



GOODNESS,
GRACE &
GREAT
THOUGHTS
ON FIRE

How to Embrace 7 Billion Shades of You

SUSANA MEI SILVERHØJ

GOODNESS,
GRACE, &
GREAT
THOUGHTS
ON FIRE

**How to Embrace
7 Billion
Shades of You**

*H*ave you ever asked yourself the questions:

What is life about?

Who am I? and

How can I feel whole and free?

Goodness, Grace & Great Thoughts on Fire invites you to experience and expand your perception of life into something greater than good or bad, positive and negative. In this book you will learn that *all* is good — for the highest good!

In this illuminating volume, Susana Mei Silverhøj has deeply opened her heart to awaken you to loving yourself — exactly as you are — by telling personal stories that you will relate to. These stories will help you to remember *your* uniqueness and to embrace both your light and shadows in all their many shades.

The “feel-good menu” of 33 personal, brutally truthful and transformational stories will help you pick and choose what gifts resonate with you on your journey — the journey of creating magic and awesomeness in your life.

Receive and embody the frequencies of:

- Empowerment to create a magical life

- Changing perceptions and beliefs to feel free, vibrant, and powerful
- Embodiment and alignment of body, mind, heart, and soul
- Inclusion and acceptance of your uniqueness, just as you are
- Love to embrace the 7 billion shades of you

Also by Susana Mei Silverhøj

Flow Food – Nem Økomad på Budget, 2016

*From Money with Love – Activate your Prosperity
Consciousness, 2018*

Co-author

*No mistakes!: How to change Adversity into
Abundance*

by Madison Taylor, Sunny Dawn Johnston and
HeatherAsh Amara, 2013.

Time to Rise

by Dr. Andrea Pennington, 2017

Famna Feminint Ledarskap

by Siljans Måsar, 2019

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*- How to Embrace 7 Billion
Shades of You*

Susana Mei Silverhøj

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Coverdesign: Verónica Martínez
www.behance.net/veronicamartinez

Coverphoto: Kerstin Rossbander www.pureblume.de

Editing: Juliette Lachemeier www.theeruditepen.com

ISBN: 978-87-970446-1-2

EAN 9788797044612

PRAISE for
Goodness, Grace & Great Thoughts on Fire

“Susana’s stories point to the elegance and graceful simplicity that we all desire in life, but struggle to achieve. The idea that life could really be as simple as being willing to try on the various ‘shades’ of me while embracing my true personality, following my heart and learning to live with purpose is an idea that inspires me.

I love the way Susana brings humor and humility to her personal journey through life.

Her vulnerability, openness and open-eyed truth-telling are comforting and reassuring as we struggle to embrace our humanity and trust that our evolution will indeed occur in divine timing. I highly recommend this book to those on a journey of self-awareness, self-compassion, and self-acceptance”.

— Dr. Andrea Pennington
Creator of The Attunement Process Meditation,
and Author of *I Love You, Me!*

“Goodness, Grace and Great Thoughts on Fire is a must-read for anyone who wants to love more, feel more and live more.

Susana takes readers on a fun, inspirational and transformational

*journey into our deepest essence. It is a delightful guide home through
raw and personal stories from her heart”.*

- Rachael Jayne Groover
Best-selling Author of *Powerful and Feminine*
Creator of Art of Feminine Presence®

DEDICATION

*To my amazing and most loving children—Ellice, Theo, and
Hugo.*

*Thank you for letting me love you and for making my life so rich and
magical!*

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PREFACE

*F*or thousands of years masters and teachers have tried to explain the nature of existence and have alluded to a supreme being that governs all of creation. But how can we explain infinity? How can we describe the greatness of it All? Every word limits and reduces the magnitude of the infinite divine intelligence and grace behind all life. Some teachers say we are all a hologram of that divine intelligence. In other words, we are all a pixel on the great screen, a drop in the ocean, a grain of sand in the infinite desert. And we are also the screen, the ocean, and the desert. We are everything and nothing.

We are a miniature picture of the universe—inside and out. An entire universe exists within every single one of our cells; 350 billion cells and universes exist at the same time as one and the same. What a mind-blowing thought.

This also means that all things have an effect on everything else. One thought can affect the whole world. There have been experiments with flowers, for example, where even the thought of harming the flower has created a measurable effect on it. With this new awareness, it is time we start to take responsibility for who we are and our actions!

Given that everything is interconnected to this extent, it has been difficult for me to work with only one aspect of my personality or one particular healing modality on my self-growth journey. Focusing on one emotional or spiritual attribute to “solve a problem” has only worked to a certain degree for me, personally. Expanding my personality aspect further into physical and mental traits immediately opened up my consciousness to a totally different level of healing. I am, therefore, very excited about the holistic or integral approach to life.

Traditionally, experts and scientists from all different points of view and faculties have found evidence that backs up *their* perceptions. Psychologists look at our personal traits and personalities, sociologists look at the world from a social aspect, and neuroscientists look at the nervous system. But instead of seeing how this all fits together, they have been arguing against each other, thus creating even more separation. Would I dare to argue that some psychological diseases could be related to a malfunction in the nervous system? Or vice versa? Some specialists, unfortunately, have been and still are so programmed in their perspectives that they have been

unable to see the whole picture. Today, however, many scientists are working with others outside of their own fields of expertise; therefore, we are starting to get some clues on how we as humans function with respect to the universe. Personally, this is where life starts to become juicy as bringing different perspectives together into a holistic and integral view of life is a powerful approach to healing and consciousness expansion. Mainly because we can pick and choose what resonates with us without being “wronged.” Everything is “right” depending on what perspective we come from. And, at one point we see that we actually do not know anything, which is one of life’s paradoxes.

While working in and with different scientific areas, different modalities, and therapies, etc., I realized that each life journey is unique. Living from our hearts and from our unique light and sound frequencies is a journey we can consciously take; we all carry a unique special frequency that we are. Unfortunately, we are taught that we should not think we are special and perfect. Instead, we are taught that we are full of flaws and need fixing. We are not good enough, which gets confirmed over and over, right? But the more we can embrace and embody our unique “heart light” frequency, which is what I call “Earth God/Goddess” or soul signature, the more grounded and relaxed we become and the more we experience divine perfection and grace. In other words, we need to embrace the different shades of self—all 7 billion of them. Then the more we will also experience our own perfection, just as we are. And from that

space we feel whole, complete, and free, which creates miracles and magic in our lives.

Since our journeys are unique, we cannot follow other teachers' paths to enlightenment. But by bringing different perspectives on existence together, we can take quantum leaps into our greatness. We can activate our DNA strands, becoming crystalline bodies and reconnecting to the coolest magical skills we could imagine. Which methods, modalities, and perspectives you resonate with and what your "soul embracing" journey will be unique to your needs. What I can provide is inspiration and guidance for you to find your path. It is our "job" to go with the flow and find what works for us and what expands us. Not because some spiritual teaching or scientist says so but because it feels good and expanding. Or sometimes scary. Fear and excitement carry the same frequency—they are only different interpretations and polarities of this frequency or different sides of the same coin.

I usually choose to try new modalities and treatments in which I have the most resistance and fear. If I experience resistance toward something, I know there is a bigger gift to collect. If I'm not ready to face my fear, I'll go with a less challenging choice. And I know it is all good. I cannot get it wrong. I made the choice; therefore, it was the "right" one at that moment. There is such freedom and relaxation in that. I did it—therefore, it was divine perfection.

To go on a journey to reconnect with all the shades of ourselves, to feel a greater connection with life, and to

feel extraordinary can be frustrating at times. As I have been embracing my different “shades” for so long now, I have found that it helps to have a structure within the chaos. Therefore, I created this book with the purpose of making each soul’s journey easier as its content will help you to assess and embrace yourself just as you are. I truly believe that consciousness is the new “black.” Not *fixing* consciousness but *being* consciousness. When we are conscious of the coherence between body, mind, heart, and soul, we can take quantum leaps in our understanding of ourselves and our roles in the greater universe. There are so many gateways we can take to that place we individually consider “home,” but what happens when we open them all? We’ll jump into expansion.

I am not trying to reinvent the wheel. What I have to say is nothing new. What I have done in this book is take all the great ideas, scientific research, visions, and wisdom I have gained and have put it into a menu of personal everyday stories that brings all concepts together in a holistic and connected way. That is what makes this book different. There are thousands of self-love books in the market today. What I have personally missed in these books is the stories behind the wisdom. Stories that cover the *how* of a teaching and the normal everyday stories we all have that demonstrate how a person integrated the wisdom teachings into their lives. I wanted real-life examples of how other people turned their lives around. So I wrote the book I always wanted to read.

I wrote this book to inspire others by revealing what is possible when living a balanced and empowered life. I would love to see you embrace your life and yourself just by reading this book. I have put my heart and soul into every page of this book. I have given you my personal real-life stories to relate to so that you can feel good about your life and yourself as you are. I want to assist you to perceive life, yourself, and your everyday situations and problems differently. To this aim, I have provided stories from my own journey together with practices, tools, exercises, experiences, and wisdom as well as from experts, teachers, and masters from around the world.

This book is not a step-by-step guide, however, since my experience is that our journeys are unique and individual. The content is not designed to give you a specific number of tasks to do in a select number of days or months and then claim it will transform your life. That tactic might even make you feel worse about yourself or make you feel as though what you do is not good enough. Instead, I have provided you with a “feel-good menu”—just like at a restaurant—where you pick the dish that speaks to you or the food that makes your mouth water. I urge you to take your appetizers, entrées, and desserts that align with you from this “menu” and leave the rest to perhaps try on another visit.

To remove some of the pressure of *doing*, I have written stories about my life. I have opened up my heart and written about my secrets as I want you to know that you are not alone. Authenticity and vulnerability are such crucial

parts of our journey into wholeness, and yet so many are so afraid to show the world who they are. We play the roles we feel are “right” and feel like frauds because of it. So there is nothing for you to *do* if you do not feel inspired to do so. You can read this book of stories from my life and leave it at that. Or, you can reflect and contemplate upon your own life and embody the frequencies of that particular “teaching” and maybe do some exercises if you feel inspired.

It is always wise to act on what inspires you; choose one thing you feel good about and refrain from trying to do what doesn't. If meditation makes you feel stressed since it is another thing to do on your way too long to-do-list—don't meditate! If an activity is not joyful and doesn't make you feel good, stop doing it. We were created to enjoy the experience of life so relax, chill, and have fun. I think that we tend to take life a bit too seriously at times, especially the seekers who really want to make a difference in the world. We forget to enjoy and just be. We keep separating ourselves *from* ourselves so that we can experience oneness. We work hard, push, and fight instead of trusting the universe, feeling the divine grace, going with the flow, and laughing at our eagerness to achieve our dream lives. How ironic is that?

So here is your **menu**:

Every chapter has either a personal story and topic that I have gone through and processed, or a vision or life episode, or a poem, or something to serve as an example, illustration, and inspiration of the topic. Most of the stories were published in my Theos Heart blog in 2014 when my

family and I had just moved to Costa Rica. The blog was read in thirty-eight countries that same year. The feedback was amazing. So many people felt seen and loved for who they were as they read about my experiences. But be aware—if you are not ready to act on your highest dreams—you might want to stay away. I have had several people saying my stories inspired them to move away, quit their jobs, travel—whatever they had dreamed of doing but were afraid to do before. Aside from these experiences, every chapter has tools, practices, reflective questions, or other easy ways to expand your heart light consciousness and help you to experience and master the art of a magical life. Are you ready to jump?

“Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need?”

Because this is the experience you are having at this moment.”

- Eckhart Tolle (2005, p. 41)

INTRODUCTION

*So here we are – all part of this great hologram called Creation,
which is everybody else's SELF...It's all a cosmic play, and there is
nothing but you!*

- Itzhak Bentov (2000)

What is life about?

This is a question that I have asked myself for as long as I can remember. I know I'm not alone in asking this question. While doing Google research a few years ago, I found that 151 *million* people around the globe do the same search *every month!*

Most of us want to feel and experience that there is a purpose and meaning to our life. That there is some kind of reason why we suffer, break our hearts, and feel pain. If

not, then what is the point of living? I refuse to believe what was said in a movie once: “*Life is a bitch and then you die.*” So what is life all about then? In my active search for the answer to this question over the last thirty years, I have come to the conclusion that it is ***to enjoy, create, and experience every single shade of ourselves in order to feel whole, complete, free, joyous, and at peace.***

There are approximately seven billion humans on this planet, and each one is a probable mirror to a shade of you; a mirror in the sense that we subconsciously see and recognize a part of who we are in every other person on this earth. My experience is that every meeting I ever encounter with another will have the potential to make me feel more whole and complete than ever before. Every time I connect with another soul it activates another part of me that I have forgotten and vice versa. Life then becomes a beautiful dance of remembrance as these connections also hold the potential of mirroring our own perceptions back at us.

Every time you feel good or bad in a person’s company, it is a reflection of the shades of you. When you claim those shades, good or bad, you have the opportunity to be the full version of yourself. Of course, I am speaking metaphorically as not all 7 billion shades—or however many shades there might be of us in total—might be necessary for you to claim. Our shades come in all different levels and forms: mental, emotional, personal, traits, and soul shades. We can even have physical shades in our body. What we think, feel, believe and experience is connected to who we think we are. Everything and everyone is a potential shade

of you. You can seek a consciousness or intelligence that embraces and accepts the full version of your diverse character traits—the dark, the light, and all the shades of colors in between.

Most of us will interact with other human beings more or less on daily basis in one form or the other. Some make us feel good about ourselves. Others trigger us to different degrees. You either love or hate or experience all the shades of gray emotions in between when it comes to each person. In other words, people can trigger a wide range of reactions and/or responses in us. Some people are energetically incongruent; they say one thing and send out vibes that don't match, which make you feel unsafe and confused. Others are simply annoying with their comments or critical, judgmental, or controlling. Some are so loving and spiritual that you want to throw up. It really doesn't matter *what* triggers you, but the fact that they do is a sign that there is a gift for you to collect. What you don't like in others is something you don't like in yourself or as Eckhart Tolle (2005, p. 74) said:

“Anything that you resent and strongly react to in another is also in you.”

I know, it's frustrating isn't it? It would really trigger my anger when people told me this. I knew this statement to be true; I just didn't want to hear it. Mainly because that would mean I had to take radical responsibility for my life, as I couldn't blame others for how I felt anymore. Crap!

So why is it that we have these different shades that we don't like—in others and in ourselves? One idea that we are taught since childhood is that there are positive and negative emotions we should and should not feel. For instance, we suppress the emotions that our spiritual community, society, culture, religion, or family define as negative and wrong. One problem with suppressing one emotion is that we then tend to suppress them all. We cannot pick and choose which ones to feel without affecting the others as well. In other words, the emotions or shades of us we don't want to see or have—also called shadows—will work against us when we resist and reject them and make us numb to all emotions to a certain degree. It is like taking antidepressants; we feel flat with no extreme emotions of any kind. No happiness, no pain, just an okay feeling. Embracing our shadow shades is an amazing tool to feel more, be more, and live fully. Also, when we focus on “positive” emotions and suppress the “negative” ones, we are telling ourselves that we are not good enough as we are. We believe that we are wrong for having those emotions. How can we genuinely be happy and at peace then?

Let me tell you something you might have heard before: There are no negative or positive emotions. There are only emotions that we *judge* as positive or negative. Emotions are *all* very joyful when we accept and embrace them. And this is not something I say because it sounds good. I really, truly enjoy all emotions when I let them flow through me freely. When I face them and love them, just as

they are, they are so beautiful and enjoyable. Not that I always manage to do so, but when I do, ahhhhh, lovely...

When I connect to my inner truth, there is no resistance and thereby I am free. Not that I always feel *happy* about all the emotions I experience. I might even still try to resist them. But as long as I am truthful to myself, I honor myself and can see the meaning and potential of a limitless life when I embrace all emotions, thoughts, and reactions. There is such power in, for instance, our emotions when we embrace them. Really! Or as my favorite spiritual teacher and intuitive Matt Kahn (2016) recommends we say when there are emotions arising we don't like:

“I respect your power.”

When you experience anger—*feel into it*—isn't it powerful? It can remove all the happiness and joy you felt moments before the anger arose. Respect! That is a powerful force! I respect the power of that anger.

Emotions also act as personal guides when we become aware of them and actually listen to what they have to say. They are not speaking “universal truth” about how things *are*, but they *guide* you to show you your *subconscious emotions*. Most people are not aware that these subconscious emotions often are based on past experiences. These emotions are not neutral; they are compasses that show us what shades of ourselves we need to embrace. The shift in our awakening happens when we honor our emotions as the guides they are instead of insisting they define how reality is.

These emotions come from our past, our stories, and we need to honor them. But we don't have to be ruled by them. Taking back our power comes from embracing and respecting our emotions for the guides they are.

It is a pretty difficult task to accept and love ourselves fully when we only accept the shades of us that we define as good. But the best part is that when we embrace and accept all of ourselves, our emotions change automatically to what we judge as being positive. In other words, being conscious of our judgments and beliefs removes our subconscious triggers and helps us to discern what our emotions are that stem from the collective consciousness. We all experience the same emotions, and for those of us who are highly empathic, we might tend to take everyone's emotions in and believe them to be ours. Emotions are powerful energy. And that is all there is—energy.

We all want to be loved, not for the roles we play or the identities we take on—but for who we really are in our deepest essence. When Oprah gave her speech on her final Oprah show, she said something in line with:

“Something I have learned over the years is that what all people have in common is that they all want to be seen, heard, and validated for who they are.”

We blossom when we connect with people who really get us. We feel alive when someone can really *see* us and understand us beyond what we have said or done. When

we connect heart to heart. We feel happy and peaceful when someone looks into our eyes and we can feel their unconditional love and acceptance of us for no obvious reason at all. That is one powerful way of how we can be of service to the planet—to hold space and see the essence that we all are: Earth Gods/Goddesses. Try to focus on that in other people. That doesn't mean we should put ourselves in dangerous or harmful situations. It is important that we honor ourselves first and foremost. If someone is overstepping your boundaries, say, “thank you, but no thank you” and leave. Still, remember, they are not what they do. Even Lucifer was an angel. I might not want to be friends with him, but he was still an angel...

My deepest longing with this book is to make you feel loved, seen, and accepted for who you are so that you can feel what I know is the truth: You are an amazing, powerful, and beautiful being. Perfect, just as you are. You don't need any fixing. You are not broken, even if you currently might doubt that. We are so programmed and trained to feel inadequate and powerless that we have almost completely forgotten the power we possess. Is it time for you to step into that power? Is that the reason why you sit with this book in your hands at this very moment? Were you drawn to this book because the universe said:

“It is time.

It is time to blossom into your full potential.

To live the life you have always dreamed of and envisioned.

To reconnect to the greatness that you are.

All 7 billion shades of you!"

I am inviting you to join me on my journey to read about my inner shadows, judgments, and feelings so you don't have to feel alone with your unembraced shades. So that you can have the courage to go on a journey within to explore, love, and embrace the 7 billion shades of you. I am sharing my stories and secrets so that I can take your hand and help you to cross the bridge over to the other side of the pain and suffering. I have been there; now I can lead you home. I have felt it all. I have lost and found. I have been in pain—physical, emotional, and spiritual. Then I saw the gifts in and perfection of it all. Because when we can find the gifts, acceptance, and love for our whole being, we are free. Free of limitations, free of suffering, free of false beliefs. To stay real and authentic with ourselves, to love, respect, and honor who we really are, and receive the grace of life, are the keys to our greatness and full power. When we can love and feel ourselves in our entirety—including our shadows, dark sides, and “negative” feelings, we are free to choose the life we long for. When we cast the light on our dark spots, we can live fully.

We are unique human beings, every one of us. The world is calling your name. We need you! There is only one you. Please take my hand and walk into the unknown, outside the boxes, limitations, and matrices, and step into the infinite, unique, and extraordinary being that you are. Let us claim our freedom, infinite possibilities, limitlessness, light, and power. Let us be who we are. *I Am that I Am. I*

AM the One Light. Or as Neil Gaiman said in his commencement address to the Class of 2012 at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia (2012):

“The one thing that you have that nobody else has is you.

Your voice, your mind, your story, your vision.

*So write and draw and build and play and dance and live as only you
can.”*

***P*ERFECT, JUST THE WAY YOU
ARE.**

Nothing is lacking in any of us; our positive integral self is always there, always available. You can rediscover and consistently live from your own wondrous perfection, lovability, dignity and authenticity. Genuine satisfaction and unconditional love are not only possible; they are your inalienable rights.

— Bob Hoffman

*D*ifferent. Alone. Weird.

Not good enough. Something is really wrong with me. These were the words pounding like a hammer in my head while I stood and watched the other kids play.

I was three years old and had just started daycare. This is my first memory and a defining moment of my life

since that was, as far as I know, where I consciously started to play roles to fit in so people would like me, given that I had realized I wasn't good enough as I was. I thought I needed to change and that I had to be a happy, good girl and hide my "bad sides" from the outside world. The bad sides, as I judged them, being the selfish acts and thoughts I had, the anger, jealousy, neediness, grumpiness, and so on. But also, my inner rebel who didn't want to do what I was told. The one who could say nasty words about my family behind their back. My inner evil side. That was the side I identified with. I really thought I was bad and just playing the role of the "good girl."

My mom wanted me to go to daycare so I could play with some other kids. But the kids were mean to me. They pulled my braids and pushed me away when I tried to join in. I didn't fight my way into the group. I was more of a victim. I observed and backed off. I felt sorry for myself and kept all my emotions inside.

One day, I was standing in the daycare entrance which was dark, moldy, and seventies looking. When my mom was about to leave, she opened the door and the light came flooding in. She looked like an angel about to walk into the light while leaving me there in the dark. I really tried to control myself. My knuckles turned white at my desperate attempt to control my emotions. I wanted to stay strong. I wanted to be a "good girl." But the sight of my mom was just too much. I started to sob desperately. My mom was devastated and in shock since I had never once told her that I hated being at daycare. I never had to go back but I still

remember how much shame and blame I felt for being real about my feelings. And how embarrassed I was because I cried in front of those other kids. I was such a bad girl.

The worst part is that this pattern of playing roles to make people like me and keeping my happy face on while crying within and not feeling good enough kept on going for over thirty years. It still comes up some days to this day!

As a young teenager, I started to question my own beliefs and those of others, my place on earth, and the meaning of life. I felt like an alien. I observed the outside world and tried to mimic it but felt like a fraud doing it. I got in contact with the spiritual world, which helped me to see the world, myself, and other people from an alternative viewpoint, and finally this life began to make some sense to me.

I wanted to know more. I wanted to understand it all: How the world works, who we are, and why we are the way we are. Who was the God that everyone talked about? It could not be the guy in the Bible, because that guy only sees us as sinful and really bad people. That guy has only conditional love for us. He punishes us when we don't do what he thinks is right. Who were those enlightened people? How did they become enlightened? I started to read books in personal and spiritual development. I went to seminars, courses, and received personal guidance from tons of different experts, healers, and spiritual teachers. I kept searching and searching for *the* answer. I became a spiritual seeker on one hand and tried to fit in with the cool kids in

my hometown on the other. I had one foot in each “world,” but I kept feeling lost and didn’t really fit in anywhere.

I felt so confused. I felt different, but didn’t know who I was. I didn’t know why I felt I was wrong, I just did. I didn’t feel as “alternative and spiritual” as some people. I didn’t walk around with long white or multicolored dresses nor did I have long, big hair, which was my stereotypical and prejudiced view of “new age people.” I dressed like a “normal” teenager just like the rest of my friends. I had modern hairstyles and makeup. I had a lot of friends, but I always felt that if they really knew me, they wouldn’t like me. So I kept playing different roles suitable for the groups I belonged to. I was a chameleon changing colors, clothes, and even accents, depending on who I was with. I felt like a fake for my whole childhood and youth. I always hoped that someone would be able to give me a miraculous cure for my suffering and pain. No one ever could.

Since I didn’t understand who I was, why we are here, and what my inner voices were, I went on a mission to find out. Many psychics and mediums told me that I had thousands of guides around me—a whole entourage—who were here to guide and assist me. They told me I was a huge gift for the planet. I thought, *Bullshit. Who am I to believe I am more than others?*

Because in my limited awareness of things being black or white, I believed I had to be better or worse than others—never equally as good. Mediums and psychics were in awe when they tuned into my energy field. Many of them

said they had never seen such light or such an old soul before. I was so special and meant for something big on the planet. But I couldn't believe it. Me? I was a nobody. I was a fake. If it were true, why did I suffer so much? Why didn't I feel it? However, there was a still, small voice within saying it was true. I saw things. I had visions. I could see past and future events. I thought it was my imagination; that I had made things up. Many adults and peers had told me I had a big imagination. So I believed I did. This made me feel even worse about myself. Sometimes I felt like I lived in two worlds. The world where I could feel the power that psychics said I had and the three-dimensional world I always came back to. It was two different realities. But the one where I felt good and powerful never lasted long. Most of the time, I suffered in this three-dimensional world. But I kept searching for the solution—the one thing that would change my life.

When I was doing my research to find out the meaning of my life, who I am, and how I could get enlightened, I felt so frustrated. It just seem to be so simple for “enlightened people” to tell their story in a before and after version. Especially how bloody simple it was for them. Their stories of enlightenment always sounded so instantaneous and free from continuous struggle. The:

- “I reached my rock bottom, my life changed, and I was happy ever after” kind of story. Or,

- “I had a near-death experience and came back where my life changed in an instant.” Or,
- “You just have to love yourself.” Or,
- “Just look inside, quiet your mind, and you will find peace.” Or,
- “You are already enlightened, just be still and be in the Now.” And my all-time favorite:
- “You can just choose to be happy.”

But how the heck do you do that? Don't they think I have tried? Why could they do it and I couldn't? What was wrong with me? Did I really have to almost die or become an addict and reach my rock bottom to achieve enlightenment? To find who I am? To have peace of mind and be happy? For crying out loud! I wanted to scream out of frustration. Why does it have to be so bloody difficult? Sometimes I almost hated these “gurus.” I was jealous and envied what they had. They were just confirming how stupid I was, that I didn't get it, and they were telling me how simple it is! How dare they? Who were they to be so ignorant? I also thought that they had huge spiritual egos, that they just wanted us to worship the ground they walked on, and get power over us. There were, in other words, a lot of frustrations, rage, and projections in me.

I came to realize that I believed I had to reach something external to become enlightened. That I had to change who I was to reach it. I had to gain a higher consciousness; I had to do this and that. I had to again

become someone else—as in adopt another role to play. As long as I was searching outside of myself, I would never find who I really was. I would never feel that I was *there*, where I wanted to be, where those “enlightened people” were.

Eckhart Tolle defines enlightenment as:

The word enlightenment conjures up the idea of some superhuman accomplishment, and the ego likes to keep it that way, but it is simply your natural state of felt oneness with Being.

It is a state of connectedness with something immeasurable and indestructible, something that, almost paradoxically, is essentially you and yet is much greater than you.

It is finding your true nature beyond name and form. The inability to feel this connectedness gives rise to the illusion of separation, from yourself and from the world around us. (2005, p. 10)

Buddha’s simple definition is said to be: The end of suffering.

I wanted that. I wanted enlightenment. I was longing for no more suffering, just love and inner peace. I wanted to fight my way to inner peace. I did the hard work—what a paradox. How ironic. I was trying to *do* instead of *be*. I was

trying to control the uncontrollable. Every time I thought I got it, I lost it. Because as I can see today, I didn't look within as I was told. I looked in my head. Yeah, that is within, I know, but I was trying to get it intellectually. That was one of my biggest lessons: I wasn't connected to my heart.

The point here is that I distanced myself from who I was by searching on the outside. I thought a modality, a teacher, guru, or book could give me the key. Many claim they can. We listen to experts instead of ourselves. I believe we can shorten our search for ourselves by looking within, in our hearts and body. By listening to the peaceful, soft, and bright voice within ourselves. The voice that makes us feel good about ourselves. That is who we are. We are already enlightened. I am enlightened. We are all enlightened. The trick is to identify with the “right” voice, remember who we really are, and that within us we have our answers. We cannot *become* something we already *are*. Somehow we are “tricked” into believing we are not enlightened and that we have to *reach* that high level of consciousness where we live in oneness and inner peace. Ironically, we distance ourselves from ourselves to reach something above ourselves that is actually within.

Life is a natural evolution of consciousness. It will all unfold in divine timing. But since our minds are limited, we are not in harmony with life. We get stuck in our minds, which disconnects us from who we are. We can't rest in the present moment. We keep on moving into the past and the future, creating new moments of suffering based on our past

experiences or fear of the future. We get caught in our limited minds and create even more suffering and discord, even though part of us knows there is more to life. We swirl round and round in the carousel of life, unable to break free. We compromise life. We might even accept that suffering is a natural part of life. And yet, part of us knows there is more to it.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *The Life Divine*:

All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. (2017, p. 4)

As a teen I knew there was more to life than suffering and struggle. I also had another secret “mission,” or more of a daydream, that I was going to be part of the big mission to make the world a better place. It may sound naïve and ridiculous, but today those feelings are even stronger, so I am sure of it. A wise man or woman once said:

“When I was young I thought I could change the world.”

Now when I'm older, I know I can."

I truly believe that to make a change in the world, we have to start with ourselves. And we don't even have to change ourselves per se—just our perspective of things. But the change doesn't just happen overnight, even if that would be the ideal scenario. It is a journey, albeit a very long one for me, but every day of the trip has been worth it because it has a higher purpose. The journey never ends—there is always further. In an infinite existence, how could it be otherwise? Life is not about the goal of enlightenment. It is about the journey and to enjoy the ride. Maybe that is the ultimate journey of life, to remember more and more of who we really are? On that journey we experience the opposites. To know what white is, everything cannot be white; you have to see the contrast and experience the black. If you only experience "positive," it would fall flat if you cannot compare it with the "negative." With that said, I don't think things are "positive" or "negative"—things just are, and we as humans put our subjective values on them to make them appear good or bad in three-dimensional reality. For the universe—which is everything, us included—to experience itself, it has to experience separation and polarity through us to then experience the higher realms. The natural evolution of man is to re-experience the higher realms via the journey through separation.

When I look back on my journey, I can see how the bits and pieces that didn't make sense when I was younger just come together as this perfect puzzle. Without the

different pieces, I probably wouldn't have appreciated or felt this enormous gratitude for my life today. And I wouldn't have had all the experiences that have given me the gift of gratitude either. All the hassles, all the struggling, and the fights—it's all worth it, today. Those were gifts as well. I just never saw, or appreciated them. Today, it all makes sense. Today, I'm glad that my life was tough from time to time. The more heartache I experienced, the more expanded I became and the more I remembered the "true" me. With every heartbreak my heart opened more, the walls fell down, and I started to live more fully from my heart. That is what brought me here, where I've always wanted to be. Being me, just as I am...

Today, that three-year-old-girl is happy. She is dancing, she is shining, and she feels both part of a group and loves being alone as well. She doesn't want to change anymore. She loves life and herself unconditionally. She feels compassion and she faces her fears until they melt into the light that she is. She loves every single shade of herself. She is an Earth Goddess, she is the universe, she is Mother Earth, she is abundance, peace, and harmony. She is also anger, hatred, judgment, and sadness—and she loves it all. Even when the days seem dark and heavy, she knows all is well. She trusts. And that is pretty big!

I'm THERE where I wanted to get someday. I didn't actually *get* there, I *was* there already. I still haven't found enlightenment, but I have found myself as I was never lost. I just thought I was. Who knew that all this time I was looking in the wrong place? I looked in the external

filing cabinet instead of the internal. I never actually had to do anything as I was perfect all along. How ironic. All I needed to do was to remember and embrace who I was, which most of us have forgotten. We are superheroes in disguise. As my dear friend Liz Ivory says:

*“We are all Superman, living the life of Clark Kent.
So you are a Superhero, pretending to be an ordinary person.”*

I want you to ask yourself:

- What will make you feel better about yourself: To believe that you are ordinary or to believe you are a superhero with an extraordinary life?
- What will make you feel happier: To believe you are amazing or someone who needs fixing?

I choose to feel I am a superhero and amazing. It just seems to make me happier...