



**Find
Your
Missing
Peace**

A Practical Guide

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Find Your Missing Peace

By Leah McClellan

Excerpt

Find Your Missing Peace: A Practical Guide to Reclaiming Your Birthright

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Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we do and see. Every breath we take, every step we take, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. The question is whether or not we are in touch with it. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.

—Thich Nhat Hanh *Peace Is Every Step*

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Introduction

The unexamined life is not worth living. —Socrates

Many of us don't examine our lives. If we're lucky, we realize that what we think we know isn't the indisputable one-and-only truth we thought it was.

We're often on auto-pilot, hoping for the best. Our actions and how we conduct our lives are based on our beliefs, our upbringing, and our thinking, unexamined though these things might be. "Well, I was raised to..." is a common excuse or reason for our behavior when challenged. But we're adults. Why do and act "as we were raised?" Especially if it's not producing the results we want. We have choices.

When things go wrong, when we're unhappy with results, and when we face hurt, disappointment, and failure, we wonder why. If we're lucky—or if we make the choice—we examine our lives. If we don't, we do it all over again and don't see the connection between our lack of inner peace or unhappiness and our choices.

This is nothing new, and dozens if not hundreds of books have been written about various aspects of this complex issue. But it's not an easy course to navigate—it's a vicious cycle we never get out of unless we take a good, hard look at ourselves and choose a different course of action for situations that detract from our life satisfaction—our peace.

It all seems so simple at times—do this and you'll achieve that—but trouble kicks in with our personal lives, our relationships, our emotions, and deeply-engrained habits we might not realize we have because we've been doing things like that since time immemorial. Or at least since we were kids.

And if we question our choices over the past 20, 30, 40 years or more, how will we feel when we realize that maybe, just maybe, we might have to change things around a bit? It can be scary and upsetting to examine ourselves.

And changing our thinking or how we do things requires more work and self-examination than some of us are comfortable with or willing to do. And sometimes

it's so difficult or painful we don't even try because it's easier to just stick with the known, the safe, and the comfortable even if it doesn't reward us very often or in ways we'd like.

When the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change, however, we start looking for alternatives.

Where does *Find Your Missing Peace* fit in and what do I mean by "peace?"

When we're born, we're blank, peaceful slates with any number of possibilities. While genetic personality tendencies, astrology and time of birth, and the possibility of reincarnation can be factored in depending on your beliefs, we're still wide-eyed and open to the world, ready to learn, grow, and find our way.

We start off in the womb, a safe, warm place where all our needs are met without question. We're secure. Cared for. We question nothing.

Granted, there may be pain or something other than peace in the womb, for example in the case of disease, congenital abnormalities that may cause pain, or a mother's drug or alcohol addiction. But in the average, normal period of nine months as a child develops, he or she experiences a relatively peaceful state.

In a hospital setting, when the light hits the newborn's eyes, all that changes. Although getting slapped to kick-start our breathing is no longer standard practice, we still face a harsh reality. Something is shoved down our throats and noses to clear them, we're weighed and measured, and we're passed around from person to person.

If we're premature or need extra care, needles are poked into us, we're placed in incubators, and we're attached to all sorts of contraptions that aren't our mother's womb or breast. Instead of dull, muffled noises we hear loud shouts and clangs.

A nipple that doesn't feel right might be pushed into our mouths, we drink something that doesn't taste like our mother, and at some point, some of us get part of our anatomy removed, and our screams do nothing to alleviate our pain.

Finally, we find some sense of peace in our parents' or caretakers' arms, and life moves along. Pain, pleasure, fear, safety, love, hate, unsatisfied needs—we learn to adapt to our surroundings or simply survive with what we're given. We develop communication styles based on the people around us and what works to get what we need or want. And most of us never regain the sense of peace we once knew.

Our peace is always in us, but it's shadowed and covered up by our experiences, the beliefs and attitudes we develop, and our emotional reactions and states of mind. By the time we're adults, our actions aren't springing from things we've learned in peace so much as they're based on what we've learned in pain or avoidance of pain.

Much of who we are, in fact, is often shaped by avoidance of punishment or pain—depending on our upbringing—rather than a reward for a job well done. Sometimes we're traumatized, even by no fault of our parents, and we may cope by stuffing feelings or acting out. And we forget about our peace as we adapt. It's gone missing.

It's not so bad, really. And some of us have it better than others. We might not realize we're missing the peace we once knew until we become aware of and question our unhappiness, our challenges, our difficulties, our failures, and our hurts or pain.

Why is life so hard? Why can't I relax, why do I feel on edge, why do I feel miserable or irritable? Why don't things ever work out, and why can't I just be happy?

We enter a relationship or marriage that we thought would be bliss—that peace we left in the womb—but it's not. Our loved one can't give us what we long for, what we've missed for so long. He or she can't heal our wounds because, guess what? They're looking for the same thing from us, and we can't provide it any better than they can because nobody knows what it is or how to find it—until we start examining our lives.

How can our sense of peace or childhood happiness go missing? Where did it go? How could it go anywhere if it was *inside* us, if we once *were* that peace and happiness?

As adults, we can find that missing peace, the inner peace and carefree innocence we left behind.

Sure, we all have work and responsibilities, and nothing is just given to us automatically. But we can examine the various facets of our lives and rethink strategies that just aren't working. We can relearn ways of doing things and ways of living that allow our peace to resurface and develop new skills that invite it to stay.

Peace is something we all have. It's still with us; it's just hidden and hard to find. But it's not the same as happiness.

Happiness comes in short bursts, often as a result of something or someone outside of us that brings us great pleasure: a happy event, a gift we've longed for, a declaration of love and devotion, completion of a difficult task, or a reward for hard work. It can last awhile, but it's easily crushed or taken away when things go wrong.

Peace, on the other hand, is a sense of wellness, contentment, inner balance, or quiet ease even when times are tough. It's a sense of deeper meaning and knowing we can handle periods of difficulty or sadness without those peaks of happiness, if needed. It's knowing that when happiness comes, it's for real, and it's lasting because it's something we're sure of, something we know is right for us, and it's not just a quick fix that we need more of to get happy again.

When we don't feel peaceful, when we can't tap into peace when we need to, difficult life events can overwhelm us, incapacitate us, draw us down into a bottomless pit.

Life is full of difficulties: loved ones pass, we lose a job, or we run into difficulties because we've made mistakes. If we have our missing peace, though, we can get through those rough spots knowing instinctively that it's a learning process, and we come out stronger, wiser, and with more peace and potential for happiness than ever.

That's the theoretical side of things. Here's the practical side and how you can get the most out of this book.

Read a section or a chapter or two at a time. Think about it. Mull over the key message or affirmation (in italics) at the end of each one. Print out certain sections or the whole thing and jot down notes, or make notes in your e-reader. If you keep a journal, you may want to make notes there. Don't forget to take a look at the Recommended Reading section at the end, select a few options, and start exploring possibilities.

It's fine to jump around and read the sections that interest you most. But it's best if you read from beginning to end because many sections use concepts or ideas from earlier sections. Some refer specifically to the corresponding chapter, but not all.

If a particular section doesn't seem to apply to you, consider reading it anyway. Think whether it might apply in some way I haven't mentioned—we're all unique with our own paths. It might also help you understand a friend or loved one's situation a bit better, which can help you develop more compassion which also helps you find your peace.

Pause at sections that clearly apply to you and think about it. Explore. What feelings come up? Do you feel angry, sad, bitter, in agreement, or want to argue? If you experience a strong reaction (or even a mild one) of any kind—whether it's *Ah-ha!* or *You're crazy*—this might be a place your missing peace is hiding.

My greatest hope is that you will find your missing peace as I have—for the most part. It's a long journey with lessons to be learned and skills to practice, and I'm not a blissed-out guru living some kind of perfectly peaceful life, not at all. I'm just a regular person who has learned a few important things about life and living from others who have walked similar paths, and I know it's all about practice, practice, practice.

It's all about the lessons learned. And I'm grateful to be able to share them.

Now go find your missing peace.

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Chapter 1 The quest for peace starts here

Sometimes the most difficult things in our lives are other people. If it weren't for this one or that one, life would be a breeze, wouldn't it?

When we take a closer look, though, we'll see that *we* are in charge of finding our *own* missing peace. Nobody can give us our peace or take it away because it's within us, not outside of us. Nobody has the key but us.

Just say no

Give yourself permission to say no to anything you want to say no about. You don't have to be nice all the time. You don't have to do everything people think you should do. It's not your job to take care of everyone else.

Nobody will hate you if you start to say no more often—then again, that's easy to say. Maybe some will, if only because people can get uncomfortable when others change. Think about it. If someone gives you flack because you don't want to or can't do something for them, that's their issue, not yours. Really. It is.

Saying no isn't about being mean. It's about being respectful to yourself, and most people will respect you a whole lot more if you *say no when you mean no*—rather than reluctantly say yes and complain later. Besides, if you agree to do something but really can't, isn't that sort of like lying?

Are you the go-to person in your office? Are you the person who's indispensable not because you're valued so much for your high-level problem-solving abilities or ingenuity but because you're a people-pleaser? Do you get paid for all that you do? Do you feel like a doormat, unappreciated? Do you feel like you're a servant to your family?

Stand firm. Practice saying no without apology and without any big, defensive explanation or justification. And with absolutely no guilt. And it does take practice!

While “no explanation needed” is good to keep in mind when saying no,

there's a time and a place for it.

If, on a third date, you decide it's not a good match, no big explanation is required. Or, in business, if you don't want to take on a new client, you don't need to spend 20 minutes explaining why. "I'm booked for the next several months and can't take on any new work, but please contact one of my associates" works fine.

If your child wants an expensive new toy or gadget that's not in the family budget, a long explanation is not only unnecessary, it's not a good idea because it provides loopholes for arguments and can wear you down. Providing an alternative option—"Uncle Trevor wants to pay you to mow his lawn this summer, and you can save up for it"—provides alternatives, much like providing a list of names for a new client you've turned down.

More delicate, emotionally loaded topics might be discussed at length when your response is "no" and mutual understanding needs to be reached. Personal matters in a relationship or marriage are a good example. If you don't explain why you're saying "no" to intimacy, for example, the other person not only has to deal with the rejection but will also wonder why (and maybe make wrong assumptions). The reason could be simple or complex, but discussion can promote goodwill, compassion, and acceptance.

If your young teenager wants to start dating and the answer is no, an open, friendly explanation can help the youngster accept your decision rather than rebel against it. You can stand firm, but "Because you're too young" or "Because I said so" doesn't help the teen learn the values you want to teach or how to say "no" (with those values in mind) a few years down the road.

A discussion can also shed light on exactly what the other person's concerns are. If by "dating" your young teen means a mixed group of boys and girls going to the school basketball game with a parent driving and supervising, that might be different from what you thought it was and possibly a "yes." Be careful to not make assumptions.

Unless it's something that's definitely your responsibility (caring for children and pets comes to mind), "no" is always an option. Often desired. Sometimes, people don't expect you to say yes, but they might be looking for their missing peace, too.

If I say no or close the door on a request or an opportunity, it creates time and space to say yes to something else, something that might be better for me, and even the beginning of a new day or a new life.

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Stop being nice and get real

Acting nice about something when you're hurt and screaming angry inside doesn't do anyone any good. And it rarely works out in a peaceful way, besides.

“Being nice”—instead of honest, genuine, and real—because you were raised to hide your true feelings just doesn't work in the long run. I don't mean that anyone should be nasty, mean, or rude. And by “nice” I mean superficially polite to hide our feelings, our true needs, our honest thoughts, and ourselves.

If we “get real” it doesn't mean we need to spill our guts all over the place, say whatever we want to in any way we like, and hurt others in the process.

Getting real means that, instead of saying “Yes, dear” to something our beloved asks us to do—and then conveniently forgetting to do it—we discuss household responsibilities and negotiate for change because *we really don't like doing the task we were asked or expected to do.*

Getting real means if we want to spend some time with someone, we ask directly instead of beating around the bush or sending quick little emails and text messages while hoping they'll do the asking or that it will grow, somehow, into something more.

If we like a certain woman or man and want to ask them out, we don't just hope to catch her eye at parties, make compliments about his looks, or post flirty remarks on her Facebook page and hope that something, eventually, will “happen” in person.

In other cases, if we're angry and upset about something, we acknowledge our feelings, share them, and ask for what we need. We don't have to tell the other person what's

“wrong” with him or her or lash out and punish someone when we’re being real with ourselves; we just stick to our own needs, the facts, and our own realities.

Speak your mind. Voice your opinion. Don’t be wishy-washy. No need to be mean or unkind but honor your truth. Stand by it. Know what it is, and state it clearly.

Someone I knew awhile back, a vegetarian, ate roast rabbit while a guest in someone’s home because she didn’t want to hurt their feelings. That might be fine for some and the right choice for her, but consider whether honoring your own truth is more important than silently honoring what you *assume* is someone else’s truth—and whether your host (or anyone) might be hurt because you didn’t think she would accommodate your needs.

Most of the time, people would rather you be *you* than someone you think they want you to be.

If someone wants you to be someone you aren’t, and you “be” whatever that is...what’s that about? Why are you doing it? Why not be you? Who are you? Getting real and being true to yourself could lead to your missing peace.

I honor myself and who I am with all my complexity, needs, feelings, and beliefs. I realize that I don’t honor others when I don’t honor myself. Honoring my truth isn’t about being mean or unkind—it’s an act of love.

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Create boundaries

How far do you let people go? How much do you put up with before you snap or withdraw in hostile silence? It’s great to be flexible and easy-going, but when you start feeling like the going isn’t so easy, that’s your limit. That’s your boundary.

Honor your boundary by asking people to respect it. If they don’t, remove yourself from the conversation, the group, the relationship, or even the job.

Some examples: teasing, unacceptable or inappropriate touching of any kind, bullying, jokes you’re uncomfortable with, snide remarks, sarcasm or snarky remarks, racism or

sexism, anti-LGBTQ attitudes, how someone treats you or acts around you in general (disrespect, condescension, lewd gestures), broken promises, chronic lateness, unreasonable demands, and so on.

If you feel trampled upon, it's usually a better use of time and effort to enforce your boundaries rather than try to change other people's behavior after the fact. That means, instead of saying "You're disgusting. How can you talk like that?" try "That's not okay for me, and I'll appreciate it if you don't talk like that again." And you don't have to defend it or explain it. Just remember there's no guarantee the other person will oblige.

It's better to hold up a hand and say "Stop" or "Please don't say things like that to me" than to resent it later.

The boundary-crosser may get defensive and argumentative. In many cases, it's best to just stand your ground and let it go (and get on with things) unless you can make a quick explanation in a few words and firmly leave it at that. Otherwise, an argument can easily erupt and just make things worse.

Is it something you ought to get over? Are you too closed, too uptight, too rigid, too much of a perfectionist? That's something to explore, but you have a right to shut the door and draw a line any time your inner alarm goes off.

For example, it's one thing to feel uncomfortable with foul language, but it might be a bit rigid if the word "shit" or something similarly mild gets you upset. Even so—take note—if that's where you're at, you have a right to your own boundaries and to be respected, especially in your own home or among friends, relatives, and people you care about.

These examples are simple and straightforward; life gets a lot more complicated, and everyone has different sorts of boundaries.

One of my boundaries involves email. I don't appreciate it when people send me jokes or inspirational quotes, no matter how well-intended they are. I get enough email as it is. And isn't that what Facebook is for? It doesn't happen often these days, but I gently thank them and ask to be taken off the list.

That's not a big deal, and I have other, more personal boundaries, of course.

I visit home improvement stores pretty often since I like to remodel my home, work in the garden, or do little projects like build my own desk or shelves. Men (and women sometimes) who work in the stores often assume I need help lifting even the smallest items.

It seems so odd to me—I'm tall, I have broad shoulders, and I don't look weak or fragile—far from it. I'm athletic, and I almost always wear jeans and sneakers while there, so when a man came running as I lifted lumber to the top of my car, I was surprised. He didn't ask, "Can I help you?" He just barged in on my space and said, "Here, let me do that." And he reacted poorly when I said "No, thanks."

That's a big boundary crossing for me, and I'm not sure they always mean well—it's so sexist. It's like assuming someone in a manually powered wheelchair needs help when they're fine and don't want to be bothered.

My own boundaries might not be yours, and yours might not be the same as mine or his or hers. We probably share many, but some are unique, and they can change over time. Whatever they are, it's a good idea to know what they are and honor them.

Certain actions, words, or situations are uncomfortable for me, and I don't allow them in my life. I don't let others cross my boundaries, and if they do, I speak up and let them know what's okay for me and what's not. If I have to, I leave or ask the other person to leave.

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Ask for what you need

This is similar to boundaries but sort of the flip side: setting boundaries is keeping certain things out, whereas asking for needs to be met is inviting something in.

Sex is a clear-cut example. Most of us have boundaries concerning what we will or will not take part in sexually. Many of us immediately say no if our partner suggests doing

something we don't want to do or something we find repulsive; we even protest if it's just a topic of conversation among friends. *Ew, gross, no way.*

But how many of us ask for exactly what we need? How many of us discuss exactly what we need sexually in a conversation rather than on the spot? How many of us even *know* what we need?

If you don't know what you need—in any situation—you can't ask for it. If you don't ask, you won't receive.

Be clear. Be direct. Be honest. Don't drop hints or beat around the bush and expect people—even the people closest to you—to understand what you mean and do what you want them to do.

Make sure you have the other person's full attention when discussing something and asking specifically for your needs to be met. Pick a calm, relaxed time, and let the other person know beforehand that you have something important to discuss.

If time is short and you're both busy, you might want to schedule time together well in advance. If this is something totally new for you and your family, friend, or partner, you might want to talk about talking itself. Check out the Recommended Reading section for some starting points.

Ask for confirmation that your message was received: "So, can I count on you to take care of those 3 tasks—Task A, Task B, and Task C—tomorrow before noon?" Or "Do you understand? Do you think we can try that sometime? What about right now or tomorrow?" Clarify if needed.

Be sure to thank the other person and show your appreciation when he or she gives you what you need, even if it seems like an ordinary, take-it-for-granted sort of thing. We all want and need appreciation, especially when we've tried extra hard to give others what they're asking for.

I know people can't read my mind or know what I need if I don't ask. It can take some practice, but asking directly for what I need instead of hinting and hoping can save me a lot of hassle and heartbreak.

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Ditch difficult people

This can be a tough one. You've heard about "toxic" people, right? People who criticize and complain constantly, argue about everything, play one-up every chance they get, put you down when they can, lie or gossip without remorse, manipulate, and basically suck the life right out of you.

If it's not someone you know well—say a neighbor down the street—it's not hard to avoid that person or keep conversation friendly but brief. You might need to set some firm boundaries if it's a coworker, though, and if you tell him you can't talk during work hours (or something similar) be sure to apply that to all coworkers or it will likely create some tension, at best.

What if it's family? You might want to explore options for establishing boundaries and handling things differently on your side, and if that doesn't work (or if it's a really impossible, painful situation), you might have to keep your distance or cut them out of your life entirely.

Not easy, I know, especially if it's a parent, spouse, life partner, or adult child. But if they cause you more distress than you can handle, you might have to do something drastic if you want your peace back. And when you've found your inner peace, you can explore possibilities for repairing the relationship.

If you're involved in an abusive relationship—that can mean emotional, mental, and verbal abuse as well as physical—don't think for a second that he or she is going to change. That kind of behavior is too deeply engrained to change without serious dedication and commitment to professional help. If your physical or emotional well-being is at risk, please get help (check out Recommended Reading for starters).

We all have the same needs to be respected, loved, cared for, and appreciated. To deny ourselves those needs means to sacrifice our inner peace, and that's not doing anyone any favors.

I'm not required to associate with people who hurt me or cause more problems for me than I can handle. I may learn new coping skills in the future, but if I'm unable to find and keep my peace in the situation as it is right now, I may need to take a break or end a relationship or friendship.

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Dealing with difficult people you don't want to ditch

Your boss. Your cranky aunt. Your mother-in-law. Your parents. A colleague. Everyone knows someone who's challenging—aren't we all at times?—but the situation isn't extreme, and we want to maintain a friendly relationship as much as possible.

You might have to do things differently on your part if you want to change the dynamics of the relationship and keep your peace when you're around them. Here are some tips:

- Ask them to honor your boundaries as discussed in this section.
- Limit your time and make plans: when to leave a family gathering, when and how to end conversations, or how to conclude meetings.
- Make sure you're well-rested and well-fed or whatever you need to be strong, peaceful, and at ease around the difficult person.
- What gets you ruffled? What buttons do they push? What topics are you uncomfortable with, and what topics are safe for you? Think about it, take some notes, and review as needed so you're ready when things get rough.
- Plan a strategy to stay out of arguments, not get defensive, not get sucked into the complaining, pity party, criticism, gossip, or anything else that drags you down.

Remember, what people say or do is all about them and nothing about you, even if it feels that way.

Acknowledge and validate what was said, even if negative (e.g., gossip) and gently steer the conversation: “Yeah, I can see how that might be frustrating for you. (Pause, and if no response, continue. If they respond, empathize and validate again, then pause

again...) “So, what’s going on with your latest knitting project?” Be sincere and don’t interrupt. Let the other person run out of words before changing the subject.

If your new way of behaving sparks questions or criticism, so be it. Keep any explanation brief and positive: “I’m just happy to be here and glad to see you! I don’t feel like talking about that stuff.”

Practice, practice, practice (new skills aren’t learned overnight).

I learn ways to deal with difficult people that honor my needs and theirs. By taking care of myself and managing situations in honest and loving ways, I enjoy difficult people more than I thought was possible and bring peace back into my life.

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Say what you mean, mean what you say

Being clear and direct can save a lot of time and prevent conflicts and arguments or, at least, keep them productive when they occur. This doesn’t mean being rude, nasty, or abrasive or anything like that. It means taking time to learn some good communication skills that can be delivered gently yet effectively (see Recommended Reading).

Remember, silence can be very loud, and it’s prone to misinterpretation. Indirect communication is often missed entirely or misunderstood—and it rarely earns respect. Hints and other passive-aggressive techniques often backfire when they work at all.

Vague words like *fine* or *whatever*—when you’re thinking more than that—might as well be silence, but they add an emotional punch to it. Withdrawing (without explanation if you need a break) does little more than increase tension and conflict. It’s hard to find and keep our peace when we don’t clearly say what’s on our minds.

Explain what you mean, when needed. In a conversation, don’t assume the other person knows what you’re talking about or assume what they mean when it’s unclear. This is especially important when you don’t know the other person well.

Some of my friends are movie buffs or have a few TV shows they watch regularly. Whenever they refer to a character or episode as a way to explain what they mean or add humor to the conversation, I'm lost because I don't watch TV (or not much over the course of my life), and I don't often watch many movies.

There's nothing wrong with making references to shows, movies, music, books, or anything else when you know, beyond a doubt, that the other person is familiar with them. But if you're not sure, in the interest of clarity and if the topic is important, it's best to not assume what the other person knows or doesn't know. Ask.

Sometimes the person isn't receptive to clear and direct communication. This can get tricky, especially in a relationship or marriage. If the situation is that bad, though, and there's no way to change it (assuming all options, such as counseling, have been exhausted), you might want to review this entire chapter again.

Even though it's hard sometimes, I communicate clearly and say what I mean because it just makes life simpler. As I become more skilled, my communication becomes easier, I feel increasingly sure of myself, and my inner peace shines its light.

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Chapter 2 The search goes on

The proverb, “know thyself,” often attributed to the Greek philosopher Socrates, is quoted with good reason. Other people can be challenging, but when we take a good, hard look at ourselves, we’ll be able to understand much more than we know now.

And as we peel away some of our habitual ways of thinking—like layers of an onion—we find our inner peace shining in the darkness.

Don’t do anything that’s not right for you

This is similar to “Just Say No” in Chapter 1 but it goes beyond saying “no” when asked to do something directly. It’s about listening to your inner voice, your inner desires and needs, and questioning assumptions or social expectations. It’s about knowing yourself, and following a path that’s yours, nobody else’s.

Some things are neither right nor wrong, but it’s not the right time. For example, some of the suggestions in this book might not be things you’ll want to undertake at first, even if some part of you thinks it will work and you want to try it.

Any of the tips here might sound like a good idea, but if you’re not quite ready, don’t do it. Take your time and choose what works best for you. That applies to many situations.

What I’m suggesting is that you shouldn’t allow yourself to be coerced or convinced by anyone or anything to do something you don’t feel comfortable with. Sometimes, of course, we need to think in terms of “no pain, no gain” and that growth *can* be uncomfortable or even painful, at times. But only you can decide when the time is right; no one can force you into it.

Plenty of us—myself included—have done things we really didn’t want to do because we felt obligated, pressured, didn’t know how to say no, didn’t know what else to do, or we were eager to please others, even if we weren’t aware of it. ...

Chapter 8 Your peace is right here, right now

Being human is a pretty incredible thing, if you think about it. We have a capacity to be, think, create, and feel so much, but we just scratch the surface of our potential, at best. When we have our inner peace, the doors are wide open to possibilities. How far will you go? How deep?

You are an incredible human being: a beautiful torch by night and a radiant sun by day as you find your missing peace and let it shine.

Love freely

Why hold back on love? Maybe you've been hurt—I know I have been. We love so much, we choose someone who's not right for us, and our hearts are broken. Even our near-perfect soul mate can hurt us. It happens all the time; that's the nature of learning about ourselves, healing old wounds, and finding our missing peace.

Don't be afraid to love again or reignite the love you once had in your relationship or marriage.

There are other kinds of love besides romantic love. Love yourself, love your life, love the world, love your children, love your friends—love people you hardly know. You don't have to tell them you love them all the time, although that's nice, too. Just love them and *show* it. Be kind, be compassionate, be caring—*do and act and speak and be love*, not just feel it or think it or say it.

Actively love people in your life in ways they understand and can receive. Some need hugs. Some need you to listen and show you care by spending time with them when they're troubled. Some need advice. Some need you to help them with something, and still others feel the love when they receive a gift, no matter how small.

Don't assume that the way you want to love someone will be understood as love. Find out. Ask questions. Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's not.

Your wife might not be particularly impressed with a bunch of flowers and a beautiful, romantic card every Valentine's day and birthday. That's nice, but maybe what she really needs to feel loved is emotional intimacy. Talking, sharing, holding.

Maybe she needs your support and understanding while she undertakes a new work project. Maybe she wants more physical intimacy. Maybe she wants an entire afternoon with you in bed, taking a walk, just hanging out. Maybe she'd like a funny card instead of a serious one or even a hand-written, do-it-yourself card with a cute little drawing on it.

Why not ask her what she needs to feel loved?

Your husband might not feel the love in a nice dinner or a carefully chosen gift, even if that's what works for some couples. Maybe what he really wants is you—all of you. Maybe he wants you to accept him with all his flaws, just as you want him to do for you.

Maybe he wants you to love yourself and quit asking him if you look fat. Maybe he wants you to believe him when he says he doesn't care that your "baby weight" isn't going away as fast as you'd like. Maybe he needs to talk and have you listen and understand. Maybe he just wants some lovin'. Maybe he needs exactly what you need way down deep.

Apply the same idea to other important people in your life. What do they need to feel loved? Most of us want to be heard, be understood, be needed in some way—that's love for many of us. Don't just say "I love you." Show it. Show your love, be your love, act your love, and find ways to show it even more.

Love yourself, love others. Make your home a love sanctuary and carry that love with you wherever you go. You'll find a lot more peace in your life, guaranteed.

I slow down enough to show my loved ones that I love them beyond words. I ask what they need to feel loved if I don't know, and I share what I need to feel loved. I act in ways that demonstrate my love, and I don't assume that what I think is a loving action will be received that way by others.

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About the Author

Leah McClellan is a freelance writer, editor, and fiction writer. She studied English and history with a social science concentration at Kutztown University where she earned her BA and MA degrees. Originally from the Philadelphia area, she currently lives in North Central Florida where she loves long bike rides on sunny trails.

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