

CHOOSE TO FULLY LIVE

*Chapter Featured In
Step Into Your Brilliant
Purpose Anthology*



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#1 International Best Selling Author

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I spent my life avoiding pain. I stayed safe and small, mired in depression and anxiety. I hurt people in my attempt not to be hurt. I lashed out at others and then complained that no one loved me. Chronic health problems compounded my isolation.

I may have stayed stuck in this pattern except that my health problems worsened. The paralytic attacks that had been in remission for several years came back with a vengeance, occurring almost daily. My muscles weakened within a matter of weeks, and I became an invalid.

The loss of my mobility was devastating, and doctors told me that I would be in and out of the wheelchair for the rest of my life due to a neuromuscular disorder. I was thirty-nine and had put off enjoying life until it was too late. In that moment of understanding, I gave up.

My health declined rapidly. I felt death creeping along my bones, stealing away my life. I made peace with the process and welcomed it, causing an argument with my husband. He felt I was going to get better, but I knew I was dying. I agreed to go to a holy man, knowing that he would help my husband see the truth. Instead, I was told it was not my time to die. It didn't make me feel hopeful; it made me angry. I didn't want to live.

Traditional medicine could do nothing for me, so to appear to keep fighting, I turned to alternative medicine. The doctor calmly listened to what I had to say and then began his exam. He paused, looked at me, and said, "Your organs are trying to shut down."

I replied, "I know." He didn't argue or try to convince me that I didn't feel what was happening inside my own body. He listened to me and my body, giving words to what I felt inside.

At the end of the initial consultation, he said, "I can't do anything about the paralytic attacks, but I can get you out of the wheelchair."

I decided that if I had to live, I was going to do it standing up. My husband drove me twice a week to my appointments, and I began to get stronger. I drank nasty green health drinks and made lifestyle changes. Within a year, I no longer needed the wheelchair at home, only when I went out. My recovery was slow, even after my paralytic attacks went back into remission, but I became a success story.

I stepped into health with daily gratitude for the ability to walk, clean my house, and drive. I looked to the future with hope-filled eyes, not understanding that my physical journey was merely false labor pains to the true labor only a breath away.

A vague disquiet gnawed at me. I tried to ignore it, but the feeling grew, demanding attention. I will never forget the moment I broke through the amnesia hiding my past and discovered that the worst possible thing I could imagine happening to a child had happened to me. My life suddenly, tragically made sense.

Pain and memories flooded in, and my life ground to a halt while I tried desperately to keep my head above water. Memories surfaced in waves, slamming into me and then receding, giving me enough time to gasp for air before the next arrived.

I began to see my abusers' fingerprints all over my life. My choices, my reactions, what I liked and disliked, all traced back to the severe child abuse I had suffered. I lost my sense of self.

Each successive memory was more horrific than the last, making me sure I had uncovered the worst of the abuse, but the depravity of my abusers exceeded my imagination.

The uninformed told me it was better not to remember. After all, my brain was protecting me. But the hidden cancer of my abuse had slowly poisoned me for years, and I refused to give any more of my life to my abusers. The only way to be free was to fully experience the pain, the anger, and the truth of my childhood.

When new memories came up, I instinctively fought against the process because it hurts. The longer I fought the process, the more it hurt. I learned to allow my memories to surface and not push away whatever feelings accompanied them. However, I didn't push to remember any more than I needed to for healing.

I attended therapy. I learned about healthy boundaries and began enforcing them in my life. I learned how to release my pain and anger in healthy ways and moved from victim to survivor. I grew out of my therapist and found another who specialized in trauma.

Little by little, I began to discover a world outside I never imagined existed. By feeling the pain and anger, I opened up the possibility to feel joy and contentment. One day I went for a walk, something I had been too unhealthy to do most of my adult life. I noticed the beauty of the world around me for the first time. I had viewed the world through a fuzzy black and white lens that had been removed to reveal the world in vivid color.

I wasn't able to stay in that beautiful place, but once I caught a glimpse of it, I understood what I was fighting for. I became more willing to walk through the darkness to come out into the light.

My healing journey wasn't quick, and it wasn't easy. I was diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, previously known as multiple personality disorder, which felt as devastating to me as my physical diagnosis had been. The dissociated parts of my personality, or alters, had worked together to make sure both those around me and I didn't know I was multiple in order to keep me safe. With the return of my memories, the child alters that had lain dormant for years began surfacing, even coming out in public.

At first, I hated my alters. They were strange, and I wanted them to go away and leave me alone. The more I fought them, the more they plagued me. There was no escape from people who lived inside my own brain. I had to learn to work with them. As I began to listen to my alters and their stories, I realized that they are all parts of me without the vast experience I have gained over the course of my life. There were valid reasons why their belief systems and coping mechanisms were so different from my own.

I learned that my disorder was a gift of protection against abuse so severe my brain chose to fracture to survive. My therapist helped me understand my alters were trying to protect me in the best way they knew how. I began approaching them with love and understanding, and we worked together to meet our shared goals.

I discovered I had within me vigilantes, rebels, and doormats. There were frightened children, know-it-alls, and those who believed I deserved the abuse. The more I accepted and communicated with them, the more I became co-conscious, meaning that I shared my headspace with one or more alters when they were in control. I felt what they felt; I knew what they knew. This allowed me to step into a life experience and viewpoint foreign to me. My compassion grew not only for myself but for others.

We all have different parts. The side that loves to party, the one who talks nonsense to babies, and the part that insists we get our work done. The difference is that you can choose when and where you step into these different aspects of your personality, and I can't, though I have learned to manage it. I learned I am both compassionate and judgmental. I am a strong woman and a scared girl. I am a victim and a survivor.

I could not step into an empowered life filled with purpose until I accepted all the parts of myself, both present and past, good and bad. Acceptance could not happen without remembering. Remembering could not happen without being willing to feel pain. Being present in my life showed me how my suffering had hurt my family and created chaos. I accepted responsibility and began changing my interactions. By doing these things, I freed my energy and my soul, which allowed me to step into a new life. I started saying yes to each opportunity that came up. I learned how to write well, which led to writing my memoir and becoming a writing coach. I began running production on writing retreats and conferences, which took me to Scotland. I became a life coach and began mentoring survivors of abuse. When the 2020 pandemic shut down the world, I used that time to complete my business degree. Each time, I began with a simple desire to pursue something that I was passionate about.

Most people don't have to confront the many aspects of their past and personality in the way that I did. But at the core of my experience, I am not so different from you, for pain is a part of the human experience. We all hold deep hurt within us, things we don't know if it is possible to heal from. I managed to push my pain down for thirty years until I became too weak and was forced to face it.

I got to the place where I am because each day, I chose to live instead of die, and then I did whatever it took to get through that day. On my good days, I searched for answers, and the universe put books, ideas, and people in my path to help me along my journey. On my bad days, I kept breathing through the pain.

There are bits of every emotion and every personality inside us. Without acceptance, we are divided within ourselves. When we refuse to accept a part of ourselves, it rears its ugly head. When we accept and give our feelings a voice, peace and unity enter.

In that space of acceptance, I began to live in the present and experience the unique joy of each moment. I strive to capture as many of those moments as I can because it was worth every bit of hard work and pain to feel alive. I believe that joy and pain are connected. Numbing the pain numbs the joy.

What is joy? To me, it is living at peace with myself and those around me and deeply experiencing the present moment. When I became truly present in my life, my relationships blossomed, opportunities abounded, and joy exploded.

I see the walking dead all around me, but people cross my path who are ready to wake up, feel their pain, and learn how to feel joy. My message to them is simple—it doesn't matter what you have gone through, how horrible your past or present, healing is possible. The universe is guiding you to a beautiful place if you are brave enough to try and not give up.

You have to want a new life so desperately that you are willing to see the truth about yourself and your past, be willing to feel whatever pain and anger surfaces, and step into change. I never lie and tell people it will be easy, but it is worth the journey.

The path forward is full of seemingly opposing ideas. Increasing our capacity to feel pain increases our capacity to feel joy. Being vulnerable brings strength. Accepting the darkest parts of ourselves allows our unique gifts to shine and benefit those around us.

I don't seek after or welcome pain. Even now, after so much practice, I still resist the process. But allowing the pain to coexist within me darkens my view, shrinks my life, and blocks my progress. I no longer accept that way of life, so I allow the pain to surface, I feel it, and I learn from it. Only then does it pass beyond me. The world becomes bright and beautiful again, and I move forward with the goals I have.

If you want to experience greater joy and opportunities in your life, begin today.

1. Be Still:

Constant activity and noise in our lives help us avoid our emotions. Routinely take the time to stop and listen to what your mind and body are trying to tell you. Notice. Pay attention to what sensations you feel in your body. We call them feelings because we physically feel them.

2. Identify:

Name the emotion you feel.

3. Express:

Allow the emotion to flow over you without judgment. Feelings are not good or bad; they are simply communication.

If you have routinely repressed your emotions, you will need an action in order to feel your emotion. Punch a pillow, watch a sad movie, or talk to someone you trust. Write or draw out your feelings—anything that helps you express your emotion in a healthy way that doesn't hurt yourself or others.

4. Visualize:

Imagine the emotion you are dealing with by giving it a shape and a color¹. Visualize it in front of you. There is no right or wrong here—allow your imagination free reign.

5. Let go:

Invite your deity or higher power to come and give the shape you created to them or destroy it by throwing it into the sun or imagining some other destructive power.

Your brain is creative and unique; let it handle this however works for you.

6. Refill:

When we let something go, we create space within ourselves. That bit of emptiness is uncomfortable. Don't leave it empty, or you will fill it back up with the same emotion. Fill it with positive energy and personal power. If you imagined a higher power, receive a gift in exchange for what you gave. Identify what it is and why it has meaning to you.

As you practice feeling your emotions, you will begin to identify what needs healing within you, whether it is physical, emotional, or spiritual. Dig down to what causes you the most personal pain, and then seek answers for how to heal. Be aware of what opens up to you, even if it seems unrelated. Then remain patient but persistent.

Your new path might be hard, or it might feel easier because others come into your life to help you along your way. Just remember, keep getting through each hard day, use your good days for gratitude and guidance, and don't give up.

Once you feel the difference of what a life fully lived feels like, you will never settle for mediocrity again. You can choose to live a purpose-driven and joyful life—one breath and one feeling at a time.

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¹ Robinson, Pam (2022, March 1). *Integrative Processing Technique*. Retrieved from Institute of Healing Arts: <https://www.ihaofutah.com/integrative-processing-technique>.

manages dissociative identity disorder and works to destigmatize it through speaking openly about the challenges and triumphs of working together with her alters/parts as well as mentoring others with the disorder.

Dawn is a writing coach and the event production supervisor at Calliope Writing Coach, has written guest blogs for the American SPCC, and appeared in two self-help books on depression and healing. She loves to hike in the mountains around her Utah home with her dog, Ginger, and cook for her kids (or chat while her husband cooks.)

To learn more about her journey of healing both mind and body battered by severe childhood abuse, read her memoir, *Broken No More: A True Story of Abuse, Amnesia, and Finding God's Love*.

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