

Introduction

It is very early and I am sitting in my garden watching the fingerlings of light beginning to fill the garden. The smell of morning is intoxicating and the song of the birds moves me more than the most beautiful music I have ever heard.

I am open. Even though my heart is aching for a loved one who is going through a very challenging time, my heart is open. And even though I am dealing with a health issue that sometimes brings up primal fear, my mind is quiet. As I sit here in my garden, I am not in the past nor in the future. I am simply and fully open to Life, right here, right now. There is no filter between myself and a direct experience of this precious and unrepeatable moment. You could use a lot of words to describe this, but what I call it is coming home – coming home to myself and coming home to Life.

It wasn't always this way. In my youth, I not only bought into the stories of being 'less than everybody else,' but also those of being 'bad and wrong to my core.' These stories were so completely my reality that in my twenties I felt I didn't deserve to live. Most of the time I experienced a constant sense of unease, but oftentimes it would flare up into dread and despair. These feelings would show up as a constant struggle in my head and as knots in my stomach, debilitating headaches, and shooting pains down my legs coupled with an intense longing to run away from my life. So I gained a huge amount of weight, washed a lot of the food down with alcohol, and took every pill I could get my hands on.

When I was very young, I was like a sea anemone that is fully open with its tendrils floating in the waves of Life. My nickname as a baby was 'Sunshine.' But as the experiences of my life scared me, overwhelmed me and abandoned me, I began to shut down. So just as a sea anemone closes in on itself when it feels threatened, I closed down too. This gave me an illusion of safety in the unsafe world of my childhood, but it also put a wall between me and Life.

Since I experienced myself as defective, I became an ongoing project to myself. I tried to get rid of the parts of me I didn't like and hold onto the ones I did. But these parts seemed to have a life of their own, appearing when I didn't want them to be here and disappearing when I wanted them to stay. I also desperately tried to understand it all, but that just kept me caught in my head.

It wasn't until a teacher showed me how to listen to myself that I began to open up again. Rather than always being in fix-it mode, I learned how to meet myself exactly as I am, discovering the place beyond judging, fixing, getting rid of and trying to understand. I learned that listening is the art of being present for my own experience, no matter what it is. Most of all, it is the art of meeting myself in my own heart – even the so called unacceptable, unmeetable parts.

Slowly, just as the morning light dispels the dark, I came back to myself and back to Life. Rather than being in a constant state of unease, I knew more and more joy, trust and love. I also discovered how to show up for the great adventure called Life – not an idea of what should be, but the real thing. Rather than always trying to create a better reality, I showed up for Reality!

Did this make all of my vulnerabilities go away? No. These feelings will always be a part of me, for vulnerability is an essential part of being human, and vulnerabilities hold the doorways back into the peace, joy and love we long for. Now mine are nestled in the spaciousness of my own heart. And when they get reawakened through this sometimes fierce process called Life, they don't take over any more. Instead, they open my heart even more.

So I am inviting you on the most important journey you will ever take, the journey back to yourself and back to a trust-filled connection with Life. On this journey, you will discover how to weave every part of yourself into your own heart so that you, too, can know the joy of being fully here for Life.

This journey will also show you that there is a sense of well-being with you always, no matter what is happening in your life. But if you are like most people, you have only sporadic access to it because you have been conditioned to believe that if you just get yourself and your life to be a particular way, then you will know the peace you long for.

So your life becomes a series of problems to be solved rather than an amazing adventure to open into. This addiction to fixing yourself and your life ensnares you in chronic low-grade struggles that at times flare up and plunge your world into turmoil. It takes awhile to see that once the mind solves one problem, it comes up with another, so you spend your life mired in struggle.

What would happen if you understood that there is a place to live from that doesn't turn Life into a series of problems to be fixed? (Did your mind just turn this into a problem: "I have to figure out how to get to that place?") But you don't need to find this sense of well-being, because you never lost it! It is here right now as you are reading this book! You don't need to search for it; you don't need to fix yourself to know it; and you don't even need to change anything in your life. Your innate sense of well-being is revealed as you learn how to unhook from your struggling self.

Struggle is like a cloud bank of stories that cuts you off from your natural state of joy and peace, and you have been conditioned throughout your life to believe in these stories. Struggle is based on fear; it is held together with judgment; and it leaves you vulnerable to sadness, loneliness and despair. Your struggling self doesn't only grapple with the big challenges of life, it resists the length of the stoplight, the spot on your shirt or the shape of your nose.

You are not this struggling self. You are the space in which the struggle is happening! You can learn how to listen to your struggles rather than buying into their stories, and through the power of listening, your struggles will dissipate just as the morning fog lifts under the gaze of the sun. You then become open to Life, right here, right now, the moment it appears out of mystery, with all of the joy, wonder and trust this brings forth.

As you work with what is being offered in this book, you will discover how not to get seduced by your mind's addiction to struggle. Step-by-step you will learn how you became caught in struggle; how to see the particular stories of struggle you were conditioned to believe; and how to give them the spacious acceptance they need to be healed.

You will also come to see that your life, rather than being a series of events that are happening to you, is all happening for you. Everything in your life – especially your challenges – is tailor made to help you see your stories of struggle. So whatever is in the way IS the way! Rather than struggling with your challenges, you can learn how to gather all of the treasures that are inherent in every challenge of your life!

As you deepen into this process, you will learn how to unhook from all of the fears, longings, irritations and sorrows that struggle generates. Rather than getting seduced into struggle or turning to your compulsions or fighting with the people in your life, you will be able to simply let them pass through you, discovering that at any given moment only a small part of you has a problem with life. The rest of you is at peace. That is the field of well-being that is always with you right here, right now.

This is what you deeply long for – an intimate connection with Life. At your core, you yearn to show up for what arises rather than constantly wanting your experience to be different than it is. You long to let go of trying, resisting and constantly evaluating how you are doing so you can relax into your life and know the joy of being fully available and present for Life.

Understanding what is being offered here is an important step, but it won't of itself open the doors into the field of well-being that you already are. This happens through experiencing what we are exploring together. Throughout this book, you will be invited with this symbol **-Ω-** to pause and open to Life, connecting with what is being offered in that moment.

Also, through the Re-membering Section at the end of each chapter, you will be given a Re-membering Statement that embodies the essence of the chapter which you can use to help reconnect with what you are exploring that week. There is also a space for you to write your own statement.

Then, through a Re-membering Session, you will be encouraged to spend some time with yourself every day, learning how to see and listen to your inner experiences rather than being seduced by the game of struggle. In each chapter, we will build upon what we explored in the previous chapter. This is designed as a ten week process, but it is okay to go at your own pace.

Finally, there will be a list of the main points called Re-memberings at the end of each chapter, and I encourage you to add your own if that calls to you. This list will be helpful in keeping in the forefront of your awareness the shifts of perception that are happening as you go through this process.

For all the people that live on this beautiful blue-green jewel that is our planet, I thank you for your willingness to bring this process into your life. This gratitude comes from knowing that, as you discover and live from your field of well-being, your life will be transformed. It will also transform the lives of everybody you meet, and even think about, for the rest of your life. For when you are not caught in the world of struggle, you are here, open to the amazing majesty and mystery of Life, radiating the presence of well-being. And a human being who has discovered how to be here, becomes an invitation to everyone they meet to unhook from the mind's addiction to struggle and open back into the joy of being fully here for Life.

For the healing of all beings, Life is bringing you home.