

GUIDE TO
FINDING YOUR OWN NORTH STAR

claiming the life you were meant to live
by:



inspiration & tools for empowered living
Creating Your Right Life

CHAPTER ONE:

THE DISCONNECTED SELF

QUESTIONS FOR TESTING YOUR SOCIAL-ESSENTIAL SELF CONNECTION

Please circle or highlight the most accurate response to each statement.

1. My life feels like a great adventure:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
2. I feel sure I can solve any problem I encounter:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
3. I have fun:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
4. I laugh out loud:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
5. I feel overwhelmed by gratitude:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
6. I spend time in comfortable solitude:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
7. I am fascinated by things I'm learning:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
8. I feel deeply understood:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
9. Things just seem to work out for me:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
10. I get so involved in projects I forget to stop:	often	sometimes	rarely	never
11. I use my imagination:	often	sometimes	rarely	never

12.	I do things I loved when I was a kid:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
13.	People seem to enjoy being around me:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
14.	I play:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
15.	I feel perfectly safe:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
16.	I get excited when it's time to go to work:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
17.	I feel mentally sharp and alert:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
18.	I have really cool ideas:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
19.	I love my body:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
20.	I'm flooded with love for other people:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
21.	I do new things, or old things in new ways:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
22.	I do what I want to, even if it's scary:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
23.	I'm completely relaxed with other people:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
24.	I feel intense physical pleasure:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	
25.	I am very pleased with myself in general:			
often	sometimes	rarely	never	

SCORING

The scoring for the Connection Questions test is very simple: **If you didn't answer "often" to every one, of the questions, you could stand to be in closer contact with your essential self.**

CHAPTER 2:

RECONNECTING: HOW YOUR ESSENTIAL SELF SAYS “NO” EXERCISE

1. Energy crisis.

Try to remember three different events or types of events (dental appointments, jobs, classes, social functions, etc.) where you had to show up but felt reluctant and low-energy.

Event #1: _____

Event #2: _____

Event #3: _____

Now please circle the response that has the most negative associations for you.

2. Sick, sick sick.

Try to remember three times when your health was below par. What was going on in your life during each of these three time periods? Please list each situation, along with the physical symptoms you suffered. Don't worry if these situations are the same ones that came up in the last section, or if all three caused the same symptoms. Repetition is welcome in this game.

Situation #1: _____ Symptoms: _____

Situation #2: _____ Symptoms: _____

Situation #3: _____ Symptoms: _____

Circle the worst symptom.

3. Forgetting.

Write down the information that you find difficult to remember (for example, “people’s names,” “my kids’ school schedules,” “where I put my important papers”).

Info-type #1: _____

Info-type #2: _____

Info-type #3: _____

Circle the type of information you forget most often.

4. **Bundles o' Blunders.**

Write down three stupid mistakes you remember making.

Mistake #1: _____

Mistake #2: _____

Mistake #3: _____

Circle the most disastrous mistake.

5. **Social Suicide.**

Name three people who bring out your very worst social behavior. It might help to review hour life's most embarrassing moments; the two are often linked.

Person #1: _____

Person #2: _____

Person #3: _____

Please circle all three of these names.

6. **Fight or Flight.**

List times when you couldn't sleep, slept very poorly, or slept so much you felt groggy and squalid. What was the problem in your life that caused the sleep disturbance?

Problem #1: _____

Problem #2: _____

Problem #3: _____

Circle the issue that most disrupted your sleep.

7. **Addiction.**

Name a bad habit or obsessive thought pattern you've been unable to eliminate:

_____. Now remember what happened to trigger that bad habit the last three times you fell off the wagon. (For example, "I'd had an argument with my mom," "I'd been working day and night for a month," "I was facing a performance review.")

Habit Trigger #1: _____

Habit Trigger #2: _____

Habit Trigger #3: _____

Circle the "trigger" that is the most likely to make you turn to your addiction or habit.

7. **Moody Blues.**

List the last three times you experienced a very bad mood or a mood that seemed inexplicable, unjustifiable, or extreme. Again, note what was happening in your life at the time this occurred.

Bad-mood setting #1: _____

Bad-mood setting #2: _____

Bad-mood setting #3: _____

Circle the situation that brought out your worst mood.

Summary

Step 1

To get your essential self to “speak” to you, we first need to assemble all the things you hate most. In the spaces below, list the answers you circled on all the exercises in this post.

List your:

A. Lowest energy situation:

--

B. Three people who bring out your worst social behavior:

1.
2.
3.

C. Worst medical symptom:

--

D. Most forgettable information type:

--

E. Stupidest mistake:

F. Problem that most disturbs your sleep:

G. Worst bad habit “trigger”:

H. Setting for your worst mood:

Step 2

Now we’re going to create a little scenario together—a scenario that should set your teeth on edge. Using the items you've written on the list in Step One, fill in the blanks in the following story. For example, if you wrote “dental appointments” next to the letter “A” in Step One, you’ll write “dental appointments” in the blank labeled “A” below.

Your own worst case scenario

Imagine for a moment that you are in (A: Your lowest energy situation)

You are surrounded by (B: all three names on your list)

1.
2.
3.

You are not feeling your best, in fact, your (C: worst medical symptom)

is bothering you more than ever before.

You've been given a lifetime assignment that involves working with (D: most forgettable information)

All the people in the room are authorized to watch you constantly, criticize your performance, and punish you if you make any mistakes. Speaking of mistakes, you have just done (E: stupidest mistake)

a fact that is being noted by your three supervisors. Your life in general is pretty difficult right now; that whole thing with (F: most sleep-disturbing problem)

is happening all over again. You're also trying to deal with (G: worst bad-habit trigger)

To top it off, (H: your bad mood situation)

is more intense than ever before.

Just when things are at their worst, (B-1: the person who makes you feel most uncomfortable)

walks up. He or she orders you to sit up politely, smile in a way that is both humble and worshipful and say to the entire assembly, "I admire you so much. Thank you, thank you for letting me be here. You are such a terrific person, and this is just what I deserve. I want to live this way for the rest of my life."

Step 3

Read over this scenario, once you've filled in the blanks. Really put yourself into it. Then pay attention to your own reaction. How do you feel? Rotten, I hope. If you vividly imagine this horrible situation, you'll experience your own particular blend of anger, despair, illness, and anxiety. This should reach a peak when you imagine facing the person you hate most and

turning over all your power to change anything. *Whatever you feel in this moment is the sensation of your essential self saying NO!*

Don't run away from this feeling just yet. Focus on and wallow around in it. Explore its particular shape, texture, and size. Notice how it differs from other negative feelings. Your true path will take you through frightening challenges, saddening departures, angry resistance and a number of other profoundly unpleasant experiences. But the pain you experience en route to your North Star feels clean, necessary and right to the essential self. It is very different from the intense aversion you would feel in the scenario we've just created. *You're not supposed to feel that way, ever.*

That feeling of choked hostility, or numb depression or nauseated helplessness is a sure sign you're steering away from your North Star towards a life you were not meant to live. When you feel it, you must change course. You must say to the people around you what your essential self is saying inside: Nope, Not going there. Not doing that. Sorry, but the answer is "no"

CHAPTER THREE:

GETTING TO YES

EXERCISE

1. Nuclear Energy.

List three things that can always get you moving (Examples: “The family New Year’s party,” “Playing pickup basketball,” “Going to the mountains.”).

Energy-inducing person place or thing

#1:

Energy-inducer #2:

Energy-inducer #3:

Look over the list and circle the response that makes you feel *most enthusiastic*.

2. To Your Health.

Try to remember three times when your health seemed better than usual. What was going on in your life at that time?

Situation #1:

Situation #2:

Situation #3:

Circle the situation that has the *most positive* associations for you right now.

3. Memories, light the corners of my mind.

Where’s your supermemory? If you can’t think of anything, you’re probably overlooking the obvious. Ask some friends and loved ones what they’ve noticed about your ability to pick up certain categories of information. List these categories below.

Info-type #1:

Info-type #2:

Info-type #3:

Circle the type of information that *interests you most*. Be honest; nothing you enjoy is stupid or trivial.

4. **Time warp.**

Write down the types of activities that make you forget what time it is.

Activity #1: _____

Activity #2: _____

Activity #3: _____

Circle the activity you find most absorbing.

5. **Emotional intelligence.**

Name three people who make you feel socially adept and confident, people who seem to understand you and enjoy spending time with you.

Person #1: _____

Person #2: _____

Person #3: _____

Please circle the name of the person who makes you feel most comfortable and relaxed.

6. **Magnetic attraction.**

List times when you felt strangely drawn to a person, place or thing. You may have temporarily become unable to concentrate on anything else. What was the object of your desire?

Urge to merge
item #1: _____

Item #2: _____

Item #3: _____

Circle the thing that brings up the most positive feelings.

7. **A natural high.**

List the last three times you experienced a wonderful mood, particularly if your good mood came at a strange time or from an action other people may have criticized.

Good-mood setting #1: _____

Good-mood setting #2: _____

Good-mood setting #3: _____

Circle the situation that makes you feel the happiest.

Summary

Step 1

In the spaces below, list the answers you circled on the exercises in this chapter.

List your:

A. Most high-energy activity:

B. Person who makes you feel most relaxed:

C. Best health situation:

D. Information you remember most easily:

E. Activity most likely to make you forget the time:

F. Item that created the strongest “urge to merge”:

G. Best mood setting:

Step 2

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate response.

Your Own Best-Case Scenario

It is an incredibly beautiful day. The air is clear, the scenery dazzling, and you're setting out to do (A: Your most high-energy activity)

with (B: your favorite person)

You've got no other responsibilities, no immediate deadlines, and no major problems weighing you down. You feel great, even better than you did back when you were (C: your best health situation)

In fact, you are in the best physical shape of your life: strong, lean, robust and full of energy. You're having a great conversation about (D: the information you remember most easily)

when a message arrives for you. It's a letter from the president, saying that you have been chosen to receive a lifetime of financial support for doing (E: the activity that makes you forget time)

This will require you to spend a lot of time with (F: the person or situation that creates the Urge to Merge)

You feel just the way you did when (G: your best-mood setting)

happened, only more so. Lie back for a moment, take in the scenery, and enjoy knowing that this is basically how you are going to spend the rest of your life.

Step 3

As you did with the “worst-case scenario,” read over your “best-case” story carefully. Picture the images as vividly as you can, and notice how you feel. There's considerable evidence that just visualizing this scene greatly increases the likelihood that you'll experience something like it at some point in the future. In fact, no matter how impossibly wonderful it may appear, the scenario above is only a pale shadow of the splendid realities you'll find on the path to your own North Star.

What does it feel like to you, this sense of your essential self saying “*Yes! Due north!*”? How would you describe the sensation—or is it a sensation at all? Many people experience their true path not as something that happens to them but as the simultaneous loss of self and complete connection with the universe. When the essential self is really in its element, you may be so involved with the work at hand, the people around you, and the things you're learning that you won't be aware of yourself as separate from them. This state is the goal of many mystical practices, both in Western religious tradition and in the East. It's been described by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi as “flow,” and by anthropologist Joseph Campbell as “following your bliss.” What do you call it?

CHAPTER FOUR:

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE PARANOID DOESN'T MEAN EVERYBODY ISN'T OUT TO GET YOU

EVERYBODY ON DECK

Step 1: Finish the following sentences by writing down whatever comes from your gut, no matter how silly it may sound to your brain.

1. People judge me because _____

2. Everyone loves it when I

3. When I do well, people feel

4. Nobody will let me

5. Everybody always tells me to

6. People just can't accept the fact that I

7. When I fail, everyone thinks

8. Nobody cares when I

9. Society keeps telling me I have to

10. Everyone expects me to

Step 2: For each statement above, write the names of six people you know who *actually, verifiably* hold the opinions you've ascribed to Everybody. You can use the same names for every question if that's what pops up.

	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4	Person 5	Person 6
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

SELF-PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Please note whether you believe or disbelieve each of the following statements.

I do believe	I don't believe	
		1. I'm a natural-born winner: always was, always will be.
		2. The world is full of people who would love to be my friends.
		3. I'll always have plenty of money.
		4. I deserve a life full of joy and fulfillment.
		5. I'm physically beautiful, and I always will be.
		6. I can be wildly successful at my chosen career.
		7. I have an amazingly capable brain.
		8. I'm perfectly lovable exactly as I am.
		9. I'm highly creative by nature.
		10. My dreams are in the process of coming true.

CHAPTER 5:

GETTING EVERYBODY ON YOUR SIDE

ALTERNATE VOICES EXERCISE

Fill in as many of the blanks as you can. You don't have to fill all of them, and it's fine if the same names came up in response to different statements. Bother only with the statements you, do not believe, and remember: no generalizing!

1. I'm a natural-born winner: always was, always will be.

People who have told you that you *are not* a natural-born winner

People who have told you that you *are* a natural-born winner

2. The world is full of people who would love to be my friends.

People who have told you that there *aren't* a lot of people who'd love to be your friends

People who have told you that you there *are* a lot of people who would love to be your friends

3. I'll always have plenty of money.

People who have told you that you *won't* always have plenty of money

People who have told you that you *will* always have plenty of money

4. I deserve a life of joy and fulfillment.

People who have told you that you *don't* deserve a joyful life

People who have told you that you *do* deserve a joyful life

5. I'm physically beautiful, and I always will be.

People who have told you that you *are not* physically beautiful

People who have told you that you *are* physically beautiful

6. I can be wildly successful at my chosen career.

People who have told you that you *cannot* be wildly successful

People who have told you that you *can* be wildly successful

7. I have an amazingly capable brain.

People who have told you that you *are not* intellectually capable

People who have told you that you *are* intellectually capable

8. I'm perfectly lovable exactly as I am.

People who have told you that you *are not* perfectly lovable

People who have told you that you *are* perfectly lovable

9. I'm highly creative by nature.

People who have told you that you *are not* highly creative

People who have told you that you *are* highly creative

10. My dreams are in the process of coming true.

People who have told you that your dreams *are not* going to come true

People who have told you that your dreams *are* coming true

COMPARE AND CONTRAST: EVALUATING EVERYBODY

Have you completed your lists? Good. Now I'd like you to simply look over all the names you've written in the left-hand column and *notice what you feel when you think about these people*. Do you remember the "worst-case scenario" we developed in Chapter 2? I'd be willing to bet that the left-column names above evoke a similar kind of anxiety and visceral misery. Now look over the names in the right-hand column. How do they make you feel? Probably a lot like the "best-case scenario" in Chapter 3. Mind you, I'm not talking about your reactions to the *opinions* voiced by the folks on your list—I just want to know how the *individuals themselves* make you feel. To clarify this, answer the following questions.

EVERYBODY EVALUATION

Looking over the columns of names you've written down in the previous exercise, please answer the following questions:

1. Whom do you like more?

People on the left People on the right

2. Whom do you respect more?

People on the left People on the right

3. Which people have the happier, more fulfilling lives?

People on the left People on the right

4. Which people have more stable, intimate relationships?

People on the left People on the right

5. If you had a baby and were forced to leave your child to be raised by other peoples whom would you choose?

People on the left People on the right

6. Which individuals most deserve to have their opinions ignored, belittled, and discounted?

People on the left People on the right

7. Why in the name of all that's holy would you give any credence to the people on the left?

People on the left People on the right

EXERCISE

1. Positive Feedback

Write down any positive feedback you've ever gotten, from other people or from circumstances. Put copies of this feedback list everywhere, and read it often.

2. Your Fan Cub

Display pictures and mementos of people who believe in you. Do not display pictures or mementos of people who attack your true self.

3. Storytelling

Be the hero of your autobiography—Not the victim.

4. Media Blitz

Seek out media products (books, movies, TV shows, magazines) that support your essential self. Avoid those that don't.

5. Clean It Up

Talk to everybody about your Everybody.

6. Hang with Your Tribe

Spend as much time as possible with people who support your true self. Spend as little time as possible with those who don't.

CHAPTER SIX: HOW HOLLY GOT HER BODY BACK

EXERCISE: CLIMBING BACK INTO YOUR BODY

Step 1: Choose a Sober Moment

Fortunately, Holly came to my office in pretty good chemical shape. That is, she didn't have any untreated neurochemical imbalances (like bipolar disorder or schizophrenia), and she was relatively free of other mood-altering substances. Anything from high-grade heroin to mild uppers or downers, like caffeine or alcohol, can make it difficult for you to get in touch with your authentic feelings and desires. The whole point of these substances is that they fool your body into believing you're moving toward your North Star when you actually aren't. The essential self's physical signals go haywire in these situations, so if you want to find out what the "compass" of your body has to tell you, detoxify first.

Step 2: Relax the Body and Still the Mind

Once you're as clean and sober as you're likely to get, lie or sit down. Close your eyes and take a few long, deep breaths, letting your muscles relax more with each exhalation. After five or six of these unusually deep breaths, go back to breathing normally. Focus your mind on the sensation of the air passing in and out of your nose or mouth, and *keep it there*. Your mind will act like a puppy, forgetting to focus on your breath, wandering off into other thoughts every few seconds. Don't scold or abuse the puppy; remember that the mind is a feeble, impetuous little thing and doesn't know any better. Whenever you notice your attention wandering, just gently return it to your breathing.

Step 3: Notice One Toe

After a few minutes, when you're feeling a bit limp, turn your attention to your left big toe. As you breathe in, picture the air being drawn into that toe, instead of into your lungs. Shift your full awareness to the toe, and mentally describe *everything it feels*. Is it hot, cold, or just right? Does it itch? Is it tired? What is the texture of the sock, shoe, floor, or air that's touching the toe? Wiggle it around. Marvel at its capacity to send you so much information while helping you walk through life. Tell your toe that you love it, and that you want it to move in with you. You do not need to do this out loud.

Step 4: Conduct a Full-Body Search

Now conduct a slow sensation-sweep of your entire body, moving your attention to each of your other toes, each foot, each ankle, each shin, each knee. Learn what your body is feeling, part by part. *Don't think*; just describe. Move your focus up your legs, through your tailbone and spine, into your head, down your arms to your fingers. Pay special attention to your torso, where so many organs are stored. Feel your way through it bit by bit.

Step 5: Identify Gaps of Feeling

If, like most people, you're a high-to-medium somatizer (someone who holds a lot of tension in your body), you'll probably find that some parts of your body are easy to feel while others seem numb, tight, or paralyzed. Good—now you know where your body is storing useful information that your brain doesn't know. When you've identified a "frozen" area, let your attention linger there. Breathe into the numbness. Imagine the warmth of your breath thawing it out, allowing it to relax. And with every intake of air, let yourself feel what that part of your body is feeling.

Step 6: Lean into the Sensations

Thawing out your frozen spots is a key step toward comfort and joy, but I have to warn you: Initially, it can be *way* unpleasant. The first time I tried this exercise (while studying meditation in preparation for a move to Japan) it was just awful. As my numbness dissolved, I felt an upwelling of enormous physical and emotional pain. After about ninety seconds, I opened my eyes, stood up, and stated, in a loud and convincing tone, "*I will never do that again.*" (Now, of course, I do it every day, because I've come to believe that the alternative is losing my true path.)

The point is that as your mind and body come together, you're going to become aware of any discomfort you've been holding at bay. This includes physical sensations like pain, tension, hunger, and fatigue. (If you're tired, you may fall asleep. This is fine—it means that napping is the next step to your North Star.) In most cases, the message locked in your numb tissues will be more than physical. Climbing back into your body may mean feeling intense emotions: sadness, anxiety, hatred, fear. You'll find these emotions embarrassing at best, agonizing at worst. After all, if they weren't so unpleasant, you wouldn't have pushed them out of consciousness in the first place. We'll talk much more in subsequent chapters about dealing with intense emotions. For now, just keep breathing and let yourself feel them.

EXERCISE: USING YOUR NORTH STAR-O-METER

Step 1: Identifying Gestures and Labels

What gesture does your body naturally make when your essential self is miserable?

Think of a phrase that describes the physical sensation you feel as you make this gesture.

What gesture does your body naturally make when your essential self is thrilled?

Think of a phrase that describes the physical sensation you feel as you make this gesture.

Step 2: Play Hot and Cold

Do you remember playing the children’s game of “Hot and Cold”? In this game, one player—let’s say it was you—left the room while the others hid some object. Then you came back in and searched for the object, while the other players gave directions by shouting temperature words. When you were moving away from the object, they’d yell “Cold!” When you turned or moved toward it, they said, “You’re getting warmer.” When you discovered the hiding place, you were “red-hot.”

You can use your body’s innate properties to play a high-stakes game of Hot and Cold. Your body knows where your North Star is, and it does its best to tell you when you’re getting “cooler” or “warmer.” When you face a proposition that’s wrong for you, your body will try to go into the negative gesture you’ve identified above. When you’re headed down your true path, it will want to celebrate by moving into the positive gesture. Of course, most of us—even those who haven’t been to Montessori School—don’t let our bodies express their feelings through movement. Instead, we fight to keep ourselves from displaying our moods with any physical cues. *Keeping the body still when it wants to recoil or rejoice creates the physical tension that locks sensation away from consciousness.*

Step 3: Evaluate Your Life

You can use your North Star-o-Meter to determine how close you are to your ideal life, and what you need to do to come closer. To try this out, list three things you plan to do tomorrow:

Activity No. 1: _____

Activity No. 2: _____

Activity No. 3: _____

PROFILING YOUR LIFESTYLE

		Strongest Negative Feeling							Neutral Response					Strongest Positive Feeling								
Activity No. 1:		-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Activity No. 2:		-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Activity No. 3:		-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

THE BIG PICTURE: HOW CLOSE IS YOUR NORTH STAR?

In the spaces below, write the labels you've created for the most positive and most negative reactions you've seen in your own body (for example, "Trapped" or "Free," "Panicky" or "Calm," "Knotted up" or "Loose"). Then go:

Relationships: How does your body react to:

	Strongest Negative Feeling							Neutral Response					Strongest Positive Feeling								
Mother:	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Father:	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Siblings (write the names of your siblings in the blanks):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

	Strongest Negative Feeling							Neutral Response						Strongest Positive Feeling							
Other relatives (list by name):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Romantic partner:																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Children (list by name):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

	Strongest Negative Feeling					Neutral Response					Strongest Positive Feeling										
Friends (list by name):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Pets (don't smirk: pet relationships can be very significant):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Boss:	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Coworkers (list by name or title):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

	Strongest Negative Feeling									Neutral Response				Strongest Positive Feeling							
Subordinates (list by name or title):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Anyone else with whom you interact on a regular basis:																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Situations and activities: How does your body react to:																					
Your income:	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Amount of time you spend working:	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Your religious or spiritual practices (churchgoing, meditation, communion with nature, etc.):	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

	Strongest Negative Feeling							Neutral Response					Strongest Positive Feeling								
Various aspects of your job description (creative work, administration, meetings, filing papers, making presentations, traveling, etc.):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
Various aspects of your domestic life (child care, laundry, yard work, paying bills, etc.):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

	Strongest Negative Feeling							Neutral Response					Strongest Positive Feeling								
Leisure-time activities (watching TV, dancing, reading, exercising, making love, etc.):																					
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10
_____	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10

Remember, no judging or editing is allowed—just observation of a physical reaction.

CHAPTER 7:

SOUL SHRAPNEL: REPAIRING YOUR EMOTIONAL COMPASS

TESTING FOR EMOTIONAL WOUNDS

Answer each of the following questions as honestly as possible. Please note that the “Yes” and “No” responses are not always in the same column. If you are reluctant to answer the questions, or if you feel you’re being tricked into revealing something you’d rather not, the game is already up: You probably have an emotional wound.

1	2	
N	Y	Do people ever tell you that you seem arrogant, cold, aloof, or distant?
Y	N	Is there at least one person who really understands almost all your feelings?
N	Y	Is there anything you do compulsively, even though you wish you could stop?
N	Y	Do you feel exhausted and irritable after being with a group of friends for a few hours?
N	Y	Do you often seek solitude to “recover” from interactions with social groups?
Y	N	Do you feel comfortable crying in front of the person/people you love most?
Y	N	Do you talk about your feelings at least once a week to at least one other person?
N	Y	Are there any events in your life you would not be willing to talk about to anyone?
Y	N	Do you regularly engage in activities that allow you to express your feelings (writing in a journal, singing along with emotional music, acting, weeping at emotional movies, etc.)?
N	Y	Do you have strange or unexpected emotional reactions, such as feeling shame when you are praised, relief when you fail, or anxiety when you are loved?
N	Y	Do you have any “dark” secrets?
Y	N	When someone makes you angry, do you tell him or her how upset you are?
N	Y	Are you lonely even—or especially—when you are with other people?
Y	N	Are you comfortable being touched affectionately by the people you love most?
N	Y	Are you <i>only</i> comfortable being touched by a sexual partner, or does all touch seem sexual to you?
Y	N	When you get good news, are there people you’d call just to share your happiness?
N	Y	Do you pride yourself on never being upset or angry?
N	Y	Would you rather “stuff” your anger than cause conflict by standing up for yourself?
Y	N	Are you comfortable verbally expressing your love for family and friends?
N	Y	On a typical day, do you laugh—genuinely, not out of politeness—less than five times?

1 2

N Y Do you laugh at inappropriate times, such as when you hear bad news or when someone else is expressing anger?

N Y Do you often cry without knowing the reason why?

Count the number of responses in column 1 and column 2. Getting more than three column 2 responses indicates a probable emotional wound.

TREATING AN EMOTIONAL WOUND

Once it's been diagnosed, fixing the damage from emotional wounds is surprisingly simple. I said simple, not easy. The steps are pretty straightforward, but they're guaranteed to scare you, and they may be briefly but intensely painful.

EXERCISE

1. Right now, are you feeling more mad, sad, glad, or scared? Even if your feelings are very mild, try putting them in one of these categories.

2. Now write down at least six different words, besides those listed above, that describe your feelings at this moment.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

f. _____

3. Think of three works of art (songs, movies, images, poems, plays, books, etc.) that resonate with your current emotional state.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. What do these works of art have in common? _____

5. Complete the following sentences. Don't think about grammar or spelling; just shoot for emotional accuracy. No one has to see this but you.

a. I wish _____

b. I hope _____

c. I'm angry that _____

d. I'm afraid that _____

e. I'm sad about _____

f. I'm happy about _____

g. If it weren't so embarrassing, I'd feel _____

h. Even though it's stupid, I feel _____

Magic Question No. 2: Why Am I Feeling This Way?

EXERCISE

1. What was the strongest emotion that emerged as you did the exercises above?

2. Why do you feel this way? _____

3. Why? _____

4. Why? _____

5. Why? _____

6. Why? _____

“I want Cassandra to stop making me feel guilty.”

“I want to stop feeling guilty.”

“I want Percy to admit he was wrong.”

“I want to believe that I did the right thing when I ignored Percy’s advice.”

“I want Everybody’s approval.”

“I want to know I’m a good person.”

EXERCISE

1. Think about a situation that makes you feel angry, sad, or scared. What is it about this situation that you wish were different? _____

2. Think about a situation that makes you happy. What elements of this situation do you want to keep? _____

3. What do you want most right now? _____

4. What do you really want most right now? _____

Magic Question No. 4:

“What’s the Most Effective Way to Get What I Want?”

EXERCISE

1. Think of a very inexpensive item you'd like to own, such as a Popsicle or a shiny new pencil with your name stamped on it in gold-colored letters. *Make sure it's something you don't own at the moment.* Note what the object is in this space:

2. Now think of six ways you can get the item you just named *without leaving your house.* You can use any communications devices or other technologies at your disposal, and you definitely don't have to go it alone. (Magic question No. 4 is all about working with others to reach your objectives.) Even if the methods you come up with aren't things you're really comfortable doing (like borrowing or calling third parties to ask for help), list them. You may build up some courage, and even if you don't, you'll find that refusing to censor your inventiveness will lead to more solutions.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

 - d.

 - e.

 - f.

3. Read over the solutions you've listed, and see if any of them are a) possible, b), legal, and c) morally acceptable to you. If an action plan fulfills *all* these criteria, go ahead and use it.
4. Double-check to make sure your social self isn't ruling out workable solutions. Here are some signs that your social self is acting as your master, rather than your servant:
 - a. When you think about putting the solution into action, you find yourself laughing in embarrassment.
 - b. You react to the proposed solution with thoughts like "I could *never* do that!" or "I can't just..." or "But I have to..." These statements tend to reflect social inhibitions, not actual limitations.
 - c. You immediately think of some person who'd be upset if you took this course of action, or you stop yourself with the question "What would people think?"
5. If you've had any of the reactions above, consider whether you might want to break the rules of the social game. Be sure you stay within the confines of your own moral system; violating your own integrity will lead you directly away from your own North Star.

EXERCISE

Think of something that scares you. Then answer the following questions:

1. Exactly what are you afraid of? _____

2. Does your fear tell you to do anything specific? If so, what? _____

If you aren't able to answer these questions, your primary fear is of the unknown. Check to see if you're covering up another emotion. If not, proceed to the next step.

RESPECTING REAL FEAR

EXERCISE

Is there anything you “don't want to know”? Are you avoiding information (medical testing, a good hard look at your finances, the truth about your romantic relationship) because you're afraid it might reveal something terrifying? Take a deep breath and name your pain by listing the information you're scared to know:

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

As the compass-reading chart will tell you, fear presents you with a couple of options. You can either run away or face the thing you fear. Since fear is the “flight” component of the fight-or-flight mechanism, the first inclination of a scared person is almost always to run away. Before you do that, though, you need to *gather information*. Fleeing in a panic won't cause your fear to dissipate as fast as doing some research will. Let your fear motivate you to pay very close attention to the scary situation.

EXERCISE

1. Complete this sentence:
If I only had the guts, I would _____

-
- Whatever you just wrote down, do it. Right now. You heard me, soldier—put down the damn book and *do it!*

MAKING FEAR YOUR ALLY

Of course, it’s easy for me to tell you to face your fears, as I sit here with my laptop and my latte, far from the dangers that besiege you. Rest assured, I know how you feel. In fact, the reason I have no mercy when it comes to pushing my clients out of their various “airplanes” is that I myself am a thoroughgoing coward. As a child, I was scared of pretty much everything, and by the time I hit puberty, things had gotten so bad that I realized I had a choice: I could either start doing things that terrified me, or I could become one of those women who share their long, apartment-bound lives with twenty or thirty cats. The thing is, I’m allergic to cats. There was only one option left. I made myself a promise: I would do one thing that scared me every day, provided it was something I really wanted to do.

EXERCISE

Is there any sadness you carry that has not been honored, either by you or by the people around you? What is it?

Now give yourself permission to grieve this loss, no matter how “inappropriate” or silly it might seem. Processing genuine grief is never inappropriate. It’s the only way to your North Star.

CONSIDERING YOUR OPTIONS

EXERCISE

For the next twenty-four hours, do not use the phrases on the left unless they are literally true. Substitute the most accurate statement from the list on the right. You’ll be amazed how much this will clarify the real source of your anger.

Victim Language	Accurate Language
1. I can’t...	I won’t... I choose not to... I don’t want to... I’ve decided not to...
2. I have to...	I will... I want to... I’ve decided to... I choose to...
3. I don’t have time to...	I’m going to do something else.

That's not my highest priority.

EXERCISE

List four or five of your happiest memories:

Choose the memory that appeals to you most right now. Close your eyes and recapture this experience in as much detail as you can. Then answer the questions below.

- | | | |
|------|-------|---|
| True | False | 1. Just remembering this experience creates a surge of happiness. |
| True | False | 2. I feel hollow and exhausted when I think about this experience. |
| True | False | 3. When I remember this experience, my muscles relax. |
| True | False | 4. I can't really remember the good feelings that came with this experience. |
| True | False | 5. I find myself smiling spontaneously when I dwell on this memory. |
| True | False | 6. I get agitated and "hyper" when I remember this experience. |
| True | False | 7. I know that no one can ever take this experience away from me, that it is a permanent part of my mind and heart. |

The odd-numbered statements are characteristic of real joy. If you answered them "true," you know how to identify happiness. The even-numbered statements describe the way joy substitutes often affect people. If you answered them "True," then you may not yet be distinguishing between joy and Joy Lite.

CHAPTER 10:

ADVANCED COMPASS READING: INTUITION

FINDING THE SOURCE

INTUITION TRAINING EXERCISES

1. *Do You See What I See?*

“Projecting” a visual image into someone else’s mind, the way I seem to have done with Karen, is a classic ESP setup, replicated in many lab experiments. You might want to try the sketching game Karen and I played, or you can simply sit with a buddy and a deck of playing cards. Take turns trying to “send” and “receive” messages about which card you’ve pulled from the deck.

2. *Personality Profile*

Have a friend tell you the names of people whom he or she knows well but whom you have never met. Hold each name in your mind and describe any impressions that pop into your head about the person who owns it. Try not to think; *say whatever comes into your head*, without censoring. “Big red nose, drives a Honda Civic, owns a snake” or “Nasty temper, great legs, hairstyle from Hell.” Stay loose, even silly. Your intuition and your sense of humor are deeply sympatico. Get too tense, analytical, or serious, and you’ll never hear your little black cat.

3. *Psychometry*

This word refers to picking up psychic impressions by holding an object. The most common strategy is to hold something that is meaningful to another person and try to pick up information related to the object. For example, you might hold a set of keys and describe the house, office, or car they unlock, or pick up a piece of jewelry and describe the person who wore it last.

4. *Going Along for the Ride*

You can try “remote viewing” by having a friend call you from some undisclosed location—a phone booth, an office, a cell phone on a boat—at a prearranged time. Try to “see” and describe what’s going on around your friend. Obviously, an unscrupulous player could cheat by listening for ambient sounds, so you have to go past generalizations. What pictures are on the wall in the room where your friend is sitting? What color are the flowers in the nearby garden? What other people are visible, and what are they gearing?

STAYING GROUNDED

Finding out that you’re intuitively talented, that you can actually do the feats I’ve just described, can be a heady experience. After my second pregnancy, which was so fraught with magic, I got really carried away exploring the strange new reality I’d come to accept. I was like one of those parents who can’t tell their baby’s smile from a gas-related grimace; I thought my intuition was

speaking to me every time a stray thought wandered into my head. I made a lot of embarrassing mistakes, but these proved very educational. Every time my “intuition” ended up being wrong, I got a little better at telling the difference between a genuine intuitive hunch and, say, sleep deprivation. Mostly, I learned to follow the priorities of North Star compass reading: *body first, emotions next, intuition last*.

This means that if you’re sensing some urgent message from within, first make sure your body is healthy, fed, and rested. Then check your emotions for unhealed wounds. Physical impairment or emotional shrapnel, when mistaken for psychic knowledge or the word of God, can lead you off your true path in the weirdest way. Many’s the emotionally wounded soul who got swept up in the charisma of some self-declared prophet and ended up slurping poisoned Kool-Aid in the jungle, or vanilla pudding by the light of the Hale-Bopp comet. When in doubt, act on skepticism. Here are some signs that an inner urge is probably not a true intuitive message.

EXERCISE

Think about something you hope will happen in your future. Write it on a piece of paper. Next, pick a date several years away. Write down that date, along with the age you’ll be when it rolls around. To get your brain in “future” mode, you might also write down the ages your partner, parents, children, siblings, or friends will be on your target date.

Now close your eyes and create your “future scene.” Anchor it in lots of sensory detail: sights, smells, sounds, textures, temperatures (this helps you get into your body, which is close to your intuition, and away from your conscious mind, which often drowns out intuitive messages). Now simply check: Do you have that dream job? The perfect house? A horse? A boob job? (I once had a client whose first comment about her future scene was, “Gosh, I’ve had so much plastic surgery!”)

Once you get an answer, move forward or backward in time to find the approximate date you plan (deep down) to get what you want. This is not a deterministic exercise: If you don’t like the answers you get from it, you can change them. What future scenes do tell you, very accurately, is what you now expect. By magic or design, you’re likely to make that happen unless you consciously decide to change your future.

SYNCHRONICITY

The term *synchronicity*, which literally means “things happening at the same time,” is sometimes used to mean a coincidence so remarkable it seems beyond chance. I assign all my clients to start looking for synchronicities as soon as they begin to get in touch with their essential selves. It’s one of the best tools for finding jobs, friends, romantic partners, ideas, and just a general reassurance that life is on your side.

Julia Cameron, a creativity coach and the author of *The Artist’s Way*, often sees synchronicity at work in the lives of her clients. When they begin to uncover their artistic sensibilities, she claims, events around them seem to celebrate their efforts and draw them forward.

EXERCISE

Go to a bookstore or library when you have at least fifteen minutes to spare. Wander through the shelves without any particular intention. Try to feel if some books or sections seem to “tug” at you. This “tug” is a wisp of the same kind of curiosity you used to feel when you were a little kid, whenever something really interesting passed your way. It’s quite subtle, and you may be tempted to ignore it. Don’t. Pick five books that give you the strongest “tug,” take them to a table, and page through them, focusing on anything that seems to draw your attention. Sometimes, you’ll feel tuned in to a whole book. At other times, you may feel pulled toward specific bits of information. Simply take note of these, and see if they suggest any action. If not, let it go—this activity often acts like a seed, sprouting eventually into something much more interesting than you expected.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS: NORTH STAR, DEAD AHEAD

Carl Jung, the psychologist who popularized the word *synchronicity*, believed that these kinds of coincidences hinted at his patients’ destinies, orienting them in the right direction for self actualization. He also thought that synchronicities might show up just to confirm that a patient was on the right track. Once, a patient of Jung’s had a vivid dream about a scarab, a large, rather rare type of beetle. As the client was trying to figure out what the scarab represented, something began tapping at the window of Jung’s office. Jung opened the window, turned to the patient, and said, “Well, here’s your scarab.” Sure enough, there sat the beetle, waving its antennae at the patient from the palm of the doctor’s hand.

CHAPTER 11:
A MAP OF CHANGE

EXERCISE

See if you can remember three major catalytic events in your life so far. Were they shocks, opportunities, or transitions? Did you use these times to reconnect with your essential self, or did you go along with social pressures?

Name of Event	Shock/Opportunity/Transition	Reconnect or Cave In?

NAME YOUR SQUARE

Chaos Commando

Cindy just loves creative ferment. She’s constantly having great ideas, and she gets jobs easily because of her strikingly original way of thinking. She performs fabulously for a few months- but after that, she starts getting bored. If she stays in the same routine for any length of time, Cindy’s likely to stir up trouble, change horses in the middle of the stream, and fix things that aren’t broken, because she’s basically a Square One person.

Big Dreamer, Little Doer

Falco is a dreamer, a Square Two person all the way. He loves sitting in my office and planning his brilliant career. He does visualization exercises, affirmations, and detailed written “mission statements” that his self-help books assure him will lead to fame and fortune. But when I ask Falco what he’s done to actually construct the various castles he sees in the air, I’m met with an offended silence. The truth is, Falco’s a lot more comfortable in his imagination than in the real world. He’s a Square Two genius, but Square Three makes him very, very nervous. Until he faces up to the need for pragmatic action, his fantasies will never become realities.

Realist, Not Idealist

Lauren is a crusader. Give her a dream, and she will make it happen. She’s always on a project, like organizing neighborhood association keep drugs out of her city, volunteering to serve her

favorite candidate's political campaign, or helping her company market and sell a new product. She's a fantastic manager with excellent logistical skills, great at arranging schedules, keeping track of details and following through to make sure that every assignment gets done. Laurent loves to lead a charge—but don't ask her to come up with the basic ideas. She prefers falling in love with other people's visions and helping make them real. She's a Square Three person, through and through.

Rock of Gibraltar

Johann is a Square Four kind of guy. He's had the same job for twenty years, and he's proven invaluable to his company. Steady as the Budweiser Clydesdales, Johann punches the clock every single morning, works until five every single afternoon, and meticulously completes the various physical and bureaucratic aspects of every assignment. But when his firm goes belly-up and Johann is out of a job, he's utterly flummoxed. All he knows how to do is forge straight ahead; he's not used to inventing new responses and coming up with creative solutions. Johann's skills were perfect for Square Four, but he needs a different strategy to get through Square One.

EXERCISE

Read through the examples above and see which ones resonate most for you. If you're like most people, you'll be strong in at least one square, fairly competent in one or two others and not so great at the fourth. Some people are totally focused on one particular square. Others, even more rare, are great at all four squares. These people are extremely wealthy.

CHAPTER 12:

SQUARE ONE: DEATH AND REBIRTH

Whatever type of change catalyst you experience, it throws you into the first phase of change. I call this phase called Square One, because clients who launch themselves into a new life often tell me they feel that they've gone "back to square one." Though they could've sworn that they were moving forward, they feel as though everything they've ever learned or experienced has suddenly evaporated. They grieve desperately over the loss of familiar roles and situations, all the time bumbling around in their new lives like scared, clumsy infants. Believe it or not, this is a good thing.

Letting Go of Your Life

If we can believe people who've "died" and then been resuscitated, we don't have much to fear from our actual, physical demise. True, the part leading up to death—disease, dementia, decapitation—can be horrific. But once you've shuffled off the old mortal coil, you're supposed to go on to a junket of adventures that make a trip to Disney World look like a sentence in Alcatraz. According to those who managed to get a round-trip ticket to the undiscovered country, these activities include floating around without your body, seeing your whole life on "instant replay," and meeting up with predeceased loved ones. (I'm hoping to be met by the luggage I lost en route to O'Hare Airport in 1975.) Of course, it may be that the near-death experiencers are wrong, that we just disappear into nothingness when our bodies die. That doesn't sound like nearly as much fun, but of course, we won't be around to care.

Unfortunately, the "death" we experience after a catalytic event isn't nearly so stress-free. Remember, the change cycle doesn't begin when we experience the minor course corrections of life, only when something forces us to let go of our identities. This is a very real and profound form of annihilation. The Xhosa youths are losing their identity as boys, a shift so fundamental that the tribe takes away their names and obscures their features to symbolize it. In our culture, loss of identity is a less familiar concept. To help you understand what it feels like, please finish the following sentence with whatever comes to mind:

"I am a/an _____."

Now push it further by listing four or five more things:

"I am a/an _____, a/an _____,

a/an _____, a/an _____, and

a/an _____."

COPING ON THE THRESHOLD

1. Instead of clinging to Square Four, read your internal compass
2. Make small moves; gather information
3. Stay present
4. Don't mistake a Square One identity crisis for a signal that you've made the wrong choice
5. Reframe the way you think about identity loss
6. Remember and repeat the Square One Mantra

I don't know what the hell is going on, and that's okay.

7. Manage the Kindergarten Complex
8. Explore the magic of the threshold

VISION QUEST:

“I was always meant to be a/an _____”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

SQUARE TWO: DREAMING AND SCHEMING

GETTING BACK TO IMPOSSIBILITY

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, the irascible White Queen has a daily regimen that includes doing "six impossible things before breakfast." You don't have to push that hard, but to reach your own North Star you'll probably have to do at least a few impossible things a month. You'll find out what those things are when you reach Square Two of the change cycle. Here are some exercises I use to help clients blast through internalized limitations and reconnect with their true dreams. (Remember, these exercises won't do you much good if you're still in Square One. They're most effective after you've begun experiencing spontaneous hope.)

1. Repeat the Square Two Mantra

The first step in recovering your dreams is to memorize and repeat the Square Two Mantra:

There are no rules, and that's okay.

If this doesn't ring quite true to you, you may use the Deluxe Industrial-Strength Square Two Mantra. *Screw the rules.* This doesn't mean that you take all constraints off your behavior; it means that you begin operating out of the curiosity and passion of your essential self, rather than the fear and propriety of your social self.

EXERCISE: WHIZZING CAN THE ELECTRIC FENCE

The rules in your mind are like psychological electric fences that keep you from consciously engaging your real dreams. Instead of railing at them, I'd like you to start treating them with profound disrespect, and ultimately trampling right over them. To start, please complete the following sentences.

"If I didn't care what people thought, I would _____
_____."

"If I were sure I'd succeed, I would _____
_____."

"If I had the nerve, I would _____
_____."

“If I could be certain it was the right choice, I would _____

_____.”

“If I weren’t worried about the future, I would _____
_____.”

“If I had the freedom, I would _____”

Now I’d like you to choose one of your answers that is neither illegal nor physically dangerous, and *do it*. Right now, before you’re sure that it’s fail-safe, or acceptable, or risk-free. When you’re finished with that item, pick another one, and do that one too. Yes, I know you’ll be breaking the Rules. I don’t care. The needs for certainty and permission are the electric fences in your mind. Which would be gorse: whizzing all over them or permanently forfeiting *all* of the things you wrote on the list above?

2. *Defrosting*

To avoid pain, you may be tempted to keep your dreams in the deep freeze forever. But it’s far better to thaw out your dreams, endure the agony, shed the tears, and regain the full use of your frostbitten heart. Here’s an exercise that might help.

EXERCISE: DEFROSTING YOUR DREAMS

This exercise is similar to the popular tool called an “affirmation”—a positive phrase you say to yourself over and over. I don’t know about you, but for me affirmations always have a backlash effect. When I walk around saying something like “Every day, in every way, I’m getting better and better,” I get steadily more manic for about two hours, at which point something in my brain goes “pop!” and I find myself crouching in a corner mainlining Rocky Road ice cream. I’ve had far more success with the following version, adapted from an exercise creativity consultant Julia Cameron calls “blurts.”

To begin, find a notebook and something to write with. Take these tools to a comfortable place where you won’t be disturbed for at least half an hour. Ideally, it should be a place outside your home: a playground, a restaurant, a mountain road. Once you’re there, take a few relaxing breaths, climb fully into your body, and focus your attention on your internal compasses. Then search inside yourself for the memory of an abandoned hope. Do you wish your dead mother were here to comfort you? Do you want your amputated leg back? Think of something you truly want that is truly impossible. Write it down at the top of your page.

Now draw a line down the center of the page, below your dream. On the left side of the line, write the following sentence, while holding your dead dream in your mind and heart.

“My dream is coming true.”

You will get an immediate response from your analytical mind, which will say something like “COW CRAP”. Write that response on the right side of your paper, across from the first sentence. Then, just below the first sentence on the left side of the page, write it again:

“My dream, is coming true.”

Your brain will give you another negative response: “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Write it. Move down a line and repeat the whole sequence. Keep this up for a while, and you’ll see that the sentences on the right are different each time. Continue as long as you’re getting new answers.

3. *The Interview Game*

This is a visualization game similar to the “future vision” I discussed in Chapter 10. First, imagine that you’ve moved forward to time. It’s anywhere from a year to several decades in the future. You’ve just picked up a fresh, new copy of a glossy magazine, and—oh, look—the picture on the cover is a portrait of you! The headline premises an article, written by a well-known interviewer, that will tell readers all kinds of interesting things about your life and times.

Now I’m going to ask you some questions, and I want you to answer them not by thinking but by opening up this magazine in your mind and reading the answers from it. You might want to write these answers down on a separate piece of paper. Again, don’t think about the questions. Just look at the magazine. If you can’t “see” the answer, just skip to the next question.

1. What magazine is it? *Time? Vogue? Walrus Fancier’s Quarterly Review?*
2. Who is the interviewer?
3. What group of people typically reads this magazine?
4. Why do the readers want to know about you?
5. What do they want to know about you?
6. The interviewer has written a description of your home, where the interview took place. Read the description. What does your home look like? Where is it?
7. How does the author describe you physically?
8. What does the article say about your clothes? Your manner? The way you move?
9. Is there anyone else in your home? Who?
10. The interviewer asks you about your romantic life. How do you describe it?
11. If you have a spouse or partner, read what the interviewer says about him or her, and any comments about the way the two of you interact.
12. The author writes about the way you spend a typical day. What is it like?
13. The interviewer describes some photographs you have in your home. Who or what is in them?
14. Does the article mention any children, or perhaps ask you about your decision not to have them?
15. The author writes a good deal about your best-known achievement. What is it?
16. There’s a motivational paragraph or two about the hard times in your life and how you worked through them. What does it say?

17. The interviewer asks you what advice you would have given to your younger self. What's your answer?
18. What gem of wisdom do you have for your readers?
19. What's the most interesting part of the article?
20. The interviewer asks you about your plans for the future. What are they?

If you really like this exercise, try writing the article out in full. Don't edit, ponder, or worry about writing style; just take dictation from your intuition. When my clients do this, the results often turn out to be spookily predictive. Just remember not to censor or edit the article dictated by your essential self. Nothing you can say is too grandiose or improbable for the Dreamtime.

MID-SQUARE TWO: TRANSITION TO REALITY

Once you've let go of some internalized rules and breathed life back into your frozen dreams, it's time to begin the transition from the ideal world to the real world. This means taking your impossible dreams and putting them into pragmatic, attainable terms. At this point, I join forces with all those motivational speakers who flash their enormous teeth on TV infomercials and tell you that just specifying your goals is a huge step toward achieving them.

Your beloved activity: _____

Your WIG: _____

MY WILDLY IMPROBABLE GOALS

Date these goals were set: _____

1. _____

Date achieved: _____

2. _____

Date achieved: _____

3. _____

Date achieved: _____

4. _____

Date achieved: _____

You can see that I've left a space for you to note the date on which your WIGs became realities.

Unfortunately, this doesn't mean that you'll achieve all your WIGs without effort. I don't get those celebratory postcards from the clients who set goals, then sit back and do absolutely nothing but wait for the Goal Fairy to zap their dreams into reality. Miracles really can and will occur when you connect with your dreams, but they're both more likely and less necessary if you do everything in your power to reach your goals. As the saying goes, "Trust Allah, but tie your camel to the post." That means moving on from the Dreamtime to late Square Two: the Scheme-time.

EXERCISE

1. **Post-it Passion: Setting up Your Scheme**

Gather a bunch of post-its, in a variety of colors if you choose, and a place to stick them, preferably a flat surface at least 3 or 4 feet across, such as a white board, a strip of butcher paper, or a blank wall.

2. **Setting Up the Equation**

On the far right of your planning space, stick a Post-it on which you've written a brief description of your Wildly Improbable Goal. Many of my clients like to surround this particular Post-it with pictures that represent their ideal lives. They'll cut images out of magazines, collect postcards, or use snapshots they've taken themselves, gluing all these things into a collage representing their own North Stars.

Once you've got your WIG on the far right of your planning space, go to the far left side and this may be a good 10 feet away – and put up another Post-it recording today's date and time. I mean right now, as you are reading this. You have now set up two sides of the equation, like this:

My life as it is at:

_____ (time) + X = My Wildly Improbable Goal
on _____ (date)

3. Visualizing the Process

Try to visualize every step you must take to realize the WIG you've got stuck on your planning board. If you don't know exactly- and I mean exactly- what you must do to achieve your WIG, your scheme still needs elaboration. You may not even be sure what you need to learn, but that's just another question you must research.

4. Doing Your Homework

Homework Exercise No. 1: Book Larnin'

Go to the library (or bookstore) and research as much as you can on the topic

Homework Exercise No. 2: Reach Out and Touch Someone

Conduct informational interviews on your WIG, using your personal network

Homework Exercise No. 3: Untangling the Web

Use the internet to research your WIG. Bookmark and organize key information

Homework Exercise No. 4: Wild Invention

Brainstorm possibilities. If you have a group of friends handy, use the "100 different ways" exercise found on page 313 of the book

5. Fleshing Out

Fill out your planning place with Post-its, one little sticky note for every single step required to achieve your dream.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

SQUARE THREE: THE HERO'S SAGA

EXERCISE

1. *Break Every Task into Turtle Steps*

Think of a goal you really want to achieve, and write down one step you knew you must take to attain it (if you made a dream-scheme after reading the last chapter, pick out a step on your plan). Now break that step down into smaller components. Then pick one of these components, and break it down into even smaller subcomponents. Keep going until you find a mini-step that you're sure you can accomplish *easily*. Pay close attention to your internal compasses: You will feel changes in your body and emotions when the tasks became small enough to earn the coveted "turtle step" designation.

Today, take one turtle step toward your goal. Just one. Then STOP! *You are not allowed to take another turtle step until twenty-four hours have passed or you feel a strong desire to move on, whichever comes first.* At that point, take one more turtle step. Then stop again, and so on. Step, stop, step, stop, step. It may not look impressive, but it will get you anywhere.

2. *Bribe Your Essential Self*

Every Square Three hero's saga will include tasks you really, *really* don't want to do. Obviously, I don't want you to head away from your North Star and fill your whole life with hated tasks, but to reach your dreams, you'll probably have to jump several unpleasant social hoops. There are also some items on your plan that can't be broken down into 'turtle steps. If you have to give a three-hour presentation, you may chop up the preparation for it into small bits, but at some point you'll be up there in front of people for the whole three hours. Other jobs are so horrendous that even the smallest unit of effort is unpleasant. All of this requires essential-self participation, or at least willingness. When turtle steps won't work, bribery can really help.

Suppose that I asked you to do some really gross task, like cleaning a gas-station rest room. For this, I offered you five shiny pennies and the satisfaction of a job well done. Here's your brush and plunger! How is your essential self reacting to this proposition? Imagine that I'm serious, that I'm really sending you into the field of combat right this minute.

EXERCISE

Consult your list of dream-scheme tasks for a step that is difficult to break down into turtle steps, or that you really don't want to do. Figure out how much of a favorite reward would be needed to bribe your essential self into completing this step. One crucial caveat: *Once your essential self agrees to a deal and completes the assigned task, you absolutely must pay the bribe in full.* Otherwise, you'll lose the trust of your own true self.

3. Do a Terrible Job.

I believe with all my heart that if a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing badly. Almost all my clients are willing to work very hard to do things well. That's a laudable approach to life. However, it often means that once we've amassed enough life skills to get by without daily egregious mistakes, we stop growing, experimenting, and learning new behaviors. We limit our whole range of activities to things we already do well. Refusing to do a bad job is a leading cause of North Star Deficiency Syndrome.

If you're going through a major transition, your hero's saga is absolutely certain to include unfamiliar situations and new skills. The first few times you try any of these things, from tying flies to negotiating a contract, you're probably going to do it badly. Terrific! That shows you're still expanding the horizons of your own capability. With time and practice, you'll do your North Star tasks brilliantly. But being willing to make a mess is a prerequisite to gaining that skill.

EXERCISE

Find a turtle step you've never done before, or something that's difficult for you. Do this thing really badly. Misspell words. Draw stick figures. Get hopelessly lost. Ask for instructions, then forget them. Then, instead of scolding yourself, give yourself a reward for trying something new and being brave enough to mess up a few times. Now you're living like a hero.

EXERCISE

1. Hang Loose.

This week, go into an environment that feels alien to you. If you're a clean-living religious type, spend an hour in a bar. If you tend toward chains and leather, go to church, and make sure you pick a religion you've never belonged to. You will enter this situation as a "participant observer" (a term used by social scientists to get professional credit for writing journal articles about strip clubs). Your objective is simply to notice what happens in these alien environments, so that you can describe everything later to a friend. How did the people sit, walk, smile at each other? What would you have to do to fit in? You don't have to do it, just describe it.

As you do this exercise, you'll find that your initial unease will become mixed with detached interest and amusement. Analyzing the social environment will decrease your discomfort and increase your confidence. The next time you hit Square Three, remember this feeling and return to it, no matter how stressful the situation. It will help you hang loose.

2. Learn from Your Mistakes.

My favorite college art professor used to say, "The sooner you make your first five thousand mistakes, the sooner you can move to the next five thousand." This was his drolly depressing way of noting that we learn to succeed by failing. What he didn't mention is that as you solve harder and harder problems, you eventually reach a level where your mistakes are the problems of a master, rather than a beginner. This is true, however, only if you learn from every failure.

Most people don't take a "black box" approach to their own mistakes. We like to put failure behind us, avoid thinking about it, and hide it from others. To reach your own North Star, you must examine your mistakes from angles—including other people's vantage points. This means seeking honest feedback, both positive and negative, from the people around you. Many of my clients self-destruct every time they get to Square Three, because of problem or preconceptions that are as obvious as daylight to everyone around them. They make it clear that they don't want to be "criticized," so this wealth of helpful information stays in other people's heads and never makes it to theirs. Instead of looking for the black box, they bury it with hardly a glance and end up turning small isolated errors into big, repetitive failures.

EXERCISE

You may recall that a few pages ago I asked you to do something badly. Now I'd like you to figure out exactly why your performance was so bad. Ask for feedback from two or three people you trust. If the task was to make something, show them the product and ask them what's wrong with it. If you were doing something interpersonal, ask for feedback about how you came across to others. If you were solving a problem, let someone show you where your logic failed. Then thank them for their feedback and get your essential self a treat. As Plato said, "Man gains his first measure of intelligence on the day that he first admits to his own ignorance." Congratulations. You're looking smart.

3. *Go Back to Square One.*

EXERCISE

Make something you have never made before, anything from a potato patch to a model airplane. As you make it, count the number of unexpected problems that arise and the number of new skills you have to learn in order to succeed. Write them down. Reward your essential self for having conquered so many obstacles. If you can learn all that, you can learn everything it takes to go, turtle step by turtle step, all the way to your own North Star.

4. *Repeat the Square Three Mantra.*

The Square Three Mantra, like the mantras for the first two squares, is something you should say to yourself at moments of discouragement or frustration. It goes:

"This is much worse than I expected, and that's okay."

5. *If You Can't Figure Out What's Wrong, Just Do Something Different.*

EXERCISE

Think of a pattern you'd like to break: a bad habit, a tendency to procrastinate, saying yes when you want to say no. The next time you feel this coming on, don't fight it. Just go right ahead and repeat the pattern--*but this time, you must wear a hat*. If you are a habitual hat wearer, do something else while you commit your little sin. For example, you could try squatting, holding a

raw egg, or speaking pig Latin. From now on, you must add something new every time you indulge in your unwanted pattern. Enjoy.

EXERCISE

1. *Work like a dog*
Find a dog. Watch it work. Now forget Ebenezer Scrooge, John Henry, and the titans of industry: Fido is your new role model.
2. *Play like a dog*
Establish an official play time and honor it.
3. *Hang out with your favorite people*
Call your best friend. Schedule time and play together. Keep the appointment, and when you're enjoying yourself thoroughly, stop and pay attention. This feeling-the feeling of ease, contentment, trust and above all, fun-is what you should experience on a regular basis as you lock in on your North Star.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

SQUARE FOUR: THE PROMISED LAND

TIPS

1. Put On the Brakes
2. Focus on What's Working; Drop Everything Else
3. Slide Down the Learning Curve
4. Chunk Your Turtle Steps

EXERCISE ONE: CLING-GUARD AFFIRMATIONS

Despite my doubts about affirmations in general, this is one situation where they work beautifully. Below are some statements you should post all over your walls, including the walls of your mind, whenever you start feeling greedy and anxious. If you've followed your internal navigational equipment through every step of the change cycle, all of these statements are absolutely true. Repeat these until you believe them.

1. There is more than enough wealth, love, and happiness to go around.
2. I am succeeding because of my choices, not blind luck.
3. If something goes wrong, I'll figure out how to make it right.
4. I created this situation once, and I can create it again—and again, and again ...
5. If I lost everything, lots of people would be willing to help me.
6. I can deal with my life at this moment—and that's all I'll ever have to do.
7. Nothing can take my destiny away from me.
8. There's much, much more good stuff where this came from.
9. I will always have plenty.
10. I have free access to infinite richness.

Even if you have a very generous internalized Everybody, you may develop psychological tentacles after going through a period of deprivation. This is a natural tendency, possibly even a physiological one. The Soviet toast miser's need to save food was an instinctive body-and-brain reaction to near starvation. My favorite remedy for this kind of thing is what I call "divine decadence."

EXERCISE TWO: DIVINE DECADENCE

To practice divine decadence, simply get yourself an oversupply of something your essential self really likes. Don't just get as much as you want; get twice as much, five times as much, more than you could use in a month of Sundays. Obviously, unless you're very wealthy, you won't be stocking up on luxury yachts or highly trained servants; but the essential self is a simple soul, and it can feel divinely decadent with relatively inexpensive rewards.

EXERCISE THREE: HOLD A GIVEAWAY

Giveaways are a central element of many cultures. People in these societies gain status not by having stuff but by giving stuff. While this philosophy has its own drawbacks and dysfunctions, most of us could stand a little more of it. In our culture, giving too often becomes a form of control—"I gave you life; you owe me everything"—or a way to feel self-consciously righteous. Giving for these reasons will make you more stingy, not less, and could very well keep you away from the life you were meant to live. A real giveaway, the kind that nails down your spot in the promised land, is willing and joyful. You give because it makes you happy. You don't have the slightest need to be repaid or to sit around admiring your own generosity. I must reiterate that *you can't feel this way about giving unless you're sure that there's plenty of good stuff for you*. It's impossible to force generosity out of a sense of deprivation. Don't even try it. But once you've experienced enough divine decadence to feel that the world may be generous after all, the following steps can make your Square Four experience even better:

1. Identify something you have in great abundance and don't mind sharing.
2. Find someone who needs what you have to share.
3. Figure out how much you can give away joyfully (do this by checking to see how your essential self responds to the prospect of giving various different amounts).
4. Give as much as you can joyfully afford. If possible, do this anonymously.
5. Dwell on the pleasure of seeing, or imagining, the good feelings you've created with your gift.

You'd be amazed how happy this exercise can make you. Weirdly enough, I also believe—really—that it's one of the best ways to increase your income. I remember reading this piece of advice in a financial-planning book and thinking that it was saccharine, bogus, and obviously untrue. See, I was raised in a religion that requires its members to give 10 percent of everything they earn to the church, and though I'd done this in my youth, I certainly never saw my income magically increase. But as I read the financial-planning book, it occurred to me that as a kid I'd always given under duress, often parted with more money than I wanted to give, and knew that my donation was going to a massive, faceless organization, however well-meaning. When I ran across the concept of a "giveaway" decades later, I decided to try it on my own terms. I calculated how much money I felt comfortable giving and identified someone whose life could literally be changed by this small amount. The actual anonymous donation of the cash left me feeling wonderful. And the next day, sure enough, I got an unexpected windfall check from a project I'd forgotten about long before. You could have knocked me down with a feather.

I don't know why this works, but it does. Whenever my financial affairs are looking worrisome, when greed and fear begin crooning their fetid whispers into my ear (this tends to happen right around April fifteenth), I hold a little giveaway to reverse the trend. As long as I give in a manner and amount that brings me joy, more money arrives in short order—money I had no good reason to expect.

EXERCISE

List ten good things you have, right now. For example, at the moment I have: 1) healthy lungs, 2) many happy memories, 3) gum, 4) the ability to read, 5) a slight tan, 6) hope, 7) Diet Snapple, 8) plans to visit Jamaica, 9) a lovely view of North Phoenix, and 10) sweat glands. And that's just the beginning! Your turn:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now take a second to focus on each of the things you listed. Congratulate yourself on every one. Dwell on your virtues and advantages. Gloat. If at all possible, push your own self-satisfaction to the point where you are overwhelmed by a grateful sort of joy. Express this feeling as often as possible. Far from turning people off, this will draw good friends and good fortune toward you.

3. *Be Here Now.*

Andrew Carnegie said, "Show me a contented man, and I'll show you a failure." In other words, the craving for more and the inability to be satisfied are fundamental ingredients of success. Huh? This is nonsense. It's like teaching medical students that only patients who are in severe pain can be considered healthy. Nevertheless, it's the way a lot of us have learned to think.

EXERCISE ONE: THE BEAUTY WAY

There is beauty before me, and there is beauty behind me.

There is beauty to my left, and there is beauty to my right.



There is beauty above me, and there is beauty below me.

There is beauty around me, and there is beauty within me.

EXERCISE TWO: MINDFUL MUNCHING

This is based on a meditation practice called “mindfulness,” in which you do ordinary things with extraordinary attention. First, fix a small serving of some food you really love—one grape will do, or a noodle, or (my favorite) a caramel-nut chocolate. Sit down at a time you know you won’t be interrupted and eat this food very, very slowly. Try to focus on every sensation you experience: sight, smell, taste, sound and texture. Notice how the food feels in your mouth, throat and tummy. Play with it. Poke it with your fingers. Blow bubbles. Be fully present for the delight of this one experience. You will find that there is far more pleasure in it than you generally notice.

FINALLY

Repeat the Square Four Mantra:

“Everything is changing, and that’s okay.”