

How to
Soar with a
Broken Wing

*Finding Tiny Moments of
Joy Every Day*

Introduction



My Journey - Your Invitation

My life began behind the backdrop of the rolling green farms of the idyllic Dutch country that populated so much of southeastern Pennsylvania. To see Amish families bringing fresh vegetables to market was a very common occurrence, and my dad always took such care to avoid driving our big Pontiac (and it was always a Pontiac) too close to the lumbering horse and buggies that would slowly make their way along the edge of the road. We lived in a very small city in the middle of this farmland, but it was a friendly, slow-paced life filled with dozens of cousins and friends, hours of playing outdoors, and days of school and church and family gathering. And always simple family meals made from food fresh from the Farmer's Markets. A tiny moment of joy each day.

The truth is, I did have a special upbringing.

I had a mother and a father who worked together as a true team. They were quiet people, second-generation Americans, who both worked hard but never allowed themselves to become dominated by the stresses of their work. They were the helpers at church and school. They made time each day for family and for each other.

I was an only child, but I never felt lonely with the tribe of twenty-some cousins always around, the playmates everywhere, and the scores of aunts and uncles in the neighborhood. We sat on porches

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or on the stoops and watched everyone walk by. That was enough for us. We were entertained. We were happy.

With my parents, there were no gender roles assigned, no war of the sexes, no bitter arguments and resentments, just a happy and productive partnership and a warm and loving environment.

I remember my mother and father dancing to the Big Band tunes on the radio. Dancing in the kitchen. Dancing in the living room. Dancing in the dining room. Every day. Their tiny moments of joy.

I remember joining in with them sometimes. I remember laughing.

I remember trips across the country in my father's beloved Pontiac. I remember Broadway plays in New York City. I remember the overflowing excitement of getting on the train (when they were still running) to go on a shopping trip to the big Wanamakers in Philadelphia. As a little girl, I would look up with wonder, and ride the wood-paneled elevators as the operator asked politely if I would like to go to the floor with the girl's dresses. You bet I did!

I remember my many cousins running about and playing with me daily. We would climb trees, draw hop scotch in the alley, play hide and seek until it got dark or we were called in for dinner. One would have never known that I was an only child.

I remember working diligently at school and I remember the community we formed together at church. Especially during Lent, when services would go on so long that we would come out with our knees red. That had a way of bringing people together.

I remember heavenly meals and learning about the value of good, nourishing food early on. I would watch as grapes were loaded straight off the curb in the fall for wine-making, and as scores of mouth-watering foods were unloaded at the local Farmer's Market where the Amish would cart only their freshest vegetables,

meats, and perfectly baked sticky buns. It was the original farm to table.

I remember streets that were safe enough to play in until sundown when we could race home for a dinner of spaghetti and meatballs, or roast beef with gravy and mounds of whipped potatoes. I remember peaceful nights fueled by the kind of beautiful tiredness that can only come after long days of playing outside and catching lightning bugs in a glass jar—always making sure we punched holes in the lid so they could breathe. They lit our small hands and we were in wonder.

Life was its own kind of heaven.

As I look back at it now, it sure seems like it was all too good to be true. After a life of coaching women through harrowing experiences and hearing story after story of painful childhoods, horrific abuse, and negligent parenting, how could I be so different? Did I just draw some magic lot in life? Was this real?

The truth is, it was real. But it wouldn't be my life forever. My struggles and pain arrived later. We all take our turn—our moments of joy, our moments of sorrow. But somehow, what we learn about years of living and reliving the cycle is that the joy is there again if we only look for it.

In our world today, millions of women are wandering through life plagued by disappointments, heartaches, and a sense of impending dread that they have missed the boat on their great adventure and now it's too late to hop aboard. So many are saddled with deep pains as they are burdened by a crushing sense that their lives are not their own—their boat strayed off course and now they simply do not know where they are or where they are going.

Despite my beautiful childhood, my loving parents, and all the blessings this world has given me, I too found myself in the middle

chapters of my life burdened by a continuous feeling that my destiny was not my own. Events happened in my life that made me feel as if I were spiraling out of control, that I perhaps was paying back for that beautiful childhood with some true tragedies in the later portion of my adult life. Some days I carried with me a sense that there were strong powers at work making it impossible for me to reshape my destiny and manifest the life I wanted. But I am learning now that all of these powers and messages are here for me to learn and thrive and grow.

I now know that these experiences were given to me for a reason, which I am still to this day uncovering. I know that by dedicating my days to making conscious choices, I have started to overcome, inch by inch, the disappointments and struggles of my life and understand that we get to have a cycle of Life Death Life again, without which, we would be flat and unfulfilled. I am learning to embrace change and learn from it, always reminding myself that happiness and sorrow will come and go.

“Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.

Just keep going. No feeling is final.”

—Rainer Maria Rilke

I wish I could tell you that throughout my journey I found what I was seeking, that I suddenly became “whole.” But I have embraced that it is the journey, and not just the goal, where life truly unfolds and presents us with unlimited gifts. What I can say is that I am working on myself every day. That joy has returned, sometimes in smaller bites. But I can breathe and smile again, and I feel blessed each day.

And you are brilliantly capable of doing the same.

Struggles, big ones and small ones, will always come and go. They are a part of the natural rhythm of our lives. We fluctuate between comedy and tragedy, with the majority of life feeling like it's landing in some messy place in between.

But we are equipped with choices. There will always be choices. And there will always be a way out of our struggles. Pain will always be present too, but that pain does not have to define us.

As we grow, we learn to honor our pain, our sorrows, our grief, and our loss. We train ourselves to stay with these sensations, to invite them into our homes and inevitably transcend them. These emotional cuts and bruises are telling us a story, and it's a very important one.

They tell us why we are here and what we are supposed to be. They tell us that we deserve change and we deserve happiness. They tell us that our life, when painted by courageous choices that are truly awake, can belong to us. We are in control of who we are, what we feel, and how we decide to address our pain.

But most important of all, our pain shows us that we have a deep reservoir of resilience within ourselves. Sometimes we may need some support, a guide to bring out that well, but it is within each and every one of us. I know it is. I know it in every fiber of my being.

We want the daily existence of our lives to be easy, but that is not how we learn and grow. Before we find a sense of peace, we have to accept and rise above some dark and difficult truths. We have to work on “letting go,” so that we may open up room for the good things to come in.

There is a reverse side of this pain and difficulty. An easy choice, one that we can make with so much simplicity. Every day, thousands of tiny moments of joy are swirling around us.

Small blessings are everywhere, populating our world and waiting to be captured. It is up to us to see them.

I was taught this lesson growing up; it was almost encoded into my DNA. It was fundamental to my upbringing and the world that made me the woman I am today. It just took me time to cut through

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the levels of pain and disappointments that were clouding my ability to see the joy surrounding me. But it was always there.

As a modern woman, you are living in a world with rules and systems that are designed to hold you down, that want to see you ignored and want to keep things exactly the way they are now.

You will be spoken over; you will be belittled.

You will be told to live your life within the confines of a small bubble that you may never exceed the bounds of.

You will be called a little girl.

You will be called a bitch or worse.

You also may be called an old lady.

You will be asked to play your life on the small screen.

But you are not here to listen to all of that.

You cannot let other people define you.

You can and you must live your life large. That is how you will allow yourself to once again see the joy around you.

We are a beautiful tribe of troublemakers.

We are creative, we are chaotic, and we have an endless store of potential that is screaming to be released. The world is afraid of that release. But for you to be happy, you must jump in and make trouble; be what your heart tells you to be and do.

And I am here to tell you that with our strongest inner conviction, we must trust in God, in a Universal Spirit, with a relentless focus on joy centered around becoming our best every day. Only then can we change our lives and the lives of others.

To be honest with you, I am still on my path toward getting to this place of joy and trust. I have come to a point in my life where I can finally say that I am living my life more fully, more awake, and in harmony with my pain and loss. But it is a journey I know will never end. It is a process that gets me a little closer each day to finding peace. And the paradox of it all is, by accepting that we will never reach the end of this journey, true peace arrives.

So, I want to share with you my story so far. I want you to come with me on a journey of self-discovery, of pain and loss, and of unbreakable spirit so that you may find your own power within yourself and create the life that you deserve. My journey is only one amongst a large web of stories of women finding themselves amongst the pains and sorrows of our modern life.

What we all share in common is that along the way, we have all taken our own path to discovering and realizing these tiny moments of joy. And they are there waiting for you as well.

I invite you now to share in my journey so that you may find little pieces of wisdom and learning to guide you along the way to your new path to joy. As you travel, I hope these stories will help you realize the most important message of all: you are not alone. There is a tribe of beautiful women all around, including myself, to support and inspire you at every turn of the road.

In this book, after each chapter, I have included Take Time Now to Reflect, because this book is for you—to reflect, to learn to laugh, to grow in your own unique and wonderful way. You may not be able to answer all the questions at this point. If you can't, just jot down the first thing you feel. I didn't say think—I said feel. Feelings are what truly speak to us and reflect what our heart wants us to hear.

Without further ado, let's begin.

Chapter 1



Playing Small

One day while reading *Daring Greatly How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* by one of my favorite authors, Brené Brown, I remembered being told about how children have to be quiet. Brené talks about the issue of women still staying “small, sweet, quiet, and modest,” even though people believe it is no longer an issue. Many times, it is still here with us when women do speak up.

I remember how this started in my life. I can hear the usual refrain now, and perhaps you can as well.

“Children are meant to be seen and not heard.”

If you were of a certain age, this was not a phrase; it was a gospel. And for me, this clear expectation quickly transformed into hard lessons. Very hard lessons.

In my town, most people knew their place. We had a very structured society. And I would not say that these rules were strictly enforced. There was no reason for them to be, because everyone naturally followed them.

This is simply what people did; this is how we behaved and how we lived. There was no back talking, there was no sass, there was no questioning of authority. And this way of life did not bother me

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at the time of my childhood. It was a source of comfort, a safe way of being. Who really wanted to color outside the lines? The picture was far prettier if we stayed within our structured bounds.

And the result of all this? Looking back, I ended up living a small life.

To be clear, I lived a good life, a peaceful life, and a life full of support and love. But it was a small life in the sense that I was a follower rather than a designer of my own future.

And the humor of it all is, when I was young, this life seemed great. It was perfect for me at the time.

But one day, I had to grow up. And what do you think I wanted?

I wanted a bigger life. A life where I was the writer of my own destiny, where my failures were squarely mine but so were my successes, my heartbreaks, my loves, and my joys.

As I matured and moved through my college career and early jobs, the tension between my small life and my desire for a larger one became an almost insurmountable conflict for me. In many ways, I thought the same ways as I did as a child; I kept my head down, I got the work done, and I didn't ask many questions. I was a good girl.

And all along, I thought this was the right way. If I just stayed dedicated to the path I was on, somebody was bound to see all this diligence and hard work, right? I turned in every paper on time, expecting a cookie in return. Soon enough, I found there was not always going to be a cookie.

Looking back on my life, I see that this pattern of behavior was holding me back from vast potential. I had been trained from an early age to listen and to do. I was never taught to open up and create.

But I would soon learn creation is where our power lives.

We are not mindless robots; we are not simply obedient doers. We are makers. The process of creation is a spiritual process. And it is within this process where our power truly rests. Unfortunately, becoming a “maker” or a “creative” is something that has been discouraged for us as women for such a long time. It’s too dangerous to have women running around with all that creativity. What if they broke down the established order? What if everything changed? What if there was chaos?

But chaos, I have learned after a lifetime of spiritual growth, is a beautiful thing. Chaos is the source of our power. It is something we must embrace if we want to grow and learn. Chaos is the heartbeat of creativity, and I encourage you now—no matter what age you are—to bring chaos into your life. It is the first step to building that big life you’ve always dreamed of.

Structure keeps us docile. It keeps us small and it keeps us slaving away, so we don’t have the time or the energy to ever question our place in the world. Chaos, on the other hand, lets us live freely. It lets us embrace our naturally inquisitive mind; it builds roads to new potential; it fills us with a beautiful, peaceful power that once released can never be squashed again.

And if you want to stop living a small life, my first piece of advice is paradoxically to start small. What if you left your desk messy today? What if the clutter was no longer a problem, but a source of chaos and creativity? What if it was inspiration?

What would happen if you chose mindfully to no longer remain quiet, to ignore the household chores and the expectations to stay on the hamster wheel of doing more, more, more. What if you didn’t make the bed every day? What if you had two pieces of chocolate because that’s what you really, honestly wanted? Would the world burn down? Would society fall apart?

I hardly think so!

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Throughout my time as a coach, I have worked with countless women CEOs, entrepreneurs, artists, and executives who all seem to struggle with one shared constraint: no matter how successful they have become, they still find themselves constantly questioning their skills, their worth, and their own personal identity.

I have found over time that the belief these women hold for themselves is so fragile that a simple flick of my finger could topple it over.

I specifically remember one client, a well-renowned and successful vice president of a major global company. At first glance, she seemed like she was sitting on the top of the world.

But there was a darker underside to her success.

In work meetings, she had a reputation for wearing high-heel shoes. During the heat of the discussion, she would quietly smile, look at you, and then throw those high heels against the wall—all to make a point. Colleagues and employees were terrified of her; business associates would approach her with extreme caution. Her leadership at this point came not from confidence but from control.

Eventually, we were able to connect during our sessions and make a breakthrough, mostly because I believe she did not view me as a threat to her power in the way she viewed many of her colleagues and fellow executives. She admitted to me that she believed this behavior stemmed from deep doubts hidden inside her. Despite the insurmountable level of control she displayed, she found herself riddled with insecurity and fear.

I found myself thinking, if a woman as powerful as her was plagued by so many doubts, how many other women out there are suffering just as silently? Women who may not be as successful, recognized, or articulate as this client.

I began to see that this was a larger problem for women, an infra-structural problem. No matter how high up the ladder we may ascend, self-doubt surrounds us everywhere. It holds us back from our potential, even when at first glance it may seem as if we are soaring. In reality, we are weighing ourselves down. We are letting the world and its expectations halt us from discovering our true potential. And worst of all, we are letting others force us into a life lived small.

We have been diligently, specifically, and consistently trained to live a small life. Somewhere along each of our paths, we became susceptible to the whims of the world and allowed ourselves to accept that smallness. And as time went on, that belief festered inside of us, cementing into something permanent and stopping us from realizing the true extent of our potential.

As a result, our creativity has consequently gone dormant, and our power has shriveled into a shell of itself. Our sense of adventure has become neutralized and our tolerance of risk has become greatly reduced. We no longer take chances on who we could one day become. And so, our potential shrinks and the possibilities of our life close. Stepping out of our comfort zone now equates to a feeling of pain, and we find ourselves trapped.

However, we are not stuck forever inside this future of living small. We can and must expand. And it's easier than you would think.

There is a very famous quote from Marianne Williamson in *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of "A Course in Miracles"* that is so profound. She asks, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" And this is a great question. According to Marianne, we cannot afford to be less than that! We are here to shine our brightest light on others, not our dimmest.

When we give ourselves the permission to slowly begin opening back up and shining our light again, we allow our creativity to take

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over. The effect will eventually begin compounding upon itself. The smallest taste of creativity and chaos will begin to spread...if you allow it.

Before you know it, your small doses of creativity will, step by step and bite by bite, turn into large storms of inspiration and power. You will find yourself enveloped by grand ideas and blessed with the energy and the drive to turn those grand ideas into grand practices. And before long, those grand practices will morph and cement into a grand life.

Step by step, you will turn a small life into a large life. And no one will be able to stop you.

How to Grab Tiny Moments of Joy

I have learned that there are a few powerful things you can do to make sure you will grab those moments you need—the joy that is there for you. There are small things you can do every day that will help you acknowledge what is missing and help you build that fuller, bigger life you truly want.

- **Be aware of how you are *feeling*.** Is your energy low? Are you frustrated or snapping at others? Are you feeling taken for granted? Or any one of a hundred other emotions that are antithetical to your happy place and your best self? Awareness is the first step to beginning to take action.
- **Take three deep breaths.** This is a mandatory part for you to begin to find out what is not working. Close your eyes, step back, and slow down.
- **Have an honest conversation with yourself** about what is going on. Write it down in a journal, or keep an online journal.
- What are you doing that is putting you in a space that isn't ideal?

- What are you doing that brings a smile to your face?

Once you have these answers, you will start to see a pattern. For example, if you are remote working and have seven hours of zoom calls, ask yourself at the end of the day, do you feel productive or do you feel depleted? Make notes. Be introspective and honest about what moments brought a smile to your face! Keep taking notes and you will see the patterns I mentioned before.

If you are feeling depleted, indulge in a quick pick-me up. Take a walk around the block or in the park. Listen to the birds sing. This will do wonders for your mood, temperament, and energy.

Chapter 1 Summary

The lesson of “children should be seen and not heard” has a negative effect on women as they enter adulthood. The adage teaches us to behave small, to live small...to be small.

This thought pattern will hold us back from living big and achieving the aspects of life we want most of all.

We are makers, not obedient robots. Society sees women taking hold of their creativity as a threat. But our creativity is a blessing to the world and accepting this is a necessary step to living large.

- Creativity is chaos, and chaos can be a beautiful thing. It can be a source of power and the antidote to an overly structured life that will only hold us down and keep us playing small.
- Living large paradoxically begins by starting small. What if I left my desk messy today? What if I ignore the household chores for a little while longer and write another chapter of my book? These small decisions work together to create a life lived large.

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- No matter how high up the ladder we climb, due to our up bringing, self-doubt will always find a way to creep in and stop women from reaching their full potential.
- Small doses of creativity will transform over time into large storms of inspiration and power.

Take Time Now to Reflect

1. When were the times in your life when you felt you played small?
2. Why do you think that happened?
3. Do you know what you need to stop playing small now?
4. What does one Tiny Moment of Joy you create do to make you smile and laugh, and make your heart sing—if only for a few minutes?