

Awareness

As I finish this book, the last two chapters are different. I was guided to share what I've written, using my experience as the example. The stories are a combination of what has been revealed to me and what I have learned through the awakening process. I was told to be fearless in exposing what I consider to be my own flaws in hopes that others will relate to my message.

My biggest lesson is that there's been no waste of time. There's nothing for me to regret, either; this was just my personal journey, through which I was meant to learn. As a result of my new perspective, my life has improved to the point where I barely recognize the person I once was.

The stories below are not given in chronological order.

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Letting Go of the Victim Story

My victim story wasn't just my tale of survival. It was my identity. I knew if I wanted the freedom of a wonderful new life, I would have to let go of this part of my persona. I took a close look at myself to see why I would hold and nurture a victim story. What did I hope to gain by being a victim?

Each time I met a new man, I presented my story to him with a silent hope: *Love me more*. I hoped my new Prince Charming would make a vow to never add to my pain. I hoped the tragedies in my past would inspire him to be especially tender with me, that he would act toward me with the kind of tenderness you would give a child from a war-torn country. *Please rescue me from myself*, was my plea. I hoped my hero would open his heart, tuck me deep inside, and love me more than I loved myself.

The silent yearnings of my victim story were like a computer program I might call *The Walking Wounded*, and the program was always running in the background of my mind. Because I was always wounded, my response to the world came from an emotional space. I was entitled to be irrational and angry because I had paid my dues throughout my life. The world owed me something, and I felt that I should be paid for my pain. I also felt that friends and strangers alike should deeply respect the pain I had lived through. They should feel compelled to make life easier for me. My suffering was supposed to get me something.

But what?

If what you focus on expands, suffering begets more suffering.

If you are like me, and you have a similar program running in your mind, it's hard to see you're inside the program. It took me a lot of debugging before I could fully realize that, yes, as ridiculous as it sounds, I really did think the world owed me something and I was looking for the people who were willing to make good on that payment.

Here's what I learned. The world owes me nothing because of what I've been through. I am a product of those experiences, and I have the choice to either make those lessons count for something or let them destroy my life. Each day that I choose to dwell in the story of my past, I can't see the beauty of the day I'm in. Today, instead of looking for the slights that others perpetrate on me, I look for the kindnesses they give me. And I always find them. What you seek, you shall find.

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I meet a lot of people that are still angry with their parents for something that happened in their childhood. If you are one of those people, here are some questions I've asked myself: What am I getting out of that anger? Does holding my parents responsible for my misery somehow make me feel like they are being punished? Read that last sentence again. *Does holding my parents responsible for my misery somehow make me feel like they are being punished?* Does it make any sense? If I

suffer, am I punishing them? Does my choice to be angry with them for being human enhance my life?

Once I got clear on the answers to those questions, I was able to let my victim story go. First, I began to recognize the times when I traveled into the past and into my story (“poor me”). Then I chose to bring myself back to the present day, today. When I found my mind wandering back to a hurt in the past, I asked myself, What does that have to do with today? Do I want to bring that hurt into today and relive it? The past only has something to do with today when I invite it into today. Over time, I have retrained my mind. It doesn’t go back to the past like a reflex anymore.

I’ve studied those around me who can’t seem to let go of this pattern. They “white knuckle” life. You can spot them by their generally pained expressions and generally negative outlook. I’ve learned that perceiving myself as a victim was a habit. It was a habit to complain, a habit to look at the glass half empty, and a habit to tell others what’s wrong with life.

Whether you believe that *life is hard* or *no pain, no gain*, or whether you are like me and won’t lay the burden down until you’ve gotten what is due to you, keep in mind that those types of thoughts block your happiness. You won’t experience the glow in your soul while you are the one holding the dark cloud over it.

What better time is there to have your best life than right now?

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Chronic Pain

Chronic pain was my secondary identity, my best friend in my victim story. I believed in illness. I believed I was subject to illness, prone to illness, likely to always be ill. The condition of my health was the result of those beliefs.

The little voice in my head that spoke to me prior to rehab told me, *Break the cycle*. The cycle looked like this. I got a headache. Comparing it to previous headaches, I decided it was worse. Once I had a pattern of getting repeat headaches, I anticipated that the pain would get progressively worse, and my whole focus became pain. I monitored it. I rated it. I catered to it. My pain owned all the thought waves in my brain. When physical pain wasn’t enough, my body sought emotional pain, which was my suffering in relationships. One way or another, I was seeking

the awareness of pain. My cycle wasn't about headaches at all; it was about chronic suffering.

That same voice also said, *Headaches are a result of blocked emotional pain*. Pain is a message. It's supposed to provoke thought and encourage us to review the conditions in our lives. We need to ask ourselves some questions. Am I eating well? Am I getting the rest I need? Am I angry with someone I need to forgive? Am I ignoring something that needs to be dealt with?

Scientists know that our bodies are made of energy. Negative thoughts (anger, resentment, pity, etc.) are forms of energy inside us. If that energy is trapped inside our body without a proper release, it can manifest as illness. My pent-up negative thoughts chose to manifest as migraines. Unfortunately, at that time in my life, I did not speak the language of my body. Rather than listen to my body, I wanted it to shut up. When my body made a stand against the way I was living by giving me messages through pain and illness, my thoughts toward my body became hostile, impatient, and judgmental. This was the complete opposite of what would heal me. I did nothing to inspire my body's healing; instead I rudely demanded it give me back health instantly.

This is not rocket science. It's more like $1 + 1 = 2$. I took terrible care of my body, and I expected it to take better care of me than I took care of it. In retrospect, it's no wonder the energy of stuffed hurt, pain, and self-abuse acted out in the form of migraines. My body desperately wanted my attention.

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In rehab, I was prescribed a migraine blocker called Topomax. Before I received this prescription, I'd had a migraine every day for twelve years straight. Upon release from rehab, I continued dutifully taking Topomax each day. It may not be a narcotic, but I was still handing over the power to heal to something outside of myself. Each day that I woke with the glorious feeling of a head free of pain, I felt grateful to the little yellow pill. After about a year, however, I heard Love's voice in my head. *You no longer need to take that medication. You do not have migraines.*

When Love talks, I listen because I've noticed that the quality of my life is directly proportionate to following Love's guidance. I weaned myself from the pills immediately and no longer suffer from migraines.

I am a success story. The woman who was defined by pain is now free of pain. What changed in my life? I meditated. I released my anger.

I embraced forgiveness. I began to eat better and exercised more. I went to a chiropractor. I chose to believe that health is natural for me. I affirm that health is mine. As a result, my body is no longer a host for pain.

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The Mirror's Reflection

I learned that for each resentment I held for another person, I was guilty of the same behavior myself. When I have a strong reaction to another person's manner or actions, behind that reaction I always find their action to be something I have done or am capable of doing.

I've made a lot of complaints about my mother's behavior. My favorite complaint was that she placed her life at my feet and expected me to solve her problems. But did I not display that same behavior in my relationship with Teddy? In my complaints about how Dominic was treating me, I would turn around and act exactly the same way toward my mother. For years, I held a long list of my father's actions against him. Once I reviewed that list, I discovered that I'd done all the same things I was angry with him for doing, and more.

For years I lived under a veil of delusion that helped me judge others without ever accurately looking in the mirror. I was convinced that my life contained the most selfish people the world could collect. Under closer examination, I saw that I was the common denominator. I was entirely capable of extremely selfish behavior myself.

What I've learned is that I can't see my own behavior in the mirror, but I can easily see what I don't like about others. That's my wake-up call right there. I have to pay close attention to what behavior I judge in others and then ask myself, *How have I done that, too?*

Once I figured this out, I could take another look at Jason, the man I considered the worst offender of the men I'd been in relationships with. He tried to dominate me. He made me responsible for his happiness and conditioned me to do whatever he wanted to do. He was insecure and jealous and manipulated me to get his needs met. The world was some kind of game to him, a game in which his moves needed to be carefully considered so he could get what he wanted. When I looked at myself, I saw all of those same behaviors in me. I had allowed the pain of his abuse to stay with me for years, but in seeing my own reflection in Jason, the pain became free to leave. I could see another person living in the same amount of pain and torture that I had lived in, but without any tools to improve his life. Yes, I was even like Jason.

