

# Embrace the Moment – And Stop the Struggle

I'm often asked why I made the change from Board Table to Massage Table and how I did it. For 20 years I worked in the field of Organisational Development – a specialist branch of Human Resources – and although I was a pretty good operator, held senior positions almost from the start and, for the most part, really enjoyed going off to work, I always felt that I wasn't quite on my right path.

Sure, my jobs included some of my path "elements" - I really liked figuring out how to help organisation's and their people get from point A to point B, coming up with creative solutions, making the textbooks and "expert" commentaries come alive (or prove them wrong) for real rather than ideas and concepts you only read about but never do.

I liked trying to out-think our competition, doing things other organisations were too afraid to try, going out on a limb and persuading other people to come along with me, getting people on board even if I wasn't exactly sure I could pull off the promises (to all my ex-bosses who just took a sharp breath in, it always worked out in the end, didn't it?), all the planning and plotting, and I really loved that a large part of my work was writing training and coaching programs for leaders and teams - coming up with unusual approaches to learning and development that would help them discover and bring out the best in themselves. I delighted that I could use my imagination and be a grand dreamer. And, to be honest, I loved too, that other people thought I was really good at what I did and I was paid well for doing it.

Yet, despite all those wonderful things, the opportunities and the great people I worked with, I still hungered for something more...something that, at the time, I couldn't quite name. Some "thing", that in my quiet times, told me that in my heart I was fundamentally unhappy – not just in my work, but in my whole life. Remember, I'm a grand dreamer. I wanted to come home...but I didn't know where that was or how to get there.

So, after getting lost and tangled in my yearning for a while and finally realising that wasn't really helping either, I decided to let the trade winds hoist my sails and start walking my dreaming path.

## Deciding to Dream is the First Step to Freeing Yourself

Keep in mind that personal and life change is a process that takes time, lots of time. If you seriously want your life to be different, then you seriously have to do something different. You've got to be honest with yourself, and that can hurt, and you've got to be prepared to do your "inner work", and that can be hard work too. You might shed a few tears on the way, well, lots of tears actually – if I'd bottled mine over the years we wouldn't have any water shortages now. But it's absolutely achievable, all of it, I promise you. **Life change starts with one simple choice.**

## Reading Self Help Books is Not the End Game

Everything sounds good in the books, and books are helpful when you're lining up at the starting blocks – but they're not the end game. Doing your reading helps you to get a feel of what might work for you and give you some ideas for reflection and the courage to go inside and try out a few things – but the real gold is using your inner knowing (your gut feel) to discern what you want to keep and practice and what you don't. Try out a few things, keep what works and throw out the rest. Start simple, do your reading and discern for yourself your own starting point. **Listen to your intuition.**

## Tend to Your Inner Garden

That's right, you've got to do your gardening from the inside out, clear the weeds and make some space for new things to grow. You can't grow new flowers if the soil isn't fertile and the garden bed's still tangled with weeds and thorns. Doing your gardening and keeping it clear is an ongoing process. Meditation is a way of creating inner spaciousness because it teaches you self-discipline, how to focus your attention, to train your awareness so that you can concentrate on what's important and to open your imagination to possibilities and renewed creativity. When you can feel uncluttered on the inside you know you've created your workspace and that's when magic can happen. When your house is a mess, you can't find what you're looking for but when you tidy up, that thing you couldn't find is right in front of you. Get a book, a CD, download it from the internet or join a class. **Start meditating, clear your space and find your inner wisdom.**



## Empty the Stones from Your Bowl of Light

Your gardening and meditation practice clears an inner workspace, it might only be a tiny space to start with but it's your workspace. When you start to clear, you'll find your attention naturally turns to what it is you want to change – depending on what it is (as in my case) this might be a long, long list! Get a journal or a piece of paper and write it all down without stopping to review what's on your list, just keep going until it's all on the outside – you don't want anything left in your garden, you want it all outside of you where you can see it clearly – be honest and truthful, no-one else is going to see it.

I love the ancient Hawaiian teaching that we are all born as precious bowls of light; that we *are* precious bowls of light in a physical body and as we move through life our bowls fill up with stones that obscure our bowl of light – it's still there, just dimmed a little bit by all those stones. This really helps me to get perspective and distance from my problem, finding a story or metaphor that speaks to you helps you to stay with the change process. Now you can review your list, just look through it and try your best not to be too judgemental. Select the item on your list that seems to stand out to you, this will probably be your starting stone – the first stone you empty from your bowl. This is where your meditation can really be useful because meditation isn't only about space clearing – you can actually meditate *on* something, explore it, get some distance and a broader perspective without judging yourself too much. It helps you to detach from all the connections of a problem and just see the problem for what it is – an issue that is resolvable. Whilst you might have many stones in your bowl, the trick is to **find your starting stone and choose just one stone at a time to work with.**

## Heal your Heart – You are Not Your Patterns and Habits

Your stone may have a number of connections – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social – and as you sit with your stone, meditate on it, explore it, you may find yourself locked in a cycle of recrimination, resentment, shame, guilt, anger, fear, grief, sadness, disempowerment, embarrassment, pain and so on. Those feelings can be pretty overwhelming and they can easily derail all of your good gardening efforts – but the good thing is they confirm you chose the right stone to start with. And, it's a natural part of the emptying process. The secret is not letting your mind traps and gremlins drown you. Just knowing that these are normal feelings helps you to stay detached from self-judgement and to stay in your strength.

Other people may have opinions, comments and criticisms about who you are and “how” you are but it's important to remember that each person's viewpoint is based on their own values and, of course, stones. In your heart, at your core, at the source of your bowl of light, you are not your outward behaviour. Your patterns may have been around for a long time, but they're just patterns and habits, and like all patterns and habits they can be changed – that's why you're doing your inner work. That's not to say it's not painful but here, in this game, you get to choose what you believe to be true about yourself and create your truth about you. If what others say does ring true for you in some ways, then you're already walking your path of change, emptying your stones, doing your inner work at your own pace. **Discern what's true for you about your stone, explore your beliefs, ideas, thoughts and fears. Write them down, which are limiting you?** Start being aware of any limiting thoughts, beliefs, patterns and behaviours in the moment and decide on a different one instead.

## Having a Helper is Helpful

OK, I'm a big advocate of getting the right professional support. I had to try a few Counsellors and Coaches before I found the right one for me, but each one did contribute to my pathwalking – even if it was just deciding that they weren't the right one for me. Of course, as I grew, changed and developed, I outgrew some of my Helpers – which is a natural process in personal development. I still work with my own crew because I'm still working on walking my path. Getting outside help makes a big difference in doing your inner work because your Helpers can see the light in your bowl when you can't. When you feel lost in your maze they can help you with ideas and actions so you can find your way out. When you're fearful of taking your steps, they can encourage your heart and help you to have faith in yourself. When the pain and effort of doing your gardening work because too much, they can hold you gently whilst you work through your suffering. When I wanted to go off with the fairies, my Helper kept me grounded in the here and now. **Finding a Helper to guide and support you is vital** through the personal process of change.

## Forgiveness is Very Empowering

I figured if the Dalai Lama can do it and the Bible says Jesus could do it, well I could do it too. The thing with forgiveness though is you have to be really ready to authentically do it – you have to be truthful and honest with yourself, done your inner work, cut the connections and be ready to let it all go. Even when you feel ready and you do a forgiveness practice, somewhere down the track you might find you have to do it again because a new connection has arisen that you didn't know about before. That's another reason why it's important to work with a skilled Helper. The Buddhists have a simple yet powerful forgiveness practice – try it out and **when you're really ready forgive...starting with yourself.**

*Personal change doesn't need to be a struggle. When you know what to change, you can. I am a nationally accredited Counsellor and Coach and have coached hundreds of people. I would be very happy to help you embrace the moment and live to the very finest expression of yourself. Thousands of us walk this same path with success and you will too,*