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FINDING YOUR OWN NORTH STAR

STEERING *by* STARLIGHT

FIND YOUR RIGHT LIFE
NO MATTER WHAT!



Some Things I Really Want

Thing 1: _____

Thing 2: _____

Thing 3: _____

Thing 4: _____

Thing 5: _____

How I'll Feel When I Have What I Really Want

When I have Thing 1, the sensation I'll feel is: _____

When I have Thing 2, the sensation I'll feel is: _____

When I have Thing 3, the sensation I'll feel is: _____

When I have Thing 4, the sensation I'll feel is: _____

When I have Thing 5, the sensation I'll feel is: _____

Three Places I Did Not Fit In

Setting 1: _____

Setting 2: _____

Setting 3: _____

Choose the setting that was most uncomfortable to you, that caused you the most grief. Now, painful as it is, return to that situation in your mind. Allow the awful feeling of being out of place and misunderstood to grow large, to fill your whole awareness, to reveal its spiky texture and awkward weight. Now, finish the sentences below *as childishly as you can, without censoring yourself at all*. Even if you were an adult when you actually experienced this unpleasantness, let yourself express your inner brat.

Speaking the Contrarian Truth

1. I don't fit in this situation, in this place, with these people, because I am not _____!
_____!
2. I hate these people because they can't see that I _____!
_____!
3. If I were in my right environment, with people like me, everyone would realize that I'm _____!
4. I'd be so much more comfortable around people who don't _____!
_____!
5. It's so frustrating that these people expect me to _____!
_____!
6. Compared to everyone here, I'm much more _____!
_____!
7. This situation is way, way too _____!
_____!
8. I can't wait to get away from people who _____!
_____!
9. I want to scream in this situation because _____!
_____!
10. I'm so angry because no one here wants to let me _____!
_____!

Three of the Best Things in My Life

Thing 1: _____

Thing 2: _____

Thing 3: _____

Look over this list and circle your favorite of the three items. Though it's impossible to say which aspect of your life is "best," for now we'll call the thing you just circled your Favorite Thing.

Now recall a positive turn of events in your life that enabled you to have this Favorite Thing. For example, if your Favorite Thing is your significant other, recall how you happened to meet him or her. Maybe you worked together or got a lucky hit on match.com, or maybe, like so many couples, you were pinned under the same circus tent when it was downed by rogue elephants. If your Favorite Thing happens to be your fabulous car, recall what enabled you to get it: conscientious behavior, a winning raffle ticket, your God-given talent for armed robbery. Write it down in the spaces below. This is a "proximate cause," something that directly linked to your Favorite Thing about your life at this moment.

Happy Event That Contributed to Having My Favorite Thing (Proximate Cause)

Now, go back a step further in your life history. Read over the event you just described and describe something *else* that happened to make *that* event possible. If you want to get fancy, you could call this an “antecedent to the proximate cause.” For instance, say your Favorite Thing in life is your dog, Robert Redford (I love Robert Redford; I would name my dog after him in a New York minute). Perhaps the event that led to your owning Robert Redford (the proximate cause) is that he wandered onto your porch one night, unclaimed and starving, and you took him in. But this wouldn’t have happened if you still lived in the city, because your building had a “no pets” policy, and Robert Redford would have had to take an elevator 10 floors to wander anywhere near you. Therefore, “moving out of the city” might be one event that made Robert Redford’s presence in your life possible—an antecedent to the proximate cause. Write down the thing that led to the thing that led to your Favorite Thing.

Prior Happy Event That Allowed the Proximate Cause Event to Occur (Antecedent to the Proximate Cause)

What we've done here is reversed the storytelling order of your life, so that the mental momentum runs from future to past rather than vice versa. Now you're thinking like a contrarian. Keep it up: Follow your chain of life events backward until you can *think of one piece of "bad luck" that helped your Favorite Thing come into your life*. This could be damage far back in your childhood that made you a crusader for justice, a health condition that forced you to think carefully about how you use your time, or a financial disaster that led to a career change.

For example, I get to write books—for money!—partly because my son was prenatally diagnosed with Down syndrome, giving me the material for a memoir that eventually became a bestseller. It also helped that when I was a kid, my family didn't have a television, which meant I had a choice between constant reading and chronic boredom. And then there were the dreadful years when I was clinically depressed and unable to afford therapy. To cope, I poured out all my feelings into journals, unwittingly conditioning myself to sit and write for hours and hours and hours.

Once you get started, you'll see that you, too, can list many "bad" incidents that became links in the chain leading to your Favorite Thing. Jennifer, for instance, is dyslexic—a core reason for her constant disruptive behavior at school. If she'd been "normal" or had spent an hour less in study hall, she might not have developed the wicked sense of humor and deep empathy that make her a smash hit on radio. If Bruce hadn't been mercilessly criticized by his father, he might never have escaped into computer-world, where his million-dollar ideas were born. If Eileen hadn't been forced to lie down and handle pain for so long, she might not have developed her unstoppable commitment to adventure—or the high pain threshold that's made her a successful explorer.

By now, I'm hoping you've thought of at least one "bad" thing that helped support the best thing in your life. Write it down in the space below. If you can think of two or three more, this exercise will work even better.

Supposedly “Bad” Event That Eventually Supported My Favorite Thing

Now you’re ready to tell at least part of your life story—the story of your Favorite Thing—from the backward perspective of the Stargazer. The process is one of simple substitution. Instead of saying, “This bad thing happened once, but then later, some good thing happened,” tell the story this way: “My destiny was to have my Favorite Thing. Therefore, this bad thing happened in order to make my Favorite Thing possible.”

For example, instead of writing, “I was born with dyslexia, so I flunked out of school and went into radio,” Jennifer would write, “Because I was destined to be in radio, I was born with dyslexia and hated school.” Bruce might say, “I was destined to be a wealthy entrepreneur, so I got a father who chased me into the computer world.” Eileen’s story could be: “I was meant to roam the wild places of the earth, so I had a lot of health problems early that taught me to handle pain and love freedom above everything else.” To tell your first backward story, fill in the blanks below.

The Story of My Favorite Thing, Stargazer Version

I was destined to have [list your Favorite Thing] _____

Because of this destiny, something negative happened [write in the Supposedly “Bad” Event you identified above] _____

Fortunately, this led to [write the Antecedent to the Proximate Cause] _____

And that helped this other thing to happen [note the Proximate Cause] _____

And that, sports fans, is how destiny brought me my Favorite Thing.

Inner Lizard's Top 10 Tunes

Oh, no! I don't have enough _____

If I don't watch out, someone will _____

People want to take my _____

I can't be perfectly happy until I get _____

Everybody pressures me to _____

You just can't trust _____

People will hurt me unless _____

If only I had _____

Someone's always out to _____

I must hang on to _____

Money Quiz for Lizards and Other Readers

1. Having “enough” money means I can afford . . .
 - a. sufficient food and clothing to stay warm and well fed.
 - b. my own apartment.
 - c. two travel vacations a year.
 - d. Jamaica.

2. I can stop worrying about running out of cash when I have . . .
 - a. a mattress full of \$1 bills.
 - b. full health insurance.
 - c. a wealthy spouse.
 - d. hypnotic control of Bill Gates.

3. The only people who really don’t have to think about going broke are . . .
 - a. successful gamblers.
 - b. people with steady jobs.
 - c. white-collar executives.
 - d. the dead.

4. My well-being would be threatened if I lost . . .
 - a. my ability to work.
 - b. my present job.
 - c. my corner office.
 - d. one of my oil wells.

Case Studies from Real-Life Clients

The Mind's Rationalizations

I'm so torn—I just don't know whether or not I want to stay in this marriage.

I'm so pissed off at my boss, my coworkers, and my customers—they'd better make it worth my while to do this damn job.

I really stood up for myself today—the bagger at the supermarket put my eggs on the bottom, so I had him fired. Hah!

I've wanted for so long to live my dreams, but no one will let me. I have to take care of everybody else's needs, not my own.

Tiffany-Lynne is so sensitive, I just don't know if she's ready to fend for herself. I mean, she could end up a bag lady.

The Plain Old Lizard Fear

I want a divorce, but I'm afraid people will judge me because my marriage failed.

I went into a career I hate because I was totally focused on money, and now I'm miserable but afraid to quit.

I feel small and powerless in most of my life, so I make myself feel powerful by attacking people who are defenseless.

I want to succeed at something I love, but the thought of having to compete—and possibly fail—is so terrifying I never start.

My adult daughter is freeloading and taking advantage of me, but if I told her to move out, she'd yell at me, and that scares me.

SHACKLES ON

One person, place, or thing that doesn't serve my destiny is _____

When I let this person, place, or thing fill my conscious mind, my body and mood react in the following ways: _____

THIS PHYSICAL REACTION IS YOUR "SHACKLES ON" FEELING. REMEMBER IT.

SHACKLES OFF

One person, place, or thing that does serve my destiny is _____

When I let this person, place, or thing fill my conscious mind, my body and mood react in the following ways: _____

THIS PHYSICAL REACTION IS YOUR "SHACKLES OFF" FEELING. REMEMBER IT.

Shackles On, Shackles Off

1. Think of something you recently did for someone you love. What was it? _____

Recall doing that thing and notice how your body reacts. Do you feel more “shackles on” or more “shackles off”?

SHACKLES ON

SHACKLES OFF

2. Consider the clothes you are wearing right now (if any). Briefly describe them: _____

Remember choosing those clothes when you put them on. Do you feel more “shackles on” or more “shackles off”?

SHACKLES ON

SHACKLES OFF

3. Choose one thing on your list of “things to do” this very day. Write it here: _____

When you contemplate doing this thing, is your body’s reaction more “shackles on” or more “shackles off”?

SHACKLES ON

SHACKLES OFF

4. What’s the last task you performed that you would call work? It might be housework, your job, sending out résumés—anything that counts as work for you. _____

Recall performing the task. Did you feel more “shackles on” or more “shackles off”?

SHACKLES ON

SHACKLES OFF

5. Think of a person you interact with every day: _____

Picture interacting with that person again. Notice how your body reacts. “Shackles on” or “shackles off”?

SHACKLES ON

SHACKLES OFF

Preliminary Unshackling Practice

Choose one thing in your life that you are doing because you feel shackled and write it here: _____

Now, go to the magical "end state" you created in the previous chapter. Picture a place where there is nothing to fear and all your dreams have come true.

Once grounded in this absolutely safe imaginary place, think of an alternative course of action you might take (instead of the activity you just wrote down) that would feel like "shackles off." *You don't have to do this new thing yet, just think about it.* Make a note of it for later: _____

Some Things I Have to Do within the Next Week

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

*Prompts That Can Help You See through Your Thoughts
(To Be Used Alone or in Conjunction
with the Work of Byron Katie)*

Write a painful thought that often troubles you (e.g., “Nobody loves me,” “I’m not good enough,” “I shouldn’t have sneaked into that tooth-filing ceremony”).

My Painful Thought: _____

Now investigate your thought in light of the following questions.

- *Is your imprisoning thought always true, or are there times when it could be false?* (For instance, “Parents should put children first” is false in a depressurizing airplane, since a parent with oxygen can help a child put on a mask, but not vice versa. A parent might also go first when entering a dangerous location or trying something very difficult in order to teach the child. Now think of some on your own.)

- *Can you think of a hypothetical situation, no matter how silly, in which the thought you wrote down above might be obviously untrue?* (For example, “I must always keep my promises” might turn out to be untrue if a murdering sociopath tricked you into promising you’d help him with a little project that turned out to involve homicide. If you were born into a family with a blood feud and promised your mom you’d always do what she told you, breaking the promise by mending fences and ending bloodshed might be a noble thing.)

- *Can you think of any time you acted as if the thought above weren't true and yet the world didn't end?* (“I can't bear to fail,” you may say—but the fact is, you've failed in the past, and you bore it. “I can't disappoint Dad,” you fret, but you absolutely can disappoint Dad and probably have in the past, without destroying the universe.)

- *Can you think of times you acted as though the thought you wrote down above were true and things still turned out badly?* (“I have to do my best or I'll hate myself,” you may say. Well, have you ever done your best and still hated yourself? Hmm. Interesting.)

- *Can you think of a historical figure who “broke the rules” defined by your painful thought and achieved a positive result?* (“I can't just go off and do whatever feels right to me!” you exclaim. Yet that's a pretty good description of the lives lived by folks like Jesus, the Buddha, all great civil rights activists, most great artists, the framers of the American Constitution . . .)

- *Would you force this thought on any other person you cared for?* (“I have to stay with my abusive spouse so that my children will be happy,” said one of my clients. When her young-adult daughter's husband became violent, my client was horrified—even though that was precisely what she'd modeled for her daughter. It never works to inflict on yourself anything you wouldn't force on someone you love.)

Summary of Method to Eliminate “Dirty Pain”

1. Believe (but notice what you believe)

Become aware of unhappiness in any form. Rather than avoiding it, notice it and allow it to come into consciousness so that you can address it.

2. Articulate (spot the thoughts behind the pain)

Pay attention to the thoughts that fuel that unhappiness—anything you say in your mind that stimulates feelings of helplessness, despair, futile rage, or abstract terror with no action implications. Articulate these thoughts if they're vague.

3. Recognize (why the thought is not absolutely true)

Examine the belief to see if there are any flaws in its logic, using these prompts if necessary.

a. *Is your imprisoning thought always true, or are there times when it could be false?*

b. *Can you think of a hypothetical situation, no matter how silly, in which the thought might be obviously untrue?*

c. *Can you think of any time you acted as if the thought weren't true and yet the world didn't end?*

d. *Can you think of times you acted as though the thought above were true and things still turned out badly?*

e. *Can you think of a historical figure who “broke the rules” defined by your painful thought and achieved a positive result?*

f. *Would you force this thought on any other person you cared for?*

4. Detach (from the thought by recognizing possible alternatives)

Allow the thought to “wiggle” like a loose tooth as your brain follows the unfamiliar neuron tracks created by logically disproving it.

Repeat the process until the thought disappears—in other words, when the suffering it causes is no longer present (often, you won't even notice this happening).

Your Three-Ring Life

Picture your life, your consciousness, your reality as a series of concentric spheres like the ones in the illustration below. As you can see, this sphere has three layers, of which we shall now take a brief guided tour.



One Metaphor for Your Psyche

Form for Dream Analysis

After writing as much as you remember about a dream in your journal, list each object, person, place, or compelling image in the dream. Then, process each symbol on your list by answering the questions below as they relate to that symbol.

Symbol #1: (For example, Noah's symbols include "the forest" and "the bear.") _____

As Symbol #1, write down three adjectives or phrases that describe you. (Noah's examples: "I, the forest, am dark, fertile, and mysterious" or "I, the bear, am strong, curious, and invulnerable to harm.")

First descriptive word or phrase: _____

Second descriptive word or phrase: _____

Third descriptive word or phrase: _____

As Symbol #1, please answer these questions with whatever comes to mind.

QUESTION: What is your purpose, Symbol #1? (For example, the forest in Noah’s dream might answer, “I am here to give shelter and permit life to thrive.” The bear might say, “I am meant to find honey and protect my cubs.”)

Your purpose as Symbol #1: _____

QUESTION: As Symbol #1, how are you trying to help the dreamer? (For example, the forest might say, “I am trying to give Noah shelter and a place to hide his vulnerability until he is strong enough to act on his own behalf.”)

How you, as Symbol #1, are trying to help the person dreaming: _____

As Symbol #1, do you know what aspect of the dreamer’s waking life you symbolize? If so, write it here. (For example, Noah’s forest represented his life as a whole. The bear symbolized his heart, which became clear when Noah analyzed the symbol of honey and found that it represented love.) _____

Repeat this process for each symbol in your dream.

If you have a short dream, a dream fragment, or a dream symbol that doesn’t want to “describe itself,” you can use the analysis form above on any *aspect* of the symbol, such as its color or shape. (For example, “I am the purple color of the sea monster” or “I am the sound of the monster roaring.”)

The Magical Mapmaker's Itinerary for Your Life

In the spaces below, describe as accurately as possible everything that appeared in your imagination as you soaked yourself in stillness, silence, space, and timelessness.

From my mapmaking perspective, I see myself having _____

From my mapmaking perspective, I see myself being loved by _____

From my mapmaking perspective, I see myself doing _____

From my mapmaking perspective, I see myself experiencing _____

My Stuck State in a Nutshell

I can't [condition A] _____

because [condition B] _____

Your Countermanding Spell

I see myself [condition A] _____

But [condition B] _____

Your Reality Check

"My mind is choosing not to have [condition A] _____

because it believes [condition B] _____
is a problem. My true self can create [condition A] _____

because it knows [condition B] _____

isn't the problem—my beliefs are."

Discrediting Your Countermand

First thing I would do if I did not believe condition B: _____

Second thing I would do if I did not believe condition B: _____

Third thing I would do if I did not believe condition B: _____

The Three Adjectives

Think of three adjectives that describe the beautiful place you've targeted with your star chart. You can write them here if you like.

Adjective 1 _____

Adjective 2 _____

Adjective 3 _____