Each Day Your Life Begins

CREATE THE LIFE YOU WANT
A HAMPTON ROADS COLLECTION

LYNN GRABHORN and MINA PARKER
Each Day Your Life Begins,

Inspired by Lynn Grabhorn's *New York Times* Bestseller *Excuse Me Your Life Is Waiting*

Mina Parker

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Introduction

Lynn Grabhorn’s landmark book *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting* appeared on my doorstep one day, the gift of a friend of the family. I did not seek it out, I did not ask for it, but my vibrations must have been sending out the message that I needed this book. I picked it up not knowing what to expect. I had heard bits and pieces about the law of attraction: the idea that like attracts like in all aspects of the universe and that we can create our own destinies through acceptance and mastery of this concept. Some of this seemed to resonate for me and some of it seemed completely bogus. So with curiosity, excitement, and a degree of skepticism, I plunged in. Lynn’s voice rings from each page—authentic, worldly, and wise—and I quickly found myself wrapped up in the start of an amazing and challenging journey.

Soon after I opened *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting*, stories started to pour into my life—stories of people’s experiences with the law of attraction, whether they called it that or not. Some were thrilled that something they’d been wanting, hoping, and working for seemed to float into their lives on a cloud. Some were excited by the new directions their lives had taken as a result of some unexpected stroke of luck. But a recurring theme in many of the stories was the difficulty of living these principles day after day and finding the inspiration to reclaim that initial spark when the going got rough.

The law is simple: like attracts like. There are many straightforward ways to put the idea into practice. Sure, it all made sense while you were reading, and, yes, there were initial leaps and bounds and many saw results right away. But then old habits would resurface, sometimes in insidious ways. Lynn talks about finding ways to open our valve, that inner part of us that flows energy freely or stops it up completely. People would manage to pry it open a tiny bit and then after some success they would inexplicably begin to clamp down, judge themselves, and shut the valve they had just managed access. I wondered why. Shouldn’t this get easier as you go? If it’s really such a simple concept, why is it so difficult to live by on a daily basis?

In my own experience, as I played around with some new ways of thinking and feeling, several amazing things came down the pike—along with some miserable ones. I thought, “This isn’t any better; it’s just a life pushed to the extreme and the end result is about the same (or worse, given the exhaustion of going back and forth between good and bad).” How was I going to find consistency and comfort in a whole new way of being?
I came up with the idea to make a book to help people, including myself, navigate the slumps and pitfalls of the daily practice of living through the law of attraction. It is essential to me (as it was for Lynn) to take all of this stuff with a grain of salt, to continuously find the joy and the levity in this ongoing life adventure, and to lighten up on and take care of ourselves. To me, the law of attraction is about finding and holding on to the inspiration, passion, and connection to what you love that makes your life meaningful. There are all sorts of ways to do this, and I mean really do this, but our old habits and our fear will more often than not lead us to the least effective strategies. So these 365 meditations are meant to serve as a guidebook, a source of inspiration and encouragement throughout the year and again and again. The law of attraction is best learned through practice, and 365 times seems like a pretty good way to do that.

When my life is going along at a happy clip, I now attribute it largely to the fluidity and inspiration of the ideas in Lynn’s books, as well as a special rule that correlates to the law of attraction. I call it the law of plenty. We operate on a model of scarcity all too often, worrying about what will come next and how we will struggle to get what we need. The law of plenty assures us that we already have anything we will ever need. Everything we need is at our fingertips, and the law of attraction is the information superhighway that brings it to us.

There is no concept more relevant to our lives than what Lynn calls the law of attraction. It goes far beyond the immediate, self-gratifying milestones of unblocking your energy and getting the stuff, jobs, and relationships that you want (though that’s pretty great too!). This is about tapping into the energy that connects all of us, that defines the goals and the wisdom and the trajectory of the human race.

We are disconnected from our deepest selves in our daily lives. We are steeped in chaos and anxiety. It doesn’t have to be this way. This book brings together ancient wisdom and new concepts in a way that applies to our hectic, overstuffed, frenetic lives—lives in which we seem to be doing more than ever and getting less out of it all. The principles laid out in *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting* and *The “Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting” Playbook* are explored in this collection, month by month. If followed in an earnest and open way, these principles provide a complete reversal of what makes our modern lives crazy without taking the drastic steps of moving off the grid and into the hills to weave our own clothing and raise our own food (unless that is your lifelong dream, in which case go for it). This is simple, revolutionary, and completely suited to the lives we want to lead, the lives that will make us happy if we only let them.
Lynn dedicates her book to “every one of us who finally . . . maybe . . . possibly . . . believes they have the right to perpetual happiness.” What is perpetual happiness? How can I get a double order of it right away? Perpetual happiness doesn’t mean you’re never going to be sad or upset or frustrated again. If that’s your goal, then you might want to consider a vegetative state, though I wouldn’t recommend it. Perpetual happiness, to me, can best be defined as embracing the big picture of what makes you feel good, what feels important and vital to your concept of yourself in the world, and what challenges and renews you on a regular basis. There are happy janitors and happy bankers; it has been proven by scientists that one’s individual circumstances make almost no difference. Through the daily meditations of this book, I hope you will find the courage to embrace that belief and find the strength and inspiration to open up to the possibility of that happiness saturating every part of your life.

I have picked up and used some of Lynn’s phrases that may be unfamiliar to you. Even if you haven’t read her work, most of these simple concepts will become clear through the meditations in this book. In addition to the inner “valve” I just mentioned, she talks about “feeeeling” and getting into a “feeeeling place”—an alternate spelling to convey emotion that is the result of wonderful, positive, focused energy. She writes about “flip-switching,” which is a way she devised to turn off negative vibrations as you would a light switch, which enables you to quickly move into a better state. She talks about “prepaving,” which is a way to send out your positive energy so that instead of fretting about future events you can simply send your good vibes ahead of you to generate the best possible outcome. Some other vocabulary may be new to you, but I urge you to trust yourself and go with the flow and you’ll soon come to your own, greater, understanding.

I hope this collection will be a resource for you. I encourage you to use it any way you wish—read it daily and incorporate it into your routine; pick it up now and then to get a jolt of inspiration or reawakening. Simple as these concepts are, as Lynn says, they are completely foreign to us, and a daily practice to remind us of what we’re meant to be doing, or the suggestion of a new way to look at something, is often indispensable.

So welcome to the next phase of your journey, and here’s to the third month of Each Day Your Life Begins . . .

. . . a month of letting it happen
... a month of letting go

... a month of staying calm

... a month of practice

... a month of abolishing fear

... a month of desires

... a month of forgiveness

... a month of resilience

... a month of beating boredom

... a month of comfort in small things

... a month of stumbling

... a month of new beginnings

... a month of honesty

... a month of giving over but never giving up.

Mina Parker

Lynn Grabhorn began her professional life in advertising in New York City. She also founded and directed an audiovisual educational publishing company in Los Angeles, and ran a mortgage-brokerage firm in Washington. Her main claim to fame was *The New York Times* bestseller, *Excuse Me, Your Life is Waiting*. She died in 2004.

Mina Parker is a freelance writer, editor, and mom. Her other books for Conari are *Half Full, Mother Is a Verb, 100 Good Wishes for Baby,* and *Her Inspiration.* She has also worked as an actor, a grant writer, and an administrator for several nonprofits. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and son.
“When no money was coming in, I had to do a lot more of what I call ‘flip-switching,’ the rapid altering of one’s energy from negative to positive. I had to find ways to get me out of whatever worry-habit I’d been in, and open up that valve.”

No one said the habit of worry is easy to give up. It’s especially hard in periods where money or work is scarce. Maybe we don’t have enough to pay the mortgage. We don’t know where next week’s groceries are coming from. Why wouldn’t we worry? It’s what we’ve been taught to do. A lot of people are even very sure that they don’t work as well if they aren’t under pressure, that they don’t earn all they can if they’re not afraid of the wolf at the door or nipping at their heels.

No one said it would be easy to switch to positive energy when the news is seemingly so bad—high unemployment, low sales, high foreclosure rates, no credit. Yet when things are grim is the very time we most need positive energy.

Now is the time to start paying very close attention to our energy. When we feel the negative coming on, we can do something concrete toward our goal. If it’s looking for a job, we can make a phone call or send an email. If it’s finishing a project and we’re feeling too negative to actually do anything creative on it, we can clean up the office so we can work tomorrow.

When things are bad, I’m on the lookout for any positive gesture I can make.
“Forgiveness is forgetting the thing ever happened in the first damn place.”

Forgive and forget. It’s a proverb we learn in childhood—and rarely accomplish in adulthood. It slips off our tongue. “Forget about it,” we say. Or, “It’s already forgotten,” usually when someone apologizes. But is it forgotten? And do we mean it—either literally or figuratively? It is difficult to forget things we might want to forgive—that a partner was unfaithful, that an employee stole money or resources, that a mother-in-law said a hurtful thing. So just what does it mean to forget the thing ever happened in the “first damn place.”

I don’t think it necessarily means we have no memory of the thing happening. I think it means that we have defused the negative energy around the memory. We know it happened. We no longer feel its sting. We no longer let the negative energy that was being generated by us and between us and the other person to dominate. We give up charging the memory—the anniversary of the day he left me or six months since my car was slammed into. We may, in the case of the former, remember the day and celebrate how good we feel. Or, in the case of the latter, feel grateful to be alive. But we’re not marking the occasion by remembering primarily that another done us wrong.

Another way to “forget” is to practice a ritual forgetting. Again, there are some things we’re not likely to forget. But writing them down on paper and tearing that paper up into little pieces before recycling it or burning it are symbolic ways to stop the negative energy. Finally, there are some things we can actually forget, and it’s a good idea to practice doing so. If you don’t rehearse over and over in your head everything that was said in your last fight with your partner, you are less likely to remember those words. In time, you may even—literally—forget them.

Try some creative forgetting.
“What unconditional love really means is: ‘I will keep my valve open to well-being no matter what crazy thing you’ve done.’ (Remember, you don’t have to change it or even like it; you just have to stop focusing on it!’)”

To love without putting conditions—on our partners, our kids, our friends, ourselves. How much trouble is caused in relationships when we focus not on the fact that we love someone, but on what they are doing that we don’t like? Sending a message that “I’ll love you if you stop doing something or change your ways” is sending a message that I don’t love you now. And that goes for love of self as well as others.

It’s a pretty simple thing to say we can’t change someone else. But, oh, how hard we try. And we pray about it, and we make suggestions to them, and we admonish, and we nag, and we think if only, and nothing changes. Let’s just say, “I stop putting all that energy to trying to change that person. What could I do with it instead?”

Today, I bring my focus to well-being, for myself and others.
“Stop focusing on, responding to, or worrying about how to control conditions that haven’t changed yet. That’s only getting you more of the same.”

Every time you focus on, respond to, or worry about how to control anything, you become stiffer and tighter, shutting down the flow of energy. I can feel it physically when I do it—my spine crunches under the weight of my own efforts to control, and I find myself hunched or stooped over whatever I’m trying to muscle into being. If I can see and feel that much of a change in my body, I can only imagine what a mess my vibrations must be.

Rigidity and flexibility—energy responds to both. Think of a steel rod as a lightning bolt shoots through it straight into the ground. Then think of a lightning bolt striking a lake and branching out through the water’s depth and width. In human beings, the energy flow through a rigid personality, or goal, or thought pattern, may indeed be powerful and effective. Many people have accomplished great things by High-Ho Silvering away at something until it happened. But the power of that initial burst of energy goes straight into the ground—powerful but short lived, and possibly dissatisfying.

In contrast, for someone who is flexible, who allows her thoughts and dreams to flow like water, the energetic jolt of a new idea or a burst of passion is free to travel on a much broader path, finding ways and means beyond what she could ever consciously imagine. These ways and means are all the more available in a flexible person because no path is shut down outright.

Getting into your feeling place is like doing vibrational stretches, limbering up in preparation for a burst of fresh energy.
“Try as we will, fix-it kits don’t work. When we decide someone needs fixing, all we’re doing is viewing them as ‘wrong,’ flooding them with negative energy.”

Whatever energy we send out to others bounces off them and comes right back at us. So when we send out “I’m gonna fix your problem” energy to someone, letting them know we think there’s something wrong with them, it comes right back at us, flooding us, too. We set ourselves up. Here’s how it works: A decides to fix B’s bad habit of, oh, say, smoking cigarettes. So, A harangues B and sits him down and lectures him on the detriments of smoking. And B feels stupid and powerless, and lashes out at A. Who feels better after this little exchange? No one.

In fact, “fix-it” kits don’t work on ourselves, either. Imagine A and B above are just two different parts of the same person. Same result. Everyone is flooded with negative energy. No one benefits.

Imagine instead of fix-it kits, we each took responsibility for ourselves. And as a first, and ongoing, step, we take stock of ourselves, not as home improvement projects—plaster here, paint there, fix up the plumbing—but as the beautiful, spiritual, and physical beings that we are, without judging ourselves as good/bad, right/wrong. That opens up room for us to look at our behavior in any given moment and situation without sending that flood of negative energy. It opens up room for us to change that behavior if we choose to.

I watch the energy I send and receive, changing its charge from negative to neutral, so I can make choices that benefit me and the world.
“When we feel bad, or down, or not much of anything, we’re disconnected and flowing the foreign vibrations of low frequency negativity throughout our bodies. In other words, if it’s not about joy, it’s always negative.”

Never say no.

I used to teach a kids’ theater class, and this is the first rule of improvisation in theater (and, I would argue, in life)—never say no. Never say no? I know you’re probably rolling your eyes and thinking I’m off my rocker (and you’re no preteen drama student), but hear me out.

You don’t need no. No is a given: a negative, the contrast of the path you did not choose, the decision you veered away from, the failure to embrace what’s really there in front of you. No exists without you having to reinforce it, or invite it to meddle in your affairs. But most importantly, no is a dead end. Going back to improvisation for a minute, I taught that instead of “No,” you say, “Yes, and . . .” So, even if you don’t want something, you can say, “Yes, and . . .” to redirect that energy to something you do want. That way the channel is open, and there is always something coming down the pipes.

So you’re feeling down. On top of that, you’re moping about how your low frequencies are drawing in more stuff to make you feel down, and the whole thing is shaping up to be a vicious circle. So you get stuck on the negative: I don’t want to feel this way! Or the false positive: I want to feel better now! Both of those come from the lack of feeling good, so you try stuffing how you feel down your own throat as a last resort and force yourself into a smile, at which point, you fall practically to pieces with the wasted effort.
Try “Yes, and . . .” and open up the possibilities of an improvised moment, day, or life.
“Stop thinking the world has to change before you can be safe or happy. You create your own safety through your energy flow.”

Regardless of all the wonderful attracting you are no doubt managing to do, you will most certainly find that there are still some unpleasant tasks in your life. At the very least, there will be some garbage to take out, some painful dentist appointments, some awful people with whom you have to interact on a daily basis. Is this a failing of your powers of attraction? Nah. But maybe you can turn even daily unpleasantness into fuel for the fire.

Or maybe it’s far worse than the garbage—maybe you live in a dangerous neighborhood (sure, you’re magnetizing your way out of there to a beautiful and safe home, but what about until then?). Maybe your financial situation is so bad that you’re headed to the food stamp office, or a homeless shelter.

Think of any disagreeable task or situation, or even one that most people would think of as a real downer, as a tool. That’s right—a hammer, a wrench, a nail gun. By directing your energy and changing your beliefs, any situation or action can be a part of the new life you’re building, brick by brick. The great thing about tools is you pick them up, use ’em to get something done, and then put them down. Just so with an unpleasant task. Get into it, get it done, and then let it go. Lingering around it, or building up anger about it, or feeling shame or guilt about it just draws more of that same unpleasantness to you.

Do this and be amazed as unpleasant junk drenched in negativity transforms into just another tool for the job—all getting us where we need to be. We can feel gratitude even toward the crappy stuff in our lives, because it’s all just bringing us closer to our goals. That’s quite a turnaround.

Life’s downers—small and large—can be picked up and put away in service of your grand scheme.
“No, not all at once; this thing is ongoing and will be for as long as I’m in this body.”

Here’s good news. Learning is a lifelong activity. We can, for as long as we are in our bodies, learn new things. Have new insights. Grow into our best selves. Not in a day, not in a week, not in a year, but for as long as we live.

We can focus on one thing at a time, opening in one area of our lives, knowing that we can continue opening; in fact, once we’ve started opening, nothing much can stop us. Once I say, “Yes, I want” . . . Once I say, “Yes, I will” . . . I have started on a path. I have opened to telling my own truth. And that is not an ending. It’s a beginning.

Opening to my own truth is like riding a bicycle—once I know how to do it, my body’s not going to forget. A week, a month, a year, five years can go by. And it’s ongoing. If I ride regularly, I’ll be able to ride farther, faster. If I open to the energy around me, I’ll learn faster.

It is good to be alive in the moment.
“We send the magnetic feelings out, the universe obediently delivers. It doesn’t react to our pleas; it only responds to our vibrations which come purely from how we’re feeling.”

But I can’t help it. I feel horrible, miserable, sad, and lonely. And we can’t control our feelings, can we? Say a car cuts you off in traffic. What’s your first, automatic response? To shout a curse. To call the driver a name. To snarl at your passengers about the state of drivers today. Anger. Justified, right? That car cut you off. It’s justified, and it’s automatic, and you can’t do anything about it. Right?

And you’ve just sent out a message that you’re mad and you’re not going to take it anymore. At the next corner somebody runs through a yellow light. There you were, chomping to go at the green—YOUR green light. That fool nearly killed you. Cuss, double cuss. Now you’re mad and scared. So you slow down for a minute, but now you’re worried that you’re going to be late. So you send that vibe out. Lo and behold, a traffic jam.

Now you probably didn’t cause the other driver to nearly run you down, and it’s not likely that you’re responsible for the overturned apple truck that stopped traffic for five miles in both directions. But, if your initial response had been to take a deep breath and then another and then another, and then the next thing that happened and the next thing that happened—well they might have all been different.

When you’re ready to pitch a fit, take a breath and think about what you’re throwing out into the world.
“It is so important for us to have a broad understanding of just what negative emotion is, how covertly it works, how to spot it, why we keep having it, and, oddly enough, how truly vital it is to the process of taking control.”

Someone told me once that the crazier you are, the saner you have the chance to become. What I think she meant is that as you struggle with a whole host of difficulties, worries, obsessions, or neuroses, you actually have more opportunities to learn and grow as you go through those things than someone might who remains in a relatively balanced state.

This can be a great comfort, especially when you’re feeling a little nuts or out of control in mind or body. All negative emotion can ultimately fuel our understanding. But those nasty feelings are tricky: they can catch us off guard, can play to our fears or insecurities, and worst of all, can masquerade as positive emotions. Think of how good it feels to an alcoholic to sink into temporary oblivion. Not really good in the sense of being tapped into a true life force, but certainly good enough in that moment. So the tricky part is diving in to discover a broader understanding of negativity and how it goes to work in your mind, and in your life.

What are your negative habits? Do you walk around judging yourself and others? Do you cower from making decisions? Do you shut down your creative impulses by deciding your ideas are frivolous or impossible? Do you choose temporary comfort over long-term growth? Take a magnifying glass to your neuroses and find out how they work. Be fascinated by them and ask them direct questions, aloud if you can. “Why do I believe
in you? What purpose do you serve in my life?” Shine a bright light on them so that you can see them for what they really are.

Bless your negative emotions, as they enable you to understand, forgive (yourself and others), and move on.
“There’s just no getting away from it; the overwhelming balance of power on this planet is on the side of well-being because that is the natural, omnipotent state of All That Is, including you and me!”

Sometimes I think the story isn’t looking good for the side of the angels. Watching the news—hurricanes and earthquakes, not to mention war in places most of us have never heard of until there’s a war there, not to mention . . . Well, the list is practically endless. Yet spending a lot of my time and energy listing it is not a productive task. I can succeed in making myself feel awful for a little bit if that’s what I want to do.

What I cannot do is change the “natural and omnipotent state of All That Is.” But what is that state? How do I know it exists, especially in my most despairing moments? I take a breath, and I consider the negative proof—if the balance weren’t on the side of well-being, the forces of evil would have destroyed our race and our planet a long time ago. I take another breath and I consider the positive proofs—a baby’s smile, a perfectly symmetrical leaf, a connection between the yous and the mes of this world.

I think about love songs. In so many of them, there’s the inevitability factor—the person falling in love just can’t help herself. So she gives in to it. There is no getting away from it. So, what if I think about the balance of power being for well-being and just give in to it—with every breath I take, in every waking moment, and my sleeping moments, too? Imagine what a life I’ll live. Imagine how much I’ll affect the balance of power.

May I remember with every breath that well-being breeds well-being.
“Stop being a wimpy wanter. Want big in quality, as well as quantity! And don’t ever stop creating new Wants. The ultra high energy You are needs outlets to flow. Create them!”

Reach for the stars. Let yourself dream. Think big. What have we got to lose? This is not the easiest advice in the world for many of us to follow, especially those of us who grew up in cultures, families, or parts of the country where it’s not exactly polite to say out loud what we want. We get the message very early and very loud that it’s also probably not all right to want what we want.

Corollaries of the “it’s not all right to want” law are if you want one thing, then you have to give up another. If you want something, then your sibling/parent/friend/partner/colleague is going to have to give up something. You can’t tell me this isn’t reinforced at work. Who among us hasn’t asked for a raise and been told the pool for raises is just too small? What would happen if everyone asked for that size raise? Well, the pool might have to get bigger. Or the staff smaller. Or some of you might have to (and want to, I might add) find different jobs. In any of those events, me wanting is not the problem.

As we create our wants and let them grow, we also learn flexibility—if one thing doesn’t come through in the way we desire it to, we might shift our energies slightly and see it come through in a different way, maybe even bigger. As we open up, we find more things open to us. We increase our wants and our gets by leaps and bounds. All this happens when we stop being a wimpy wanter.

The next time I catch myself being a wimpy wanter, I’ll ask myself what would happen if I asked for twice as much. Three times? Ten times?
“The moment you become aware that you’re feeling a little shaky or off case, ask yourself
*What’s bothering me*? and keep at it until an answer comes. It will.”

Many of us were raised with a “just suck it up” mentality. One favorite saying in that vein is, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” So, does stopping to take time to figure out why the going got tough mean you’re not going where you set out to go?

No. Unequivocally and without a doubt.

When you’re feeling shaky, not sure of your path, there’s really no point barreling ahead on that path. Indeed, it might still be the right path for you. And, until you stop to figure it out, you won’t know if it’s the wrong path, the wrong approach, the wrong time.

Asking ourselves what’s bothering us requires time and honesty—time to let the answer well up from our hearts and the honesty to admit we’ve found the answer even if we don’t like it. Even if it means taking a turn away from some of the people in our lives, or quitting a “good” job.

May I ask the question with courage and be receptive to the answer.
“They’re just the garden variety type of feelings we have all day long. But once you learn to keep track of which ones feel good and which ones feel less than good, you’re home free.”

I have a ready excuse for my own tendency to resist change in my life: it’s too hard to move forward because it would mean changing everything all at once, and then I’d be lost, without a leg to stand on. As if my bad habits were my sum total, and to make a positive leap in my life I would have to solve every past or present problem I’ve ever had. As if in order to feel good today, I’d have to revisit every moment of feeling badly I’ve ever had and pick it apart to figure out motivations, illusions, and reality.

If we had to do all that before making a change, there would be no person on this earth ever capable of changing his life. And it’s easy enough to see there are plenty of people who have changed in all sorts of ways. We may not feel like we can join their ranks, but that very feeling is the single and only thing preventing us. Don’t get me wrong, that roadblock is very real. But it’s not real because it is inherently true, it’s real because we endow it with a heck of a lot of power to control us.

As it turns out, all you have to do to make sweeping, positive changes in your life is to figure out how you’re feeling right now. Period. Because most of us are so focused on the scope of our entire life, we spend quite a bit of time evaluating the whole kibosh and looking for big, sweeping emotions that will come in and clear out all the old dusty stuff. We’re trying to muster passion by thinking about how great our lives would be if we sat around being passionate all day, and then judging ourselves harshly if that doesn’t materialize. So scale back to the garden variety level of your feelings. Notice what you notice for five minutes at a time. Make a habit of watching yourself think and feel, instead of just blindly going along for the ride.
Everyday feelings hold the keys to your future, and only by seeing them clearly can you learn to flow energy to the feel good places and pull it back from the feel bad ones.
“When we can look at ourselves in the mirror in full approval and say, ‘You are who you are, kid, and I’m learning to love every funny little thing about you just the way you are,’ we’re on our way!”

Figuring out how to love ourselves unconditionally is one of the hardest things most of us will ever do. There is an endless list of reasons why we don’t like ourselves, let alone love ourselves. We are constantly nitpicking, judging, tearing down, punishing, shaming, and belittling ourselves. How about cutting it out, already? It’s going to take some time, and some discipline. Every time you catch yourself in a negative thought pattern about yourself, flip your focus immediately to something that you love about yourself. You can pick one thing for the day or for the week so that you don’t have to waste time thinking, “Oh, I can’t remember anything I love about myself.”

Never mind if you deserve that love (you do) or you’ve earned it (no need) or if you’re capable of giving it (you are).

Eventually, you’ll start to hear a new voice in your head. It’s your voice, but if it helps, you can imagine it sounding like one of your parents if you had a supportive one or an older sister or brother—someone who admires the heck out of you and loves you with all your faults, not in spite of them.

You’re on your way, kid, and I love ya so much, I can’t even say.
“When storms come, you know what created them and what to do.”

It is still tough for me to embrace the idea that any and every problem in my life is self-created. In fact, sometimes it’s easier to look at it as a kind of metaphor, or a viewpoint; I don’t have to parse out or justify the logic or illogic of it to make use of this idea when I’ve got a problem. When I can hold this seemingly crazy idea close to me and really take it in, I can stop worrying about blame and negativity and feeling like a victim. Whether I’m a victim by anyone else’s standards becomes irrelevant, and I’m suddenly free from the weight that that term carries with it (justified or not).

It’s a scary thought that we might have created our own misery, but it can be a comforting one, as well. Often, the worst part of a difficult situation is the feeling of helplessness. We are frozen because we can’t imagine how this happened to us. If we can say, even for a minute a day (and believe it), “I made this! And I can make something different,” we are on our way to leaving behind the feeling of being alone and vulnerable in our situation. Again, whether it is right to feel that way or not in the particular situation doesn’t matter as much as we think it does. You can be right in your misery ’til the cows come home, but you’re still going to be miserable.

When we manage to override that feeling of powerlessness, even for just a little while every day, we can face our problems from a new angle, take them by surprise, and conquer them. We can claim them, own them, and only then can we talk them out and talk them down, little by little chipping away until we tip the scales toward feeling better.

Our fear of the storm adds immeasurably to its force. When we reclaim the fear, the wind dies down and the hail turns to rain.
“How do we get rid of those beliefs we now see as destructive? One way is to play ‘let’s pretend’ to generate the emotion opposite the one that comes from the belief you want to change.”

Start a program of one-a-day belief busting: every day pick a new (old) belief and conjure up the absolute opposite feeling to the one it gives you. For example, if you know that on the outside you are a people pleaser and are always trying to make everyone around you happy as a thin veil over your own insecurities and judgments, then you want to get into the opposite feeling. That is, you want to feel perfectly comfortable letting people be happy or unhappy on their own terms, and to do that from an inner place that is judgment- and insecurity-free. Do some pretending and imagine yourself in those shoes.

When you get in a good feeling opposite place, make it physical—do something concrete to solidify it in your body—this could be as simple as saying “no” to yourself or others when you feel your motivation is trying to please. Or it could be as easy as smiling, or putting some money in your wallet and walking around deciding what to spend it on.

You can also pick one thing to bust for the whole week—playing with turning the same old belief on its head every day for a week might actually break it open in a new way.

Play the opposites game and see how easy it can be to turn rock solid beliefs upside down.
“It’s so important I feel good that I’m going to behave differently more of the time!”

I’ve talked to people who’ve quit smoking. Some of them after long years. And it’s supposed to be one of the most difficult habits/addictions to kick. One woman I know used a statement very nearly like this quote on her path to quitting. It had gotten to be that she felt bad in a bunch of different ways—she was having trouble breathing, she had about six colds per winter, she felt embarrassed to have people she was just meeting know she was a smoker (since smart people don’t smoke and she, rightly, sees herself as a smart person), and she was always edgy—protecting her supply—where and when could she have her next smoke?

She quit because she imagined she’d feel better once she did. And it became important for her to feel good about herself, both physically and emotionally. So, after a particularly bad cold, she made the daily choice to feel better. She behaved differently more of the time—smoking less, consciously choosing, noticing her feelings particularly around the where and when she could smoke, reminding herself how much better she felt. And it worked.

What behavior do you want to choose to do differently in order to feel better? Make a simple plan. Try it out. See what happens.

Feeling better is a choice I make.
“We’ve been taught that we gain only as we labor, that action is the magic word. Do, do, do; work, work, work, strive, sweat, toil, and then if our luck holds, we just might come out ahead.”

Let me set something straight—labor in itself isn’t the enemy, here. No one’s saying that we should all grind to a halt and see how the world hands us everything we want on a silver platter. The fact of the matter is that finding the silver platter is in how we think about work: how we approach it, plan it, and carry it out. Then the fact of our work will feel incidental, breezy, and marvelous. The work will feel like it’s doing itself.

Think of work as a lump of clay, or even the tools used to sculpt that clay. You can handle those tools, polish them, organize them, fiddle with them, and knead that clay for a lifetime without ever producing something that’s appealing to anyone, least of all, you. You can put a lot of time and energy, a lot of brain and willpower into the sweating, striving, and toiling with zero result, or close to it. Even worse is if you do all this thinking that the final touch that will bring everything to fruition is some kind of wild stroke of luck. Might as well put your eggs in a basket and throw the basket in the back of an open pickup truck on a country road.

It’s time to transform what we’ve been taught about work, and to realize that we are capable of accomplishing any work we need to do to really get what we want, and it is possible that any work we need to do, we can accomplish easily and freely. In fact, it will not feel like work at all. The value of work is not increased by how hard it feels to accomplish, or how much you sweat and stress as you do it. The really valuable work is inspired, and, while it may be taxing, it is not exhausting—in fact, it can be, and should be, exhilarating.

Rediscover the magic of inspired work.
“Learn to turn on at will, no matter how you choose to do it. When you turn on, you open your valve, you lower your resistance, you vibrate positively, you attract positively.”

Smile—at yourself in the mirror when you first wake up. At the clerk behind the counter when you pay for your gas or pick up your coffee. At your colleagues as you greet them. Smiling is perhaps the simplest way of opening ourselves up, of saying, “Here I am, Universe. Ready and willing.”

Repeat some simple words that help you remember to open yourself up for all the good the world has to send your way. Say them out loud. Say them under your breath. Sing them in the shower.

Count your blessings. Marking all the good things in life—health, enough food, friends, family, the sun warm on your face, the shimmer of blowing leaves. Small blessings, big blessings, count them all. See if you can get to a hundred. Keep a notebook. Write down five a day or ten a day. Repeat them. And invite more into your life.

I make a practice of attracting positively.
“So crank up your passion and put your fears to rest. Sure, you’re going to have some bumps in the road ahead, but who cares? You’ll know what to do with them, why they came to you in the first place, and how to turn them into breathtaking rewards.”

Wow! It sounds like a pretty cool ride. When I was a child, my family moved to California. One day we went to Santa Cruz, where there’s a wonderful old wooden roller coaster. My dad loved roller coasters, and he and I got an unlimited ticket and got on and rode and went back around and got on and rode. I stopped counting at twelve and lost track of the number of times. It was a magical and breathtaking day. And I can and do vividly call it up.

To have a passion for riding roller coasters is to have a leg up when it comes to understanding the up-and-down ride that following a dream or a passion brings. I know when the coaster car falls, it’s going to go up again. Up and down is part of the process. I really “get” that. And when I remember that I get it, I use that knowledge to push me up the next hill because I know that without going up the hill, I won’t have that wonderful and breathtaking ride down to the goal I’ve set.

Find your own getting-over-the-bumps metaphor and memory.
“We’re like toddlers on training wheels just learning to maneuver in our new world. Everything in that toddler says ‘get up and go.’ So it does, again, and again, and again, and again, no matter how many times the tumbles may come. That’s called passion . . . and practice.”

Kids have an undeniable passion to grow up. They’re fascinated by even the most mundane adult tasks (talking on the phone, going to the post office), and they hurl themselves headfirst into figuring out their own abilities and the world around them. Once we grow up to fill out the shape of our adult bodies, we forget that passion. The urgency of repetition and learning tapers off, replaced by the feeling that we’ve been there, done that. We lose the need to constantly explore, discover, and push the limits of ourselves and our surroundings. For some, this is such a devastating loss that they push themselves into thrill seeking, or addiction, just to feel that rush of the new again.

But so few of us are real grown-ups (by which I mean, fully realized mature human beings). The few who do seem more grown up than most also seem to be more childlike in a way than their adult peers, because they know that we all thrive best when we’re engrossed in our passions and knee deep in exploration, no matter how old we are.

We could all stand to stir up a little passion through practice. Or, better yet, a little practice through passion. Then the practice won’t even feel like work.
“But now that deep feeling of aloneness, and our frustration of now knowing who we truly are, is pushing us to wake up and remember, a push that is coming directly from our soul, the divine record-keeper of our being.”

There is a song at the end of the musical *Into the Woods* by Stephen Sondheim with the line “You are not alone. Believe me, no one is alone.” It is a huge struggle in many of our lives to understand that we are not—in fact we cannot be—alone.

Our sense of abandonment and the fear that comes with it can motivate us to do crazy things: to make choices we hate or live our lives in a way we might otherwise run away from. What if we were able to fully comprehend, whenever we called up the feeling, our oneness with everyone on the planet? Not only them, but with everyone who has been and everyone who’s coming. It’s the biggest crowd there is, and you cannot be alone in it—even when you feel your most lonely and terrified, you are still not alone.

Interestingly enough, that dreaded feeling is a major gift from the universe. Because we are here to experience contrast, and our very sense of aloneness can be a divining rod that points us in the direction of finding our place in the whole.

You are not alone. How does that knowledge affect today’s outlook?
“Got hurt feelings? What someone said has nothing to do with us, only what they are attracting into their experience, and we happened to walk into it.”

Most of us can think back to a moment when someone said something hurtful to us. Just recalling the memory can bring back a mini-version of the physical sensation we felt at the time—blood flowing in our ears, a tightness in the chest, tears welling up. That memory is in our cells and we give it power and credence if we can’t look at it, really feel those feelings, and then dismantle the whole thing.

To take apart an old feeling, we have to find a way to create a new belief about it. One of the ways to do this is to understand that what felt like a lightning bolt of anger coming out of the blue to slam into us was really just the discharge of a surge of negativity in and around the person who dealt the blow, and we happened to be in the same airspace. If we threw some energy back at them at the time, even our “hurt” energy, we were willing participants and multiplied the pain involved.

Can you make a new belief about how the universe gifted you that moment for a particular reason? If an insult stays with you viscerally, it may be because there’s some kind of truth to it—if not on the surface, then maybe underneath. Or maybe the gift was just to discover more about your negative feelings—to encourage you to become a better observer of how you are flowing.

Old feelings + new belief = letting it go.
“You’ll have up days, down days, fantastic days, cruddy days, deeply emotional days, and days when you’ll be ready to throw in the towel. Yet I’d be willing to bet you won’t, not now, not knowing what you know.”

Would you be embarrassed if I asked how many books on your shelf promised to “change your life”? Would you blanch if I asked you to describe how many programs you had started out on but never completely found what you needed to stay the course?

The new is so foreign to us that it almost never feels comfortable, and we associate our comfortable place with our identity. So we try a new plan or a new way of thinking and it energizes us at first; then we hit some stumbling blocks as our resistance builds to something that might take us far out of our comfort zone. And then we stop, making the excuse that “It’s just not me. I’m not like that.” We slide back into our old worn-out beliefs and we feel a little better because, at the very least, those beliefs fit like good old slippers, and even if we’re miserable in them, at least we know that particular misery, and we’ve acclimated ourselves to it. We even think that misery is a part of who we are.

You were not put on this earth to get used to being miserable. I know that for sure. It’s a waste of your time, your talents, and your beautiful soul. Period. The law of attraction draws on what you are at your deepest core. It certainly may not be comfortable at first to spend much time with that deep part of you. But it is not someone else’s plan, or thought, or outline. It’s just you—it can only be you. You are the creator of your destiny and as you find your foothold in that knowledge and learn that nothing can stop you but yourself, it will be very hard to go backward.

Start on this path to a deeper, truer you, and never look back.
“If we are verbally or mentally accusing, berating, or disapproving in any way, we are attracting negatively.”

There’s that old saying, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” A corollary could be: If you can’t think something nice, try thinking something else. Sometimes (especially when I’m feeling a bit smug about how well I’m doing being positive, attracting what I need into my life, like I’m winning some kind of attraction contest, as if), sometimes, I hear what I’m thinking about the other drivers on my morning commute. These are words most people don’t use in polite company.

So I start out feeling good. I curse out drivers doing what I consider to be stupid things, and then? Then I become cranky and annoyed and impatient. It’s like an immediate demonstration of attracting negatively. I’m guessing we all have our own example of this.

The trick here is “try thinking something else.” In the case of the drivers, maybe I think, “Wow, I’d better drop back from that guy.” And I take my time and I arrive at the office relaxed.

Make a list of situations or people you’ve thought of accusing or blaming. How can you turn it around?
“If you want to help someone out of their immediate suffering, sending a simple ‘It’s going to be all right’ will usually quiet them down and give them an opportunity for a moment of Feel Good.”

We don’t, of course, know the future. So, it’s not the future we’re predicting when we say, “It’s going to be all right.” What we’re doing is creating a moment of calm. Other words work, sometimes, too. “There, there.” Or “Hush, hush.” A hand on a person’s shoulder also conveys, “Stay here, stay in the moment, it will be okay. It is okay.”

The fourteenth-century mystic Julian of Norwich is often quoted as saying, “All will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well.” More of the story is that she heard these words in a vision, at a time when she was mortally ill, perhaps with the plague. And her suffering was relieved.

Saying the words or hearing them. Saying them to ourselves or to others. These acts—saying and hearing—create a space for positive energy to flow in. Sometimes, it’s a small space; yet, often, it’s a big enough moment to engender more like it. And, then, we know we’ve come through the worst of the suffering.

Create one moment of “feel good” and enjoy the one that follows on its heels.
“Don’t justify your feelings with an ‘I’m right and you’re wrong,’ even though that may be the case. That closes your valve and plugs up the flow of higher energies to all other areas of your life. Remember, you plug up one, you plug up all.”

There’s a sad little joke that goes something like: what does the little girl who’s right all the time get to do at her birthday party? Celebrate it by herself. It really doesn’t make any difference who’s right and who’s wrong about what Aunt Sadie said to Uncle Lester forty years ago. Or, for that matter, about who forgot to turn the dishwasher on. Or who forgot to balance the checkbook. Whatever disaster—and was it really a disaster?—that happened because of that thing has already happened. Now we get to deal with it.

You read that right—get to. Get to find the lesson in it. Get to let the energy of love and forgiveness flow between you and whomever you’re wanting to blame for being wrong—even, or especially if, that’s yourself.

Getting stuck in a right/wrong tug-of-war wastes time and uses up energy. That’s pretty obvious. The trick is to recognize it in the moment. Stop, take a breath. Chew those words. Don’t let them come out of your mouth. Now, swallow them. Open to: we have a problem and we can figure out how to solve it.

Open to the solutions flowing, and they will.
“Usually when we forgive, we are acknowledging that whomever we’re forgiving has done a wrong, which is probably true. Then, even though we say we forgive, we secretly hold on to the dastardliness of the wrong. Yet true forgiveness is about no longer holding on to or stewing over (focusing on) the thing that got us all riled up to begin with.”

Let’s think of things we don’t hold on to: the too-hot handle of a pan, a cold metal stair railing in winter, a rope slipping through our hands, a heavy box that makes our arms quiver. You get the idea. Holding on to all those things hurts.

We put them down.

Of course, we don’t just drop them. We put them down in a way that is safe for us and those around us. We don’t just drop the pan of boiling water, letting it splash all over. We don’t let go of the railing if it means slipping down a flight of icy stairs. Dropping a box of books when our arms are quivering could result in a broken toe. Forgiveness is like that. People say, “Oh, just let it go.” And we do need to let it go, because holding on to it hurts us.

The real question is how to safely and effectively let it go, making sure our letting go doesn’t fall heavily on our own head or someone else’s. Forgiving a friend for being late doesn’t work if your forgiveness is conditional on her never being late again. That’s a
small hurt. To forgive a bigger hurt takes a bit of thought and work—how to lay the burden down where it won’t come back to hurt you or someone else. Each of us needs to figure that out and practice doing it.

I practice shifting my focus away from what hurt me in the first place.
“When your joy no longer depends on what anybody else thinks of you, or what anyone else does, then you’ve ‘got it.’”

Never underestimate the power of peer pressure. It holds more sway over some of us than others. Part of that may be how we’re raised—always to consider what the neighbors might think. And part of that might be our temperaments—some people seem innately less timid about expressing themselves than others. But, sooner or later, we all learn that doing the same things the same way as others in our family, group, town, or country is not what makes us happy. That is to say pretty much that other people can’t make us happy—either by what they do or by their attitude toward what we do.

No matter how comfortable we are living in a situation in which we do things the way “our people” have always done them, sooner or later, we’re probably going to bump into a situation in which we’re not comfortable. And given that peer pressure is strong and self-motivation and pleasing ourselves need often to be learned, it’s really probably better that this happen sooner. We can all use the practice.

My joy resides in me, and while I hope others in my life will share it, I won’t try to force that.
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