that no matter or radiation can escape. I think this sums up how many individuals feel like there is no escape and that they will disappear without a trace due to the level of intensity of what they are dealing with.

Doctors can diagnose the cause for ailments, but with these three “black holes” there is more than likely not a clear-cut path to determining what you might be experiencing. Physical manifestations can come from any of the three, or true physical or psychological injury can be the cause, or instigator, of them. This might seem elementary in explanation, but oftentimes individuals are in denial, their friends and family are in denial, and even professionals will deny that the “black holes” of pain and loneliness exist. They are excused away and not given respect or value of how they can really affect an individual’s overall quality of life.
People will often say the stupidest things such as, “You can do it,” “Don’t give up,” “Be strong,” or “Think positive” yet they have no freaking idea what it means to walk in your shoes.

In order to figure out how you have to make decisions and determine your choice of survival to deal with the “black holes,” you really do need to find out the reason for why you are suffering. It’s not easy and definitely requires more energy than you have, but at the end of the day, if you can truly gain a better understanding of the why, then the steps for treatment, mitigation of, or survival techniques to keep you alive - if that is what you choose - will make the daily journey more manageable. I didn’t say easier, I said manageable.

**Why Natural Treatments and Medications Can Make a Difference**

I’m not a doctor but I am a specialist of life, so what I’m speaking to is all about how you can take care of yourself daily when you have to live with pain and loneliness. I’d rather be straight about this up-front, I don’t condone drug use and honestly if I didn’t have to take certain medications, I wouldn’t. However for quality-of-life purposes, there are some things you have to do to mitigate the symptoms and to enable you to continue moving forward. I know that I’ve heard excuse after excuse as to why an individual might not do something to help themselves get better or to take care of themselves. I honestly don’t agree with someone not making the effort. Individually everyone has a purpose and reason why they are alive. There are no accidents but whether you choose to believe it or not is up to you. With that being said, medication may be what it takes to make a difference in your life if you have to deal with chronic pain and/or loneliness.

It may sound prescriptive in nature and it is in a way; however instead of focusing on the pain of loneliness, having activity lists and actions readily accessible and easily accomplished may help take the focus away. Things I have found to do that are relatively simple such as meditation, listening to music, reading, writing, volunteering, finding a hobby that relieves stress, finding a quiet place, resting, exercising (at home – a gym nor equipment is required), and joining a support group (many are free).
Of course these are just a few and none of these cost you a thing to do except time. They are not difficult, however trying to do them when you are experiencing a level 8 or 9 on the pain scale makes these feel like the most difficult things in the world. Even trying to do these when you can't even open your eyes or leave your house can consume you with the darkest feelings making loneliness that much more unbearable. Sometimes you can't even imagine going on another day and that's what makes these seem monumental. Why recommend them? Because I have used them myself, even when at the worst stages of these feelings. Finding motivation during these times are most important so as to help manufacture desire or inspiration, or to give yourself some energy, no matter how minute.

Through my natural skills and abilities, I am an energy worker and healer so it may or may not be surprising to know that we experience the same things everyone else does. In fact, we have to find ways to manage so we can follow and pursue our calling and to walk and work in our purpose. Do we have an advantage? I would only say to the point that what we learn on our journey and are also able to share and teach others. So the bonus is that through our pain and suffering, we can share our knowledge and wisdom with you to help you heal naturally and mitigate at different levels. We look outside of conventional treatment methodologies, and work to employ as many natural, and internal treatments.

**Learning Coping and How to Grind It Out**

The most difficult truth to admit to is how long I’ve actually suffered from pain and loneliness – ever since I was in junior high back in the small mid-west town in the sixth grade. I can remember experiencing loneliness as a child yet being fully aware that I was different from the other individual around me. I also knew at an early age that I was special and had different awareness and skills. In high school it became clearly evident through my untrained coping skills. I was dealing with life at a much higher and deeper level than the students and some adults in my life.

Where did this feeling and awareness come from and why? I can only speculate that my purpose in life is the driving factor that has led me to this path of awareness and understanding. At such a young age and during a time when individuals were not really allowed to openly discuss their feelings and especially of things that could not always be described, trying to find a support system
outside my family or friends was pretty non-existent, especially for a young teenager.

I share this because this is when I learned how to cope and to grind it out. As an adult in the twenty-first century, we have access to so many more services and resources than were available when I grew up in the eighties.

Back then, self-medication was often times the only route an individual could take if they had no other access to people or services that were normally based on official diagnosis due to some type of trauma. I had trouble sleeping, so insomnia prevailed along with my obsessive compulsive behaviors and my desire to have an increased understanding in this world.

Alcohol was what I had access to and what I used. Like many experiencing pain and loneliness, the first thing I wanted to do was turn it off. For me, drinking until I couldn’t feel it anymore was one way the self-medication worked. By no means was it a healthy way. However I did learn that, due to my obsessive-compulsive personality, I would have had to manage alcohol use probably the rest of my life. Not because I would be considered a classic alcoholic, but because this is how the downward spirals begin when you succumb to something and then let it control you.

If you can relate to finding a tool or drug of choice to cope, some of this may sound familiar and feel similar to what you have experienced yourself. I used to consider coping with alcohol a form of a purge that was in a cycle and actually did have an associated timeline to the behavior. Now this may all seem doom and gloom to the inevitable, but the truth is, this level of understanding helped me figure out healthier ways of coping. What many learn along the journey is that this may not be just a phase in your life; you may actually have to deal with it throughout your entire life like me.

As a teenager and young adult you think you know everything, but when you truly know more than those who surround you, the loneliness gets stronger and is reinforced. Once you understand what you can and cannot control, you can create new habits and coping skills that will better address how you mitigate your feelings. This is part of the grinding out portion.
Complacency and accepting status quo are things you must also be cognizant of because these are the enemies of managing each day and may actually cause you to slip backwards into bad habits and non-action. Do NOT sit back and wait for things to pass; find something that will cause you to move yourself, or your brain, or affect your feelings so there is some kind of movement.

Energetically-speaking, even writing down future plans and putting them on a calendar can cause the energy to change, and will help move the feelings of loneliness and pain in a different direction. It’s when you stop thinking and do nothing that likely causes you to fall back. I know I mentioned resting earlier and it might appear that through resting you are doing nothing, but that is not the case. If you are truly resting your mind and your body, you are allowing for healing and rejuvenation to take place which is energy working to improve your physical and mental state by allowing itself natural healing time.

**Surviving Daily with only Hope and Finding the Power Within**

Through the journey, you will find that you are the most impactful to your survival. Because healing and management really come from within, you must be accountable to yourself first and foremost. You must be committed to being serious about how you live daily. You must not operate without thinking or caring. This is where your daily choices make all the difference. This is the time for honesty and being completely self-aware of how you handle and deal with life so you can constantly ensure you are on the right path and not taking a detour. Will detours and obstacles and challenges still occur? Yes. However, this is when you can fall back on what you determine are your best techniques for managing through the turmoil.

I’ve created my own treatment and improvement plans that have helped me through my worst times. Sometimes it’s been as small as finding a quote or inspirational saying that moves me for that day. Sometimes it’s committing to finding tools, tricks, and tips that will work for one week, then three weeks, and then extending it out to a few months or even a year. I’ve made small commitments of doing cleanses or eating certain healthy foods that promote a better sense of well-being. I’ve scheduled exercises, massages, doctor’s visits to help support my efforts. All of these have been done with the intentions of improvement and daily healing from the smallest to the largest commitments to ensure I keep moving and taking action. I’ve
had obstacles that have taken years to resolve and I’ve broken down my resolution process into steps.

Keeping a journal of the daily intentions and or steps you are taking is a great way to give yourself credit for the work you are doing. I have found that oftentimes individuals forget all the work they’ve done to change things or make them better. Once you start recognizing and giving yourself credit, it’s amazing to see the additional transformations that can occur just because you’ve allowed yourself recognition and positive reinforcements. Due to time constraints and the inability to be able to go out or be with others, reaching out via social media or online can sometimes also be a way you can find and feed your energy and inspiration. It may even turn out to be a search for hope in which you will find it. Being real, authentic and genuine in your sharing of what you are going through will draw others from similar situations who are there for you and who help provide you with encouragement and feed your hope.

Please don’t create a self-pity party or put your life on display. This often opens the doors to naysayers or individuals with malicious intent towards you. When you make yourself vulnerable you also open the door for negativity to enter. You can protect yourself from negativity by not giving it energy or enabling it. You still have to be aware of who your real support system is so I share these with caution and advice to utilize the solutions and techniques for daily management that suit you and your lifestyle the best.

**Mind Over Matter**

It’s up to you, how will you choose to live your life so you can cope and mitigate the feelings? Through experience I’ve learned that everyone is different; there is no cookie cutter methodology or one-size-fits-all solution. I’ve been fortunate to have found my calling and purpose early in life and to develop specific techniques and ways to address the daily life challenges. Through my personal coaching and passion work utilizing my energy healing and channeling techniques, I help individuals move past obstacles and challenges so they can create a life plan that will help them be successful.

Life is not easy and nor was it meant to be but you can still find joy and celebrate the good in your life each day.
Eva Louis is a producer, writer, and actress known for her work in the local film community to include several shorts and feature films such as Desperado Noir, The Last Responders and Dark Dignity. Eva co-founded Worldwide Women’s Film Festival in 2016 to help showcase talented women filmmakers. Eva has specialized in social media, marketing and promotions of both artists and individuals in various modalities of the entertainment industry. She is also president of Chronic Behavior LLC which focuses on business strategy development and marketing.

Eva is a recognized advocate for many causes and charities in the community and is on the Board of Directors for Arizona Apparel Foundation. She enjoys writing and encouraging others, and assertively shares her inspirations to promote positivity. She has a passion for helping others who are suffering from chronic pain and loneliness through her Passion Identification Assessment program.

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My story of loneliness is a backward story, so I start my story right before things became a backward tale. When I began my metaphysical training I studied under wise older women. I remember meeting other glorious women, forging bonds, and though I was twenty-two, and always the youngest, that did not matter, we had great conversations, deep belly laughs and it felt good to connect in that way with other women. I loved this part of my life. It was full of connections and a circle of women that shared their lives and their knowledge. I embraced this life and never looked back.

I eventually set up my own healing practice and continued to grow personally and spiritually. I loved the freedom this life afforded me. I was blessed to work on some of the same clients for seventeen years. During this time I got married and had a son, and didn’t realize then that the salad days would soon begin moving out of reach. I recently had a conversation with my son and he told me that he was aware that I had taken the burden on for him during the after effects of my divorce, so that he would not have to feel the trauma of divorce. At the time I was married, I hadn’t thought of my marriage as a lonely experience, but listening to my son that night, I felt the tears come as I reconnected to the loneliness of that situation. It took my breath away, and I realized, that yes, it had been lonely being in that marriage. It was filled with a lot of moving from one place to another, starting, stopping and restarting my practice, not a lot of couples as friends or playmates for my son. I was far from this earlier circle of wise women and support system.

Parenthood however was the easy part. After my divorce, I prayed every day to be courageous and strong as I became a single parent to a seven year old.

By the time my son began high school I had my healing practice for twenty five years. I was feeling burnt out and I needed to heal myself, and take a break from healing others. I took my first “normal” job in a nine to five setting. I was offered a job at my son’s high school. Working at the high school was a big change, but my work with students was very rewarding.
It’s funny though; who you are never completely disappears. I was hired to be a registrar and I worked with students to help them, from enrollment to graduation, and on to college. But I noticed that something began to happen, students would find their way to my office, often saying, I don’t know why I’m here, but I heard you were a good person to talk to. They would talk to me about issues they had and what was going on in their life. I felt that my actual job was as a registrar, but my spiritual job was as a healing guide. I began to see that students also wanted to find their place in the world, they wanted to be seen and heard. I became a safe harbor for these lovely students. After five years and many conversations later, I left the high school and was offered another opportunity and began my second nine to five job.

It was several years into this second job that I felt as if I had a life I didn’t connect with anymore. **As a single woman, I felt this loneliness and longing to belong, to a larger community, to a larger purpose, to give back what had been given to me.** I felt as if I had this deep desire to do something different and more meaningful with my life. I realized that I felt lonely for my soul’s calling again. I knew this calling to be true, because I had answered that call before when I was twenty. Here I was, fifty-three and feeling like I had gotten stuck somewhere and didn’t recognize my life. I went through a period of time when I felt like every day I would make a decision to go back to school and change the path of my life. Nothing stuck and I began to feel that I was making false decisions. I knew strongly at that time that I was no longer in the groove of a spiritual path. I really saw the full-fledged backwardness of my life. I had followed my heart early on and wondered how I had ended up as normal person working in a regular job. For me it seemed to have given me amnesia where my imagination is concerned.

I knew that I wanted more from life and certainly myself, but could not seem to elicit any reaction other than feeling lost. I could say that while stocks plummeted and our recession/depression had its way with the world, my regular job, though a flat line of opportunity, kept me safe from the ups and down of our economic decline, and for that I was truly thankful. But as America climbed its way up, I still felt this exasperation at having not made any decisions in any direction.

It was about this time I came upon a passage from a book by Mark Nepo, called ‘Seven Thousand Ways to Listen.” He has a chapter in his book called, Being Lost. In this chapter he talks about how sometimes when we are lost, we just need to be okay with being
lost. When we are okay with not knowing where we are going, it opens the door for the unexpected to happen. I felt relief, and it was then that I decided I was just going to be okay with being lost. I also began this contemplation about the loneliness of the soul, and the need for belonging. Though my private practice was no longer, I still continued to study personally on my spiritual path. I came back around to my Shamanic studies and began a spiritual practice that involved direct communication with Spirit. I began an altar practice, and similar to meditation, I began to really develop a deeper connection with my helping spirits, intuitive plant communication, dream work and working with the elements in nature. I made direct communication with Spirit and my own inner light in my daily practice. I began to see that in my need to get out of my own feelings of discomfort, I was missing the point. I was looking externally for an answer, when the answer was to go farther in. I began to create a deep dive into my own inner light.

What I understand from years of connecting to my own source energy is that all things contain this energy. In another conversation with my son, he has said that he and his friends have had this feeling of being adrift and a longing to know their place in the world. A theme I could understand. My son has told me that he equally feels a connection to his own intuition and has felt a connection to something greater than himself. From these conversations with my son, with other women, I see the need for community and Wise Elders, both female and male. I also was interested in this loneliness of the soul, this need for human connection and belonging because my mother is aging and my sister and I have long conversations about how the two of us are not that far behind her, and spend time apologizing to our kids in advance for our potential bad behavior. Though we joke about this, I know from my studies of other cultures that the elderly are treated as wise council, the young learn from the elders and seek their counsel. Our current American culture is one of youth, of looking as young as possible for as long as possible. This creates an ache for me, because it sends a message to women in particular, that getting older is not okay, and again brings a larger message that engulfs an even larger idea that older people in society have no place. We already have hardly any initiatory rights of passage for our youth, into adulthood, and adulthood into wise elder. Where are our wise counsel of women and men passing their knowledge down to younger generations? There is still much work to
do in a community setting to connect the voices of our younger generations with our Wise Elders

One of the outcomes of my jag with loneliness was that it forced me to become present to the circumstances in my life that were unavailable for me to change. It left me with only the ability to change myself. The first place I began was by grounding to the land. I had lived in Arizona for over a decade and had never felt connected to this place, I began to spend time with the nature that surrounded me and listen to the plants and trees. I made Flower Essences of the local area, and learned how to do the same with the energy of the land. This is something that connected me to the medicine of the place I lived. Next I began sharing the gifts that were passed down to me by several of my Wise Woman teachers. Loneliness is no longer a place I connect to. By sharing, I too enter the circle of Wise Women Elders and right my backward story. I offer you these two exercises as a gift to widen the circle of knowledge.

This first one was taught to me by one of my Shamantic teachers, Sandra Ingerman. It is called Transfiguration.

1. Take a few deep breaths, breath in a slow and even pace. In and out. Place your hand over your heart. Feel your energy in your heart. Give yourself as much time as you need to feel your energy shift from your head and everyday thoughts to a sense of peace within your heart.

2. When you feel your energy settle, begin to see yourself as a radiating light. See this light penetrating every cell in your body from the inside out, until you are a radiant beam of brilliant light. Think of a star. A star just shines, it does not try to radiate, it just shines.

3. This is you now, a shining, radiant light. This is your only job, To shine your light. Stay as this radiant being of light for several minutes.

4. When you feel ready, slowly return to your human form, keeping the feeling of your radiance with you as you return to the room you are in.

The second technique I want to share with you is from combined teachings of several Shamonic and Crystal teachings. This is to be used on a daily basis, especially when you feel your energy is not 100% present, or you feel obsessive thoughts, or feel scattered.
1. Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Breath in to the count of seven, hold for seven seconds, then breath out to the count of seven. Do this several times until you feel your energy shift and become calm, and all external daily thoughts have gone and you are centered in your heart.

2. Picture yourself in your mind’s eye standing with your arms up in a Y position above your head. You can also, literally stand in this position if you would like, also.

3. Say the following words silently to yourself, or out loud, which ever you feel comfortable doing.

4. “I call back my energy from all the people, places and things that I have left it.” As you say this picture in your mind's eye, small particles of light floating in the air, making their way back to you and filling your body and energy up with your own light. Keep doing this until you feel complete.

These techniques can be done in the morning to set your day, or before you go to sleep. Use these techniques anytime you want to connect with your source energy. These are two of the practices I use on a daily basis. I see how my daily practice connects me to the belonging of myself. If you find yourself lost or needing to connect with your true source energy, begin with these as a daily practice.

And finally, I want you to know that the Universe/God/Spirit/The Divine, or whatever name you choose to use, is always your source of supply. This source is never depleted; it is abundantly available for you to draw from. It is your constant companion.

You are truly never alone.
Evfa interweaves her work as a healer, intuitive and shamanic practitioner to guide people toward their deeper soul work. She also combines her love of spirit and light in her photography and writing which helps others explore their path to healing. She has been quoted in San Diego magazine, and photographed by National Geographic during her healing sessions. She is currently creating two inspirational card decks and a journal.

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At one point, or another, through life most of us find ourselves lonely. It would almost seem that some of us are born with the loneliness gene just like some of us are born extra-happy, depressed or highly energetic.

If I think back on the first time I ever felt lonely, I would most certainly be looking at my childhood. I'm sure that just like many of you, I never fit in. As a child, I didn't really understand what it was that made me different. Why didn't the other kids want to play with me? Why were they so mean? Why did they relentlessly pick on me and make fun of me?

Of course, my older-self can probably analyze the actions of all those mean children, many of whom I'm actually friends with today, and break it down to a simple fact. They were also very lonely going through their own crap and didn't know how to express themselves in healthy ways.

A few particular "mean" moments stick out in my head, but none are etched as permanently as the one I'm about to describe.

We were outside at recess in 5th grade, playing a game that involved a ball. I don't recall the name of the game but the premise was that we had to throw the ball to the next person and say something as we did so.

It was my turn to catch, and one of my male classmates was throwing the ball to me. He walked up as close to me as he could, and as he through the BASKETBALL directly in my face, he said:

"We all make mistakes, and God made you."

I don't know what hurt worse - the burn on my face as the basketball bounced directly off of it, or the burn in my soul as his words echoed loudly. I was already feeling lonely, sad and lost but he had just amplified all of that in one second.
Fast forward to many years later when I invited this same boy to my very first-housewarming party; he was visiting from out of town and I wanted to catch up with him and see where life has taken him.

As we were chatting and he was opening up to me, I realized that most of his life, he's been lost, he's been searching, and damn, he was just as lonely as me if not more. I told him the story of us playing at recess and what he did to me.

To say that the look on his face was mortifying would be an understatement. I am pretty sure he would have crawled out of his skin if he could have.

My point in telling him wasn't because I was angry - obviously I had forgiven him by this point (although admittedly the little girl inside thought it felt good to watch him squirm a bit with discomfort) – but I simply wanted to remind him of an experience we had together. He was a mean kid, not because he's a bad person but he had some things to work through just like we all did and still do.

Taking it back to loneliness... I do believe this is an emotion that we get very familiar with from a young age. Not all of us know how to connect and even if we are more inclined to understand the concept of a true connection, we don't always have people around us that would provide healthy, nurturing connections.

So from a young age we are lost, we are searching, and we are almost used to being lonely because we tend to think that no one is like us and no one would understand us if they got to know us anyway.

**Sound familiar?**

I do not believe that loneliness is something we "grow out of." It follows us through life and deeply penetrates all aspects of it.

I tell people that some of the loneliest moments I experienced were actually when I was married. I was with someone for 17 years who I believe to be one of my soul mates. Initially, we really connected. No one "got" me the way he did at that point in my life; we were best friends. There wasn't anything that we didn't share but over the years, we grew apart and the loneliness came back with a vengeance.
Before I met him, I was used to being lonely. I longed for something else, but I didn't yet know what it was. However, after 17 years, I now knew what I was missing.

My relationship wasn't the only place where loneliness lingered. Being an entrepreneur, I chose a very lonely road. There is nothing easy or glamorous about building a company from the ground-up. I always tell people you have to be a little crazy to choose this journey, and most of the people around you won't really understand your kind of crazy. The more success you have, the lonelier it gets.

At some point, I really started to feel like loneliness was now my best friend. It was always with me, where I event and whatever I did.

I'm not saying that's healthy but I feel it’s pretty normal, not really so out of place. Loneliness is a natural human emotion that, at the end of the day, just reminds us that we have to keep moving forward.

Here is an excerpt from something I wrote on the topic of loneliness...

"Loneliness, like any other feeling we experience, is meant to teach us something. It delivers a message to us.

All those nights falling asleep with tears in my eyes, loneliness was gently whispering that I should move on. All those times no one was holding my hand, loneliness was nudging me because I wasn't connecting. All those times I was lying next to him thinking about how lonely I was; I really should have been lying alone.

Like a dear friend that's always there, I'm not sure if I should be thanking loneliness for cradling me all those nights ... or if I should be mad that it gripped my heart so strongly.

But in my conclusion, loneliness is nothing to fear.

It's just nature's gentle reminder that we must keep moving and flowing..."

So to the wife who is disconnected from her husband, I urge you to get to the core issue and figure out the missing connection. To the single woman who is searching, find a way to truly connect. To the women who haven't found their "tribe" yet, keep searching. And to all the entrepreneurs out there, well heck, you chose one of the loneliest roads possible too. I applaud you and also encourage you to connect with others who chose to be just as crazy as you.
I feel that the only way to "beat" loneliness is by opening up your heart and connecting with others on a very genuine human level, not something superficial.

Some of us just need that one connection, and others need multiple friends. We all have unique needs but I believe most of us are walking around lonely, no matter how happy or upbeat our posts show up on social media.

By definition, loneliness means "sadness because one has no friends or company."

So if you're feeling lonely, it's because you need to take some kind of action. Go out there and find your tribe, no matter how quirky, unique, weird, deep or whatever else you are, I promise you there are people looking to connect with YOU.

At the end of the day, we all want to connect, we all want to be accepted for who we are, and we want to be around people who get us.

Better yet ... can't find a tribe you fit into? Create one of your own and allow others to find you and connect. MeetUp.com is a great place to start.

No matter what tools, tricks, or tips you choose to use, I promise you, anything is possible.
Gelie is most well-known in for the vision and execution of NetworkingPhoenix, her unique networking platform consisting of over 40K members making it the largest landscape of networking in the Phoenix area. Additionally, she is a business growth consultant.

For over 10 years, Gelie has been on many stages and media platforms speaking on the importance of business strategies and relationship-building. In 2015, Gelie delivered a TEDx talk on the topic of freedom in which she shared her story of being a political refugee from the former Soviet Union and how this experience led her to relentlessly chase after her dreams and happiness.

After a 17-year-relationship, Gelie chose to undertake a new chapter of her life and embrace being a single woman for the first time in her adult life. She publicly blogs about her the challenges this new chapter has gifted her with as a way to remind others that they are not alone the areas of being a single mother and divorcee.

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Please Dear God, Take Me
by Laurel Dale

Laughter filled the room, smiles on every face. What a beautiful day, my parents have been married for 50 years. Family and friends have come together to celebrate with them. Everyone was happy except for me. Oh, I was happy for my parents, and I smiled in response to all the well wishes. Inside I was dying or wishing I would die. I was lonely, and my heart was crying out for someone to really love me. My husband put on a good act when people were around. It was in our home behind closed doors when the true person came out.

The real person belittled and demanded; he told me I could not survive without him, would be nothing and would not be able to support myself and my 2 sons. I felt like a small and incompetent person. Even with my wallet filled with his $100 bills, I felt poor and lonely. In the past I did support myself and my sons but now I was beaten down; always dependent on him. Why did I let him make me feel this way? I knew I was an intelligent woman, but today I did not feel like one.

Driving home from the anniversary party I cried and wished my life was over. As I turned into my neighborhood, I begged, “Please dear God take me from this life. I don’t want to live anymore.”

The next year in April, my wish almost came true. I was on my way to work and, as I was driving in the outside lane, there was another truck beside me. As we approached an intersection, the other driver decided she wanted to turn left and go back the way she came. She realized there was no street to the left and quickly decided to go right. Without looking she moved into the right lane, right into my vehicle. Suddenly my vehicle was propelled towards the shoulder of the road and I was headed directly into a traffic light pole. In a split second, I realized if I hit the light pole, I would die. My prayer to God was about to be answered but did I really want to leave my sons and my family?

At the last second, I determined I did want to live and pulled on the steering wheel as hard as I could to keep from hitting the light pole. My truck just missed the light pole and instead went between the pole and the large electrical box for the area. The two objects scraped the sides of the truck and then it came to a stop. At the time it seemed I was not seriously injured but later I found out my right rotor cuff was severely damaged.
The accident was followed by months of doctors’ appointments, therapy and medication. My shoulder was not getting better. Instead, it got worse. My husband was not happy that I had damaged his beloved pickup and things at home continued to get worse as my health deteriorated. I could no longer drive a stick shift, clean house, cook, and do all the things I usually did to keep the house going.

As I prepared the Thanksgiving turkey to go into the oven, I heard the chainsaw buzzing in the front yard. My husband was up in a palm tree trimming the branches. As I saw them falling to the ground, I thought “What now!” When he finished with the trees in the front yard, he went to the backyard and continued trimming the palms. When our dinner was ready, I went into the backyard to ask him to come in and eat. He shoved past me and yelled “I don’t have time for such nonsense, I have work to do.”

He moved out of the house suddenly on that same day. My parents were there to have dinner with us and saw the turmoil in our house. I was not able to hide it anymore. As he left the house he said “I will not be back to support you. You will regret this day.” My husband did not want to deal with a wife who could not work as usual. I was shaking with fear for the future. Would I be able to support my sons? Will I be alright?

He left all the palm fronds where they fell. The front and back yards where piled full of them. My parents and son helped me carry and stack all the fronds on the street in the front of the house. I was not sure how I was going to get them carried off, I knew my husband would not be back to do it. A few days later a great guy knocked on the door and said “My wife and I would like to haul away the large pile of palm fronds.” They did so at a reasonable cost.

The day after Thanksgiving my parents had to leave for their home, they promised to help me anyway they could. Later that evening, the house was quiet for the first time in four years. My youngest son sat next to me and assured me everything would be alright. Slowly for the next few weeks, the quiet crept into my heart and created a small flicker of hope. Maybe I will be okay. I have my wonderful sons and parents.

However, my health was still a concern. I needed to be able to do my work. Working for a car dealership as a Fleet Manager meant I
was expected to drive any vehicle on the lot. I also needed to be able to write out contracts (most difficult), type on a keyboard and spend many hours working with customers. Sometimes walking the lot of several acres was difficult. *Will the dealership be understanding about my limitations? Will they feel like my husband, and not offer the support I needed to get my health back?*

One day while having a massage to help my shoulder, the therapist asked me why I created the accident. What? “I did not cause it” I responded with indignation. Later upon reflection, I realized the accident was an answer to my plea for God to take me out of this world. Maybe I did create the accident to give me that out. I started thinking about how my thoughts and prayers created my life and opportunities.

By the following year, even with hours of therapy I was slowly losing the use of my right arm. The doctors said my arm would eventually freeze in position at my waist if I did not get it moving. I could not make it move. I could not lift anything and was in pain all the time. After going to several doctors, a surgeon determined I needed surgery. It was during the surgery they realized the extent of my injuries. Even after the surgery, I was still having trouble with my shoulder and arm. The pain was not as bad, but use of the arm was limited. Raising the arm over my head was not possible. Something additional was needed for a complete recovery.

Later I was meditating and asking that something would come my way to help improve my life. One day I received a flyer in the mail from the Awareness Center. There were several classes I thought I would like to attend, but one in particular, caught my eye. It was a free introduction to Reiki. I remembered seeing something on TV about Reiki and the healing they were doing with it. That was all I knew about it. I convinced my girlfriend to attend the introduction with me so we could learn more about Reiki.

As the teacher started talking about Reiki, I felt goosebumps on my arms; this was the answer to my prayers. After the teacher finished talking, one of the practitioners gave me a treatment; it was wonderful. I decided right then, I just had to learn how to do Reiki. Reiki is taught in 3 sections and I started learning it right away. I became a Reiki Master/Trainer in 1998.

After completing the first section, I started working on myself immediately. At night lying in bed, I would go through the self-
healing positions. Some nights the pain would be unbearable. I kept on doing Reiki every night. Soon I realized I was no longer waking up all through the night in pain. Sleeping during the night was becoming my normal state. Instead of insomnia, I was falling asleep before I could complete the full Reiki session on myself. Oh, how good it felt to be able to sleep. My body was getting stronger every day and, along with the healing of my body, I found my emotional state was also improving. Empowerment filled my body and mind.

I started using affirmations to help my mind create the things I wanted in my life, especially good health. On the way to work I would say out loud, “I am healthy, I am strong, and I feel great.” I would say the “GREAT” like Tony the Tiger, “GRRRRREAT”! At first, my mind tried to tell me this was crazy because I did not feel great. I felt awful. However, I kept doing it. Then one day I realized, I did feel great. In fact, I felt wonderful and healthy. I wanted to be here in the world. I felt a purpose in my life. I felt I needed to share my experience with others. I wanted to help other people bring healing to their life. I wanted to share Reiki with anyone who would listen.

I wanted to tell everyone about the change Reiki was able to make in my life. Right away I started teaching what I had learned. My students were and still are from around the world. It is important to spread the simple healing Reiki can provide. When I hear of my students teaching others I am thrilled. I would encourage you to contact me or to find a Reiki Master and Trainer near you to learn this invaluable tool.

Reiki is a tool using the God Source energy to promote healing in all aspects of life - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The healing spread throughout my entire being – not only healing the emotional trauma, but making me mentally stronger while healing my physical body.

Since that time, I have regained full use of my arm and shoulder. I have no pain in that area at all. Minor injuries from other accidents have been healed also. About 6 months after learning Reiki, I was able to go bowling. I never thought I would be able to do anything that strenuous again.

Since those dark days in 1996, my life has changed completely. I have been able to support my sons, who are now grown and out on their own, support myself and have a wonderful, happy, full, loving
life. My life is no longer lonely, even when I am by myself.

There are many tools available to help people when they are lonely and feel hopeless. The first one I would suggest is meditation. This can be done anywhere that is quiet as long as you can be comfortable. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and follow your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and hold your breath for a count to 5 and exhale through your mouth for a count of 5. Imagine a white light surrounds you. As you breathe in, inhale the white light. Let the light completely fill your body during the 5-count. Don’t worry if you are doing it right; you are! Relax. Let your body sink into the chair. Do this several times. Your mind will generally clear and calm down. As you exhale, imagine the tension, loneliness, fear, anger and any other strong emotion leaving your body. With a calm mind, you will be able to think clearly. You may receive answers to what you should do next or it may just provide a feeling of well-being.

The next tool I would suggest is to locate a Reiki Master (teacher) and learn how to heal yourself. You can contact me; I would love to be your Reiki Master. Reiki is easy to learn, and the self-healing is very effective.

Finally, affirmations are wonderful tools to help create the life you desire. As you say the affirmations and you think about them, your thoughts create your reality. On my webpage, you will find some suggested affirmations for various circumstances going on in our life. Feel free to use any or all of them.
Laurel Dale is a Reiki Master / Trainer. She has a passion to help people heal their lives on a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level by using various tools. One tool is Reiki. She has healed herself of several injuries through the use of Reiki.

Since learning Reiki in 1998, Laurel has taught many people how to use this powerful tool. It is her goal to spread Reiki and Love throughout the world. She wants to assist anyone who is interested in improving themselves. She says, anyone from young children to seniors can learn how to do this energy work.

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Notice Your Symptoms: check. She glanced in the mirror. Hair? Check. Collar? Check. She didn’t see the hair falling out; the dark, sad, tortured eyes; the clenched jaw. She’d been to the doctor about the migraines and the dentist about the cracked teeth. But if she wasn’t going to see herself in the mirror, she damn well wasn’t going to see why she was grinding her molars to pieces in her sleep.

Years passed.

Long after, out of that house, away from the constant assault, alone with her daughter, able to spend that parenting energy on play and joy, she went through her morning routine.

That woman in the mirror looked tired. She looked empty. It hurt to chew. Who was she? Where had she come from?

She wobbled into the living room and sat down, and a whole unknown room in her mind re-opened. Its filthy contents flooded out. She noticed a pain on her thigh. She looked down, and she’d twisted up her fist into her jeans. It was pinching her skin.

One of the filthy ideas flopped at her feet, stinking.

When was the last time she’d actually felt her leg? She honestly couldn’t remember.

She groped herself, confirming. Knees to chest, she realized for the first time she hadn’t been on speaking terms with her body in quite some time.

Being alone was paradoxically a lot less lonely.

Forgive Yourself: check. Years passed and she had a job, was a parent, had a place to live, was of service to the community, had a little savings, a few creative writing and art projects to do, a persistent aikido career, and functional independence. No problem. Some booze and weed - more than before - but she could afford it; it certainly didn’t impede her life.
There were a string of seemed-like-a-good-idea-at-the-time boyfriends; usually a year on and a year off, but nothing too outrageous. She dumped one when he started popping pills and stealing. One vanished for five days without a word; turns out that was a gambling binge so he was excused. One said he was single and then started telling her she was “the other woman”. One online guy (*good writer, lots of imagination, sexy voice, lived far away*) showed up in person 100 pounds heavier than his picture, yet that itself wasn’t the problem. The main problem was the servile way he wanted to touch her without receiving attention himself and his insistence that they go shopping for new socks when he accidentally “broke” two identical pair. Then his demand that they hold hands in the parking lot on the way out of the department store, along with the complete lack of exercising his attractive imagination in person. “It’s *because I’m fat,*” he whined; she didn’t argue, and he got back on the plane a day early.

She was alone about half the time, though it didn’t bother her much. She’d keep trying for the right fit. It takes company to fix loneliness, right?

Years passed.

There had been a second divorce. Her daughter graduated and moved away. She’d lost her property, her money, her community, and ten years progress on those writing projects and the aikido career. She was dating someone wrong for her, but the weekends were fun, he liked beer and TV, and he had good weed. Her job was a screaming nightmare, but hey the kids needed the help.

She woke up on her dingy couch at three in the morning. Looked like she hadn’t finished the sixth beer; the hound had knocked it over and licked it up. Her boyfriend had gone home, mostly because he he’d sobered up enough to drive and didn’t like being in her house in the mornings.

She did a lap around the property, trying to get a grip on her day.

The roof needed replacing. So did the plumbing, the sewer line, the erosion control on three sides of the house, the carport, the paint, the water heater, one and a half bathrooms, the flooring, the landscaping, and the shed. She’d envisioned vines all over the fences, but crabgrass was doing the job.
Inside again, dust coated everything. It was beginning to self-organize into intelligent herds of breeding fuzz bunnies that chased the dogs through the house.

Careful early rinsing kept the flotilla of dishes from going septic.

Aikido students had faded away. She couldn’t help her daughter with college. She stuffed her starving mind with TV, beating it into submission. Her hands had begun to shake. She was having trouble swallowing and controlling her bowels in the morning. She stumbled a lot. Her family members were all far away, struggling with age and illness, living in California where she couldn’t afford rent or a down payment on a teacher’s salary, and where the fruit orchards she once climbed were only asphalt. Wilderness lifted her spirits a little. She lived near the open desert, but mostly looked out at it through the grimy windows. At least the mortgage was cheap.

Aikido taught alignment between mind, body, and spirit. She guessed she was pretty well aligned, but it looked like she was pointed at poisoning herself.

She’d followed an extremely inspiring aikido teacher for fifteen years, traveling through the West Coast, Japan, and even a little in Europe to train with him as much as possible. She even hosted him for a seminar at her place in the mountains near the end of her second marriage. Then he died. The diabetes and alcoholism didn’t mix well.

She picked up the beer bottles, walking with a little shame through the dusty dojo and past the shrine with his picture. He’d understand. Wouldn’t he?

She threw the bottles in the trash. They’d had recycling pickups in her tawdry little town, but it turns out the waste management folk just threw it all in the same pit without actually recycling anything. So they stopped charging people for recycle pick up and that was the end of it.

She headed down the hall for the TV;

She stopped in front of the neglected shrine.

If she knelt there, she’d wipe trails in the dust. If she bowed there,
she might hear her master again. If she listened, would he forgive her?

She rolled her eyes at herself. She’d had this conversation before. She’d been working hard to be better for years. She had piles of art and literature nobody ever saw. She’d failed herself, her potential, her own dreams. Kneeling in front of a couple pictures of dead men and dusty swords really wasn’t going to help, was it?

And yet, she knelt.

Finally, with just enough forgiveness for herself to believe she deserved help and ask for it, she was no longer alone.

She wept; tears (mostly tears and probably some snot) fouled the mats in front of her shrine. Her master’s spirit sat with her, his smile mixed with sympathy and gentle, understanding distaste. You can clean up the mats, he assured. You really should, when you can.

“I’ve wasted so much,” she sobbed.

He shrugged. I died a drunk, even when I knew it would kill me. Even surrounded by people who loved me. Even with a thriving, important body of work to do teaching peace in the world. Even with the support of a loving, understanding master who reached to me from beyond the grave.

“You’re not disappointed? Not impatient?”

I’m dead. I knew you alive, and I know everything about you now. I love you, I love your spirit, I love your struggle, I love your tears. I passed this work to you knowing who you are and knowing you might fail. And time, for me, is infinite. It is for you, too. If you don’t get it done this life, you’ll get another turn to try.

“What do I do?” she wailed to the empty room.

Work on your spirit. Turn your mind to something positive. Take care of your body. If you can, without any negative judgement from me at all, it would be better for you and for our training lineage if you could drop the drinking - at least as a coping strategy. Our message of
peace and positive, loving action in the face of conflict is something the world needs but the message dies if we’re drunk half our lives.

“I don’t even like the booze,” she whimpered. “It’s making me sick. I’ll have to quit my job, start writing, get back all that youthful enthusiasm and drive, drop all that self-loathing. No toxic jobs, no toxic people, no toxic coping strategies, no toxic self-recrimination. I don’t know how.”

I never figured it out either. He sat with her, spirit bared, asking her to do a little better than he had done, honoring and cherishing her by suggesting that she could offer the world something wholesome and important, actually asking her to help him clean up his messes.

“I guess I’ll start with a rag, then,” she said. She bowed and wiped her slobber off the mat. She polished her blades. She practiced the weapons katas that doubled as spiritual cleansing rituals.

She decided not to renew her teaching contract. She’d been in a classroom almost every working day of her life since she was six. She’d been a classroom teacher over 25 years. She’d done her time and done it well. Now was her time to write and practice aikido.

Of course, that meant getting out of bed today, leaving the TV off today, walking the dogs today, training today, cleaning today, earning money today, having positive coping strategies to replace those tasty easy negative ones today, feeling her emotions today, finding health care today, fixing the roof today, writing a novel today…

She stayed in bed and read for a week. The sheets got grey and she smelled like an animal. The dogs didn’t mind, except they were bored. But they were breathing, warm beings with heartbeats who loved her, who very rarely told her what to do, and who never complained about her increasingly irregular hours. This getting to know herself was disorienting. She reminded herself to start at the top.

Notice your symptoms: check. Overwhelmed and hiding, but giving her brain something constructive to do.

Forgive yourself: check. In the context of doing better for herself in the long term, a few days in bed reading while changing a seething bucketful of toxic habits was totally reasonable. Compared to
decades of abuse turned to decades of self-abuse, it was practically a miracle.

**Listen to your teachers: check.** She was training a little every day, even if just a few minutes of spiritual cleansing with the weapons katas. She was making the changes she needed for herself with an eye toward also being better for her training lineage. She published her work.

**Understand it’s a new way of life: check.** Completely revamping her life from inside out and sticking with it through those “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” might not be a daily struggle, but it was going to take a lifetime. She would never be finished, even after her last breath. Shriek. She imagined that terror as a huge monster, and gave it a mental hug. As she did, her pitbull jumped on the bed, trampled her, licked her eyeball, knocked her glasses off the stand, and gave an enormous grotesque pitty grin. She laughed and hugged the monster dog, too.

“**Let’s write postcards to our friends and walk to the post office, ok?”**

**Provide Self-Care: check.** Writing to her distant loved ones helped. They knew she was thinking of them, she knew they were thinking of her. There wasn’t that estrangement she’d felt when she visited anymore, no self-shaped hole in their lives. They could just enjoy their time when they were together. That helped a lot. So did visiting more now that her time was hers to command.

She’d dug up a few people she’d felt affinity for locally. She’d called them back, visited their houses, invited them over for tea, had a writing group going awhile. Social media was a quick fix in the dead of the night and a bit of a writing warm-up, but live human beings who weren’t trying to get into her pants or run her life made a huge difference.

She visited her local dojos more, went to Texas for the regional meetings twice a year, went to Japan to train with her friends and perform in honor of their late master every year.

She had moments of loneliness, of sadness, of anger, of frustration, of overwhelm, of keening temptation to take the old shortcuts. She also had moments of pride, productivity, joy, happiness, contentment, and humor. She faced her emotions, embraced them,
felt them fully, and let them go their way without the panicky grasping and avoidance that once drove her toxic tailspins.

She spent time alone enjoying herself. She wrote, painted, beaded, wove, photographed, blogged, walked the dogs, puttered in the garden, did home repairs, drank good Japanese tea all morning, took the day off when she felt like it, ate healthy most of the time, and pruned once-internalized external expectations that only barked at her without helping at all.

She exercised most days. She wrote most days. She meditated, focused on her goals, and spoke to her master most days. She smiled at people, held doors open, thanked people, hugged people, gave away spare change, and spoke up when people impressed her. She let her spirit shine in public, which turned heads to embarrassing degree, but she got used to it. She avoided conflict, and she called BS when she saw it as gently and briefly as she could.

She went to the local bar, always packed with local huggy friends, had one drink and danced under the full moon on Vinyl Nights. She never took a date with her or gave her number. Anybody could seem like a good idea at the time, and she finally had a functional toximeter in place.

If she had a chance with someone she knew well (“well” as in for years through thick and thin and personal growth and changes and breakups and struggle and joy and hope), someone who knew and loved her as she was, someone who embraced her fearlessly as the glorious force of nature and aging vulnerable person she was, someone who rang her sexy bells and tickled her brain and enjoyed her dazzling kaleidoscopic spirit, she’d probably jump at the chance.

Seeking romance wasn’t a high priority. She had a novel, trip to Japan, a 4th degree black belt test, and a wilderness seminar to plan.

There was nothing lonely about being alone.
Before it was Silicon Valley, San Jose was the Fruit Basket of the World. Laurel grew up there - climbing cherry trees and spitting pits over the fence at the neighbor kids. Her folks gave her a tiny printing press with aluminum trays, rubber letters, and a rolling drum. Unsolicited local news began appearing in mailboxes up and down the street within a week.

A friend once described her as having “a broad dynamic range.” She worked a year on a NASA fellowship in high school, got a bachelor’s degree in theater, taught in public schools for 27 years, and recently earned her 4th degree black belt in aikido. Her photography, poetry, jewelry, weaving, essays, paintings, and novels percolate through the world.

In addition, she also teaches aikido to low income students, writes, and hosts spiritual retreats.

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My early 20’s were a beautiful time of joy, excitement, and beginnings. I was newly married, and had left everything I knew behind to move from one coast to the other; I also delivered my sweet son only a week and a half later. He was born a month early, catching us by surprise. I could tell he was already taking after his momma, keeping everyone on their toes!

Just months after our son’s second birthday, my husband prepared to leave for a tour in Afghanistan. I remember feeling heartbroken as if I were being abandoned, left to figure out this whole being a mom thing alone. I found myself on the other side of the country, far away from friends, family. Arizona felt so different when I compared it to the green grass and woods I was authentically in love with and had a profound connection to for my entire life.

**The land felt very sad and desolate for me, beginning to mirror back my innermost feelings and emotions.** Everywhere I looked, I was reminded of wide open and empty spaces, feeling vulnerable and exposed. When I wasn’t feeling sad… I was in a constant state of fear and panic, missing my husband fearing for his life. Questioning what I would do if he didn’t return, all genuine possibilities.

It was a blessing I had our son to care for, to make me laugh and provide constant distractions. His sweet nature made me laugh and focus on the present moment, but at night, the loneliness and fear would kick in. It made me feel scared and helpless; I even had this overwhelming feeling like someone was going to break into our home, I did not feel safe without my husband around. Some of his family lived near, but we did not get along, I often felt criticized and judged. This sent me further into a pit of loneliness, missing my family and people who cared about me.

During this time, my husband had not even left the states yet; he was to spend some time in Texas before deploying to Afghanistan. The fear was growing as the days for him to leave the country grew closer. Knowing living in fear and alone would not serve my son or me, I decided to do something with all of this emotion, to channel it in a way into a positive project.
I thought about what I could do, how I could take this experience and pass the time while staying present to my emotions. It became my mission to find the gift in all of this. One morning, soon before the big deployment day I had an idea, I decided to put all of my focus on creating a special gift for my husband, something unique for him to come home to, and for me to have a healthy distraction.

**My focus shifted from loneliness and fear to self-care, writing, and being the best mom I could be.** I decided to write every single day of my husband’s deployment, to keep a special book for him so he would be able to read all about the moments he missed, providing a snapshot into each day so we could cherish it forever.

Daily, I wrote an entire page or more of the events unfolding, where I took our son, how we missed him, and the milestones that were occurring. Little did I know that this practice of daily writing would turn into therapy for me… and a gateway into my intuition. The more I wrote, the more exciting things began to emerge. Coincidences started to appear, I started to know things ahead of time, and have prophetic dreams.

My intuition became a beautiful gift, helping me cultivate a sense of peace and calm, to see how this time away from my husband was also helping both of us to grow as individuals. I began to trust my instincts and listen to my nudges from spirit. Beautiful surprises landed in my life, and the loneliness shifted into a divine connection with my soul and the world of spirit.

The days stopped dragging, and I began to wake with a renewed sense of purpose. The time with my son transformed into adventures. We went to the zoo, played games, went hiking and swimming. Timeout in nature grew my connection to my spirit while providing opportunities for my son to explore this new world with the joy and excitement that a toddler has.

There were still moments of fear and loneliness, but they faded when I discovered I could choose how to see this situation. I became a licensed massage therapist, hypnotherapist, and started sharing my intuitive insights with my clients…soon a successful practice was born. I discovered the power of channeling emotion into service…service to others, service to my son, and even to my
husband with the journey of writing, each step of service brought me back to being a light to myself.

I healed old stories of lack and limitation, releasing fear and saying yes to every possibility. My sadness, fear, anxiety, and loneliness subsided each time I decided to try something new, including how I responded or viewed a situation.

My husband’s deployment gave me time to heal, to become a better mother and a stronger wife. I see these characteristics, twelve years later with a now teenage son and another anniversary around the corner. One of the most challenging experiences in my life was getting through this deployment, consciously and with Faith. There were countless moments of uncertainty, even a false alert about the whereabouts of my husband and his safety, sending me into a spiraling moment of fear, I was terrified fearing my husband was dead after hearing news that led me to believe this nightmare.

I can now see from where I stand, all of it happened for us, not to us. As a family, we grew closer and took less for granted. Hard lessons were also learned about loneliness when it comes to those who cannot be there for you when you need them to be.

I forgave, and I also discovered boundaries and behavior I will not tolerate, all from being alone. It became a choice to be with myself and my son, and to enjoy these moments instead of focusing my anger and frustration on the family who turned their backs on us during my husband’s deployment. That too although painful then, was a gift. It provided time for reflection instead of getting together for surface level conversations with people who did not care for me.

Becoming my own best friend revealed the illusion of loneliness, inviting me to see my perspective and how I was feeding this false belief. I learned to welcome time alone in solitude, and soon after it was a necessity for self-care.

Fast forward, twelve years later, and I am proud of myself for facing a shadow time in my life; inviting the beauty and grace that appeared as I allowed in the light. The light of my spirit, guiding me, and reminding me of how none of us can ever indeed be alone, we can only feel that way. May you always be shown how loved you are, always and in all ways.
Melissa is a best-selling author, psychic medium, and Hypnotherapist certified in over 20 healing modalities. She helps clients release fear & clear away emotional clutter. Through various modalities coupled with her heightened intuition, she connects with your spirit for guidance to help you shift limiting beliefs.

For over 15 years, Melissa extensively studied many facets of intuition, from science to metaphysics, to various energetic practices. She has mentored and worked with shamans, metaphysicians, and psychics to hone her intuition.

Melissa weaves the world of spirit into her daily actions and private sessions. She’s embraced her sensitivity as a gift instead of the burden it once felt like. One of her renowned gifts is taking people into deep levels of relaxation through guided meditations and Hypnotherapy, projecting her voice to take you on a peaceful and transformational journey.

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Meet the Girl Behind the Fence

Adopted at birth, raised an only child by abusive alcoholic parents, bullied by peers for decades, and more… my whole life was lonely.

“You know, people absolutely love you professionally but personally, they don’t like you at all”, he said to me.

If you know my story, you may be as shocked as I was.

I mean, how could I let a simple sentence like that bother me so much, if at all? Truth is, that statement probably hurt me more than all of the years full of abuse and bullying in totality.

My immediate reaction was to jump into the safety net of the “victim mindset” and shout back in retaliative defense, “I have always been broken and defective, I have always been on the other side of the fence. I’ve always been the one everybody hates”.

Yet, underneath the bitterness, it felt like my heart had been shattered and ripped apart piece by piece.

For years, I had worked extremely hard on trying to change my personality so I could be “normal”. I had tried for years to shift my toxic mindset, to start trusting and caring about others, to conquer the near-uncontrollable anxiety and bitter sarcasm, and to free my heart from years of unrelenting pain and anger. In fact, I tried so hard that I mistook my emotional detachment as success, and my isolation as strength.

With every replay of those hurtful words, it became obvious just how fragile my inner spirit really was.

The individual who said that to me was one of five human beings I had truly loved. He knew my deepest secrets and biggest dreams and, although it took a while, he was the first person I had truly ever trusted. I had removed the walls around my heart for him, and I considered him my best and only friend. Yet here I was, immediately feeling betrayed as I started the reconstruction of my heart walls.

After my logic was once again operating at full throttle, I realized that he was also my biggest and only cheerleader. No matter how big and powerful the defense, he always had faith in me - both personally and professionally.

I then had to realize that the Universe assigned him the difficult task
of delivering that life-changing message, knowing it would break me down, and force me open in preparation for full transformation.

You see, I believe everything that happens to us also happens for us, and that each storm we survive carries a valuable lesson. I also believe that if we ignore the often-subtle clues of the lesson we are about to learn, they become larger, until we cannot ignore them any longer. No matter what, we will never be able to outrun the lessons that are waiting for us. So, while reminding myself of these beliefs, I also recalled hearing variations of those painful words for many years. I either wasn’t listening or wasn’t quite ready to hear them.

After being hit repeatedly with the “crane of pain”, the storm shelter finally gave in and the damn of self-awareness rushed in to consume me. It was time to sink or swim, because I now was swirling around in the middle of a hurricane. The emotions were raging out of control and the words were piercing my gut. I felt like I was drowning while being pregnant with an angry child who was trying to break free from years of torment and anguish.

As a successful trauma therapist, I was now faced with my most difficult client ever... my inner child. I had to be understanding yet tough. I had to realistically and fairly look at the choices I had made along the way which led me to this day of reckoning.

I had spent my entire life feeling as if I was alone and trapped on the other side of the fence, away from all the “normal” people. I had become obsessed about how to transform into one of the popular people just so I could feel valuable and accepted. I had allowed the “you are defective” tape to play over and over in my mind for years. In return, my anxiety and fear had been paralyzing me.

Then it happened - I was tossed out of the hurricane and plunged throat-deep into the emotional quicksand.

It was now time to either let it consume me even more, or free by myself by taking responsibility for my actions – or lack thereof – and it was time to forgive myself for settling behind this powerful fence of segregation. Yes, the hard truth was that I was lonely because I chose to be.

Then it clicked…
Nobody likes me personally because nobody knows me personally… not even me.

I had spent years giving people mixed messages because my internal environment was in a power struggle with my external facade. My outdated beliefs, and toxic thoughts, behaviors, and attitude were slowly suffocating me. In very little self-defense, I was a responsible adult by day, yet a hot-tempered 13-year-old by night.

I was confused, and everyone in my life was confused too. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I had been diagnosed with Asperger’s in 1981. In clearing out my mother’s home after she passed away in 2007, I found the paperwork. As if I was unwrapping the best gift under the tree, the words within that paperwork clarified so much for me. It opened up a whole new mindset of both relief and self-understanding; I now understood why I had never been chosen for the teams during physical education class or at church picnics. I finally understood why I was bullied and assaulted for over 10 years in school. I finally understood why I had always been the outcast… the girl behind the fence.

So, because of my chosen career, I was able to talk the lingo of the mental health world, and I could verbally define the meaning of authenticity – but I had no clue how to actually be genuine. In fact, the mere thought of even trying was utterly exhausting.

Nevertheless, I was now faced with three choices:

#1: Refocus on my career and ignore my personal side again (easiest option but obviously not helpful);

#2: Rekindle the “fake it flame” so I could try and fit in with the normal people. This was probably not the best idea either because I had spent many years standing bare-naked inside of the “Mental Auschwitz Camp” and I really did not want to go back;

#3: Try something new and start my journey toward authenticity. I knew it would not be a quick trip, but I also knew that this was the healthiest, best and right choice. Although it was going to be a struggle, I intuitive knew that this was the choice that would ultimately save my life.

So, I packed my bags and prepared for flight.

Along the way, I was able to empty my suitcase. I traded in my self-criticism for acceptance, my mental bullies for love, my anxiety for
forgiveness, and my hatred for gratitude. I also cashed in my bonus miles, and traded in my tunnel-vision for clarity.

When everything came together, I realized that I had become so accustomed to the darkness and isolation while running from my past, that I never noticed my inner warrior who had been trying to help me the entire time.

In fact, I was so trapped in my victim mindset that I never noticed I was free all along; I just had to make the choice and commitment to take an action step of which the first one was making an inventory of

- the lessons I had learned yet ignored;
- the emotions I had felt yet suppressed;
- the unhealthy thoughts or behaviors from both myself and others that I hated yet settled for;
- the “who” I had been, the “who” I currently was, and the “who” I wanted to become (this was especially difficult);
- the positives in my shadow side which helped me survive decades of this toxic stuff

In making these lists, my mind and emotions started spiraling out of control. For example, in 2007 when I found out about my hidden Asperger diagnosis, my initial reaction was anger toward my adoptive parents for not telling me. I immediately assumed it was just more of their deceptive ways. As I sat alone in the living room sorting through all of the belongings that my now-deceased adoptive parents had collected throughout the years, I started to feel like a victim of theirs yet again. However, I was able to stop myself when I made the conscious choice to find some good in the situation. I truly was grateful that I did not know about the diagnosis until that moment. The diagnosis would have become my label, and my excuse and would have held be back and sabotaged my success.

After all, in appreciating my shadow side, it was my Asperger symptoms which allowed me to survive decades of trauma at the hands of family members and peers. As a child, teen, and young adult albeit unbeknownst to me, I was forced to adapt the Asperger symptoms into my life in order to be successful in my career, and function as a responsible wife and mother. As a result, I fully believe that by not knowing, I developed a unique perspective on life and a unique appreciation for my skills, talents, and inner strength.
I firmly believe that my Asperger symptoms are what gave me ravenous passions, focus, dedication, and loyalty (or perhaps fixations) to people, animals, places, experiences, and things.

That moment was when I was able to take the last piece out of my suitcase… I traded my anger for gratitude.

It had finally become clear that my parents were protecting me and that not telling me about this diagnosis was their unique way of not allowing my human potential to be hampered by what many consider a “disability”. In my opinion, no part of me was ever disabled, only uniquely-abled.

Bottom line is that freedom comes in many forms and one of those is the “freedom of choice”. You are in a powerful position right now. You have the freedom to choose an action step – something that will help you step out of your comfort zone and away from the life you hate, into your authenticity and a life you love.

Therefore this series was created as a result of all of the pain I had felt during my transformational journey; the books within this series are derived from the “emotional inventory list” I had made.

Albeit out of alphabetical order for the series topics, loneliness was the one that I struggled with the most, and still do from time to time. That’s why loneliness is the first one of this series.

"Never lose your inner warrior... sometimes she’s all you have."

Mozelle Martin
In 1987, Mozelle became the first person in documented world history to create an evidence-based program which modifies personality through powerful handwriting changes. This home-based program is called Transformational Grapho-Therapeutics (HTT). HTT was born out of “Mozelleology”, and is a mix of forensics, psychology, and spirituality. You can also find “Mozelleology” in her books, articles, blog posts, videos, podcasts, and public speaking events. Mozelle is partially retired from 30 years in forensics working as an international law enforcement trainer and case consultant. She has been a consultant for the Criminal Minds show, and has provided commentaries to ABC, NBC, TruTV, and Crime Watch Daily. She holds a Master’s in Forensic Psychology and a Doctorate in Transcendental Psychology. She has been a contracted Forensic Mental Health Professional for correctional facilities across the USA, and teaches forensics at a Phoenix-area college. In addition to writing her autobiography, *Shattered to Shining*, she has written many other books. Personally, she is very passionate about human and animal happiness.

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Mirrors Always Tell the Truth  
by Olivia DeMoss

I am too what? “You’re too sensitive! You are such a pain, you’re just too emotional!”

This usually throws me into a whirlwind of emotions: frustration, anger, resentment and sadness that bubble and swirl like when I fill a bucket with the garden hose. He is probably right, my feelings are too intense. This phrase “You’re too sensitive!” usually unleashes a tsunami that rages over my mind and my heart, leaving me unable to function for three days. For three long days I cannot focus on my art work, I cannot sleep, I cannot concentrate on reading even or do anything constructive; my mind is occupied with thoughts that don’t support my happiness, thoughts I would prefer not to think but they know how to sneak up on me from every which way they can seep into my confused mind.

Well, to my surprise, this time, the storm just glides over me… how strange!

Mirrors always tell the truth: every morning, the Evil Queen asks "Magic mirror in my hand, who is the fairest in the land?". The mirror always replies: "My Queen, you are the fairest in the land." And the Queen is always pleased because the magic mirror never lies. Mirrors have often been used in the history of magic, and we know that Mirrors always tell the truth!

Smile and depression: I have traveled a lot and lived on three continents, I am always curious to discover different cultures, yet this experience in this part of the world that the French call ‘L’Afrique noire’ (Black Africa) is one that left permanent scars on me like a branding iron. Ever since I was a little girl my dream was to go to Africa, but the Africa of my childhood dreams was more like Kenya with the fantasy of exploring through lush greenery with fragrant stunningly shaped colorful blooms, with fascinating new sounds of birds and unknown critters, and most of all, cuddling with baby lions. Incidentally I did go to Kenya; I didn’t see lush vegetation with colorful flowers, I did not get to cuddle with lions – I did that in South Africa – but I did get to pet a wild rhino and that was awesome. Yet, the Africa where Philippe took me was nothing like I had imagined. It was a culture shock and he never made any effort to smooth anything out for me.
So here I am now, in a country that has nothing in common with my African fantasy, in a culture I know almost nothing about, moving in with a man I am infatuated with. We barely know each other but I am in love! He is French too; he has lived all his life in ‘Black Africa’, in different former French colonies. We met three months prior while he was on vacation in France and it was instant mutual attraction. We had a hot affair and then he went back to Gabon where he resides. When he called me and asked me if I wanted to come to Africa, what do you think I responded?

At first I was intrigued but I couldn’t understand the natives’ logic. Their slowness soon got on my nerves and often I wasn’t sure how to handle situations with the locals.

- “Philippe, can you tell me why the boy is acting the way he is, what should I say to him?”

And instead of support I always get this same irritating answer:

- “You don’t understand them!”

- “Well no I don’t and that’s precisely why I am asking for help, not criticism”

Every time we have an argument, after just a few minutes of disagreement I can feel – energetically feel – I can see and almost touch a red brick wall rising between our two bodies, and when the wall has reached five feet, there is no conversation possible. He then leaves the room while I stand there frustrated, angry, sad, discouraged, feeling abandoned. And the following three days are like a lonely golden cage.

Yes the cage is golden, I can spend all the money I want, I never have to make my bed or do anything around the house, I have everything to be happy – or so it seems – and yet for three days there are no words exchanged between us. And for three nights sleep eludes me.

I have not made friends here and I can’t even share my frustration with my sons or my father, all three of them being macho guys. I have nobody to talk to, no support, I feel misunderstood and lonely in this foreign environment of different culture and values. And in
addition I have developed a chronic migraine that lasts up to nine or twelve days in a row, stops for two and starts again.

**Be in integrity with yourself:** it is three in the afternoon on this beautiful sunny day, yet I am lying on the bed with a throbbing migraine. He comes in, sits next to me and with a look of compassion that I have never seen on his face, he says:

- “You’re not happy’
- “Oh! I’m fine, I just have a terrible headache”
- “No, you have lost your smile. I fell in love with you because of your smile and now you have lost it. I want you to see a doctor tomorrow; I think you are in depression”

As he leaves the room I have to admit to myself that this is true. I have lost my smile and I slowly sank into depression as I chose to be in denial, brainwashing myself with “We’ll make it work” but truly, in order to make it work, it is not enough that you are in love with me and I am in love with you, we also have to both be in love with the third entity that we are forming, which is the couple.

You know how I tremendously enjoy making love with you but I have heard that critical statement so many times “You are too sensitive” … thousands of times! And now I realize that I don’t even care whether we make love or not, I quieted my feeling; that’s what you want, right? Oh! This scares me because If I don’t have feelings any more, then … who am I?

The throbbing migraine does not stop my mind from being unpleasantly hyper active; thoughts are gushing in, all the thoughts that I repressed or suppressed in my stubbornness to want to make it work and be happy together.

*Philippe, why do you hang on so tightly to your stupid pride? Why do you believe that you are really special because your wealth allows you to pull people’s strings as if they were puppets? Why are you so distant, so cold, so out of touch? I know why you created your inner landscape to be flat: you believe that this is the way to protect yourself from drama. You think that this appearance of being even tempered has people believe that you are cool and strong, solid as a rock … Possibly but do they truly admire you and love you or do they put on a mask when they are around you? … Puppets, that’s what they are! And you: A cold marble statue on a pedestal!*
What would it take for you to be human…. I mean all the time, not just in our rare moments of intimacy. Oh! How I used to look forward to these moments. Oh! I love you so much when you allow yourself to be a human with feelings for a few hours once in a while. Oh! This is so much fun, but has become so rare now. Why are you like two different men? The one I want to be with is the one whose great joy is to give me pleasure, discovering again and again the sensual touches and slow caresses, marveling at the explosion of mutual orgasms, in physical, emotional and spiritual union, you and I are one, and we are one with the Universe when our bodies bend and undulate. The sparkles in your eyes meet mine and ignite a rainbow, it feels like a soft, colorful cushion suspended in the cosmos, suspended in time. Our bodies are profusely sweating and this feels like the fusion of our souls, it seems as if we are offering each other and receiving the gift of Life, it is an absolute physical pleasure and at the same time it is an ecstasy that cannot be described in human words, we are floating on rainbows, and sweating and laughing, feeling so alive, immortal, powerful, multi-dimensional!

I will always cherish those moments, yet now something big is on the verge of happening. His snoring has gotten so unbearable that if I am not awake because he hurt my feelings again, I am awake because of his snoring. A few weeks ago I decided to move into another bedroom despite the fact that I am aware that separate bedrooms kill the love, but I need sleep. Now we have to set an appointment to make love! The communication that was already sparse is now rare; we are living under the same roof but we are not living together, and that is a worse kind of loneliness than living alone. I know how to live alone but I don’t know how to live alone next to a man I love.

The opposite of joy is not sadness, it is numbness. I have been told so many times that I am “too sensitive”, well now I am numb. And that is scary!

**The encounter in the mirror:** I am in the bathroom, I turn around and I catch my eyes in the mirror, and … those eyes are staring at me right in the eyes, and I hear a voice that says:

- Sure you’re not totally unhappy, but you are not fulfilled either and ten years from now when you look at those eyes in the mirror again and they ask you: “What have you done with the last ten years, have you … wasted them?”
- Oh! No! That cannot be, I wouldn’t be able to live with myself!

In that instant, a decision is made. I know without a doubt that I have to leave him. The mirror always tells the truth.

**Have Heart:** the word courage comes from the French and it means heart (Coeur).

During those twelve years together there were lots of moments of loneliness, and in that decisive instant, certainly I am acutely disappointed, sorrowful, feeling misunderstood, unsupported and alone, feeling so alone in this life altering moment, alone like at the moment of birth and at the moment of death. Each one of us takes that first breath and that last one alone. We live in the company of others, yet to a large degree, we walk alone, each one of us on a unique path. *Breathe, breathe* I tell myself. *You’ve got to get your smile back!*

The decision is powerfully clear now, though painful, yet it is the only thing to do. I know in my core that I don’t want to go to my grave with regrets.

“I must admit that you have balls” said he as he took me to the airport.

**Happiness matters:** my motto now is “*Life is a magical adventure that is meant to be enjoyed, and if your Life isn’t about the joy of it, something needs to change*."

My happiness matters, your happiness matters, and our joy creates ripples that affect the whole Planet! You create your Life moment by moment and until you understand that you are responsible (response-able) for your own destiny, you will feel like a victim of circumstances. You are the only one who can make you feel the way you feel. Know that when you live by others’ values, when you try to fit in and please others, it may work for a while but it is not sustainable because YOU are here to live YOUR Life. It is crucial to live your Life consciously since time goes by so very fast!

- Dare to be YOU: feel your feelings; it is okay even to experience what some call ‘the dark night of the soul’ in fact this is a sure way to grow. I have been there a few times. The secret is to not dwell on the darkness and to not judge yourself for it. Live it in details, savor it - as painful as it is -
perhaps for a couple of days and then come out of it like the Phoenix, renewed and open to the unknown.

- Dare to ask for help. It is not being weak to ask for help. You have to be your own student and instructor, but you do need support. Human beings are social beings. Sometimes all it takes to emerge from that feeling of loneliness is to find an ear as I like to say, someone who will give you undivided attention when you need to vent, without trying to fix you.

- Dare to allow yourself to receive with gratitude, and no, it is not better to give than to receive.

- Dare to adventure beyond your excuses. You can make excuses or you can be happy. Be attentive to your self-talk, it can be poisonous and it will keep you stuck.

- Dare to take a stand. Don’t allow toxic people to dictate how you feel about yourself. You are unique and you matter.

- Dare to listen to the wisdom of your body; it knows what is good for you, so stop being stubborn and have the courage to quit the situation or the people you have outgrown.

- Dare to embrace change and make mistakes. Let go of the judgment, the shame, the guilt and the stress for whatever you have done or not done up until now, because those things that you might not be proud of, were not mistakes, they were experiences that were necessary in order for you to be where you are at now. And if you so choose, now is the time to make new choices.

**What I learned from this experience:**

- Dare to be you, ALWAYS be in integrity with yourself.

- Don’t let your Life pass you by and have regrets when the end comes.

I have come to understand that I am an adventurer at heart, and making the radical decision to leave the man I dearly loved, while painful, was the right decision for me. Radical decisions may not be the solution for you, I do not advocate that you do that but I wish to remind you that powerlessness is temporary. You are stronger than
you think; you are actually as strong as you make up your mind to be, and your past does not define you, you are worthy of love and happiness and you are worthy of your dreams – I will even go as far as saying that it is your duty and your responsibility to make your dreams come true. It doesn’t matter what others think, you are here to be YOU. Look up and look ahead now, the past is behind, it is time to walk forward with confidence in your mind, with a courageous heart and a spring in your step. There are people who would be delighted to guide and support you on your journey.

And here is something that I advise you to ponder – this might feel harsh but stay with me for a minute or two: What if loneliness was the (unconscious) unwillingness to fully participate in your Life?

Human beings are social creatures, no one is an isolated island. Think about it: do you need someone to grow food in order for you to stay alive? Someone to harvest it and bring it to market, someone to sew the clothes you are wearing, someone to put together all the parts that make the bed you sleep in, the house where you dwell, the car you drive, someone to print this book that you are reading? Each one of us holds a unique piece of the puzzle of Life, or as I like to say: each one of us is a seed in the garden of Gaia our gorgeous Planet. For you to feel lonely and wallow in loneliness is selfish. To refuse to partake in the garden of Life is a sin – I am not talking about religion here – it is an offense to not partake consciously in the mystery and the beauty of Life. Let me re-word this: it was ignorance until now; and now that I got your little wheels turning in this marvelous mind of yours, it would be a sin to remain lonely, feeling blue and helpless.

Look at yourself in the mirror; what do those eyes say?
Life has brought Olivia into contact with a variety of cultures, experiences and challenges on different continents and, though she was born in France, she is a citizen of the World. She has a reverence for life, she is an advocate for animals, the environment and our planet. She loves gardening and being in nature. She is also an ambassador for the Global Prosperity and Peace Initiative, and a co-author of the international No1 best-selling book: "Are You the Missing Piece?"

A life-long glass artist turned coach, author and speaker, she has a calling to help push humanity forward. She helps her audience understand that a major source of discontentment comes from compromising their own truth. Olivia believes that more “Joie de vivre” (joy of living) in people’s hearts would get us closer to peace on Earth. Her motto is “Life is a magical adventure that is meant to be enjoyed, and if your Life isn’t about the joy of it, something needs to change!"

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Alone in My Bed. Alone in My Head.

by Onyxe Antara

I was born for travel. I was born for adventure. I had never lived outside of the USA, but my family moved frequently as I was growing up, and I always felt the inner urging of the nomadic, wanderer's heart - the gentle, yet pervasive, longing to explore cultures and people and geography beyond the borders of where I was born. And here I was, getting ready to embark on the adventure of a lifetime, newly married and relocating to Bangkok, Thailand, courtesy of my wife's job.

To say I was enthusiastic would be an understatement. We had already visited Bangkok during our "look-see" trip less than two months earlier. The vibrant golds and greens and reds and blues of the Buddhist temples, the cacophony of the nightlife, the tantalizing smell of street food being prepared over makeshift charcoal grills, and the infectious smiles of the Thai people had already won my heart. I crave new challenges, and I was eager to immerse myself in a new culture and a new language. I was ready to jump in with both feet and take off running.

I was in a unique position, with the freedom to fully immerse in the experience, because working would not be permissible under my VISA type. Co-workers had cautioned my wife, more accurately they "warned" her, that I would need to find activities and interests to keep me busy and happy. As a trailing spouse, I was not permitted to work, and the "danger" to my happiness was substantial, according to them.

What? Are they serious? That's ridiculous! They obviously don't know me. I'm an independent and resourceful woman with unlimited interests to explore and all the time to do it. My options are limitless. I enjoy my own company, and I can connect with family and friends virtually in an instant. There's no possibility that I'm going to be bored or somehow fail to be active and fulfilled. Besides, I've moved a lot in my life. This won't be that much different.

Moving to Thailand was going to be exotic. Fresh tropical fruit to eat every day, fresh tropical flowers to arrange on our dining room table, meeting local people, learning the language and the culture; that was what I imagined my life to be. Oh, the first year was fantastic, exploring and learning about myself as I interacted with a new city,
country, people, culture, and language. Everything was different; some of it remarkably easy, some of it excruciatingly difficult, yet always expansive.

Living in Thailand is a mash-up where ease and challenge collide head-on. Our marriage is socially acknowledged but not legally recognized by the Thai government. As newlyweds, we were freshly navigating how to manage our combined finances. To compound that, the bank would not add my name to our bank account. We had only one ATM card, "her" ATM card, between the two of us. Every online banking transaction sent a text message to the phone number on file, hers, for security confirmation. I couldn't even pay a bill online without her, and she was busy.

It was frustrating on the best of days and infuriating on the worst. It took us many months to find a system and rhythm that worked for us, including finally changing the phone number on record with the bank. That alone took a form in triplicate, a copy of her passport and work permit, and a visit to a physical branch location to accomplish the simple task of changing her phone number in the system.

Because I don't have a work permit, I cannot have billed cell phone service in my name. I purchased a new phone and needed the help of my wife, her assistant, and two employees at the cell phone company to set up my account. Correction - to set up "my wife’s account" - I had become irrelevant, inconsequential in my own right, a non-person.

Fortune Town IT Mall is a four-story mall dedicated to electronics, accessories, and repairs. Honestly, I love electronics; it is a thrill for me to research all the features, read comparisons and reviews, and thoroughly weigh the pros and cons before making a purchase. I wasn't satisfied with the quality of the cable modem provided by our internet provider, and this mall was going to be a little slice of heaven for me and my inner geek to find a suitable replacement. There's also an entire floor that looks like it is dedicated to cell phone accessories, and my new phone needed a case.

I arrived at the mall full of enthusiasm. I entered and was astonished by the overwhelming number of people and hundreds upon hundreds of cell phone cases in every color, pattern, and style for EVERY phone type imaginable. And guess what? I couldn't find what I was looking for. Not because there were too many choices,
although this is true, but because I could not communicate with a single salesperson. I did not speak Thai, and they did not speak English.

With each step I took, I became increasingly distressed. On the floor that catered to modems and routers and other computer accessories, I wandered aimlessly by the shops not recognizing the model names. The lists of features were in Thai, which I could not read. As I was taking the escalator to the next floor, silent tears welled in my eyes, and I could feel the lump forming in my throat. There were people all around, yet I felt isolated and alone.

*How am I going to survive here when the simple task of buying a case for my phone feels IMPOSSIBLE?*

Reality doesn't usually look exactly like our dreams. Often it is far better. Sometimes, when we aren't authentically engaged, it veers off in another direction entirely. I thought I was having a blast. And I was. I thought everything was great. And it wasn't. But I was busy being busy, and I didn't notice the gaping hole in my social life bucket. That is, I didn't notice, until my back injury almost exactly one year after we arrived in Bangkok. It took away my mobility, and it compelled me to look at my life and how I was living it.

*How did I get here? This is paradise. Why am I not happy?*

As I was forced to slow down – actually, life came to a screeching halt - I realized that I had NO friends, NO social life, and NO support system. Loneliness had arrived like slow rolling storm clouds that you barely notice on the horizon. You continue with your day, look up again, and there they are overhead ready to burst and unleash a torrential downpour. And unleash they did. All the ways I filled my time were a bandage to hide my loneliness, and they were no longer accessible. It was like ripping the bandage off, exposing the wound and the pain. Raw and vulnerable. It stung, and now I understood that it needed exposure to the air in order to heal. But what did that mean?

*Where is my support system? How is it possible that I've lived here for a year without making friends?*

In my childhood, I attended 10 schools in 13 years. By necessity, I developed skills for establishing deep friendships quickly. I didn't have time for small talk or relationships built over time because I never knew when I might move again. I don't remember ever feeling
particularly sad or lonely about this. It was all I knew. It was my normal. And because I was always walking into an environment with established friendships, I learned to observe first. I usually befriended someone who was unusually quiet, had fewer friends, or was an "outsider" to the cool group. Same as me. It didn't make me popular, but it did expose me to diversity and helped build my compassion for people.

*What is different this time?* Well, it doesn't matter now. I'm stuck in this bed. I'm in unbearable pain. There's no way to make friends now.

Closeness is developed through proximity, and I no longer had the benefit of school or work to interact and cultivate meaningful relationships. I was longing for connection. Technology is an extraordinary tool to connect us with loved ones near and far AND it is no substitute for face-to-face conversations. Each and every sense comes alive when we are in the physical presence of another living soul. This is vital to our ability to thrive in the world.

*HOW and WHERE can I get that?*

The next wave of loneliness descended on me like a dark cloud blocking out any hope of sunshine. No connections. No sense of belonging. Alone in my bed. Alone in my head. Alone and lonely in my life, and 8500 miles from my family and friends.

*Where can I find my people, my tribe, my community?*

I lay in a hospital bed in my condo bedroom for 2.5 months while I tried to manage the pain and heal. My wife engineered a contraption with my hospital tray table, a clip-on flexible arm, my tablet, and a wireless keyboard. I would lay in bed with the tablet suspended above my head, arms at my side, typing away on the keyboard resting on my thighs. This connected me with the outside world and helped to soften the sadness I felt.

I explored every holistic healing modality that I could find to address my physical pain. To keep my mind engaged and be productive, I looked for online courses. Through the website of a writing class, I was led to a group called Gather the Women. I clicked the affiliate link and read their vision statement... “*Gather the Women Global Matrix™ (GTW) is a worldwide sisterhood that connects women*
through circles, creating safe space to share our true selves. In circles, we find our voices, reclaim our power and remember our self-worth. We celebrate our unique diversity, as well as the rising of the Divine Feminine, leading to personal and planetary transformation.”

Oh, THIS is what I need. I need other women who are also looking for connection and who will uplift and support one another. This is the support system I have been missing. THIS!

I was ecstatic to read that GTW is a global organization with circles all around the world. Anxiously and excitedly, I clicked the search button to find the groups in Bangkok. As I was waiting for the page to load, my anticipation was building. I knew this was exactly what I needed. I already imagined the new friends I would make and the bonds I would form. The page loaded, and my heart sank. NOTHING.

Nothing? How could that be?

I was disappointed but not deterred. Maybe the website is not updated. Perhaps there is still hope.

I clicked "contact us" and quickly shot off an email, my hope and anticipation surging once again. This had to be available because finding the group felt like the answer to my prayers. Surely, I was led here for a reason.

The next day I received an email from the woman in charge of the non-USA-based groups. My heart sank again to read that there were, in fact, NO circles in Bangkok. Mary was kind and generous, and I felt her as a kindred spirit immediately. She gently inquired if I would be interested in being a Regional Coordinator in Bangkok. I was curious and still feeling profoundly inspired to connect with other women, so I told her I was interested to know more. I powered off my tablet and went to sleep. In the morning (note that nighttime in Bangkok is daytime in the US), I awoke to an email announcing "GTW welcomes Onyxe Antara from Bangkok Thailand as our newest Regional Coordinator!"

WHAT? (blink-blink) That can't be. I need the support of a group, not to be responsible for it.

I took a deep breath then heard the distinct message... if you need it, so do other women. If you can't find it, you must build it...
yourself and for them. I took another deep breath and a slow exhale.

OK! I am the new Regional Coordinator for Gather the Women in Bangkok! Congratulations to ME! Now what?????

Over several weeks, I engaged the assistance of Mary to determine how to start a women's circle. There are no special requirements for being a Regional Coordinator other than the desire to support and be supported by women in your community. Ideally, a group would have a minimum of ONE circle or event in March of every year to honor International Women's Day. Could I at least do that?

It was October, 7.5 months after my injury, and I had been working with a personal trainer to build my strength and restore my mobility. Even though I still had significant daily pain, I decided that I was willing to commit to hosting a circle every other month. Working backward from March that would mean I would schedule one in March, one in January, and one in November. I created a meetup group and scheduled the first circle for Saturday, November 14th. Three days before, I had 21 members in the meetup group and seven RSVP's for the first circle. I was overjoyed. I was nervous.

Oh my GAWD! Who am I to create this women's circle? I've never done this before. What if no one comes? What if it's a failure. What if I am a failure? OK. Hold on. How can I afford NOT to take this action? How will I ever move forward if I don't take this leap now?

I was overcome with emotion covering the full spectrum between elation and fear. I didn't know what to expect, but I knew, ultimately, I was willing to jump in and discover it along the way. I hadn't defined a subject or a theme beyond co-creating a collaborative group with whoever showed up. I had a basic format, and I trusted in the process.

WOW! That first circle was mind-blowing and heart-opening. Women showed up, and they showed up BIG. The common message I heard was, "I don't really know what this is or exactly why I'm here, but I think I need to be here, so I'm here." I was in tears.

Of course! Just like I heard; if I need it then other women need it too. That is precisely why I'm doing this.
In 1.5 hours on a Saturday afternoon, we took a deep dive together. Each woman sharing a part of her story while feeling the connection and support of the others. Everyone was united in her need to connect in a meaningful way, and we did! There was a tremendous amount of sharing and holding and listening and supporting. It was a dream-come-true, and I knew I had found a key to turning my life around.

Women’s circles have become a staple of my well-being. They remind me that we all have struggles, and we all have successes that need to be witnessed and acknowledged. They are a container where I feel safe to be vulnerable and safe to celebrate. The focused listening that occurs in a circle affirms that I have been heard, no matter whether everyone can relate to the exact details of my story or not. Speaking from the heart allows me to access and hear my inner truth as I understand it.

Connections are forged and fostered through shared, meaningful experiences. I have learned that combating loneliness begins with creating the environment for those relationships, the ones I desperately need, to grow. I climbed out of my state of isolation and loneliness by listening to my heart and answering the call.
Onyxe Antara is deeply committed to how sacred witnessing of personal journeys can expand world views and transform lives. She believes that to end global suffering we must begin with our own healing. She is the founder of HeartSpace, a body of work that focuses on deep listening, clearing emotional tension in the body, connecting with our Divine Essence, and learning to live a purposeFULL life with heart-centered presence. As a Regional Coordinator for Gather the Women, a global sisterhood dedicated to changing the world one woman and one circle at a time, Onyxe facilitates a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-faceted women's circle in Bangkok. She received a degree in Mind-Body Transformational Psychology from Southwest Institute of Healing Arts in Arizona, USA. An international presenter now living in Bangkok, Thailand, she offers individual healing sessions in Polarity Therapy and CranioSacral Unwinding as well as group workshops around the world.

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The Hidden Story  
by Victoria Glod

The pain of loneliness can be excruciating, yet there are times that we can easily distract ourselves from its awareness. How could my loneliness possibly be a hidden story? It has everything to do with the family dynamics and my response to it.

The relationships within a family can impact us while we are in our mother’s womb. I know that the growing fetus is aware of the feelings of the mother and the family dynamics. I am certain my story begins there. Her firstborn child was a still-birth, and there was fear during her pregnancy with me. There was also grief and sadness because her mom was dying from cancer, and this grandmother transitioned when I was 4 days old.

In those days, the word “dysfunction” was not commonly used, certainly not as frequently as we hear it today. Perhaps my hidden story can best be explained by a lot of distraction occurring amidst the dysfunction. The unknown aspect of my loneliness occurred because I repressed much of my story. There was school and younger siblings, and eventual care-taking of my three younger sisters. As I got older, I started preparing the family dinner before mom would return home from work.

Once I graduated from high school, my primary goal was to move out of the house, which meant I had to find work that paid a decent salary. This was a time of great passion in our country with the Vietnam War protests. The sexual revolution was also occurring, enhanced by the discovery of the birth control pill. The counterculture of the 1960’s was usually associated with the hippie subculture, and it was this movement that I gravitated toward.

It feels important that I inform you of my absolute inability to even begin to grasp why our country needed to be in Vietnam. Sending young men to a foreign country to kill other people and to be killed or injured was beyond my comprehension, and I must tell you that in my heart I supported the draft dodgers. This piece of information is only a snippet of the many happenings occurring on our planet that have never really made sense to me.

During this time I read an article about the American psychologist Timothy Leary. His philosophy promoted mind expansion and personal truth with the use of LSD. When I look back at this era, I
realize that I was searching for something of meaning, and I distinctly remember thinking, “I have to try this drug.” I also recall that I was reading Jean Paul Sartre’s Being and Nothingness. Although I do not remember my exact reaction to Sartre’s Existentialist philosophy, my guess is that I perceived it as somewhat depressing. Although I had been raised Catholic and did indeed have a falling out because of the church’s dogma, I nevertheless believed in a God. Sartre did not have this belief.

Let us fast forward a few years to the completion of my medical training as an x-ray technician. This provided the income necessary to be able to move out of the house. It was then that I invited a group of friends over and had my first psychedelic experience. What I distinctly remember about that experience is that I finally felt I had a family of friends. I don’t remember experiencing that when I was growing up. I actually do not recall feeling emotionally bonded to anyone. Yes, I did repress much of my earlier years, but when I run those years through my memory bank, I do not recall deep connections.

One of my sisters transitioned over 20 years ago. I remember her telling me on several occasions that I was the mother she never had, and she also shared that she never felt loved growing up. That feels very sad to me because despite my lack of emotional connection I always knew on some level that my parents loved me. I regret that I never asked my sister about that, for I must have done something that benefitted her.

In my early 20s, I took off for Hawaii and spent about 15 years living there. In retrospect, I realize that I was running away. There were many years of drugs, alcohol, and dysfunctional relationships with men. I still had my career in the medical field, but it was getting harder and harder to hold it together. There was a lot of drama, and by definition, addictions can be thought of as pure drama.

I would occasionally return to the states to have a family visit in the Chicago suburbs. I began to hear stories of our early years and when asked if I remembered I would shake my head “no.” One quite significant question was when I was asked if I remembered Mom and Dad arguing about Dad’s drinking. Again I shook my head “no,” for I remembered none of that.
I would do things to prove to myself that I was holding it together. This included getting my real estate license, and taking an occasional class at a community college. It was getting more and more challenging to show up at my job. I worked the graveyard shift in those days, and I remember my hands were shaking quite badly toward the end of my shift. That was when I started to keep booze in my car, unable to wait any longer to curb the withdrawals.

Something quite serendipitous happened that finally got through to my inner being. I was taking a class at a community college and living with another alcoholic/addict. This class discussed women’s issues, and they were telling all my secrets. They spoke of alcoholism and drugs, and they even spoke of domestic violence. I knew deep in my heart that I was too messed up to even get out of that relationship. I also had a deep fear of being homeless, knowing that I would not be able to hold on to my job much longer.

One day an amazing event occurred that was totally unplanned and spontaneous. I was still living in Hawaii and had finished my hospital shift at 7 a.m. I got home and went to sit outside amidst the beautifully lush and tropical scenery. This prayer came out of my mouth, which I shall never forget. It was a simple prayer. “God, you have to help me. I can’t stop drinking.” That was well over 30 years ago, and I still reflect on that with awe and gratitude.

While taking this class there was a girl who attended, and I was sure she was an alcohol counselor because she talked about doing AA meetings at the women’s prison. One day, out of the blue, I went up to her and told her, “When the class if over, I’m going into treatment”. She became my first AA sponsor. She asked me to attend a meeting, which I did and immediately came home and drank. I was not about to stop until I went into treatment. I went and talked to my boss and everything was arranged. When the class was over, I indeed checked into treatment.

By the time I arrived at the treatment center I had surrendered entirely to my addiction. However, talking about feelings was not something I did, nor was it modeled in my home. I remember one of my friends in treatment told me that if I just talked and cried the counselors would get off my case! Me cry?! I was not sure I had ever done that. When the issue of the boyfriend was brought up, I said that I came in to get clean and sober, not to talk about the boyfriend. In retrospect, that is actually funny, for how does one stay clean and sober and live with an addict who is using?
Gradually I began to get in touch with my anger towards that boyfriend, with the cheating, the violent behavior when in blackouts, and the way he reminisced about an ex-girlfriend. I ended up becoming a “star” in the treatment center, for I told him I would not move back in with him if he was still there, and that I had a place lined up to stay if need be. He checked into a 3-month facility and during that time I was able to process my anger and end the relationship.

One of the things I remember so clearly was reading the 12 Steps of AA written on a wall in the treatment center. As I read them I thought, “What a beautiful way to live.” For those who are not familiar with the 12 Step Programs, I can share with you that they are nothing akin to what I grew up with, even with my early years in a Catholic grade school, and going to Sunday mass until I was old enough to drive.

My transformation has been a long journey, which began the day I entered treatment. I was so ready and willing to change, and in retrospect, I can share with you that it has encompassed much more than I could have ever imagined. One does not repress much of their childhood and teenage years without having an undercurrent of many unknown and unresolved issues.

I remember my sponsor always asked me how I was doing. I often said, “I’m fine, but I’m just really lonely.” Aha, the hidden story of loneliness! I do not believe it is possible to grow up without loving and respecting ourselves, not finding value in who we are and being acknowledged for our value, and then to end up not feeling lonely.

I willingly embraced working the 12 Steps. This meant an extensive list of resentments and a willingness to look at the role I played. Imagine that! Yes, I did indeed play a role, and I can assure you that these topics were never discussed in my family! Then there was making amends to those I had harmed. That was certainly the first time I ever heard of that concept.

My strong commitment kept me going to meetings and working with my sponsor, who also believed in therapy and meditation. I went to her therapist after a year in recovery. I ran out of there quickly, for I was not ready to explore my family dynamics. I also could not relate to the women in the meetings who cried. Yet slowly the walls began
to crumble, and I was willing to get on my knees when I needed to and to share what I needed to share.

Eventually, it was time to leave Hawaii. I had started back to school, and it began to open up my world. I spent 4 months in Prescott, Arizona living with my parents and attending another community college. That was where I realized I had so much anger towards my mother. How could I not know that? While reading a book by Dr. Jean Shinoda Bolen entitled Goddesses in Every Woman, I suddenly understood that relationship. It caught me off guard, because it was dad who drank alcoholically and who had major anger issues. Today, many years later, I understand that anger is always about pain. Mom’s role was passive and wrapped around keeping the peace.

I came to Phoenix where there was work and school, for Prescott had very little work in the winter months. That is where I processed through my anger towards my parents. I had an old Louise Hay tape. This was definitely before the days of CDs and other technology. I listened to that tape every night before going to sleep. Soon I had the opportunity to visit my parents and an aunt for dinner on their way for a vacation in California. My mom and I entered the restroom at the same time, and that was when I had the sudden realization that all of my anger towards Mom was gone! What a blessing, and I still remember to this day my thought, “Now I can enjoy my time with mom.” She died from sudden heart failure while on that vacation. It was devastating to lose her, and yet it gave me the opportunity over the years to appreciate all the “Mom” things she did for me.

I received a degree in Social Work during my return to school. I had a number of exciting jobs working with substance abuse and other addictions, relapse prevention, anger management, and mental health.

My transformation has taken a very eclectic approach. In my last job, a kindred spirit co-worker told me that I was the “woo woo” one in the office. She came in second. One of my personal goals is to be as open-minded as possible, so I can take in information from the metaphysical, spiritual, supernatural, paranormal and occult worlds. The key is to discern and take what feels right.

When I was looking for passion in my last job I was reading another book by Jean Shinoda Bolen, which was written for women experiencing menopause. She explained that if we blame
uncomfortable feelings such as boredom and irritation on our hormones, then we are missing the message our body, mind, and spirit are attempting to tell us. So again I said a prayer, and asked to be shown what my passion was and what I came here to do.

I love how magic can happen in life. After several serendipitous experiences, I took off to California to study Animal Communication. I have come to learn how intuitive, wise and knowing animals are. They are aware, for example, of what we could do to help ourselves. They will even act out to get our attention.

I later studied Spiritual Response Therapy (SRT) which is a very powerful spiritual clearing process that can assist with our emotional, mental, spiritual and sometimes physical issues. I have cleared a plethora of challenges with this process, including PTSD.

Besides treatment and 12 Step recovery, I have used many tools to assist me on my journey. I have worked with a variety of counselors. Some have been more traditional, such as when I was dealing with repressed sexual abuse or molestation. Generally I have gravitated to non-traditional methods, which have included soul retrieval, past life regression, SRT, Tapping (Emotional Freedom Technique), Inner Child work, journaling, and various modalities to move me along on my spiritual path. Astrology, Human Design and Numerology have given me insights into the “nature of the beast!” Please know that I make that statement with humor. I have also worked with ACIM (A Course in Miracles), and numerous books and speakers on this spiritual and transformational earth journey. I have connected with animals and nature, including the trees and rock formations. Everything has consciousness, and there is such wisdom available to us.

I believe that healing is possible, and that we must believe and have faith in our ability to transform from the painful place we might be in at this moment in time. I see transformation as peeling away of the onion’s layers. Know that I love and bless you for your desire to read this book and to transform your life into a greater place of peace, love, happiness, and joy.
The 1960’s have been referred to as a “volatile and life-changing” time for our country and it certainly was for Victoria as she entered young adulthood. A time of passion with the Vietnam War protests, the sexual revolution, and the emergence of the hippie subculture.

She found herself escaping from a restricted, patriarchal home environment to the subculture of the hippie generation. However she started working in the medical field and moved to Hawaii where she eventually found herself in an in-patient substance abuse facility. She later acquired a Social Work degree to “figure it all out”.

A series of serendipitous events occurred that moved her into studying animal communication. Later, in an effort to assist animals and people, Victoria then learned Spiritual Response Therapy, a spiritual clearing referred to as SRT and has hundreds of animal and human clients.

Reach out to Victoria at:

www.VictoriaGlod.com
Meet the Non-Profit

Each book in this series will focus on an applicable non-profit.

This book helps bring awareness to “Find Me”.

Over 4,000 people go missing in the United States alone each day.

Imagine what it would feel like if your loved one went missing, or was taken from your life.

You would miss their voice, their smile, their smell, their laughter…

And they would miss yours!

Therefore we chose Find Me Group because:

(1) The loneliness that the victim feels if they are being held against their will - pleading for their mother, father, spouse, child, police, or God to help them.

(2) The loneliness the loved ones left behind feel, searching day and night yet never knowing what happened.

Please help further their mission by learning more about them at www.FindMeGroup.org.
In 1969, while working on my Master’s Degree at the University of Hawaii, I applied for and was hired by the U.S. Secret Service. However, just prior to starting academy, there was a hiring freeze so the Secret Service offered me a position with another U.S. Treasury Agency. As a result, I began a career with the U.S. Customs Agency as a Special Agent. I was assigned to the narcotics unit at Honolulu International Airport. In 2004, I transferred to the Drug Enforcement Administration and retired from that agency in 1995.

After retirement, I wanted to work with children in some capacity yet unsure how. In short, starting in the year 2000, I joined the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as an investigator. During my three years with them, I was only given the opportunity to work on a few actual investigations. Despite all of these cases having successful conclusions, I wanted to work in a more proactive way. That’s when I resigned and created the Find Me Group Inc. (FMG) so we can assertively look for missing children.

*Find Me Group* had numerous highly-qualified investigators, my curiosity pushed me in the direction to inquire if the psychic phenomenon was real or fiction. I made some inquiries and eventually met several psychics to attempt to understand their methodology. I wanted to know if and how they were able to provide information on our cases with surprising accuracy. I wanted to test this theory to the maximum, so I requested their involvement in my group.

**In the beginning there were only five psychics.** However our reputation gained momentum and, within a year, we had over 100 psychics in our group. I wanted to keep an open mind because, if this “psychic system” collaborated the solid experience of our investigators and search and rescue professionals, it only seemed logical to utilize it.

Originally, I only wanted to investigate missing children, but we were very soon asked to look for a missing adult and ironically, that was our first success story. We located this missing adult from Scottsdale, Arizona three months after he went missing. In fact, one
of the original psychics stated she saw him (in her meditative vision) standing in a line waiting to be fed at a ‘soup kitchen’ in the Mission District of San Francisco, California. Since law enforcement professionals are not required to look for a missing adult, the missing’s twin brother went to San Francisco Officers and, on the second day of showing his brothers picture, a homeless gentleman recognized his photo and directed him onward. Once we had our first success story based solely on psychic information, then I was hooked on the idea that we could do this same thing each and every time.

Slowly and methodically, I had created a group that was similar to a police department. This included forensic specialists in handwriting analysis (the main author of this book), body language analysts, linguistics experts, and investigative medical examiners. Then I partnered with search and rescue professionals called AZ-STaR who offers canine support and two search airplanes. We have since expanded our search methodology to including the use of drones, which can go into canyons and inaccessible areas, without putting dogs and humans into dangerous situations.

The one missing component from my viewpoint was the technological-scientific approach to compliment all of the other techniques being utilized, so I created an artificial intelligence (AI) software which targeted missing persons, human trafficking victims and ultimately homicides. This technology will eventually revolutionize law enforcement in every aspect of the investigative process.

Our system has been tested, approved, submitted to the scientific community and a provisional patent has been submitted. This technology utilizes data from all sources and creates an algorithm to learn and identify the most logical search area for a missing person. We are continuing to enhance the software by adding additional human trafficking data along with facial recognition and facial reconstruction components.

Ultimately, our goal is to create a system that can identify homicide victims and the suspects related to the homicide. The AI technology is only in the beginning stages of helping people identify medical issues, creating positive treatments and on the precipice of solving most if not all of the worlds health, economic, social, cultural and world conflicts.
The challenge of course for purposes of the law enforcement community is getting the ego-driven officers and detectives to embrace new technology and more important to accept the psychic phenomenon to be utilized using the Find Me Group philosophy. This philosophy is to create psychic units within each state that have highly qualified vetted intuitives responsible for addressing each states crimes and assist law enforcement on a regular basis where there are no leads available and no hope of solving the crime without their assistance.

Surprisingly in the 16 plus years that the Find Me Group has been in existence, with 306 current investigations we have only been turned away by law enforcement on 15 occasions and 8 of those were from a foreign country. Find Me Group has solved or resolved 91 cases since 2002.

Law enforcement officers in general have welcomed the Find Me Group’s involvement, I believe because we approach them with a simple phrase. “This is a one way street, we give you everything and ask for nothing”. This immediately eliminates the fact/concern that we are not going to get in their way. We only ask that they read our report and if anything in our report makes sense or parallels their investigation then consider using that information to solve that crime. We also offer all of our forensic and ancillary services free of charge to families and law enforcement.

We only work on investigations where the investigative authority will accept our information, since we are unable to provide our information to families and friends of the victims. This policy is to protect the integrity of the information/investigation, since in homicide cases we actually provide suspect information. We also want to protect the ‘potential’ crime scene in the event our GPS information as to where the individual can be found ends up being a homicide.

It is important to know that we do not work on runaways or any other crimes other than what has been stated above. We believe that limiting our scope of cases will allow us to become more accurate on missing persons, human trafficking and homicides.

One final comment to those individuals out there who do not believe the psychic phenomenon is real: it is real and has been proven in 91 of our 306 investigations, which makes our success ratio 34%.
Most police departments missing person success ratio is less than 5%. For those ‘skeptics’ who practice ‘rectal cranial inversion’ (RCI) yet continue to state that a psychic has never solved a case are not only ignorant, but clearly have not done their research.

Reach out to Kelly at:

www.FindMeGroup.org
HELP LINES

Adolescent Crisis Intervention & Counseling Nineline
1-800-999-9999

Abortion Information
800-772-9100

Post-Abortion Project Rachel
1-800-5WE-CARE

Adoptions- Rosie Adoptions (if currently pregnant)
1-800-841-0804

AIDS National Hotline
1-800-342-2437

Al-Anon & Alateen (young people living with alcoholic)
1-800-344-2666

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters
1-800-356-9996

Alcohol/Drug Abuse Hotline
1-800-662-HELP

Abortion Federation
1-800-772-9100

Be Sober Hotline
1-800-BE-SOBER

BIRTHRIGHT
1-800-550-4900

Boys Town National Hotline
1-800-448-3000

Care Net
1-800-395-4357

Center for the Prevention of School Violence
1-800-299-6504

Centers for Disease Control AIDS Info
1-800-342-2437
CHADD-Children & Adults with ADHD
1-800-233-4050

Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-422-4453

Children of the World - (to adopt a child)
973-239-0100

24 Hour Cocaine Hotline
1-800-992-9239

Covenant House Nineline
1-800-999-9999

Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233

Domestic Violence Hotline in the US
800-799-7233

Domestic Violence Hotline/Child Abuse
800-422 4453

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1-800-537-2238

Drug Help National Helpline
1-800-378-4435

Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention
1-800-931-2237 (8 AM - noon daily)

Eating Disorders Center
1-888-236-1188

Ecstasy Addiction
1-800-468-6933

Emergency Contraception Information
1-888-668-2528

Family Violence Prevention Center
1-800-313-1310
Food Addiction
1-800-841-1515

Gay & Lesbian National Hotline
1-888-843-4564

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Youth Support Line
800-850-8078

Gay & Transgender Hate Crime Hotline
1-800-616-HATE

Headache Foundation
1-800-843-2256

Healing Woman Foundation (Abuse)
1-800-477-4111

Herpes Resource Center
1-800-230-6039

Homeless/Runaway National Runaway Hotline
800-231-6946

Incest Awareness Foundation
1-888-547-3222

Independent Adoption Center
1-800-877-6736 (9 AM – 5 PM)

Learning Disabilities - (National Center)
1-888-575-7373

Lyme Disease Hotline
1-800-886-5963)

Marijuana Anonymous
1-800-766-6779

Mental Health InfoSource
1-800-447-4474

Missing & Exploited Children Hotline
1-800-843-5678

Mothers Against Drunk Drivers
1-800-438-6233
National Abortion Federation Hotline
1-800-772-9100

National Adoption Center
1-877-648-4400

National Adolescent Suicide Hotline
800-621-4000

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
1-888-554-2627

National Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-422-4453

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233

National Drug Abuse Hotline
1-800-662-4357

National Hotline for Missing & Exploited Children
1-800-843-5678

National Inhalant Prevention Coalition
1-800-269-4327

National Institute on Drug Abuse & Alcoholism
1-888-644-6432

National Institute of Mental Health
1-888-269-4389

National Mental Health Association
1-800-969-6642

National Office of Post Abortion Trauma
1-800-593-2273

National Runaway Switchboard and Suicide Hotline
1-800-621-4000

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK
National STD Hotline
1-800-227-8922

National Teen Dating Abuse Help
1-866-331-9474

National Youth Crisis Hotline
1-800-448-4663

National Victim Center
1-800-394-2255

Panic Disorder Information Hotline
800-64-PANIC

People Against Rape
1-800-877-7252

Pet Loss Support Hotline - Grief Counseling Hotline
1-888-478-7574

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This book is meant to provide you with extra awareness and tools of self-help. However, this book is not meant to take the place of a mental health provider or diagnostic assessments. If you feel unsafe, or someone you care about may be struggling with thoughts of suicide, please call 9-1-1 or visit your local psychiatric resources. You may also find the previous list of help lines of great assistance.
DISCLAIMER

The author's wrote and handled editing on their own or by a third party. Their essays were then copied & pasted into the format of this book. Therefore, if anything is unclear, please contact the author directly for clarification.

“Girl Behind the Fence”
A New Self-Help Book Series for Women

Anger – November 2018
Anxiety – February 2019
Co-Dependency – May 2019
Depression – August 2019
Fear – November 2019
Grief – February 2020
Guilt – May 2020
Hatred – August 2020
Jealousy - November 2020
Overwhelm – February 2021
Powerless – May 2021
Rejection – August 2021
Resentment – November 2021
Shame – February 2022

Seeking Women Authors over age 35

If you are interested in becoming a contributing author, please see details at...

www.GirlBehindTheFence.com
(no cost – no hidden fees)
As of 2017, approximately 42.6 million adults over age 45 struggle with feelings of chronic loneliness. Twenty-five percent of the population lives alone, and over 50% of the population is unmarried. Results from a recent study of 300,000 participants prove that individuals with weak or non-existent social connections actually increase their risk of early death by up to 50%.

That is why this book exists.

Inside of this book are the stories of 22 women from around the world who, just like you, have struggled with loneliness. Their personal insights will provide you with hope and inspiration; the tools they used to guide themselves out of the emotional quicksand just may be the life jacket you’ve been searching for. Whether down the street or across the world, you are truly never alone because also inside of this book are the ways in which you can reach out to each author individually for continued support.