

**You
Were**

Not

**Born
To
Suffer**

Blake D Bauer

Overcome Fear,
Insecurity and
Depression and
Love Yourself
Back to Happiness,
Confidence
and Peace

An exclusive introductory sampler

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Preface

This book was first self-published in November of 2012, after a contract with one of the largest personal-development publishers in the world fell through. Following this unexpected shock, in its first edition, *You Were Not Born to Suffer* went on to become the number-one bestselling spiritual title multiple times in Australia, where I was based for over six years. In this new updated edition, you will find very practical insights that have now helped thousands of people around the world to significantly improve their life both personally and professionally. Although legally I cannot prescribe medical advice, I can confidently say that the views and exercises in this book have assisted many people who could not find effective long-term solutions from conventional medicine, psychiatry or religion.

These pages are also a testament to the fact that if you do not let rejection or fear stop you from being true to yourself or from doing what you love, you will find the peace, joy and self-respect that come from honouring your life purpose. In my experience, when we find the courage to value, care for and follow our heart, no matter what, we attract the support we need to live a life defined by truth, kindness and meaning. The external recognition, approval and validation we seek is simply a subconscious cry for us to fully acknowledge our own worth and stop rejecting our true self.

Thankfully I can now always see a larger purpose to my personal struggles. A very significant part of this purpose has been to share the essence of what I've learned from my own suffering with you, so that you can enjoy your life as fully as possible before you die, in the same way I intend to. Our existence is quite fragile, yet we're also much stronger than

we realize. And because life is so easy to take for granted as it passes by quickly, it's helpful to know that you're the only person who can give yourself permission to be happy and well. Your partner, spouse, parents, children, employer, doctor or religious leader cannot and most likely will not. Rather, it's a daily choice we each need to make to overcome fear, negativity and guilt.

This book will help you to make this choice.

Believe nothing. No matter where you read it, or who said it, even if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

Buddha

Introduction

You Were Not Born to Suffer was born out of my personal quest for two things in life. The first was freedom from my own mental, emotional and physical suffering. The second was my unquenchable desire for the truth – the truth about life, the truth about myself and, most importantly, the truth about my life's destined purpose.

Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life, and of my life in particular? How do I heal myself and find peace mentally, emotionally and physically? Where can I find deep health, happiness and true love? How can I thrive every day rather than just get by and survive? How can I create a fulfilling life that I respect myself for without selling my soul or settling for less than I know is possible?

After finding the answers I was desperately seeking, and helping thousands of people around the world to do the same, the empowering insights I discovered form the foundation for the pages that follow.



I was not aware of it at the time, but as a young man I suffered very deeply in myself, mostly mentally and emotionally, but also physically at times. My early life, like many of our lives, had presented its fair share of painful experiences. Although I could not articulate it until years later, I grew up feeling very insecure and unlovable. I often felt confused, anxious and ashamed of how I felt.

In my attempts to run from both my internal struggles and the challenging situations around me, I unintentionally created a great deal of suffering for myself. On top of the

impact of my parents' tumultuous divorce, my biological father's absence, multiple drug-addicted family members, and the extreme psychological dysfunction I was raised around, I developed a number of unhealthy habits through which I caused myself very deep harm. By the time I was 18 years old I had set in motion a domino effect that caused my already unstable world to crumble. I had been suspended from high school on three different occasions. I was selling drugs and had been arrested for drug possession multiple times. I was asked to resign as captain of my high-school football team three games into my senior season after being arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol and several illegal substances. After a night of excessive partying, in the early hours of the morning, I had parked my car and fallen asleep at a stop sign in front of train tracks. Around this same time, I also pushed away my high-school girlfriend while largely under the influence of pharmaceutical pills, which I had no need to take and that had not been prescribed. Even though I loved and cared for her very deeply, I unintentionally hurt her and ruined the relationship through my self-destructive behaviour.

As a teenager I was clearly out of control. I unknowingly used drugs, alcohol and even food as crutches for my broken and confused heart. I had developed a very large and unhealthy ego to survive and to compensate for feeling deeply inadequate and unworthy of love. I wanted so badly to be accepted by my peers, to fit in and be respected, because deep down I did not love myself or feel appreciated at home. As a result, I created a significant amount of pain not only for myself, but also for everyone close to me. I had no idea at this stage that I was running from myself, my life and my past. I didn't know I was denying years of internalized

thoughts and emotions, which I had never felt safe to talk about or supported to understand.

Just before graduating from high school, I had cracked my heart wide open and lost the two most important aspects of my life at the time: I lost the girl I loved and both the game (football) and the team I loved. At this point in my development as a person, these two aspects of my life comprised the greater part of my identity, or my ego, and within a very short period I had unintentionally pushed them both away. In retrospect I came to see that through doing this I had lost my sense of self, or who I thought I was. I didn't know this then, but I had experienced what is referred to in psychological and spiritual thought as a 'death of self', where the idea or the image of who we think and believe ourselves to be is completely shattered. I went from being extremely arrogant and thinking I was invincible to feeling painfully insecure, paranoid, self-conscious and tortured by my thoughts, which in reality was always the case underneath the façade I had instinctually created to survive. Although very purposeful in the bigger picture, sabotaging the parts of my life that I loved the most and which offered me an escape from the dysfunction that was normal to me, left me feeling very alone, ashamed and unaware of how to ask for the help I didn't even know I needed.

Reflecting back on it now, as hard as this period was, today I'm very grateful for what I experienced, because it set in motion the birth of my true self as well as the discovery of my life purpose. It showed me how to find the strength, trust and compassion in myself, for myself, that later would prove to be my only refuge or salvation. Without the pain I experienced as a child with my family and the further pain

I created as a teenager, I would not be in a place today where I'm able to look back on this part of my life with a deep understanding of the purpose it served in the unfolding of my destiny. *I now know that I had to lose myself completely in order to heal myself and truly find myself.* Who I had become to survive had to die so that my true nature could flower and guide me towards a life of knowing, loving and respecting myself deeply.

Moving forward after high school, I left home for college still carrying with me my largely unconscious psychological and emotional pain. I went away to college because it was expected of me both by my family and by my local community. Most of the people graduating from the high school I attended were going on to college. I had no real idea of who I was or what I wanted to do with my life at this point. I just unconsciously went with the flow.

I began taking business, finance and advertising classes, because I thought I wanted to make a lot of money, as money seemed to be a very important aspect of life, if not the most. My family and the community I was raised in was very focused on money and material wealth. Growing up I had also witnessed my parents and many family members go through financial hardship or extreme fluctuations in wealth. I watched my mother struggle as a single woman after divorcing my biological father, all of which unknowingly contributed to me developing an excessive drive for financial freedom. As so many of us do, I unconsciously believed that money alone equalled success, strong self-worth and happiness. It wasn't too long, however, before I realized that beyond my physical survival needs, my motives were ultimately empty and meaningless, and that underneath my apparently 'normal' outer life circumstances and goals,

I was completely lost and suffering very deeply in myself. I could see how my fixation on wealth was masking the lack of emotional connection and self-worth I had felt growing up. I didn't know better at the time but I believed that making money would fill the void and heal the pain within me, which obviously would never be the case.

During my second year of studies, after two years of waking up every morning completely tortured by anxious thoughts, I finally found the courage to leave college, step into the unknown, and follow what became an unquenchable desire to heal myself on all levels of my being. Intuitively I knew in my heart that life wasn't meant to be as empty, isolating or painful as I was experiencing it to be. I just knew without doubt that there had to be a way out of my suffering and confusion into a clear and joyful state of being. At the same time, I also held a deep knowing that my life had a purpose and that I would find it if I didn't give up on this quest. Somehow I was certain that I could create a passionate and fulfilling life for myself where I was truly at peace, healthy and happy, engaged in work that was authentic and personally meaningful.

My search for truth, healing and clarity of purpose led me to five universities and to a number of alternative learning institutions. I also continued my studies privately with various spiritual teachers, psychotherapists, herbalists and traditional healers. I formally studied at two different schools for acupuncture and Oriental medicine while simultaneously working with and for a group of Chinese medical doctors. I also visited a number of alternative healers and therapists to help me transform things in myself that I struggled to process on my own. I attended a variety of trainings, lectures, workshops and retreats that focused on holistic healing

techniques and spiritual disciplines. I intensively studied and practised various forms of meditation, qi gong, yoga and tai chi on a daily basis for years.

Like many of you reading this book, I became passionately hungry to understand myself and my life. I read book after book on health, spirituality, religion, God, philosophy, psychology, biology, physics, enlightenment, the evolution of consciousness, nutrition and various forms of alternative medicine. All I wanted was to free myself from my mental, emotional and physical suffering and find a clear purpose in my life.

Throughout these years following my decision to leave behind a 'conventional' career and life path, I retreated more and more from the outer world and travelled deeper into the depths of my own being. Like a wounded animal in deep need of healing, I isolated myself from friends and family. I was so desperate for lasting relief that I instinctively did not want to distract myself or numb my mind. Besides going to work, I lived like a monk and focused for hours each day practising the various self-awareness and self-healing practices that I had studied and learned. My search for truth, freedom and clarity of purpose became the focus of all my time and energy.

After roughly six years of concentrating solely on these pursuits, I had thankfully found a depth of clarity and peace within myself. Through studying natural medicine, psychology, alternative healing modalities and spiritual practices so intensively, I learned a great deal about healing myself and creating a healthy, happy and authentic life. Eventually I came to see that everything I had learned in my own selfish quest for wellbeing, purpose and freedom directly transferred over and gave me very practical insights into

how I could help others. I found that as I discovered deeper levels of peace, health, joy and passion in myself, I naturally became inspired to support others to find and create the same for themselves. In fact, I felt nothing moved me more than connecting with another human being openheartedly and honestly with a genuine intention to help.

As time progressed I found very deep purpose in supporting others to create a better quality of life. I felt that I had, for the most part, found my life's calling. At the same time however, at the core of my being, I still was not as clear or as motivated each day as I wanted to be. I could feel there was still more to my unfolding destiny that I was not aware of. At some point throughout the suffering and awakening I experienced I became certain that one day I would discover the true reason why I was born and the reason I was on this planet. I knew at this stage I hadn't totally grasped what this was yet, but I also knew that I would indeed find the one thing I was born to wake up every morning for and devote my life to without doubt and without any form of external direction.

I am very grateful to say that the message in this book represents my finally finding what I was looking for.

Towards the end of 2008 I was living in Boulder, Colorado, USA, where I had opened a full-time counselling, coaching and alternative medicine practice. Around this same time, through a number of synchronistic events, I unexpectedly decided to attend a professional training seminar in Australia on a unique form of alternative medicine and kinesiology. Even though I had never been interested in travelling to Australia, I suddenly, out of nowhere, felt a strong urge to fly across the world. I was interested in the techniques being taught and of course in the man who was teaching them,

but I strangely felt that the training was not the main reason why I needed to attend.

This unforeseen trip across the world ended up being life changing in so many ways. But the most significant of my experiences there became a major catalyst for this book. I met a beautiful woman at the training who became my best friend and partner for a number of years. I share this because this relationship opened my heart to love in a way words could never do justice in expressing. Having, in the past, hurt both myself and someone I'd loved very deeply – on top of the painful forms of love I'd experienced as a child – I'd unknowingly been scared to love again. I wasn't aware of how much I'd closed myself off to the more vulnerable aspects of true intimacy. This new relationship not only helped me to realize this; it also supported me to open my heart fully in a way I could not have done on my own and that led to the clarity around my life purpose I'd been seeking. The immediate depth, purity and power of the love between us reflected back to me the infinite source of unconditional love within me that I came to realize was my deepest nature. I could see so clearly how it had been covered up by years of stored emotional pain and the limiting thinking I'd adopted to protect myself and survive, all of which was the result of me rejecting my true self.

During the first days of this new relationship, out of nowhere, the following words echoed in my mind as though it was the voice of God. *'Once I love myself unconditionally, loving another becomes an act of self-love.'* Even though I had no clue where they would lead, I grabbed a pen and wrote them down, because the power and significance contained within them impacted me deeply. A few days later, on a plane back to the United States from Australia, I opened the journal in

which I had written those words and proceeded to write what became the seed for this book. I had not yet realized that a large part of my purpose in life was to write a book that logically explained how loving ourselves unconditionally and being true to ourselves is the most effective path to optimal mental, emotional and physical health, and then teach this empowering message. I just began writing.

Back in Boulder, Colorado, however, not too long after my return, it became crystal clear to me that throughout my entire educational, healing and spiritual journey, I had simply been learning how to love myself. I could see how all my suffering was caused by me never learning how to relate to myself with kindness, acceptance, respect and honesty at all times. Even in attending five very well-respected universities, studying with highly reputable teachers, and spending hours each day for years deep in meditation, I had simply been looking for love and hadn't understood that I was the love I was seeking. This was when I realized I had to write a book focused on cultivating complete acceptance, kindness and compassion for ourselves as a direct path to healing, happiness and peace. Having suffered so deeply and searched so desperately for this inner knowing and the resulting clarity and freedom I was certain were possible, when it finally surfaced within me, I just knew in my heart, without any doubt whatsoever, that writing this book and sharing this message was what I was born to do.

The insights I began having into loving oneself unconditionally as the key to transforming suffering, depression and disease seemed to be the last piece to this puzzle I had been putting together for years. I could see that in my own restless quest for truth, healing and clarity of purpose I had merely been learning how to value, accept,

forgive, honour, trust, believe in, take care of and be true to myself. It became overwhelmingly clear that writing this book would be the most effective way to empower as many people as possible around the world to love, help and heal themselves.

Up until this particular point I'd often felt as though I were stuck in a large and confusing maze that I was always struggling to find a way out of. I knew there was an exit from the frustration and confusion that represented life in this 'maze', but no matter where I went or what I did I could never find complete and lasting freedom. What became crystal clear to me when I finally found the answer I'd been seeking was that it had been within me and present all along. As most of us do, I'd believed this 'thing' I was searching for was outside of myself somewhere in the wider world, when in reality the answers and my true purpose were always within me, just waiting to be discovered and brought forth fully into my life.

Thankfully, I finally grasped the fact that the only way out of this confusing maze that we call life is to go *even deeper into myself*. Although I had heard it before, this was the point where I wholeheartedly realized that *the only way out is the way in*. Like a lock finally clicking into place causing the floodgates to open, I suddenly felt completely aligned with all life, as though the entire universe had come pouring through me, illuminating the path to my lasting freedom. Like a bird that continually flies into a glass window and hurts itself because it doesn't see the glass, I had created a tremendous amount of pain and disappointment for myself because I kept looking externally for something that could only be found in the depths of my own heart and soul. Fortunately, I finally realized that no lasting peace, happiness, fulfilment,

worth or self-respect could ever be found in other people or places – and definitely not in the ‘things’ of the world.

As most of us unconsciously do, I had lived my whole life like a puppy dog chasing its tail. *I was always just looking for love, when in fact I was love itself.* Through not finding what I was seeking externally and coming back to myself over and over again, I realized I organically became what I was looking for. In awakening to this fundamental truth, I realized that the path to finding the source of love within us, which is also the path to embodying the love that we are, is one that requires all of us to answer the evolutionary call to master loving ourselves unconditionally, because this is the only way to truly love others, find peace, be well, or do our personal part to make this world a better place.

With this awareness dominating my consciousness, I sat down to write out my understanding of *how to love oneself practically and effectively.* Having studied the maps and theories extensively, but more importantly walked this terrain myself from suffering and torment into significant liberation and peace, I wanted to outline the most accurate and universal map possible for anyone who truly wants to be healthy, happy and free. I know how hard it can be to articulate with words how deeply you feel, or how much you crave to be lovingly understood and valued. And because I know in my bones how painful, lonely and desperate this quest can feel, I want you to know you are not alone and that there is a solution to your struggles.

Throughout the following pages I have shared everything I’ve learned from both my own suffering and healing, as well as from my professional success helping thousands of people around the world. This approach has proven effective for many people who could not find practical long-term

solutions from conventional medicine, psychiatry or religion. Ultimately, no helping professional can do for you what you must eventually do for yourself in terms of making peace with your life and your past. Someone can witness you, guide you, and be there for you as you process your pain and face your fears, but ultimately no pill or person can 'fix' you.

It will be you who heals yourself and learns how to care for yourself over time.

The heart-centred logic throughout this book will inspire you to overcome your fears so that you can finally free yourself and enjoy your life. If you are willing to take full responsibility and let go of all blame, there is nothing you cannot heal, transform or achieve. In the spirit of living fully before we leave this body and life, this book does not 'beat around the bush'. It is intentionally written to guide you through an inner process that will completely change your life for the better. Between the written text and the exercises throughout, each chapter is designed to create new, healthy neurological and energetic pathways within your mind and body, so that you may begin to direct your thoughts, words and actions towards valuing yourself in every moment and situation. What your life looks and feels like one month, one year, or one decade from now will, however, depend entirely on how deeply you give yourself permission to be happy and well. I love the old saying that goes, 'If you give a man [or woman] a fish he will eat for a day, but if you teach him to fish he will eat for a lifetime.' With this in mind, *You Were Not Born to Suffer* was created to be a guide on how to effectively fish for yourself so you can find exactly what you want and need.

The tough-love questions now become: what will it take to say you've suffered enough? Where do you draw the line and

say enough misery, enough sickness and enough settling? If you're not already dealing with these challenges, do you have to face a life-threatening illness or the destruction of your relationships? If you numb yourself with alcohol, antidepressants, drugs, food, work or material possessions, is this truly what you want for your life? If you have children, or want to have children, is this the example you want to set for them? What will define the moment when you wholeheartedly assert it is time to value yourself and time to stop living a lie? When do you stop pleasing everyone all the time, feeling guilty for your emotions, blaming yourself, apologizing to everyone, or making yourself wrong for wanting to be healthy and happy? When is enough truly enough? And if not now, then when?

I believe we all come into this world *knowing we were not born to suffer*. Although we are very quick to forget, deep in our heart we all know life is meant to be lived and enjoyed with purpose, awareness, respect and kind, meaningful connection. Yes, life will always present us with challenges, but it's how we choose to address them that ultimately determines the quality of our life, health, work and relationships. How we view our mental, emotional and physical struggles therefore leads us either to freedom, happiness and peace, or into more depression, anxiety, loneliness, insecurity and regret.

Thankfully, each moment and day we are given a choice.

Do we remember that we're capable of creating an authentic life that we love? Do we remember that we deserve to be treated with kindness and respect first by ourselves and then by others? Or do we settle for a half-lived life? Do we compromise ourselves and abandon our inner calling? Do we betray our true feelings and constantly allow other

people to dishonour, take advantage of and disrespect us?

Looking at this choice objectively, it doesn't seem like much of a choice at all. I would wager my life that every person who reads this would choose the first option and honour it all the time if they knew that everything would work out along the way. Unfortunately, most of us do not value ourselves deeply enough yet to claim the high quality of life that's waiting for every single person. We haven't cultivated a strong enough faith or trust in ourselves, in life, or in the universe to wholeheartedly be ourselves and go after what we want and love. As a result, most of us just settle for less than we're both worthy and capable of, and then we suffer for it. But life doesn't have to be this way.

You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.

Buddha

Functional Sanity

As a preface to the rest of this book, it's helpful to know that we are all a bit crazy, in the sense that once we're honest with ourselves we cannot deny the various voices in our head or the countless thoughts that circulate in our mind. I have come to perceive mental and emotional health in terms of practical functional sanity. In other words: *can we take responsibility for our lives in a way that we do not harm ourselves, other people or the Earth while we do our best each day to be well, happy and kind?*

In my experience, which I am sure is similar to your own, there is no such thing as 'normal'. Although it is so common to think 'he or she is normal but I am not' or 'their family is normal' or 'why can't I just be normal?' deep down we all know real life is stranger than fiction. Maybe the reason we can never get to 'normal' is because it does not exist. It's like trying to find a city on a map you're holding, only this city never existed and the person who drew the map did not know what they were talking about. Being normal is mainly about being socially accepted, or, in other words, avoiding the judgement of other people. Of course no one wants to be criticized, but at some stage we have to make a choice between rejecting ourselves in exchange for the approval of others and taking the risk of being honest about our thoughts and feelings, regardless of the consequences.

Eventually you will realize that the pain of rejecting yourself is far greater than the pain of being rejected or judged by other people. So if being normal or socially accepted means you do not speak and act based on what you genuinely think and feel, you will always remain unhappy. This means we're faced with the following questions. *Do you want to be happy or socially accepted? Do you want to find*

peace and fulfilment or would you rather just fit in? Do you want to enjoy your life, work, physical body and relationships, or would you prefer to be controlled by the opinions, judgements and criticism of others?

One lesson that helped me tremendously in my quest for happiness, and also strengthened my ability simply to be myself over and above seeking love, approval and acceptance from other people, was understanding the fact that I am not just my thoughts or the voices in my head. Through meditation, self-reflection and healing internalized emotions from the past, I came to know and feel that who I am is far greater than my thinking mind and the conversations I regularly have with myself. Furthermore, I found that most of my confused or contradictory thinking was simply the result of repressed emotions bubbling up as thought. Thinking then became an addiction as well as a means to escape feeling.

When I first realized that I was not happy, I was completely identified with all my thoughts, which were most often connected to feelings of fear, anxiety and insecurity. I believed the dialogue in my mind was 'me' or who I was, because I never learned that who I truly am is more accurately the awareness, consciousness, intelligence and energy behind my thoughts, which surrounds all my thoughts and purposefully gives rise to these thoughts for my own growth, healing and eventual enjoyment of life. Before I realized this, I had no space in my mind or my heart because my body had become cluttered with internalized emotions from the past as well as limiting beliefs I'd inherited from my parents, schooling and society. I now know that without space there can be no happiness, so of course I was unhappy when I was completely attached to my thoughts. Like you,

I had learned to give my power, happiness and sense of self over to my thoughts, thereby allowing myself to become the victim of the conversations in my head, which were most often completely out of control, stress causing and very negative. Thankfully, there is a path to freedom. There is a form of functional sanity that is grounded in a healthy understanding and acceptance of your thoughts.

Self-Love, World Peace and You

I'm sure you've already realized for yourself that most of us never learn how to relate to ourselves with acceptance, kindness and compassion. The majority of us don't even know that it's possible to love ourselves in healthy and conscious ways, let alone what doing so daily would actually entail. There's a growing population of people who know they need to love themselves, but many are at a loss as to *how to do so practically*. In our early years, very few of us had people in our lives who embodied a healthy example of what it means to live and act in the world from a place of unconditional self-love. Today most of us have become so accustomed to the negative voices in our head that we firmly identify with thoughts of criticism, judgement and inadequacy. We're never taught how much freedom or peace is possible beyond this limited and unhealthy way of being.

For generations across the globe, self-love has been judged and shunned as negative and selfish, primarily because very few people actually understand what it means or why it's so important to master. We can't blame anyone for self-love's negative reputation, because most people don't know any better. If they did, they would, first, love themselves unconditionally, and second, always encourage others to do the same. The ultimate truth underneath our

collective judgements and resistance to taking care of ourselves wholeheartedly is that we're all merely protecting ourselves from feeling emotional pain. More specifically, we all subconsciously fear what we do not love within ourselves, our lives and our past, because we fear feeling the hurt we ourselves have either created or allowed by relating to ourselves so self-destructively throughout our lives. The unhealthy relationship the majority of us have with ourselves, in our own thoughts, emotions and behaviours, is really the one dynamic that keeps us at war inside ourselves, constantly feeling wounded, angry, powerless, anxious, guilty, ashamed, stressed, unwell or dissatisfied. Deep down we know we have not related to ourselves with the understanding, honesty and respect we desire and deserve, but the implications of shifting this seems overwhelming, so we just deny it or wear a mask each day.

If we do not eventually develop a relationship with ourselves that is based on understanding, acceptance and kindness, it's not only impossible for us to feel good and enjoy our lives, it's also impossible for us to relate to other people in these healthy ways. This is why it's crucial for all of us to understand that our inner relationship with ourselves ultimately determines how we relate to everyone and everything in the world around us. In simple terms, if we judge, reject and criticize ourselves, we will treat others in the same hurtful ways. If our relationship with ourselves remains destructive, then our relationships with other people will remain destructive as well.

The liberating truth that unites all human beings is that we all struggle to love ourselves fully and unconditionally. It doesn't matter how big our ego is, how arrogant we are, how much external success we've had, or how confident we

appear. This is the ultimate life lesson that we all struggle with. You, me, the men and women around you right now, wherever you are – your family members, your friends, your neighbours, your colleagues, your boss, your employees, your children, and definitely your parents, and their parents too, all struggle, or have struggled, to relate to themselves with love, kindness and acceptance. It's just the way it's been for generations. But now, we live in a time where more people are waking up and noticing their hunger for a new way of life. We're all ready for new ways of relating to ourselves, to each other and to our world that are grounded in love, kindness and compassion as opposed to aggression. Many people are sick, unhappy, defeated and exhausted from living in such a cold and disconnected world.

Thankfully, learning to love ourselves unconditionally is not only possible, it's also a necessary, natural progression in both the biological and genetic evolution of humanity, and the evolution of human consciousness. This means that life, nature and the entire universe are all working with us and guiding us towards nothing less than total mastery of life's most overlooked and important lesson.

If we do not have love and respect for who we are today, because we both forgive and accept our past and now understand how to value ourselves in every situation, it is impossible for us to truly be at peace. It is not until we make the choice to relate to ourselves with kindness, honesty and respect every day that we finally find the lasting inner peace we crave. So when it comes to our collective destiny as one human family to create peace on this planet, eventually it becomes clear that finding balance and harmony in our own lives is impossible when we relate to ourselves fearfully, aggressively and critically. If we do not live and

act from a place of truth and compassion for ourselves, we will just continue to live and act in ways that are not only personally destructive, but that are also damaging for the entire world around us. For this reason, it is crucial to grasp that world peace can only be created by individuals who value inner peace, compassionate understanding, mutual respect and loving-kindness above all else. If we aggressively try to change the world or other people, without honestly transforming our own anger, hurt, judgement or habits of denial, no amount of effort, force or war will bring about the lasting changes our world needs.

There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer.
There is no disease that enough love will not heal.
No door that enough love will not open. No gulf that
enough love will not bridge. No wall that enough love
will not throw down. And no sin that enough love
will not redeem. It makes no difference how deeply
seated may be the trouble. How hopeless the outlook.
How muddled the tangle. How great the mistake.
A sufficient realization of love will dissolve it all.
And if you could love enough you would be the
happiest and most powerful person in the world.

Emmet Fox

Using the Word *God*

Using the word *God* can be a very sensitive subject. It is a word that holds the power to create either separation and war, or unity and peace. For this reason, I feel it's important to clarify and define the meaning of the word *God* as it is used throughout this book. I chose to use the word *God* in some places because it very effectively brings to the surface our feelings and beliefs about life, truth and love.

As you read, please keep in mind that I respect each religious tradition and spiritual path. In my own life, I have found that (1) all religious and spiritual study eventually leads to love and kindness in various forms, and (2) the only barriers between one human being and another are the unhealed emotions in our hearts and the limiting beliefs we hold in our heads. These two realizations have shaped and inspired much of this book.

In using the term *God*, I am referring to everything and everyone in the universe, including the space in which no physical forms of life and no physical objects exist. By this definition, *God* refers to the intelligence, awareness, source, love and atomic energy from which all life and all physical forms of matter in the universe arise. From this perspective, *God* exists in all people, all things and all space, as the people, things and space themselves. *God*, here, also represents the vast sea of unlimited potential, possibility and energy to which all life and all physical forms of matter eventually return.

Essentially my view is that there is nothing and no one that is not *God*. Every event, every circumstance, every tear, every joy, every form of life and every painful lesson is *God*. In the spirit of being practical, however, in my experience *God* is seen most clearly through unconditional love, kindness,

acceptance, respect, understanding and forgiveness, both for ourselves and for other people. Paradoxically, God is also always in our pain, heartbreak, depression, illness, loneliness and relationship problems, which is harder to see. Although words are merely words, and will always fall short of the actual truth towards which they point, the word God here ultimately refers to the love that is crying out through our struggles to be expressed more fully in our body, mind, life, daily work and world.

I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts,
there can be no more hurt, only more love.

Mother Teresa

The Butterfly

The Greek name for a butterfly is Psyche, and the same word means the soul. There is no illustration of the immortality of the soul so striking and beautiful as the butterfly, bursting on brilliant wings from the tomb in which it has lain, after a dull, grovelling, caterpillar existence, to flutter in the blaze of day and feed on the most fragrant and delicate productions of spring. Psyche, then, is the human soul, which is purified by sufferings and misfortunes, and is thus prepared for the enjoyment of true and pure happiness.

Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable

The life cycle of a butterfly is a perfect example found in nature that mirrors back to us what it means to break free from the limitations and fears that stop us from living our most authentic, liberated and joyful life. The caterpillar's metamorphosis into a butterfly demonstrates the natural processes of inner and outer transformation that we all experience. In its physical form, the butterfly symbolizes the potential freedom and light-heartedness that are available to each and every one of us. This is why just seeing a butterfly reawakens us to the magic and wonder inherent in life. Its grace and vulnerability immediately take us beyond thought into the mystery of our own existence.

The butterfly begins its journey as a caterpillar, and it may or may not be aware of what it is destined to become. But the caterpillar lives on, faithfully following the inner prompts arising within its being. It *feels* its way through life, naturally following the inner direction with which it was born. The caterpillar follows what seems to be an inner plan, which from the outside can be observed as guiding the journey from caterpillar to cocoon and from cocoon to butterfly. The feeling and the pull into what appears to be the unknown must be so clear and so strong for the caterpillar, because when the time comes to create a cocoon for itself, the caterpillar carries out its intended purpose with a one-pointed focus and determination.

The caterpillar appears to feel that it does not have a choice, but that it must surrender and follow the forces of nature and the universe as they propel and guide it forward, no matter what the journey entails. Once transformation is complete, the butterfly struggles with all of its strength to emerge from its cocoon. Eventually it leaves behind the protective shell that no longer serves any purpose.

The butterfly's new existence only slightly resembles its old form. It does not know itself any more. Its past has been left behind, and the butterfly now experiences itself as something changed and new. It has been reborn. And now it is free.

Our own journey through life is like this as well. Like the caterpillar's journey into its cocoon and its struggle to emerge as a butterfly, our own journey as human beings towards our most liberated and joyful life is one in which we also struggle to live gracefully and intentionally as a free and full expression of who we truly are. We all struggle to liberate ourselves from our suffering and thus free ourselves from our protective cocoon in order to embody the highest form of our own evolution and potential. Within each of us, there lives a sense of an inner plan that is always inspiring us to break free into the mystery of our existence. We too have this inner guidance directing us forward, a felt force deep within our soul propelling us onwards in faith. Just like the butterfly that struggles to break free from the restricting confines of its cocoon, somewhere deep down we somehow know and trust that our own struggles will eventually open to the richness, wonder and beauty of our most liberated and joyful life.

Ultimately, the struggle to free ourselves fully is the struggle to relate to ourselves with loving-kindness, honesty and respect in every moment and situation. To do this we're all called to heal our internalized psychological and emotional pain in the present. We're faced with the task of releasing ourselves from the protective cocoon that we've developed over time – the psychic shell that's been protecting us until we were ready to live our lives authentically and openheartedly as a full expression of our true self.

Just as with the butterfly, the development of our own cocoon is natural and vital for our soul's evolutionary unfolding. Our cocoon serves us while we heal and go through the inner transformations necessary to be and accept ourselves fully. At some point, however, our cocoon always becomes limiting and unhealthy. Once we've gone through the initial stages of growth within the safety of this protective shell, all of us are called to liberate ourselves from a limited way of being in the world that no longer serves us. When this time comes will vary for each of us, just as buds on the same branch open at different moments, but it does indeed come. And when it does we're all faced with a life-defining choice. We either surrender and align with the forces of nature and the universe that are evolving within us, or we resist this evolutionary force, remain in denial, and thereby invite more struggle and pain.

A moving story I once read demonstrates this perfectly. It tells of a woman who brought two butterfly cocoons into her home that were about to hatch. The woman wanted to observe the butterflies break free from their cocoons. So for days she eagerly watched, waiting for the butterflies to emerge. In time, she was able to witness one butterfly begin creating a small hole, and from the woman's perspective, this first butterfly seemed to struggle painfully as it slowly pushed its way through the opening it had created. Once liberated, the butterfly lay there on the table, exhausted and unable to go any further. However, after a short period of time, it finally raised itself up and flew out of a nearby window, fluttering on its strong and beautiful wings.

After observing the challenging process that the first butterfly experienced, the woman felt inspired to help the second butterfly free itself from its cocoon so that it

wouldn't have to struggle as the first one did. Meaning well, the woman decided to use a razor blade to slice gently down the centre of the second butterfly's cocoon. Once free, the second butterfly lay there on the table just as the first one had. However, after a similarly short time, rather than raising itself up and flying away, the second butterfly quietly died. Confused about what had occurred, the woman contacted a friend who was a biologist and asked her to explain why the second butterfly had died. Her friend explained that the struggle the butterfly undergoes to liberate itself from its cocoon actually forces liquids from deep inside its body cavity out into the tiny capillaries in the butterfly's wings. The process of pushing its wings up against the inner walls of the cocoon is what causes them to harden, making them strong enough for their new life of flight. Without the struggle a butterfly experiences in breaking through its cocoon, there could be no strength in its wings, no flight, and ultimately no life.

Like the butterflies in this story, you and I are destined to free ourselves from our own protective cocoon. Our ego, our fears and the limiting beliefs that keep us stuck simply protect us from the pain, discomfort and truth we'd prefer to avoid. But just like the caterpillar, we each have everything we need within ourselves to be free. When we stop to reflect on the deeper meaning of this story we are graced with one of life's most beautiful and empowering lessons: *we already have everything we need within our self to fulfil our life's purpose and realize our greatest potential. We are not lacking in any way. The intelligent universe, or God, created life inherently to possess all that it needs within itself to fully become what it is destined to be.*

Unfortunately, too many of us live our whole lives without realizing this. We're not taught to trust ourselves, but rather

we learn to listen to other people and to doubt our inner wisdom, which leads us to prefer the familiarity and safety of our cocoon instead of truly living. We unintentionally end up settling for a limited way of life, typically lying to ourselves in some way and having never realized or expressed the fullness or the greatness of who we truly are. If we don't just settle for cold comfort, most of us constantly search outside of ourselves, thinking that something or someone beyond us will free us. Maybe someone will heal, rescue or save us? Maybe someone will love us enough or care enough to liberate us from our personal struggles and make everything okay?

Like you, I have learned the hard way what an illusion this truly is.

Each person is born a caterpillar and we all create a cocoon for ourselves as we grow. What differs among us, however, is that some of us are willing to follow the inner prompts of our heart and soul to become the liberated, passionate and purposeful being that we're destined to be, and some of us quite simply are not. There seem to be only two options in life. Either we become the butterfly we're destined to be, or we don't. Either we master loving ourselves unconditionally, and in so doing free ourselves from our cocoon, or we don't.

In the first option we undoubtedly struggle; sometimes we struggle deeply and it's painful. But with the struggle and the pain always come the beauty, peace and magic of living our most liberated and joyful life. The struggle and pain actually become worth it because we finally respect ourselves for the courage and strength we found to live an authentic life. We get to experience the powerful loving truth and natural intelligence that are inherent to our deepest nature. In essence, we get to be free, and one could say that our soul gets to fly.

In the second option, we either settle for the fear-based comfort of our cocoon or we wait for someone or something to come along and free us. We might live our whole lives waiting for someone to slice open our cocoon for us. In both cases, we end up living unaware that we already have everything we need within us to liberate ourselves and live an authentic meaningful life both personally and professionally. When we take this second path we remain deeply frustrated and unsatisfied, and nothing and no one is ever enough for us because ultimately we're not taking responsibility for what only we can and must do. Eventually our bodies stop functioning before we ever give ourselves permission to be truly happy. We leave this world and lifetime with regret, having passed up the magic, wonder and beauty that's here now waiting for all of us to claim.



I personally feel that a life without having learned to love myself unconditionally would not have been worth living. In fact, I don't know if I would be alive today had I not found the deep compassion and understanding for myself necessary to truly value and be myself. If you're honest in reading this, I'm sure you'd agree that the suffering and confusion that result from a critical, insecure, fear-based or self-destructive relationship with yourself make life quite miserable and hardly worth living at times. Feeling misunderstood, alone and disconnected is no way to live, but we have to learn to matter to ourselves mentally, emotionally and physically before this can shift and before we can simply feel good in our body.

The Purpose of Suffering, Depression and Disease

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, many are strong at the broken places.

Ernest Hemingway

Wherever you are, please take a few slow, deep breaths into your belly. Feel your whole body, from your feet all the way up to the crown of your head, and then down to your fingertips. Please relax any tension you feel and let yourself be. Using each inhalation to open your body and create inner space, welcome everything you're thinking, feeling and experiencing here in this moment. Please be present to your body and your breath.

Everything happens for a reason, especially health challenges of the mind and body. Although this may be difficult to accept, I've found that many of us unintentionally allow ourselves to get depressed or physically unwell, because we never learned how to express our emotions or care for ourselves in the ways necessary to remain healthy and happy throughout life. We learn from a young age to please others and to seek our parents' or our caregivers' conditional love to survive, but it's often at the expense of being true to ourselves and it causes us very deep harm. If we never wake up to this unhealthy internal dynamic, it eventually leads to depression, disease, relationship problems and most forms of suffering, all of which are simply cries from our soul calling us back home to ourselves, to the source of peace and strength within, and ultimately to love and value ourselves in each moment – starting now.

Early in life we learn to feel scared, guilty and ashamed to some degree about expressing what we feel, need and want, because this was apparently too selfish or burdensome for the people around us. Although everyone is actually selfish, but most often in denial about this, today many of us have become accustomed to living in fear. So now, after years of pleasing others and not looking after ourselves, we often

find ourselves unhappy, unwell, or full of resentment, anger and regret.

Confused, we ask ourselves: *How did I get here?*

No one is a bad person for wanting to live a deeply fulfilling and authentic life. You are not a bad person for wanting to be healthy, happy, understood or fully met within a loving relationship. Yet we still feel shame for having these desires. We've unintentionally become entrapped in a web of our own weaving, because we have not realized that we're waiting for a wholehearted commitment to our own wellbeing and that our suffering is simply asking us to speak and act based on what we truly feel in each situation.

I cannot help but point out the fact that modern conventional medicine has not discovered cures for ailments like cancer, autoimmune disease and clinical depression. Is it because there's no cure? Or is it really because we've been viewing these illnesses and symptoms from a limited perspective and completely missing the purpose of these challenges? Could it be that we've been looking for the root causes in the wrong places?

I believe so.

Based on my experience working intimately with tens of thousands of real human beings, I've found that our mental and emotional health is both the cause of and the solution to most forms of personal suffering. Our ability to express what we feel effectively, overcome negative thinking and act in alignment with our true emotions, needs and desires, directly determines the quality of our overall wellbeing. Just because we cannot see something does not mean it's not real. Just because we don't directly watch the destructive process of non-physical toxicity developing into physical toxicity doesn't mean it's not accurate or valid. If I said that

the genuine love you feel for your partner, spouse, child, parent or pet was not real, how would you respond? I think that makes this point clear.

I've discovered that in most cases deep unhappiness and chronic illness are the result of the self-destructive, critical, judgemental and fear-based relationship many of us developed towards ourselves in childhood, which then leads to a weakened immune system, increased susceptibility to viruses, bacteria and environmental toxins, and ultimately to a lack of healthy self-care. Because we tend to be so lost in this harmful way of thinking and acting, since it's all we've ever known, it's very easy to overlook the apparently naïve possibility that transforming our mental and emotional dis-ease can bring the long-term relief and peace we're seeking.

Life seems to take away anything or anyone we take for granted. Our life itself and our health fall into this category also. I have witnessed time and again how individuals ignore and disregard their mental and emotional life, simply because they don't know how to honour it or talk about it effectively. Rather, we've all learned to use denial to survive, and the natural progression of this sentiment is a deep feeling of worthlessness, where one perceives that one's feelings, needs and desires do not matter. We often feel our inner self or soul has no value or is not appreciated by the people around us, and the by-product of this is a body that does not seem to matter or feel worthy of attention either. Basically, a heart not cared for or respected by ourselves becomes a body that does not feel good to inhabit. And this becomes a very vicious cycle that a person can actually get used to and allow to ruin their life.

To be frank: what's the point of being alive if our soul feels

trapped, misunderstood and valueless? What sentient being would ever want to continue to live a mentally tortured, emotionally anxious and overwhelmingly stressful life? Yet we as human beings feel unworthy of creating a lifestyle, career and relationships that make us feel good, alive and well on a daily basis. Although objectively it seems natural to desire a healthy and happy life, we are persistently held back by the guilt, fear, shame and underlying hurt inside us. We live feeling disconnected, while this internal toxicity trickles down inside like acid or parasites slowly eating us alive. Addiction and suicide can be understood in this light, especially when we recall what it's like to feel we do not matter, silently suffering alone, without any idea of where to find love, understanding or healthy long-term relief.

The body's suffering is a mask the mind holds up to hide what really suffers.

A Course in Miracles

As a culture and as individuals we need to swing the pendulum of attention towards transforming our dysfunctional mental and emotional life if we want our body and outer world to reflect a healthy internal environment. But before we can take these steps we have to find the humility to open our mind, especially if our current approach is not getting us the results we want. We have to admit that we didn't know better and acknowledge that maybe our views have been limiting or not very healthy for us. This is not about making ourselves wrong, thinking we are flawed or blaming ourselves. Rather it's about recognizing the fact that we inherited some very self-destructive habits and beliefs from people who were doing

their best, with what they knew, at the time. And now, our body, life and world is screaming out for us to finally heal our heart and mind.

For me, traditional Chinese medicine offers one of the most practical and logical insights into how our thoughts and emotions can lead either to health and happiness or to depression and disease. From this worldview the causes of physical and mental illness directly correlate to the flow of energy and blood in the body. In simple terms, when energy and blood are free-flowing daily we experience health, happiness and freedom from pain. But when they stagnate we will eventually encounter tiredness, depression, physical pain, weakened immunity and the toxic build-ups that cause serious disease.

This perspective asserts that blood in the body follows the flow of life-force energy. The best example of this is the energetic beat or pulse of the heart that causes blood to flow within our veins and carries our immune cells, hormones, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients to all corners of the body. What is often overlooked in Western conventional medicine is the link between internalized thoughts and emotions that, coupled with fear and the resulting inaction, lead to a decrease first in the healthy flow of energy and blood, and then logically to the impaired function of the various systems throughout the body, such as the nervous, circulatory and digestive systems.

Consider for a moment that a 40-year-old person, who has on average been awake for 16 hours every day and thus slept for 8 hours each night, has been alive and awake for 840,960,000 moments or seconds. That's 14,016,000 minutes of life experience in which this person has been feeling and thinking something directly connected to their deeper

wounds, needs and desires. Objectively, much of this inner process is made up of unresolved emotions and confused thoughts, which constantly circle the mind and body and are rarely expressed or addressed in a way we're at peace with. This unhealthy internal environment typically leads to unhealthy lifestyle choices or addictions, which only cause more health problems, weakened immunity and life challenges.

Both thought and emotion are subtle forms of atomic energy, which when repressed constantly over time cause internal stress, limited oxygen intake and imbalances in molecular and cellular processes. Such repression also causes the flow of life-force energy and blood to slow down and become severely blocked. Due primarily to the various manifestations of fear, insecurity and people-pleasing habits, most people don't act based on instinct, intuition, self-care and what their heart truly communicates, which creates further disruptions to the healthy flow of energy and blood in the organs and circulatory system. Symptoms like anxiety, shallow breathing, chronic fatigue, lethargy, digestive disorders, depression, bipolar disorder and insomnia set in, and we, and often our doctors, are not quite sure what the underlying cause is.

Eventually, over days, weeks, months and years of this process guiding both our life and our behaviour, the blood and fluid in our bodies begin to coagulate to such a degree that nodules, masses, growths and tumours start to form. This then leads to toxins building up in the bloodstream, fat tissue, muscles and organs, resulting in chronic pain and disease. In simple terms, our body becomes at war with itself on a cellular level because we are at war with ourselves mentally and emotionally. The miraculous

intelligence of the body produces physical symptoms to alert us to the tear between what we really feel, want and need, and the fears that stop us from taking good care of ourselves, speaking honestly and following our heart. Although we're not aware of it, living a lie and constantly rejecting our true self is exhausting and eventually breaks us down physically and mentally.

From this viewpoint it's easy to see how living a stressful life compounded by work that is unfulfilling, or staying in relationships where we are not true to our deeper emotions, can create significant internal pressure on our major organs and central nervous system. If we are constantly fighting ourselves in this way, and do not listen to the messages from our body, the inevitable result is our self-destruction. This does not account for excessive consumption of alcohol, food or drugs, whether recreational or prescription, which are habits motivated by a desire to numb deeper mental and emotional pain. Often this is a misguided quest for short-term relief that only makes our health concerns worse in the long run. These crutches for our broken heart mask our feelings of not being worthy of love and the burden of living in perpetual fear.

My view is that both genetic and acquired immune system problems all stem from this dynamic. If we are destructive in our thoughts, emotional life, behaviour and lifestyle habits, over time the decrease in blood and energy flow, as well as the build-up of toxins, lead to a weakened capacity to fight off infections from bacteria, parasites and viruses. Similarly, a toxic or parasitic mental and emotional life leads us to allow toxic and parasitic people to remain in our lives, which directly correlates to an increased susceptibility to all forms of pathogens and environmental

toxins that will further eat away at our health, happiness and peace when we allow it.

Most people understand that eating natural whole foods and adopting a healthy lifestyle will support wellbeing and prevent illness. What most don't know, though, is that complete honesty, vulnerability and love for oneself in every situation is just as vital to our long-term mental and physical health. We are so used to hiding our true feelings in order to survive, keep the peace and protect ourselves from judgement, criticism, aggression and rejection that we remain unaware we're relating to ourselves in such a harmful way, or allowing others to take advantage of us, until of course we are forced to figure out why we've become so depressed or ill.

Deep down we all know there has to be more to life than suffering. But no one can save, heal or free us besides ourselves. This is precisely why the purpose of mental, emotional and physical symptoms is to show us where and how we're not caring for ourselves well enough to thrive and flourish fully before we die. Once we understand the simple but profound truth that all suffering is the result of a constant rejection of the true self – a self that we never learned how to love, accept, value and care for properly – we can begin transforming whatever struggles we're faced with and find deeper peace and health immediately.

Depression and disease is our body's practical and logical way of alerting us to the life-or-death importance of giving ourselves permission to be fully who we are now. I have witnessed countless people stop being victims to their fearful and insecure thoughts, which empowered them to transform their suffering into a better quality of life. Once they wholeheartedly committed to speaking and acting

in a way that valued their deeper feelings, needs and life purpose in every situation as the priority, even when scared, they were able to heal and forgive their past, and finally stop hurting and betraying themselves in the present.

The key, then, to the breakthrough is to stop running from yourself. Most of us today are moving through life so fast that we're lost in a momentum of distraction, going from one person or place to the next, without ever slowing down. But if you can choose to create some space to be alone and stay open to yourself you can finally welcome your inner truths and *feel* deeply again. Then you can get clear about what you actually want in life, what feels good to you, and what makes you feel alive and well. I've found that when we focus primarily on these things daily, even when criticized for doing so, we support the healthy flow of energy, blood and emotion in the body and we naturally move away from any person, situation or habit that is no longer healthy for us.

Until we open our mind to our inherent capacity to heal ourselves and thus take our life, health and happiness back into our own hands, there will always remain aspects of ourselves that are closed and thus will not heal. It doesn't matter how many doctors we visit or how great a practitioner might be. The walls of the ego and the small separate self must come down, which can only happen through bringing our own loving attention and acceptance to all the parts of us we've rejected and hidden over the years. Regardless of how hard life has been to date, I've found that it's only through taking one hundred per cent responsibility for the depression, disease and worldly struggles we're experiencing that we can finally see the purpose this suffering has served in bringing us home to our true self and to the source of

strength and peace within. Blaming anyone or anything external only wastes the time and energy we need to heal and free ourselves now. If we choose pride or stubbornness over honest vulnerability, our denial will only keep us trapped.

No one decides against his happiness, but he may do so if he does not see he does.

A Course in Miracles

The moral of this story is that even when we cannot see it, and even if we won't allow ourselves to believe it, there is a much healthier and happier way of life waiting for all of us beyond the aspects of our lives with which we're currently struggling. I've found that the single most important key to finding lasting peace is the realization that all suffering is simply a cry from our body and subconscious asking us to love, accept and value ourselves now. All the mental, emotional, physical, financial and spiritual struggle we experience is purely our soul's way of waking us up to the aspects of ourselves, our lives and our past that we haven't yet learned how to love or understand fully.

Depression, disease, insecurity and pain force us to bring more awareness into our daily lives so we realize the value of living with kindness and compassion for ourselves, other people and all life. Our suffering actually stops us from running and reawakens us to the truth in the present, so we can transform whatever does not support our wellbeing or life purpose. Our struggles are meant to help us learn the lessons beneath what we perceive to be our 'mistakes', so we can live each day in a way that creates less suffering and more harmony, not only for ourselves, but also for everyone around us.

Suffering is irrefutably a part of life. It always has been and to some degree it probably always will be. But the amount we suffer and the excess pain we create can be significantly decreased and relieved once we understand how we bring it upon ourselves. The pain of not loving ourselves is how we learn to value ourselves sooner rather than later so we can enjoy the life we've been given.

It's empowering to know that anxiety, confusion, sadness, frustration, anger, hurt, resentment, fear, shame, guilt, regret, insecurity, inadequacy and self-doubt are all merely the result of us not knowing how to love and value ourselves in the past. All the pain we've ever felt, feel now or will ever feel has its roots in the moments where we have not been true to ourselves, but rather have compromised, betrayed, abandoned, judged, rejected and therefore hurt ourselves. When we accept this universal truth and apply it to our life we can finally free ourselves from all the additional suffering we unintentionally allow. I'm sure you agree that life is challenging enough without us being our own worst enemy.

*There is no coming to consciousness without pain.
People will do anything, no matter how absurd,
in order to avoid facing their own soul. One does not
become enlightened by imagining figures of light,
but by making the darkness conscious.*

Carl Jung

The only way to move beyond our identification with our struggles is to view these apparent obstacles as lessons to be learned that are making us stronger and better people. Regardless of how much we try to avoid pain, if we run from it or numb ourselves it will remain alive inside us, not only

making us sick or miserable over time, but also causing us to react to life in ways that sabotage our relationships, goals and dreams. A large number of us live our whole lives trapped in some form of suffering because we keep denying the specific truths that seem too overwhelming, unlovable or scary to address. We never learned that through stepping into the unknown and honestly talking about these inner battles we can transform them, grow from them and ultimately thrive because of them.

Each thought, emotion and life experience can guide us towards improved health, happiness and self-respect if we can stop fighting life and find the purpose in what's challenging us. Every single situation and relationship – past, present and future – is leading us towards an unconditional love for ourselves and the freedom that we know is possible. In fact, the more we value ourselves, the clearer it becomes that our suffering in all its manifestations exists to guide us directly towards joy, kindness and truth. It creates the fork in the road we need to make choices to open rather than contract, to surrender rather than hold on to what's not healthy for us, and to care for ourselves rather than live in guilt, denial or fear.

Practical Questions

At the end of most chapters in this book you will find questions specifically designed to transform the core psychological and emotional blocks that are holding you back in life. These questions will assist you in freeing emotion and energy that are trapped in your body and life so you may release whatever is hindering your peace, health and happiness. As you work through these self-healing questions, it will be tremendously helpful to write out your answers, because expressing your thoughts and feelings in this way will help you to honour and clarify what is true for you. It will also free the psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual energies that have become stuck. For this reason, I highly recommend that you purchase a journal or notebook in which to write your answers. The potential change and forward movement these questions can inspire is truly unlimited.

Key Affirmations

Following the questions, you will also find affirmations at the end of most chapters in this book. These practices will support you to think, feel and express positive, healthy and high-vibrational thoughts and words. As I mentioned before, the confronting questions will free vital life-force energies that have become trapped in your body, heart, mind and life. Once liberated, these energies are then available for you to channel or redirect towards thinking, feeling, speaking and acting in ways that support you to create what you want and need. With this in mind, I have found that working with the affirmations directly after answering the confronting questions that precede them is a very effective way to transform the limiting

beliefs and unhealthy thought patterns that are harming you. Additionally, I highly recommend using the practice outlined in the section opposite for all of the affirmations contained in this book. *To make doing this simple, I recommend marking the next page so you can refer back to it after reading each chapter.*

Lastly, it's important to know that affirmations are not effective in many cases if you're not also speaking and acting based on what you truly feel in each life situation. This is why if you look in the mirror and try saying 'I love you' to yourself, but you are currently betraying yourself in your life, your initial reaction will be disbelief in the affirmation and criticism of yourself, because the truth is you're treating yourself horribly rather than with love or respect. Once you begin to address the areas where you're not valuing yourself, you'll know in your heart that you're taking care of yourself and the affirmations then become a very powerful support to improve your life.

Additional Ways of Working with Affirmations

With your eyes either open or closed, wherever you are, please say each affirmation one at a time. If you are alone and you would like to say them out loud, please do so. If you are around other people and feel more comfortable expressing them only to yourself, that is very effective too. Either way, please feel your whole body as you express each affirmation. Please feel your feet, your legs, your belly, your chest, your back, your arms, your hands, your neck and your head. Take a few slow, deep breaths through your nose into your belly, and then imagine that you are speaking to every cell in your body. When you have an opportunity, please also try expressing these affirmations in front of a

mirror while looking into your eyes. This is a very powerful way to help yourself.

Please also note any negative thoughts, emotions or physical sensations that arise within you as reactions to the affirmations you express. These will represent your subconscious blocks to living a fully healthy and happy life. Once aware of these inner limitations, you'll be empowered to love yourself more deeply and reaffirm the positive, healthy thought patterns necessary to harmonize the negative energies that are trapped in your mind and body.

Finally, please consider that it takes a little time to create new, healthy neurological and energetic pathways. I like to compare this process to digging a new irrigation channel or riverbed. At first it might feel a little like manual labour, but eventually the pathway is created and the energy can flow freely and naturally in a way that supports rather than sabotages you. When you've been thinking in a certain manner for a long period of time, it requires patience and practice to redirect your thoughts, words and actions consistently in a positive, healthy direction. Thus, when you find yourself doubting or rejecting a positive affirmation please know that this reaction represents a part of your psyche, personality or identity that's developed to protect you. In other words, when it's hard to accept or feel what you're affirming to be true, please be kind to yourself and know that the part of you that's resisting represents a part of you that's still hurting. In time, through being compassionate with yourself, the positive affirmations offered throughout this book will help you to heal your heart and free your mind. So please do not give up.

Practical Questions



In what ways do you suffer or struggle but hold back from sharing this with other people?

What physical symptoms or illnesses is your body expressing as a way of asking you to love and value yourself more fully?

What do you struggle to love about yourself?

What do you struggle to love about your life?

Do you ever think about killing yourself? If so, why?

Can you see how the desire to end your life is in fact a cry from your soul to heal your internal relationship with yourself? Can you see how your physical, mental and emotional pain are asking you to heal the past hurt, sadness and anger stored in your body?

Can you see how you need to learn to be kind towards yourself?

Can you see how you know your current habits of thinking, speaking and acting are unhealthy, and instinctually you want to transform them into new healthy ways of living? If you knew with certainty that you could be free of the pain causing your desire not to be alive, would you then want to enjoy your life? Can you please find someone to speak to about how you feel, and please talk about your suffering honestly?

Practically speaking, what can you focus your energy on today that represents you taking care of yourself and therefore honouring what you love to do, want to do or need to do?

Key Affirmations



I do not need to be sick or unhappy to be loved.

It's never too late to start over. I can re-create my life.

I am not just my thoughts or my emotions.

The voice in my head is only a small part of me.

I have everything I need within me to be healthy, happy and free.

I am willing to master loving myself unconditionally.

The loving truth inside of me will heal me and fulfil me completely.

I find strength, clarity and compassion in my suffering.

For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way – an honorable way – in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, ‘The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory.’

Viktor Frankl,
Nazi concentration camp survivor,
Man’s Search for Meaning

The Search for Love

The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove
than the hunger for bread.

Mother Teresa

Wherever you are, please take a few slow, deep breaths into your belly. Feel your whole body, from your feet all the way up to the crown of your head, and then down to your fingertips. Please relax any tension you feel and let yourself be. Using each inhalation to open your body and create inner space, welcome everything you're thinking, feeling and experiencing here in this moment. Please be present to your body and your breath.

Our search for love and connection is the one true driving force behind everything we do and everything we desire in life. Once our striving for approval, recognition, security or success loses its momentum, we finally realize we've simply been looking for love in all its manifestations, because when it comes down to it, what else really matters? In many cases, even before our physical survival needs for food, water or shelter have been met, our need for love surfaces as the primary motivating factor in life, because love is what makes life truly worth living. Love, and the genuine meaningful connections that arise with it, is the true medicine that heals, inspires and fulfils, and this is why, whether we're willing to admit it or not, we are either directly or indirectly in the pursuit of love right now.

This universal desire for love that we all share symbolizes a deep longing within each of us to remember who we really are and thus come home to our true nature – a nature that is, always has been and always will be an infinite source of pure love. But because we've forgotten this, most of what we do on a daily basis is motivated by our desire for others to love us or to love ourselves more fully, so that, ultimately, we can one day feel great within ourselves and our lives. Until we awaken to the source of love within, we all look for love,

attention or recognition externally from others, because we haven't learned how to love and value ourselves daily in ways that are fulfilling. However, as we learn to care for ourselves emotionally and physically in practical ways, we heal the internalized hurt that blocks our access to the source of love within, and this simultaneously uncovers the love that we are. Through learning to relate to ourselves with the kindness, honesty and respect we crave, we naturally grow in our ability to embody love and thus give to others purely and unconditionally, which, along with simply enjoying each day, is an expression of our ultimate life purpose.

*Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find
all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.*

Jalaluddin Rumi

In our quest for healing, purpose and happiness each of us is simply looking for love. We're instinctually learning how to love ourselves and how to create healthy situations and relationships that are grounded in love. At first, we all search the outer world for the love that has its home right in our very own hearts. Each of us simply wants to be seen, understood, accepted, appreciated and valued just as we are. Deep down, we all want to feel that our lives really matter, that we're not alone, and that even a single person actually cares about our feelings, desires, needs and dreams.

The funny thing about most of us is that even though love is the one thing we all want more than anything in life, it's also the one thing that scares us more than anything else. Love scares us to our core because it requires our heart to be open and vulnerable to ourselves, to other people and to the world. We fear this love we desire so strongly because

it opens our heart, and when our heart is truly naked we feel ourselves, we feel others, we feel our world, and we feel the love and the pain we've held in, closed our eyes to and disconnected from for so long.

Rather than fully feel the intensity of life, we unintentionally close our heart and cut ourselves off from the pulsating truth of what we feel because we're scared of experiencing uncomfortable emotions like rejection or insecurity that are inherent to human existence. Of course, we're not aware of this, but in doing so we actually reject our true self, which is the source of love within us. We ourselves deny ourselves access to the one thing we desire most.

We're interesting creatures, aren't we?

Fortunately, I've found that the love alive within each of us is so powerful that it will eventually transform every internal and external obstacle that stands in its way. How long this process takes depends on when we decide to face our fears and stop fighting our genuine feelings, needs and dreams. When we're finally true to ourselves each day we both stop hurting ourselves in the present and we heal past wounds, which allows the love within – the love we're looking for – to expand and fill our being.

At some point, the evolutionary impulse of life, nature and the entire universe will prevail in making sure we find this love that we're seeking. It is our destiny. But we have to learn how to be ourselves fully, and thus express the love we are through our thoughts, words and actions if we want to experience this as soon as possible. In practising this approach, life immediately improves because we prevent the pain and damage caused when we betray or hide our true self. Most importantly, we come to live each day knowing that, finally, we do not need to be more, do more or have

more to be lovable, because we feel, often for the first time in our adult lives, that we are, and always have been, both lovable and abundant in love.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8

Unfortunately, many of us end up making ourselves sick or depressed because we don't know how else to get the love, attention, support, rest or space for ourselves that we need. We're still waiting on others to give us what we didn't receive as children and never learned to give to ourselves. The truth is you do not need to be ill or unhappy to get love, support or time to care for yourself. You can give it to yourself. But first you have to acknowledge that you never learned how to clearly express what you feel or to ask for what you need. We all learned a very self-destructive way of getting love, attention and support, which not only destroys us if we don't heal it, but also covers the internal source we're looking to unlock.

You do not need to break down physically or mentally before it's okay to talk about your emotions or to take personal time to care for yourself. It's okay to attend to yourself now, before seeking love, attention or security externally makes you feel worse than you do today. If you don't give yourself space and permission to understand this truth within you, it makes it hard to find or attract the true love, connection, peace or happiness you're seeking. There is a path to feeling enough, to feeling lovable, and

to reconnecting to the source of love within you. But this path challenges you to accept that it is possible to be loved for who you are, as you are, rather than for what you do for others or for how much you please them.

Practical Questions



What do you love most in life and about life?

What are all of the little things that you love?

What are your favourite things to do, see, taste, touch, smell,
experience, feel, create or accomplish?

What makes you happy?

What activities bring out your happiness?

What has made you happy in the past?

Whom do you love in your life? Whom do you truly care
about and value?

Whom do you expect to make you happy or satisfy you?

Whom do you constantly try to please, make happy or satisfy?

What would happen if you stopped?

What can you focus your energy on today that represents you
caring for yourself and therefore honouring what you love to do,
want to do or need to do?

Key Affirmations



My soul is made of pure love.

I am pure, unconditional love.

There is an ocean of love inside of me.

I am one with the infinite universe.

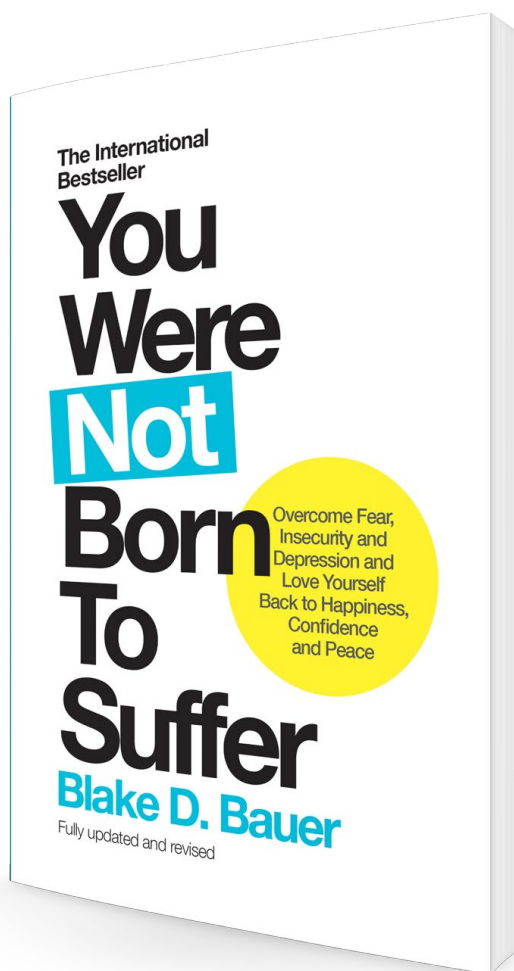
I do not need to search outside of myself for love.

I am enough.

I am lovable just as I am.

I do not need to be more, do more or have more to love myself
or to be loved by others.

We hope you have enjoyed this extract from *You Were Not Born To Suffer* by Blake Bauer and that it has left you wanting more. You can buy a copy of the entire book from all major retailers or to find out more about Blake Bauer visit; www.unconditional-selflove.com



Exclusive sampler

About Blake D Bauer

Blake D Bauer is an internationally sought-after speaker, teacher and consultant with an extensive background in psychology, alternative medicine, nutrition, traditional healing and mindfulness meditation. He is considered by many to be a modern meditation and qi gong master. Based on both his personal experience overcoming deep suffering, addiction and adversity, as well as his professional success with thousands of people worldwide, his pioneering work integrates what he's found to be the most effective approaches to mental, emotional and physical health.



You can learn more about
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