

FOREWORD

There are many approaches to treating the multiple faces of trauma. Because traumatic impacts are so individualized, a one-size-fits-all approach does not allow for treating those personal short- and long-term impacts in ways designed to each person's needs and circumstances. Recent changes to the recognized definition of *post-traumatic stress disorder* in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) have modified what constitutes a traumatic stressor to include "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence" through direct experience, witnessing, learning that the victim is family or friend, or repeated exposure to traumatic details through work.

As Rosenthal aptly states, having knowledge about trauma and PTSD empowers and helps those who have been traumatized begin and follow through on their recovery journeys. One important component of knowledge is the mind-body connection. This interaction of mind and body means that traumatic events exist beyond the time in which they occurred not only in memory and emotion (hippocampus, amygdala, depending on the type of memory), but also in brain structures and body reactions. In her book *Molecules of Emotion*, Candace Pert states that the emotions engendered by trauma are held in the cellular structure of the self. Rosenthal does an excellent job describing brain structures in the "head brain" as well as long-term impacts. She reinforces the scientific findings that trauma impacts the hippocampus in its attempts to process, consolidate, and store traumatic memories that may end up as hippocampal shrinkage and atrophy and amygdala growth as emotions and intrusive symptoms take over. One major truth presented in

this book, however, is that these impacts are not necessarily—nor do they have to remain—static. The brain is plastic and can remodel itself. However, the first requirement for change is the desire to change. Committing to change and recovery is a major step in re-creating the self.

Lying behind this process of re-creation is the recognition that there are five major psychological needs, each of which has accompanying belief structures relating to the self, others, and the world. As Rosenbloom and Williams (2010) wrote, these five needs of safety, trust, power/control, esteem, and intimacy are core self-structures that are impacted by traumatic events and may appear to be permanently changed. Some researchers believe that changing those negative, altered beliefs is difficult, if not impossible; however, another key truth in *Heal Your PTSD* is that working with and challenging those beliefs, often through the substitution of more positive ones, is a key to healing.

An individual must truly want to change if any change is to occur (p. 75). Keys to healing revolve around the five psychological needs, whether presented in their developmental order or as specific parts of healing. Rosenthal states “your beliefs drive 100 percent of your behavior” (p. 88). Many of the statements in this book illustrate this healing process.

Safety:

- Restoring your identity after being traumatized “leads to a grounded sense of safety” (p. 125).
- Safety comes from things you can depend on (p. 178).

Trust:

- Trust the process of healing. There are many truths in this workbook that will guide you through that process.
- Trusting yourself is a learnable skill (p. 102).

Power/Control:

- Challenging emotions and maintaining control over them is powerful as you challenge your mind to hold emotions inside that are positive and negative. One emotion ultimately wins.
- You cannot change what happened to you, but you can change how you function in the present and future as you “choose to define who you are” (p. 122).

Esteem:

- Your sense of self-worth begins with believing you matter (p. 85).
- Higher self-esteem can regulate emotional distress (p. 85).
- (It is important) to identify what you are good at and (then) do it often (p. 86).

Intimacy:

- Connection and reconnection (with self, mind/body, others, and your world) is necessary for healing.

In conclusion, Rosenthal reminds the reader in many ways that challenging beliefs (and hopefully changing the destructive ones) is one of the most important aspects of healing from a traumatic event or events that has changed the survivor. In other words, “your beliefs are who you are” (p. 153) and “[your] beliefs create your world” (p. 190). Choose to do! Choose to move forward! Ask yourself what Michele Rosenthal terms the one primary question to ask yourself in recovery: “What’s one small thing I can do today?” (p. 100).

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INTRODUCTION

There are several elements that make post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) recovery enormously challenging; this is a book about making it easier. The more safe and in control you feel—over your own internal experience—the more safe and in control you’ll be as you examine how, when, and in what way to move toward recovery. This means developing a vision for healing, understanding the effects of trauma, identifying an approach toward change, refining a system for reconnecting to the authentic you, plus establishing how to handle a variety of recovery obstacles from an attitude of strength, resilience, commitment, and determination.

Many survivors (including me during my own PTSD recovery) search for the “magic bullet”—the one thing that will erase the pain, fear, discomfort, and disconnection that PTSD creates and that some parts of healing actually amplify. This is a reasonable quest, as the life-crushing effects of PTSD would make anyone thirst for immediate freedom. Of course, there is no quick solution. Even though you’ll learn many strategies in the following pages, they are not meant to offer miraculous solutions. Instead, they are designed to build a flexible and adaptive system that strengthens your approach to healing so that you ultimately achieve your recovery vision.

A successful “healing rampage,” as I affectionately called my PTSD recovery process, is about exploring and discovering how to make the shift from *powerless* (the definition of the PTSD mindset) to *powerful*, the definition of a survivor who reassumes her place in the world by making choices and taking actions in alignment with her desires for experiencing a fulfilling life and self. If you want to connect to a sense of your own power, learn how to create more effective coping

and healing processes, and wish to reclaim control over who you are and how you live, then the small, manageable actions included with each strategy will help you become one of the thousands who move through PTSD and come out the other side stronger, more effective, capable, and living a life that feels good.

On the other hand, if you're in the mood to stay stagnant, hold onto beliefs like "I'm damaged and can't be helped!," want to live the rest of your life defined by PTSD, or wish to hold onto trauma and the idea that PTSD is a life sentence, then I'll tell you right now: This book will disappoint you. To do all of those un-healing things, you don't need a book; you simply need to give in to the PTSD depression, hopelessness, helplessness, and anxiety. In this case it would be wise for you to set down this book and pick it up again on a day that you feel like getting out of that space, which is entirely possible when you work the suggested strategies and make them your own.

I intimately know the PTSD recovery process because for more than twenty-five years (starting at the age of thirteen) I struggled with PTSD symptoms and the chore of living a life despite them. When I finally entered recovery in my thirties, I threw myself full-force into studying both the literature of PTSD, plus psychological theories of healing trauma all the way back to the 1800s. I was determined to crack the code of both understanding and healing. It took several years and treatment modalities for me to reach where I am today: 100 percent free of symptoms for nearly a decade despite significantly severe triggers.

By the time my recovery was complete, I had amassed an enormous wealth of information and desired to give back so that others would have access to knowledge that had been so useful in my healing success. This impulse led me to found the *HealMyPTSD.com* website; host the radio program *Changing Direction* (on which I've interviewed over 150 experts about trauma and PTSD recovery); launch the Heal My PTSD forum (join us, it's free at *HealthUnlocked.com/HealMyPTSD*); write *Before the World Intruded: Conquering the Past and Creating the Future*, an award-nominated case study in trauma, PTSD, and successful recovery, plus *Your Life After Trauma: Powerful Practices to Reclaim Your Identity*, a step-by-step program for

answering the question, “Who am I now?” I also became a certified professional coach trained in alternative modalities that facilitate healing. Through all of these activities, I’ve worked to distill the essence of the PTSD experience and identify what successful healing universally requires. Most importantly, I’ve focused on how to personalize the process for your own success. In *Heal Your PTSD*, I’ve chunked down all of this information into bite-size pieces in five essential categories to help you learn, strengthen, and create choices and actions that increase flexibility and resolve conflicts so that you might experience forward momentum.

There are two ways to strategize your approach to this book:

1. Read straight through from beginning to end and allow the subjects to slowly move you through a course of orientation and action.
2. Examine the table of contents and dip into each section according to what you need on any given day.

However you read, allow yourself the time, space, and opportunity to try one suggested action at a time. Employ self-care techniques to feel safe and in control; immediately stop any exercise that seems triggering or for which you do not feel ready. You can use any of the strategies on your own or in collaboration with a trauma-trained professional. As you read through this book, you might want a notebook or journal in which to collect your thoughts, responses to the exercises, and other material. Or you might open a new folder on your computer. Having a record will let you see how far you’ve evolved and can also help you organize effective strategies for future use. Lastly, read this book as if we are together: It’s me talking to and with you—survivor to survivor, coach to client, friend to friend. We’re in this together every step of the way.

PTSD becomes a lifestyle; so does healing. Nothing works for everyone. Your mission in this book (as in all of your PTSD recovery) is to find the strategies that work for you and work them every day. You’ll notice certain themes running throughout all of the subjects: the importance of beliefs, the necessity of pacing, the role of

self-kindness, the benefits of joy and play, and the development of intuition, to name a few. When you see a theme, pay special attention: Themes are foundational elements from which all of your success will evolve.

Ongoing advancements in the field of neuroscience prove the brain's capacity for continual change, which means the possibility for healing exists for you in every moment. If you feel ready to reclaim the power trauma stole from you and change your life one moment at a time, then turn the page. Gently allow yourself to begin creating The New You while designing a healing strategy that allows you to embody a sensation of calm, confidence, and control.

You have enormous healing potential; the goal is learning to access it. You can do this. Dig deep. I believe in you!

HEAL
YOUR
PTSD

PART ONE

YOU CAN HEAL

It's a generally accepted fact that the key to achieving anything is being able to visualize it. The reason for this has a lot to do with how the brain works: The more it knows, understands, and “sees” what you want, the more efficiently, effectively, and effortlessly it helps you create what you want. This is exactly why having a healing vision—both for how healing happens and how you can begin to create it—becomes so important in the PTSD recovery process.

Approach the following pages as your introduction to ideas that make recovery eminently possible, plus ways you can create, embody, and engage with a healing vision of your very own. The more you clarify and then learn to step into the world you want, the more success you will achieve in reducing PTSD symptoms and reclaiming a self and life you love.

How Healing Begins

Healing begins with hope.

At this moment you may question how possible it is to reach your healing objectives. There will (often) be moments of doubt—that’s all right. There’s still room for hope.

The good news is you don’t have to know exactly *how* you’re going to succeed in your quest. Having hope just means putting out there that you desire to achieve the outcome you seek.

In moments of doubt you can hold onto hope by saying to yourself, “I’m open to the idea it’s possible for me to . . .”

Having hope gains strength when you’re clear about what you hope for. Today, outline what you hope for in terms of:

- your life
- who you are
- your recovery
- your relationships with others
- your experience in the world
- your future

In your notebook, journal, or computer, complete this statement: “I hope . . .”



If you're wondering whether or not it's possible to feel better, the answer is emphatically, Yes!

While friends and family may have advised you to “just get over it,” you’ve probably encountered difficulty in doing so. There’s a very scientific reason for why the “just get over it” recovery method doesn’t work: Your behaviors are embedded in neural pathways in your brain, in the very biology of your nervous system. Literally, the traumatic experience has become a part of you, which means you can “just get over it” about as easily as you can get over infected tonsils.

Like your tonsils, healing after trauma means tending to what’s wrong. In this case, that involves rewiring and retraining your brain. Since your brain rewires and retrains itself all the time, it’s very adept at utilizing these skills. Your role in recovery is to specifically apply these skills in areas related to trauma. Essentially, you are your brain’s guide through the maze of trauma recovery. Your mission is to (1) identify what your brain needs in order to rewire the trauma pathways and then (2) develop a protocol for creating the retraining that will achieve the desired results.

If you were going to teach your brain something new about post-trauma life, what would it be? What kind of repetitive experience could you develop that would offer your brain opportunities to learn that idea?

Bringing yourself to a place of peaceful healing means repairing the bridges that were blown up in yourself and your world when trauma occurred.

In his song “In Repair,” John Mayer croons, “So much to do to set my heart right. . . .” (If you don’t know that song, go listen to it or watch the video; it’s a great recovery anthem.) This sentiment so aptly describes where a great deal of the pain comes from in the PTSD experience.

In the post-trauma identity crisis that accompanies PTSD, you question how to define yourself, wonder what’s true and what’s false,

and lack a sense of what's right for you—these are heart and/or soul wounds. One way to answer the questions and refill that sense of rightfulness is to engage in repair of the things that feel most devastated.

What are those things for you? Take some time to sit in a quiet space, peer into your heart, and see what's most damaged—what most needs to be repaired. Fixing those things will bridge you to the next phase of healing.

Then choose a recovery anthem and play it daily. Tweet the song title and/or lyrics to @ChangeYouChoose, #healmyptsd.

Healing requires recalibration, which is the careful process of bringing things back into scale, a place of neutrality.

PTSD living happens in a place of extreme: anxiety, panic, depression, loneliness, grief, loss, sadness, despair, and [*insert your ideas here*]. It's a little like living on the edge of an abyss feeling that any moment you'll teeter into open space.

Successful coping and healing bring you back from the edge of the abyss and get your feet onto more firm ground from where you can see into the chasm but have removed the danger of falling into it.

The success of recalibration relies on getting things back into a state of equilibrium. If you were going to feel more neutral in one area of your life or coping today, what would you have to do?

Healing is about re-creating who you are and rebuilding your life.

The modus operandi (M.O.) of every survivor is to create an environment and sensation of being safe and in control. You're working very hard at doing that—which is why you're feeling such an enormous amount of stress.

Here's the big secret: Focusing on staying safe and being in control through rigid coping mechanisms doesn't create recovery. Healing is

all about reversing the process in which you've come to live: learning to feel safe even when you don't have the ultimate control, and learning to be in control even when you don't feel safe.

Consider this new M.O.: You have choices to make. Decide what changes you want to experience. Then take an action to attempt achieving it. After that, let loose all of your planning. Stay in the moment and respond to what you experience.

In the avoidance perspective of post-trauma life, your motivation is to move away. You avoid threat by skirting it. However, you can't go into your future by stepping back or to the side. The future, since it exists in front of you, can be fully entered only by moving straight toward it. What is right in front of you on the road to recovery? What does that require you to do? Record your responses in your notebook, journal, or computer.

Healing means making better choices and taking more effective actions over a long period of time.

If you do this, eventually you will have installed in yourself an entirely new system for operating in the world. The foundation for this new system is the thoughts, beliefs, choices, and actions that emerge from your deeply connected sense of self. Cultivating the strong, confident, connected, and capable you is like honing the keel of a boat: It gives you balance and a way to choose and control your direction.

In the end, post-traumatic stress disorder recovery isn't just about being able to face the past; it's also about being able to connect to the present and envision a future. That begins with a connection to yourself.

Pause for a moment and notice how disconnected from yourself you feel. Do you feel disconnected from your mind, body, creativity, skills, or pleasures? In what way does that show up?

In your notebook, journal, or computer, create a two-column chart. In the column on the left, list all the ways you feel

disconnected. Next, imagine that by the end of this year, these connections will have been restored. In the column on the right, fill in what will have to happen for you to feel reconnected in those areas.

Making choices and taking actions—sometimes before you even believe in the possibilities of the outcome—will naturally evolve your confidence and perceptions.

The tendency is to think you have to feel the truth of your healing possibilities before you can move toward them. So false!

Possibility exists for you in every moment, regardless of whether or not you feel its presence. All you need in order to inch ahead is to be able to do any or all of the following:

1. *Hope* that things can change
2. *Imagine* a different way of living
3. *Wish* a better life exists for you
4. *Want* your circumstances to transform
5. *Embrace* the idea, “It can happen for me.”

The truth of who you are and what your life is really about constantly changes. Pick one of the preceding options and carry it with you today. See how much you can incorporate it into your thought process.

Today you are your trauma self, but your post-trauma self waits to be discovered.

A key feature of PTSD is powerlessness. For example, you feel powerless:

- in the midst of your trauma
- in the midst of your mind after trauma
- over psychological symptoms

- over physical symptoms
- in controlling the healing process
- about finding help in the healing process
- about who you've become despite who you used to be

In healing, you will learn to take back the power trauma stole from you. How do you do this? A (powerful) first step can be found in constructing your post-trauma identity:

Your post-trauma identity redefines you as someone for whom trauma occurred in the past but who is no longer negatively driven by trauma in the present. That full identity will include personality traits, dreams, and a vision for living a future that is full of meaningful and productive experiences.

It's okay if all of this seems foreign and/or unattainable right now. Today, open your mind to the possibility that someday you will shift into a post-trauma identity whose foundation is one of power, strength, homeostasis, and "I can handle it!" thinking.

Losing what you did due to trauma is very meaningful. That loss demands attention and deserves it.

Over the course of life, you lose many things . . . from house keys to favorite sweaters to books, CDs, and scraps of paper with important information. You don't, however, keenly feel the loss or become blindingly infuriated by it. While you may have a momentary pang of regret, the loss of these types of things doesn't usually cause you to cry, feel physically ill, fall into a bout of despair, or become enraged.

How are those losses different from trauma? Those elements didn't define you; losing them didn't challenge your view of yourself, others, or the world.

Losing what you have because of trauma, however, does all of those things.

Loss deserves recognition. Mourning that loss is a necessary component of healing.

What have you lost due to trauma? Make a list of everything you can think of and then put a star next to the losses that most bother you. Address these areas to begin your mourning process.

Plan. Commit. Act. Heal.

You are a powerful being. Every day you endure symptoms that would drive another person insane. Still, you look for relief. You move through your days doing the best you can.

More and more often you are able to make a difference for yourself when you practice what it means to make a choice and take an action. The survivors who heal PTSD are the ones who find ways to sustain this process for as long as it takes and despite every unexpected outcome or perceived setback.

You are capable of handling tough things with strength and resilience.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being “I accept that completely!”), where do you rate your response to that idea? What would it take for you to move up one notch? How can you create a situation that encourages that to happen?

Be responsible and accountable.

What makes you feel responsible for executing the recovery you’re attempting?

If you’ve ever tried to hold yourself accountable, you know how tough it can be. Different parts of you start having a conversation:

The part that wants you to follow through starts sounding like a cross parent, and the part that doesn’t feel like doing the work sounds

like a whiny child. As it does in real life, this kind of conversation can go around and around until you're both exhausted and nothing gets done.

Being held accountable finds real strength in its external origin. To an outside person less swayed by your whiny child part, you cannot fuss about what you do or don't want to do; you can follow through only because that's what is expected. If this scenario sounds more like a sergeant than a buddy, that's okay. If a buddy would let you get away with months of inertia, then it's a sergeant you need on your team!

Consider all the people you know whom you trust. Who wants you to succeed in your mission for healing? Make a list. From this list, choose one (or more) person(s) to whom you can confide your tasks and objectives and who will hold you accountable for getting them done following the schedule of choices and actions you devise.

Healing requires you to give up control.

In an attempt to reclaim control after trauma, you have built a world in which you control as much as possible. While that's sensible, strong, and wise, you have also built yourself the prison in which you now live—a place where the more you expend your energy on control, the more controlled you are by your own brain, mind, and body.

At this point it isn't trauma that controls you: You—and your belief system (embedded in both your conscious and subconscious psychological and neurobiological processes)—control you. To feel better, you will be required to release all of the controlling behaviors you have implemented.

Make a list of the (obsessive and compulsive) controlling behaviors you employ on any given day. (If you can't identify them, ask your friends, family, or colleagues; they will happily tell you what they've noticed!) Choose one behavior that you feel comfortable working with and imagine what it would take to gradually lessen and then release it. Write out

the steps you imagine. Prioritize them and make an implementation plan.

Healing happens when you value who you are.

PTSD begins as a reactionary instinct to trauma but continues because your body and mind perpetuate the survival mode cycle. The more you allow PTSD to continue, the more it builds on itself.

But you do have a choice. If you value yourself enough to believe you deserve to be well, then you can begin moving forward.

Today, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I deserve to be free of PTSD symptoms?
- Do I deserve to live a joyful, productive, fulfilling life?
- Do I deserve to have peace of mind?
- Do I deserve to have comforting, supportive, loving, and satisfying relationships?
- Do I deserve to have a successful career?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being “I am completely worthy!”), rate how worthy you feel of healing.

What would have to happen to increase that number up one notch on the scale? How can you do that? Who can help? Follow this process repeatedly until you reach the 8 to 10 range.

Initially, healing can make PTSD symptoms worse.

You're overwhelmed by how difficult, scary, and out of control your mind, emotions, and the coping and recovery process feel. Sometimes you might even be afraid to let go of your survivor persona and coping techniques. As much as PTSD symptoms make your life miserable, they have become familiar: In the framework of post-traumatic stress symptoms, you recognize yourself and this feels safe.

Healing, however, challenges you to let go of all that. Naturally, the unfamiliar is threatening and uncomfortable. To continue moving forward, you must develop a strong reserve of courage.

In your approach toward healing, you must discover in yourself a sense of adventure and an attitude of fearlessness.

In what one area of recovery do you feel the most fear? If you were going to become fearless in that space, what would have to happen? How could you create one small step toward that outcome? Who can help?

Lots of surprises happen throughout the trek to healing.

You'll surprise yourself with strength, courage, and fortitude. Your brain will surprise you with how it begins to function in new ways. Your emotions will surprise you with how they become more appropriate in the moment. Your mind will surprise you in how it learns to focus, synthesize, and integrate.

Look for the surprises, and then let them lead you forward into new territory. Where you are today may feel as if it has many questions. However, all of who you are today holds the answers.

When you look back at how you've managed since your trauma(s), what surprises you about yourself? What skills or attitudes does this highlight about you? How can you use them in your healing process?

PTSD recovery has a very specific outcome.

What does recovery look like to you? Being able to achieve healing begins with clearly and specifically naming your desired result so that your brain begins formulating a successful process.

To better clarify your recovery, start working on your (very detailed and specific) answers to these questions:

- What do you wish to change about who you are today?

- How will you be different when your recovery is complete?
- How will you know you have reached the end of your recovery?

Repeatedly asking yourself these questions keeps you focused on the work of healing and creates a reality in which that healing begins to exist.

Trauma takes away your choices; recovery is about taking them back.

There is a you that exists transcendent of trauma. Taking back your power—redefining yourself outside trauma—is a process focused on becoming *who it is you really want to be* beyond and despite trauma. The ultimate mission is for the past to become a very tiny part of your very large, present self. Getting there includes going through these steps:

- Recognizing who you are in this moment
- Deciding what needs to be changed (this includes attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, beliefs)
- Defining who you want to become (professionally, personally, spiritually, etc.)
- Planning a series of actions
- Identifying objectives
- Developing a timeline
- Putting the plan into effect

Some day you're going to look back and marvel at the fact that you made it through PTSD to the other side. Today, imagine you have an ideal self, unaffected by trauma, who knows how to guide you there. Describe that person.

You are, in this moment, creating your own unique healing process.

The origin of how you think and feel, plus what you see (in terms of yourself, others, and the world), lies in your belief system. If you allow yourself to remain stagnant in an identity system that perpetuates negative beliefs about yourself and the world, then you will stay exactly where you are now.

The same goes for healing: You have many programmed beliefs about how healing is supposed to go. You may have thought, heard, or been told that you must:

- forgive
- talk
- remember
- forget
- release
- get over
- accept
- *(fill in the blank)*

The truth: There are zero prescriptions for how PTSD recovery will occur. Healing has zero set programs. What worked for one person may or may not bring you the same results. What one person believes is true about recovery may or may not be true for *your* recovery.

You are a unique individual. Allow your healing efforts to reflect that. What do you hate about your current process? What would you prefer instead? Research your options for giving yourself what you want.

Recovery success largely derives from your intention for how you will approach your healing transformation.

There are many ways to accomplish everything you want to do in recovery. Whether you're aware of it or not, you develop a healing

action plan full of strategic processes. Once you make choices and take actions, you tweak the process depending on the feedback you receive from the results and outcomes.

For a long time, you (or others) have probably had expectations about how your recovery is supposed to go. Plus, what you “should” do, what the results “ought” to be, what length of time it “must” take and, and, and . . .

If you listen to that language, it’s not surprising if you don’t make the progress you hope for. Such enormous focus on the should–ought–must ideas creates a huge amount of pressure that can make you so tired that even your muscles feel too heavy for your skeleton to carry.

In this way, expectations for recovery can be dangerous. *Expectations* are strong beliefs for how something will happen. They set the stage for disappointment because you don’t have exact control over how your recovery will occur. Unmet expectations can make you feel like a failure and bring on a big despair that you’ll never be healed, all because you had this strong belief for how some future event would go—and then it didn’t.

Healing in the confines of intractable beliefs is incredibly hard. Recovering in an environment that lacks flexibility is near to impossible. The perfect substitute to the weight of expectations: the power of purpose, otherwise known as *intention*.

An intention is an objective or a plan. It is a suggested course of action that states a mission or aim. Unlike the assumed outcomes held in the beliefs of an expectation, an intention merely *suggests the spirit* of how something will be approached. This allows the “how you will achieve it” to develop itself.

Throughout recovery you have a choice in how you will approach any healing task. Rather than barreling into an activity at warp speed when you clearly define your intention prior to an action, you slow down and ground your energy and action in the present spirit of showing up versus the future belief of how things will happen. Since intentions are all about how you choose to show

up in and handle any moment, they offer an area in which you have 100 percent control.

Making the shift from expectation to intention is a conversion from seeking control over the “how” of your healing strategy (the exact steps and their outcomes) to the “what” of your vision (the way you will engage and be present).

Set your specific intention: How do you plan to engage in your recovery? What will that require?

What expectations do you have about your healing process? Get them out on the table right now! Make a list of what you believe is supposed to/will/must/ought/should/needs to happen in order for you to heal. Then check out the section “How to Gain (and Keep) Momentum” on page 93 for how to develop supportive intentions instead.

You are always on a path of personal discovery and exploration.

Notes from the path:

- The path is gloriously endless.
- If you hit a dead end, turn in a new direction; make a new start.
- Slowly, face all fear and discomfort; you can handle it.
- Find proactive ways to lessen fear before engaging in the work that needs to be done.
- The more empowered, confident, and secure you feel in your process, the more efficient and successful you will be.
- Ideas, thoughts, and experiences that bring up the most intense emotions (both positive and negative) are signs from your deepest self about what is important to you.
- Pay attention to the signs; you can use them to more intentionally create both your recovery and your life.

- Care less about the recovery process itself and more about your intention for the end results.
- You have what it takes to feel better.

While it may not always feel that way, there is plenty of room to contain any emotion sparked on the path. Imagine yourself as an ocean embodying the excess of any emotional spill.