

Advance Praise for *Clarity*:
Ten Proven Strategies to Transform Your Life

“Diane Altomare presents a powerful, experiential, and practical path for using obstacles and issues of the past to mobilize us through the gateway of liberation. Let Altomare guide you, with stories and exercises, on this most important journey back to yourself. It’s the only one that will ever matter!”

—**NANCY LEVIN**

Best-selling author of *Jump . . . And Your Life Will Appear*

“I’ve been fortunate enough to work with Diane Altomare. Through her coaching I’ve been able to tap into my own strength to navigate through both good and tough times. Reading *Clarity*, I can so vividly hear her voice and I am so excited that now countless others can draw on her special expertise to become who they are meant to be.”

—**LISA BRECKENRIDGE**

Reporter/anchor Fox 11 News and Good Day LA

“A beautifully written prescriptive process for self realization, *Clarity* holds a powerful message and is a must-read.”

—**DR. SHAILINDER SODHI**

President of Ayush Herbs, Inc. and
adjunct faculty member of Bastyr University

“As a physician, I have witnessed how emotions and thought patterns can determine our health and are a root cause of wellness or disease. Diane Altomare’s book *Clarity* is a step-by-step guide that will help reveal which undesirable emotions, thoughts, addictions, and bad habits are affecting the health of your body and blocking your ability to perform at your highest state.

By utilizing her techniques, you will have the tools to transform your underlying feelings of fear, anger, and sadness into confidence, happiness, and fulfillment. I highly recommend this book for anyone wanting to discover the hidden and subtle emotional patterns which are preventing them from attaining their personal goals and peace of mind.”

—ANDREW IVERSON, ND

Family practitioner and author of *Nature’s Diet*,
Nature’s Diet Cookbook, and *Nature’s Detox*

CLARITY

CLARITY

*Ten Proven Strategies to
Transform Your Life*

DIANE ALTOMARE

SelectBooks, Inc.
New York

Copyright © 2016 by Diane Altomare

All rights reserved. Published in the United States of America. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the permission in writing from the publisher.

This edition published by SelectBooks, Inc.
For information address SelectBooks, Inc., New York, New York.

First Edition

ISBN 978-1-59079-358-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Altomare, Diane.

Title: Clarity : ten proven strategies to transform your life / Diane Altomare.

Description: First edition. | New York : SelectBooks, Inc., [2016]

Identifiers: LCCN 2015012629 | ISBN 9781590793589 (pbk. book : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Self-acceptance. | Self-realization. | Adjustment (Psychology) | Change (Psychology)

Classification: LCC BF575.S37 A48 2016 | DDC 158.1--dc23 LC record available

at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015012629>

Book design by Janice Benight

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

(Continuation of copyright page)

This material has been written and published for educational purposes to enhance one's knowledge and ability to improve emotional and psychological well-being. The content of the book is the sole expression and opinion of the author.

The information given herein is not intended for the diagnosis of any medical condition, and the techniques presented here are not intended to be a substitute for an individual's prescribed medications or therapies.

Throughout this book, stories and examples of typical client experiences are used to illustrate and help the reader better understand the processes described. These stories are not those of actual persons, but are drawn from the writer's imagination and to be interpreted as composites of many people's experiences.

Dedicated with love to Debbie Ford—your power, wisdom, and love graced my life in the most profound ways. I felt your presence in every word I wrote, and I thank you for your unconditional love—words can never express the depth of my gratitude for how you touched my life and guided me to find my dharma.

“Now, it’s time to fly and create miracles!”

Contents

Foreword by Marci Shimoff xi

Introduction xiii

- STEP 1** Reconnect to Yourself 1
- STEP 2** Understand What's Really Going On 21
- STEP 3** Embrace Your Inner Child 39
- STEP 4** Target What's Being Emotionally Triggered 59
- STEP 5** Discover Your Default Emotion 89
- STEP 6** Listen to the Voice of Your Emotions 101
- STEP 7** Forgive the Pain of the Past 125
- STEP 8** Discard Limiting Beliefs 141
- STEP 9** Win the Battle of Faith vs. Fear 157
- STEP 10** Unleash the Power of Your Emotions 176

Conclusion 187

Acknowledgments 189

Notes 191

Recommended Reading List 193

About the Author 195

Foreword

SOMETHING IS STILL MISSING. We're working hard, we have more than we've ever had, and we have great access to the wisdom and inspiration of teachers and sages. Yet most people can't honestly say that they're truly happy. Even if you've accomplished some or all of your goals and dreams, you may be wondering "is this all?" I speak to hundreds of thousands of people a year, and I hear over and over again that they feel somewhat deflated or disillusioned because achieving their goals isn't bringing them the happiness and fulfillment they hoped it would.

In *Clarity*, my colleague Diane Altomare will show you how to move beyond this "disillusionment" and create the peace and fulfillment you deeply long for. You'll no longer be under the spell of thinking that you need to wait for the next big thing "out there" to bring you the happiness you're looking for.

Diane and I were introduced as a result of our deep connection to world-renowned speaker, author, and coach, Debbie Ford. Diane has spent the past fifteen years coaching thousands of people through Debbie's groundbreaking work on the shadow. I'm inspired by Diane's ability to profoundly and intuitively connect people to the root of their unhappiness, and heal themselves at their core.

It doesn't matter what's happened in your past or what you may be struggling with right now—with the powerful tools and insights in this book, you can create the life you want and feel amazing about yourself in the process.

Stop waiting for “someday when . . .” in order to experience deep fulfillment in your life. With Diane’s revolutionary approach to living your life from the inside out, you will break through your limitations. Regardless of where you are in life, you can’t help but feel greater peace, happiness, and fulfillment as you put into practice the powerful exercises, wisdom, and insights in this book. Enjoy!

—Marci Shimoff

New York Times best-selling author of *Happy For No Reason*
and the co-author of six *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books

Introduction

When someone walks into a room you immediately feel the totality of who that person is by the energy that he or she emanates. There is no denying the energy that we exude every day and in every situation. And yet most of us feel like we can cover up how we truly feel inside by the clothes we wear, the makeup we apply, the way we style our hair, or the cars we drive.

The truth is that who we are and how we feel shines through regardless of what we try to do to cover it up. We must work on the inside if we want to not only create amazing things in our life but also feel fulfilled, peaceful, and joyful at the same time. Eckhart Tolle says in *The Power of Now*, “If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place.”¹

Unfortunately, this belief contradicts much of what our society worships and teaches. Look at Hollywood and think about celebrities. They often appear to be outwardly beautiful and successful, yet inwardly they have struggles just like everyone else. Often, the inner conflict they feel can be more intense than the average person because of the pressure to cover up how they truly feel inside, what’s actually going on, and worse, the pressure to act like they have it all together.

Maybe you, along with tens of millions of people, were enraptured by the hit TV show *Friends* that has been popular for the past two decades.

Maybe you even had at one time or another, the popular haircut, called “The Rachel,” that Jennifer Aniston made a household name.

Or maybe you were enthralled with the funny and quick witted “Friend” Chandler, played by Matthew Perry, who in real life

appeared to have everything going for him including youth, fame, money, and success. Yet despite his outward success, Matthew Perry shared, “I was on *Friends* from age 24 to 34 and was in the white hot flame of fame. From an outsiders perspective it would seem like I had it all. It was actually a very lonely time for me because I was suffering from alcoholism. I think I was pretty good at hiding it, but eventually people were aware.”²

And when singer and actress Demi Lovato spoke out about greatly admired actor Philip Seymour Hoffman’s accidental overdose and she shared information about her own cocaine addiction as well. “Being a former addict, I physically and emotionally couldn’t live without it—it was medicine to my pain,” Demi said.³

And just like celebrities, who have two opposing extremes, there can be a huge disparity between how un-aligned our inner experience is with what our outward life looks like. In other words, how we feel may not be congruent with what our appearance, wealth, or status may portray.

This was all too familiar for me. I went to extreme lengths to cover up the pain and shame I felt as a child. On the outside, we looked like a normal middle class family. In fact, we had a brand new custom-built house. One day, some kid from school said, “Oh, so you live in *that* house?” He said it in amazement and awe of how lucky he thought I was. Unfortunately, the exterior facade of the house was so incongruent with what we were all grappling with and tortured by inside: Alcoholism—a brutal experience that renders you powerless and has you pretend that everything is okay when it’s really a huge mess. What I truly wanted to say to that kid—more like scream at the top of my lungs—was the truth. I wanted to share the pain of what it was like to deal with (or more succinctly, suppress) the anger, shame, sadness, and disappointment I often felt.

I was so angry that I had to deal with attending AA meetings four nights a week as a family when all I wanted to do was be on the swings playing with my friends. However, through the secrets

alcoholism breeds, I learned to hide my feelings, hide the truth, and hide what was really going on.

This is not an ordinary self-help book. *Clarity* is a declaration and a revelation that we, as a society, have become focused on the wrong things, and many of us are suffering silently inside because of it. The world of social media has only exacerbated our celebration of the facade. You can paint a beautiful picture on Facebook and Instagram, a false life and persona, when what is really going on in your home or in your heart may be devastating. Social media has heightened our obsession with “keeping up with the Joneses” and appearing as though we have it all together. Although nowadays, it is more like “keeping up with the Kardashians.” Our focus is completely backwards, and we must start paying attention to what is happening. We as a society have been taught to value the exterior at any cost. To admire, emulate, and place the people who look the part of beautiful, successful, and happy on a pedestal and then try to live up to that illusion.

But the truth is that no matter how good things look on the outside, if we don’t feel happy and at peace on the inside, it will never bring us what we desire.

Maybe you can relate to feeling so hopeless in some part of your life that you quit, give up, or feel resigned to simply accept it as it is. Maybe you wouldn’t go to the extreme of taking your life or aren’t battling alcoholism or drug addiction, but you know how it feels to go to extreme lengths to hide something painful that is going on inside of you. Perhaps you escape it with occasional drug or alcohol use. Or you turn to TV, food, or focusing on other people’s lives instead of dealing with what’s going on within you.

All too often when we feel stuck in life, we tackle the problem from the outside. We start a new exercise program or diet, we start taking a class, or we look for a new job. But where we should really start is with what we’re feeling. With what’s going on inside.

We can only pretend for so long. And in order to move beyond the facade we have created, we have to learn to feel and acknowledge

what is truly going on. And that is why I'm writing this book. To share with you how to honor ALL of who you are, all that you've experienced and, most importantly, to not make yourself wrong for how you have responded to what has happened in your life. It is a natural and necessary reaction to respond emotionally to what we are facing in our life. It doesn't matter if you feel angry, sad, irritated, or depressed in response to what is happening. What matters is that you honor your feelings and allow yourself to have them.

Unfortunately, it took me twenty years to realize that the anger that I experienced as a child was a healthy emotion. The voice of my anger was simply trying to alert me and protect me.

In this book, I will guide you through the ten steps you need to take to start living your life from the inside out and will show you how to:

1. Identify what is holding you back from creating all that you desire in any part of your life.
2. Transform any negative emotion you may be feeling to a state of peace, grace, and compassion.
3. Stop transferring the pain or experiences from your past into your future and move beyond re-creating the same situations and circumstances in your life year after year
4. Stop allowing that negative voice within you to run the show and direct your life, telling you what you can and can't do.
5. Move beyond pointing the finger at the other person in your relationship and create true harmony within yourself and all your relationships.
6. Discover your default emotion and how it is secretly running your life and causing you to react inappropriately at inopportune times.

7. Give your emotions a voice and express them in a healthy way so they no longer control you or your life.
8. Truly let go of the past and embrace forgiveness instead of seeing it as something to be avoided at all costs.
9. Let go of the beliefs that are in opposition to what you truly want to create.
10. Make peace with the part of you that tells you, you're "not good enough," "don't have what it takes," or "are a failure."
11. And ultimately move beyond hiding from the past so you can use ALL of your experiences to create an amazing future, as well as powerfully give your unique contribution to the world.

How am I the perfect person to guide you through this process? Not only have I done the work myself to move beyond the pain of my past, but as a life coach for the past fifteen years, I have guided thousands of people, in private sessions, workshops, webinars, and speeches to let go of the pain of their past and create an inspiring and fulfilling future.

As shocking as it may seem, growing up in an alcoholic family was the perfect experience to guide me to the place where I could bring my greatest contribution to the world. Although it was difficult, challenging and extremely painful, on the flip side, the challenges of being in that very family, helped me develop some of the amazing parts of who I am. I became extremely intuitive, compassionate, and understanding of the pain other people are experiencing, and that is the reason that I can now hold a space for others to heal their past and create the life they truly want.

I traditionally work with the following four types of people (although I have worked with many others as well):

1. Adult children of alcoholics or adults who grew up with parents who were narcissists, depressed, or mentally ill.
2. The wife or husband who is hanging on and waiting to divorce their spouse when their youngest child graduates high school.
3. Women and mothers who have lost themselves and their identity and have given up on their hopes, desires and dreams.
4. Professionals that are ready to move to a career that is more aligned with who they are but aren't sure what this future position looks like.

In this book we will take on “whatever challenges or difficulties you are currently facing.” I will guide you to create an exciting future that is aligned with what is most important to you and will show you how to feel amazing about yourself and your life in the process. Whether you feel stuck creatively, are unable to maintain a healthy relationship, feel depressed and lethargic, or are a people pleaser who is tired of always being last on the list, we will powerfully explore how to move past the pain you are experiencing. We will look at whatever may be going on inside of you that isn't congruent with what you want to create in your life and, more important, how you want to feel.

You will learn how to gracefully deal with whatever is going on inside of you so that you can create your reality the way that you want it to be. I'm here to tell you that you no longer have to white knuckle it, muscle through the pain, or cover up what's truly going on. You have the power to make a huge shift in your life right now and to stop repeating the same experiences over and over again. Let's begin by getting your inner world—the way you think, feel and see—to perfectly align with what you want to create and have in your life. Freedom, internal harmony, and true success await you.

The Steps and the Exercises

Each chapter of this book is called a “step.” And each step includes both “Bite-size” exercises that can be accomplished in a short period of time and more in-depth exercises as well. There is also an exercise at the end of each step called a “process” that will require deeper reflection and will take a somewhat longer period of time to complete.

In addition, each step includes stories I call “client spotlights.” Each story highlights a specific issue that my clients face and how they addressed that challenge, moved beyond it and ultimately created what they desired in their life. I also share my own stories in what I call “My Spotlight,” in which I describe the challenges and conflicts in my life and how I resolved them.

This book is set up so you can complete all the steps and exercises in 10 weeks—if you choose to. However, given that we all have different methods of processing information and in addition have work, family, and other commitments, this time line is to be taken as a suggestion. I invite you to take as much time as you like for each step and not pressure yourself to move forward faster than you are able. Please enjoy a pace that is comfortable for you and that works for your personality and lifestyle. There is no rush. Transformation will come when you’re ready for it.

CLARITY

S T E P 1

Reconnect to Yourself

I've got it handled. Hey, listen world, I'M SUCCESSFUL! I scream success! I've got everything together! That is, UNTIL I walk into the familiar door of my home every night and actually feel what's really going on inside of me.

One of my clients shared that her evening ritual was comprised of "anything and everything I can use to escape my reality."

The minute I walk into the door and hear the garage close behind me, everything I was feeling, holding onto and pushing down during the day explodes like a volcano. As I drop my bag and sink into the couch, the thought of a glass of wine or a "guilty-pleasure" reality TV show to literally take me away to a different world is all that's on my mind.

Does this sound familiar? Maybe you seem to have it all together when you walk out your door in the morning, and yet in your deepest, most quiet moments, you know how untrue that really is. Maybe the truth is that you're struggling with something you feel like you have to cover up every day. Maybe this is something that happened a long time ago that you've convinced yourself doesn't really affect you anymore, or maybe it's a recent occurrence that you know is definitely playing with your emotions and dragging you down.

Perhaps you've been living this way since that traumatic experience five years ago, or maybe you've lived most of your life this way.

2 CLARITY

We all know what it feels like to cover up how we are feeling and put on a happy face. But for many of us, it has become our way of being.

I know all too well what it feels like to live this way, and that's why I'm here to share with you a radical new approach to living your life: From the Inside Out.

What exactly does it mean to “live from the inside out”? It means that how you feel inside is completely congruent with what you showcase to the world and that the beautiful smile that shines on your face in the morning when you walk out the door is actually how you feel inside. It means that your smile is authentic and isn't just something you plaster on your face every day to cover up the pain you feel inside. And it means that whatever pain you are feeling can be embraced and released so you don't have to continue to spend your life trying to cover it up.

As you read this chapter, ponder the following:

In your quiet moments, those moments when it's just *you*—maybe while you're driving, taking a shower, or late at night when everything has shut down for the day—does how you feel inside line up with what you showcase to the world? Is what you feel about who you are congruent with what you portray to everyone around you? Aren't you tired of continually managing and covering up what's truly going on within you?

You are not alone, and in the pages ahead, we are going to tackle this very issue and inner conflict that you are feeling. But for now, just sit with these questions as you begin to explore what it means to live your life from the inside out.

Upside Down

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

ALYSSA—A Mother Who Loses Emotional Control

Alyssa arrived on one of our coaching calls in a state of panic and proceeded to tell me the following story:

I was rushing around getting my son ready and asked him if he could get dressed, while I ran downstairs to find a few things we needed to take to school. We were running late, as we do most of the time. As I finally located the few things I needed, I quickly glanced at the clock. I immediately got frustrated, as it confirmed that we were late once again.

As I rushed up the stairs to get him, I found him playing; he hadn't even started getting ready yet. My mind was racing and I could feel that the emotions inside of me were about to erupt. I kept telling myself, relax, it's okay if we are late, stay calm. But there was a part of me that just didn't want to relax or stay calm and, unfortunately, that part of me won.

I picked up one of my son's toys and whipped it across the room, while screaming and yelling at him. He started to cry and looked back at me with shock, fear, and terror in his eyes. I just wanted to die. I couldn't believe I could do that to him. How could I have let this part of me take over? How could I have exploded like that on my sweet angel? He didn't deserve that. He didn't do anything to deserve that. I can still see him crying and how bad he felt about himself in that moment. I was so ashamed. I have to figure out a way to stop doing that.

I was so glad Alyssa had the courage to share that story with me. And we immediately began to dig deeper into what was going on in her life, what she was feeling, and what she had been trying to

4 CLARITY

avoid. It was clear that squashing her emotions was no longer working for her.

During our first few phone sessions, I guided Alyssa to identify the true cause of her anxiety and anger by calling up each emotion and connecting with the expression of that emotion. I shared with her that our emotions are our internal guidance system and each one holds useful insight. As she closed her eyes and connected with her feelings of anger and anxiety, she immediately realized that neither her anger nor anxiety had anything to do with her eight-year-old son. She was angry because she had let herself down. The more she allowed herself to feel the feelings that were present, she realized she was also frustrated and felt like her dreams and desires had all been pushed aside when she walked away from a lucrative and fulfilling financial career eight years ago to stay at home with her kids. It was tough for her to acknowledge this to herself and she shared how guilty she felt even bringing it up. After a few sessions of honoring her truth, connecting with her anger and anxiety, and working through the guilt she felt admitting how “unfulfilled and unaccomplished she had been feeling,” she breathed a huge sigh of relief. She was finally able to declare from a place of certainty and clarity that she wanted to go back to work part-time.

Fortunately for her, the company she worked for previously was looking for someone with Alyssa’s experience to do consulting work a few times a week. Alyssa shared with me how she felt about her new position: “The moment I sat down at my desk, the first day at the office, I got a cup of coffee and turned on my computer, exhaled deeply and felt pure bliss.” Alyssa’s new balance of motherhood and working part-time was the perfect blend of being present for her kids and doing what she desired in her own life. She was beyond elated to be working again and felt fulfilled from all the new and exciting challenges and opportunities that were emerging.

As she put it, she was “truly happy again.” And because she was happy again, she was able to bring those positive feelings to her kids.

Months later, we had a follow up phone session and I asked her how everything was going. She talked about how content and balanced she felt. She was more patient and loving with her kids, and even in the moments when things weren't lining up perfectly or the kids didn't listen, she was able to calmly direct them to do what was needed.

Insight About Alyssa

However, despite this success story, you may still be wondering how Alyssa could have reacted with such extreme anger toward her son. But I can tell you that in my coaching practice, I hear stories like this every day. I hear the stories of people who on the outside look like they have it all together, but behind closed doors, in the privacy of their own homes, they have unexpressed, suppressed emotions that are just waiting for a place to explode.

Unfortunately, most of us have been raised in a culture where expressing our feelings or being emotional is not always acceptable. We may be okay with having positive emotions, but we do not know how to properly express our negative ones. Our culture does not welcome uncomfortable feelings, expressions of true grief, sadness, despair, or anger, so we often cover up our real feelings by putting on a strong, pleasant facade. We have, unfortunately, been conditioned to believe that if we don't do this, we will be rejected or won't fit in. And because of this, we avoid these difficult emotions and, like Alyssa, try to push them away and ignore them. However, if we ignore them, if we don't allow them to move through us, they remain stuck within us and have nowhere to go. And worse, if they are not expressed and released, without knowing it, we create a ticking time bomb inside ourselves.

The good news is, however, that there is a solution. The solution is simple and is something within each one of us that we can access anytime we want to. Like Alyssa did in our session, one of the techniques you will learn is how to specifically identify what each one of your emotions is trying to express, where that emotion

is coming from, and why you are reacting to situations in a certain way. Through this inner reflection, you will understand the purpose and guidance of each emotion and will gain the clarity you need to move forward in your life in a way that feels good to you.

The Importance of Self-Expression

Imagine eating your favorite piece of cake. You love the way it tastes and thoroughly enjoy the experience of eating it, but soon after it enters your body, you put a block on allowing that piece of cake to be digested and released. (Okay, I realize that consciously we can't do this, but just stay with me for a moment.) Now imagine eating this piece of cake every day for a year. And at the end of the year hundreds of pieces of cake have gone undigested. Imagine how you would feel. Maybe bloated, pent up, stuck, uptight, or even angry.

This is what happens when we don't allow ourselves to feel, express, and release our emotions. Similar to the piece of cake, we take in an experience or circumstance in our life. And as a result of that experience, we have a feeling about it. That feeling comes forth regardless of whether we allow ourselves to acknowledge it or not. (Emotions are much like thoughts; they unconsciously arrive without our assistance or help.) So now this feeling is present in our body. And if we don't allow ourselves to process, digest, express, and release it, that emotion remains stuck within us.

After years and years of eating these pieces of cake and not allowing them to be digested, we become chock full of undigested emotions and past experiences that we don't understand, didn't fully process, and probably aren't at peace with. One of the many downsides to this is that there is no more room for cake. There is no more room to create something new in our lives because we are all filled up. We are filled up with the past, with memories we are trying to avoid, and with limitations that keep us from creating the future we truly desire.

Most of us have a tendency to suppress our emotions. But we don't realize how many issues we are creating for ourselves by

avoiding a simple emotion like sadness or anger. Our emotions are not the enemy; they are actually here for a reason. And they are helpful guides to let us know something is not quite right. If we can learn to feel our negative emotions, if we practice and get used to using our negative emotions as the insightful guides they are, these emotions can support us in understanding what changes we need to make to create an amazing life.

Throughout the next few chapters, you will learn ways to reconnect to yourself, honor what you are feeling, and identify more of what may be needed in your life. And in Step 6, you will learn a powerful technique to give your negative emotions a voice, called “The Emotional Expression Technique” which will help you move beyond any negative emotion and regain control over what you want to do in any moment of your life.

MY SPOTLIGHT

My “Not Good Enough” Self Is Born

I know all too well how difficult it is to feel and embrace negative emotions. Growing up in an alcoholic family created many experiences where negative emotions arose. In addition, I felt like I had to hide who I was and what was really going on. I masked our attendance of AA meetings four nights a week, at the age of eight, by telling my friends I couldn’t play outside because we went out to eat all the time. I often felt humiliated and small and was overwhelmed with how someone else’s problems could weigh so heavily on me. I was so burdened by it all that there were many times I desperately wanted to end it all—to make it all go away. I began to believe that I was the problem, that there was something wrong with me.

And I started to run away, piece by piece, one little part of me leaving at a time. Until I’d buried so much of myself that I really wasn’t even there anymore. Somehow I felt responsible; if I could just be different or better or more lovable, the drinking would stop and

8 CLARITY

everything would be okay. But it didn't stop and it wasn't okay for a very long time.

And throughout this internal struggle, my “not good enough” self was born. This part of me was born from the desperation of wanting to stop and somehow control the dysfunctional behavior of this alcoholic family. I decided it must be something I was or wasn't doing right. And that decision led me to determine that I wasn't lovable, there was something wrong with me, and I wasn't good enough. Because the pain of that was too much to bear, I set out on a path for decades to prove that “I was good enough” and everything would be okay.

In my attempt to prove I was “good enough” I did the following:

- Became an over-achiever
- Constantly pushed myself
- Set unrealistic expectations
- Strived for perfection
- Hid my imperfect self
- Had to be right and went to lengths to prove I was right
- Tried to get attention and approval
- Had to be the star of the show
- Covered up who I truly was
- Covered up what I was really feeling
- Felt bad about who I was
- Often tried to be someone else
- Always went above and beyond
- Gave more than I had to give
- Became the people pleaser
- Was always concerned with what others were thinking of me.

Everyone in a dysfunctional family suffers. Whether you are the person who has the issue or you are the one in relationship with that person, it doesn't matter. What matters most is being able to find yourself, your truth, and the journey back to who you are.

One day, during a long prom weekend, exhausted, strung out, and tired, I looked in the mirror, while everyone else was out in the living room being seventeen years old and partying without a care in the world, and something powerful came over me—my “good enough” self. She was finally here. I looked in the mirror and said out loud, “I’m too good for this. I can’t do this to myself anymore. I don’t deserve to treat myself like this.”

And I made a decision right then and there in that moment to quit. To stop using mood altering substances to cover up the pain of feeling “not good enough,” to stop trying to mask the pain of the part of me that was just trying to survive and make it through another day.

I was so glad to have found her . . . my good enough self. But I soon learned that my “not good enough self” was going to stick around. It wasn’t such an easy habit to kick.

And that is where my journey with Debbie Ford began. Debbie unconditionally loved me, guided me, and taught me how to own my shadows and be at peace with myself and my past. Debbie’s monumental work on the shadow taught me how to make peace with my “not good enough” self. And, most importantly, that there were many gifts that emerged from the part of me that didn’t feel good enough.

The ultimate gift of this part of me was forever life changing and self-affirming. Because of the great pain in feeling not good enough, this part of me drove me to seek answers. My “not good enough” self drove me to the path of striving to improve and find peace with who I am. This path has directly led me to the most extraordinary journey back to my most powerful and authentic self as well as to spending the past fifteen years helping others heal and find peace with all of who they are. My “not good enough” self led me here, to this book and to this process.

Bottled-Up Emotions

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Lydia—Exhausted and Depleted

When I first worked with Lydia, a forty-five-year-old attorney, she was exhausted and burnt out. She found herself getting angry often, had a short fuse, and felt cranky most of the time. This wasn't normal for her and she wanted to figure out what was happening and what she could do to feel happy again.

As we began to talk about what had been going on in her life, trying to identify where these negative feelings were coming from, she discovered that she was still angry about all the extra work she had to do over the past year with one of her children. Her teenage son had been acting out at school and doing drugs. Lydia had been in survival mode for the last twelve months, trying to get her son back on track and keep her family together in the midst of such trauma. She had overlooked the importance of really honoring her feelings and taking care of herself throughout the intense drama of the past year and was now feeling angry about how drained and empty the whole situation had left her.

Slowly, the more we talked, she began to discover that, for the entire year, she had almost completely disconnected from herself, her needs, and her feelings. She wasn't even aware that she had feelings other than the explosive anger that would erupt at moments, as she was just purely in survival mode. Everything had been about her son. The thoughts she had from morning to night were focused on what to do to help him, if it was her fault that his life turned out this way and how to respond appropriately to his latest debacle. He had been suspended from school for three days for fighting with another boy, and by this point she was consistently questioning herself and her ability to parent him effectively. As we began to delve more deeply into the anger she was experiencing, she started to become resistant to talking about it and, more importantly, feeling it.

Anger is a tough emotion for many of us to feel, and we've been conditioned to believe that anger is unacceptable. But remember, emotions simply come to us and we have to learn not to judge them. They are a natural part of being human. We have to learn how to feel them and release them. We may think we are doing ourselves a favor by ignoring our anger, but we aren't and unfortunately if we don't allow ourselves to feel angry and express it in a healthy way, it will erupt somewhere else down the road.

As I guided Lydia to connect with her anger, she began to see it as a tight black ball lodged in her abdomen.

"Now breathe into the anger and allow it to just be there, without trying to cover it up or make it go away," I said.

Lydia started to connect with the anger and allowed herself to feel it. Then I guided her to ask her anger, "What are you trying to communicate or express to me?" Even though she initially thought it was a bit crazy to talk to her anger, she followed my guidance and she received a profound message. Her anger told her that she was ignoring herself, diminishing her needs, trying to be Wonder Woman, and not allowing herself to receive love or care from herself or others. Instead, she was always taking care of everyone else.

As our session came to a close, I gave her some homework. Her work for the week was to express her anger in a healthy way. For the next seven days following her session, her assignment was to bring her anger on a daily walk and allow the anger to express what it needed to say. Yep, her work was to continue to talk to her anger and to see what it was trying to communicate with her.

Sure enough, when Lydia came to our phone session a week later, she couldn't stop talking about how much better and lighter she felt. She laughed as she told me about her walks with her anger. She said she actually felt like her anger wanted her to learn to pay more attention to herself and her needs. The anger told her to dedicate some time over the next few weeks to do whatever she wanted to do, especially to dedicate some time to doing things without any purpose attached, and to take time just for her. Lydia loved walks

on the beach, having tea with her girlfriends overlooking the ocean and reading romance novels in her garden on a sunny day. She committed to beginning each one of those over the next few weeks. As Lydia continued to acknowledge her feelings, and reconnected to her desires over the next few weeks, her mood shifted and she felt happier and more at peace.

Insight About Lydia

Our emotions are not the enemy. They are signals and they are trying to tell us something. As we can see from Lydia's experience, her intense focus on caring for her emotionally distraught child caused her to ignore her feelings and go into survival mode. All the emotions she experienced during that year remained in her body and psyche and needed to be dealt with and digested. Remember, just because we may avoid feeling what is within us doesn't mean it's not present or will go away on its own. Avoiding or denying our true feelings leaves them in our body and psyche to be dealt with later, and it often makes dealing with the emotions worse because they've had a long time to build up.

If you take a moment, you can probably relate to holding in your feelings and then having them erupt somewhere they didn't belong. Maybe you know what it feels like to blow up at your spouse once you arrive home after a difficult day at work. Because your home is a safe space, you felt like the emotions that you were holding in all day, finally had a place to be released. Or perhaps you are unable to trust a new relationship you are in because of all the times you've been hurt in the past. Maybe you lash out at your current love interest because you expect he is going to mistreat you just like all those others before him. Or maybe you have a tendency to drive aggressively, overreacting to other drivers on the road, a classic case of road rage. No matter the situation, we all know that uncontrollable experience of a feeling that seemingly comes out of nowhere and is flung into the wrong situation or onto the wrong person.

Instead, we have the choice to consciously address what energy or emotion may be lingering from a previous experience before we enter into a new one. This is the only way to regain control of ourselves and become the director of our actions and our life.

EXERCISE

Your Turn: Talk To Your Anger

1. Sit quietly and comfortably for a moment in a chair or in bed propped up by pillows. You can do this for as long or as little as you like. I suggest that you allow at least fifteen minutes to give yourself some time to settle in. Say, "Hello anger . . ."
2. Take a deep breath and notice if you feel this anger in your body as a pit in your stomach, heaviness in your chest, or a weight on your shoulders.
3. Breathe into the anger and allow it to be there without trying to cover it up or make it go away. Take three slow deep breaths (each breath to the count of five) and just allow yourself to truly "feel" this feeling of anger.
4. Ask your anger, "What are you trying to communicate or express to me?"
5. Finally, ask your anger for one thing you can do today to express this emotion in a healthy way. Maybe take it on a walk and listen to the voice of this anger or write out the expression of your anger through journaling.

Your Emotional Wrapping Paper

It helps to picture each one of your actions wrapped up in some emotion. Maybe the emotion is appropriate to the situation, or perhaps it is something you are carrying over from an hour ago, yesterday or even last year.

Now imagine giving someone the gift of your time, and let's pretend that your "time" could be wrapped up in a box. See yourself meeting up with your friend for lunch. Imagine that in your hands you have your box of "time," and it has been beautifully wrapped with the energy of "love." See what this box looks like. Maybe it is wrapped in an exquisitely beautiful gold wrapping paper and has the most pristine white ribbon on top. When you give this gift of your time wrapped this way, you feel loving and the person who receives it feels loved.

Now imagine you show up to give the same gift of time, and instead of this beautifully wrapped box, your box is wrapped in black and red tattered wrapping paper that has tears and scratches all over it and has been so damaged that the box is now mangled. You are giving the same gift of your time, but the emotion you are sharing now may be anger or resentment. You feel angry and resentful as you give your time and the person receiving it feels that same anger and resentment you are sharing.

Although this is an imaginary scenario, it is helpful to visualize what you are wrapping your daily life and actions in. The emotion that you bring to each action pre-determines what will occur as a result. It's not just what we do that matters; it's the energy we bring to it that has much more of an impact on ourselves, others, and the end result. This is why it is so worth your time and energy to examine your emotions and clearly identify what they are here to teach you. When you can do that, you are able to receive the information you need and allow that emotion to move through you. And then you are free to move onto a new experience.

MY SPOTLIGHT

A Box of Love and Divine Validation

This past year on Mother's Day, my eight-year-old daughter gave me a small box that looked very similar to the one wrapped in love I was envisioning when I created and wrote the "Wrapping Paper" story that you just read. Keep in mind, that I had never heard the poem that was on this box before I wrote that story. The box she gave me had this beautiful silver pristine wrapping paper with hearts on it and was wrapped with a beautiful silver bow on top. It was the size of a ring box and attached to the bow was this letter:

*This is a very special gift
that you can never see,
The reason it is special is
it's just for you from me.
Whenever you are lonely or feeling a bit blue,
you can hold this gift and know that I'm thinking of you.
You never can unwrap it,
please leave the ribbon tied
Just hold the box close to your heart for
it's filled with love inside.*

And when she gave it to me on Mother's Day, I had tears streaming down my face and could hardly read through it to the end as I was so choked up. It was so touching and memorable, of course, because it was coming from my sweet, precious daughter. And in addition, it was divine validation, because in my hands, I had received something that was the physical form of a story I had created and written two years prior to my daughter handing me this gift.

Emotional Freedom

In order to be truly free to create something new in our life, we must first look within to see what lingering emotions need to be digested. Then, we need to learn how to feel our emotions and not suppress them. We can absolutely learn how to do this by allowing our emotions to be as they are in the moment, so they don't build up and cause us pain in the future. And once we learn to identify what pain or issue is rearing its ugly head, we can move past repeating the same situation or pattern over and over again and create the future we truly desire.

This book will help you do just that. It is a ten-step process to living from the inside out. We live in a constantly moving, changing, distraction-oriented society. When is the last time you sat down and actually paid attention to how you were feeling? Are you happy? Has your life turned out the way you wanted? Are there areas where you are dissatisfied? Do you want to do something about that?

You may not know the answers to all of these questions, and that's okay. The work in this book will help you rebuild your life from the inside out. That means you are going to tackle what's currently going on within you. Throughout the steps and exercises, you will become reconnected to yourself and to the part of you that knows what you actually want and need to be happy, fulfilled, and to feel truly alive.

As you have already explored, learning to feel is one of the ways you can reconnect to yourself. Another powerful way to reconnect is through silence, solitude, or stillness of any kind. The noise in our lives, in our thoughts, in our home, and on TV keeps us disconnected from ourselves. The busier we are and the more we jam pack into our schedule and in our lives, the more disconnected we often become. Connecting to a place where we are able to just sit and be with whatever we are feeling is a necessary practice to cultivate if we want to truly be at peace in our life. Think about this. How often do you just sit and do nothing? Do you specifically schedule in quiet time for

yourself on a daily walk or with a cup of tea, gazing out the window? Or are you and your needs an afterthought?

I have found it to be a necessary practice to simply sit quietly and allow myself to reflect on whatever is taking place in my life on any given day. Sometimes I'll do this for twenty minutes, and at other times, I will take a quick five-minute block of time to regroup between projects or calls. It's a time to become aware of where I am and how I am feeling about whatever happened that day.

Some people find it useful to journal the thoughts and feelings that are coming forth. I prefer to allow this time to just be a free space of time where I don't have to write or do anything. It can be simply a time to allow everything to download and move through me instead of having another "to do," such as journaling. However, whatever feels right to you, is vital for you to do. Taking time each day to identify how you are doing and how you are feeling during this time of inner reflection is essential to maintaining this deep connection with yourself on a long-term basis.

As you take more time for this reconnection and begin to practice "feeling" your emotions instead of pushing them aside, you may feel that you have more control over identifying what is going on in your life and why you actually feel the way you do. Identifying your emotions and allowing yourself to feel them as they are is an essential step in the healing process. As we feel our emotions and allow them to be as they are, they can easily move through us and be released.

When we suppress our emotions and don't see the wisdom or guidance in them, we become stuck right where we are, preventing growth and healing. And more often than not, the result of avoiding our feelings and what is truly going on in our life causes more issues. In the process, we create more drama and chaos in our lives, because we are transferring our negative emotions to places, people, or situations where they don't belong. The next chapter will help you identify how that may be happening for you.

Take some time right now to reconnect to yourself and complete the exercises at the end of this chapter. Your reconnection to yourself

will ensure your ability to feel your emotions and open up to the guidance they are here to give you. And, ultimately, it will allow you to feel more connected and at peace.

Bite-Size Exercise



Take a moment right now to choose something you enjoy that would help you reconnect to yourself over the next few days. Maybe it's yoga, a quiet walk of solitude, sitting in nature, meditating, or just gazing out the window with a cup of tea. Schedule it in your calendar now and give yourself this gift of reconnection.

Want More? Listen as I guide you through the exercise below on audio. Find the “Reconnection” audio at www.dianealtomare.com/Reconnection

THE RECONNECTION PROCESS

Find a time within the next few days to dedicate ten minutes to the following exercise. Turn off your phone, go somewhere comfortable, and allow yourself to focus on reconnecting with yourself.

1. Take a deep breath and close your eyes, and as you do, focus your energy on what is going on within you.
2. As you take another deep breath, notice where in your body your breath is most present. Do you feel it grounded low in your abdomen or is it higher in your chest? Just notice where in your body, you feel your energy and breath.

3. Watch your breath and notice that with your focus and attention on your breath, you can gently move your breath two inches behind your navel to ground your breath in your abdomen. Grounding your breath helps you to get into deeper connection with yourself.
4. As you allow yourself to get into this deeper connection, just breathe into this present moment, as it is.
5. On your next breath, take a moment to observe anything that is getting in the way of you being totally connected to your breath. Maybe your thoughts are taking you away from focusing on your breath or maybe there is an emotion present that is keeping you from being connected to both your breath and yourself.
6. For a moment, follow that thought or emotion. Notice where it is taking you and just go with it. Maybe it is connecting you with an experience from earlier today or something in the past that you don't feel good about.
7. Allow yourself to breathe into the emotion or experience and notice what that feels like in your body. Do you feel tightness in your chest? A lump in your throat? Maybe there is sadness in your heart. Take some time to breathe deeply into whatever area that emotion or experience is connected to. And just allow it to be there.
8. Take a deep breath and ask this emotion for guidance. Breathe into the part of your body where you feel this emotion and ask, "What are you (the emotion) trying to express?" "What are you trying to communicate to me?" Maybe your anger is here to let you know a boundary has

been crossed. Or your guilt is letting you know that you don't feel good about something that has happened. Take as long as you need to deeply connect with this emotion and listen for the wisdom this emotion has for you.

9. On your next breath, ask this emotion to give you a healthy way to express it. What could you do over the next few days to give this emotion a healthy expression? Do you need to journal about how you are feeling? Maybe you need to take this anger kickboxing, take your grief to yoga, or your anxiety on a walk. Trust the answer you are receiving and schedule it in your calendar.

S T E P 2

Understand What's Really Going On

Imagine walking into your favorite coffee shop to meet one of your friends, and as you sit down, you lift a large heavy sack over your shoulder and fling it onto the table. This sack is old, extremely worn, and outdated. When your friend arrives, she slumps into the chair next to you and her oversized, antiquated bag lands at her feet. As you both share the events of your week, you begin to take things out of your bag and give them to each other. You begin to “transfer” your fears, worries, concerns, and limitations from the past into your current experience. Without even noticing, you both transfer all of this “baggage” into your conversation.

Your conversation sounds something like this: “I think my husband is cheating,” you say. Although you aren’t certain he’s having an affair, you delve into a long explanation about the signs you’ve seen and how you feel: “I’m not sure he is, but something just doesn’t feel right. He’s just not interested in anything I say anymore, and he’s making excuses to stay out after work a lot lately, and I noticed that he’s changed the password on his phone.”

Being both empathetic and compassionate, your friend wants to be able to relate to your experience and share her “wisdom” with you. So she reaches into her bag of relationships, as coincidentally she has had this exact experience and knows what it feels like. She takes it out of her bag and shares her wound with you, “Oh Gina, you better

be careful. I went through that and it was awful! That's exactly how I found out, too—I saw her name on his phone.”

Now, remember, because of the specific experience she had in the past, your friend is assuming that your husband is definitely being unfaithful and that you're going to experience the exact same pain and hurt she did. In this moment, her past, her wounds, and her limitations are being transferred to you. And at the same time, this conversation may be bringing up the unresolved feelings she has about her past relationship. So when she talks to you about your experience, she doesn't have the ability to see your situation differently from hers. In this very moment, her past may cloud your future, if you are unaware of what is taking place.

What is actually happening is a form of transference, which was first described by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and is the basis of what we will be exploring in this chapter. Transference is simply the continuation of some way of being from our past, often from our childhood relationships, into our current situation and relationships. It is literally the way we transfer the past into our current experiences month after month and year after year.

Conversations like this happen every day. We sit down with our friend for a cup of tea and she casually shares something she's struggling with. Then without thinking, we dive into our own expertise to offer advice, comfort, and support. Although we may mean well, if we haven't fully healed from something that wounded us in the past, we won't be able to view her situation with clear eyes. Whatever emotional wounds we have that aren't healed skew the way we see and interpret new situations. They are literally the lens through which we view what is possible. The end result of this is that we transfer our wounds and fears onto other people without even noticing what's going on.

Transference Can Limit Our Possibilities

Transference appeared in the coffee shop story in two ways: First, your friend transferred her unresolved hurt, wounds, and feelings from the breakup of her marriage to the way she interpreted your relationship issues. Second, she allowed her feelings around being abandoned by her ex-husband and her difficulty trusting others to ultimately affect the advice she gave you.

The obvious problem with this friend-to-friend exchange and transference, in general, is that it has the potential to limit our possibilities. In order to follow our own path and grow into who we are meant to be, it is essential to acknowledge that we each have our own journey. Your reasons for being in your relationship, as well as the lessons you need to learn, will be different than hers, even if they have some similarities. The one glaring difference, however, is that you have to work through your relationship and it has nothing to do with her past, what she experienced, or how her marriage ended.

Think about all the times that you sit down with this friend or she sits down with you. You start a somewhat innocent conversation about what's happening in your life. And before long, the stories of the past are being transferred back and forth. And worse, the limitations from the past are being projected into the future through a casual conversation, just like this one.

As I discussed in Step 1, our inability to feel and express our emotions keeps us from being open to new experiences and possibilities for our life. Fortunately, by using the tools from Step 1, you can now begin to more powerfully honor and embrace those difficult emotions so that you can learn from them and move on. However, there is still work to do with the experiences from the past that are holding us back from what we desire. Those unhealed wounds often reappear when we encounter an experience that feels similar to something that occurred in the past.

Avoiding or denying the emotions that are connected with that past event prevents us from seeing ourselves and what we are

currently experiencing in the proper light. Those previous experiences are still with us and, worse, are tainting our ability to embrace the uniqueness of what is taking place now. For example, when your friend used her painful experience as a point of reference, she potentially changed the way you viewed the challenge with your husband. We do this to ourselves all the time in different ways without recognizing that it's happening. You now have the opportunity to move beyond limiting yourself in this way.

The Transference Box

Remember the Emotional Wrapping Paper Story from Step 1? Just as we transfer our emotions and energy to each other, we also transfer our past into our future through a similar transferring of energy. We are going to call this "The Transference Box."

You can use the visual of this "Transference Box" to identify what you may be transferring from the way you feel about yourself to the person you are sitting across from, what you are transferring from the relationship you had with your mother or father to your spouse or what beliefs you are transferring from previous generations to future ones.

Just imagine that when you were young that box was tinier than a small ring box and wasn't filled up with much.

And then year after year, the situations and experiences that you didn't know how to process, resolve or deal with, became tucked away in this box.

As you have experienced life and made decisions about who you are and what you can and can't do, you have added issues, beliefs, and limits on yourself and have also added them to this box. That small tiny ring box may now be the size of an overstuffed piece of luggage ripping at the seams and lugging within it the weight of your past.

By consciously choosing to become aware of what's in this transference box, you can regain control over your life and begin to make conscious decisions about what you actually want to bring into

your current circumstances and what you are ready to let go of and move beyond.

One of my private clients recently shared with me that she never knew all of this stuff was holding her back until she began her coaching sessions. She was amazed at how many unresolved emotions were lingering from what happened to her several years ago. And she shared that she was feeling like a totally different person now that she had learned how to truly embrace those feelings and let them go.

You too, can consciously sift through that box and decide what you are ready to let go of and what contents are worthy of keeping.

This transference box, filled up with your memories, experiences and unresolved issues may still be closed after forty years. Maybe you haven't opened it up to sift through it and decide what serves you and what you want to let go of. Maybe you feel like you are still living within the confines of that filled up, overflowing box and the restrictions of the past. And maybe you are transferring the negative experiences in there to your adult relationships and experiences. It's just what organically happens. You become a combination of all the experiences that you've had, both good and bad, until you consciously work through them, process what has happened and begin to make different choices.

In order to really grow and evolve into who you are meant to be today and in the future, you will want to open up that box and allow yourself the freedom to move beyond the confines of the contents of that box and expand into a whole new evolution of yourself.

Reactions From the Past

The second step in the process of living from the inside out is to identify what's *really* going on and understand what experience from your past is causing you to react, respond, or act in ways that don't serve you. After reading this step, you will understand how you are transferring the past into your present experience and relationships. You will also see why we as human beings recreate the same situations

and circumstances in our lives year after year, even though we so desperately want to create something different. And, most importantly, you will learn to identify what you need to do to make peace with and heal from the negative experiences of the past so you can create what you truly desire.

I would like to invite you to explore a whole new possibility for yourself. Examining your past doesn't have to be an excruciating or difficult experience. Yes, that's right—I said it. The process of exploring unresolved events from your past can actually be eye opening, freeing, and even exciting at moments. How is this possible? By realizing that it's often more difficult to carry these ineffective or destructive ways of being around year after year, desperately wanting something different and not being able to create it.

Even so, you may still feel uneasy about delving into your past. I understand why. Many times, I hear people say, "I don't want to go back there or deal with what happened that long ago." But it is essential to understand how we are continuing patterns and ways of being in our life that we learned early on because we can't change what we don't acknowledge. We may think we are furious with our spouse and try to fix our marriage or relationship, but often this very relationship is mirroring a relationship we had in childhood with a parent or sibling.

The true healing, then, is in the recognizing and making peace with the "original" relationship that caused us pain. Fortunately, we can do this without the other person being involved. And once we do, we can then make peace with our current circumstances and have the freedom to make the changes we desire.