



*An Unforgettable
Promise*

Tino Curione

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Part 1:
The Journey

The Journey Begins

It was at the turn of the millennium that I found myself needing to make a promise that would ultimately be deemed as unforgettable. It was at a point in my life where I had reached a critical state of crisis!

I was incarcerated in New Jersey's Northern State Prison within its maximum security control unit for violent gang members, known as STGMU (Security Threat Group Management Unit). I was confined to my cell for 46 hours at a time and only allowed out into a small caged area every two days for some fresh air, followed by a shower. The remaining time was spent sleeping, thinking and eating three meals a day which were delivered in a small Styrofoam tray through a slot next to my cell door.

It was a depressing place and I had, at that point, been in prison for 5 years. Through my tiny window, I saw only the wall of another unit which housed more prisoners - a concrete jungle with not even a blade of grass to remind me that there was still life beyond those massive bricks.

In fact, I became so irrational in my thinking that I found it hard to believe that there was a real world beyond that window. I was suicidal and often looked into my metallic mirror and threatened to kill the man who reflected such hate, fear and anger back at me. I saw only a monster, yet there was still some deeper part of me that believed that I could do some good in this world.

And so with that thought, I would look in the mirror and say, *"If there is one final good deed that I can do before I die to make it a better world... it'll be to get rid of you!"* But I was too depressed to even contemplate a strategy for killing myself. So my only other option was to get rid of the person that I had become by replacing him with the person that I was born to be.

My Earthly Beginnings

My earthly story obviously doesn't begin in a prison cell; it begins on the Mediterranean island of Sicily where I was born on the 11th of November 1972, in what would be considered a small town known as Giarre. My mother and father were both of Sicilian origin, although they met in Switzerland while on holidays. They never married, which was greatly frowned upon by Sicily's predominantly Catholic culture. And with my birth, those frowns grew even more disgruntled.

By the time I was a year old, my father ended up in prison for reasons that have been kept hidden from me to this very day. He would ultimately end up serving 15 years - which could only mean that his offence was serious.

My mother was pregnant with my sister at the time and so the choice to move to America, which was regarded as the Land of Opportunity to most Sicilians, was easy to make. But it was nevertheless a difficult one for others to accept, particularly my father. He had threatened to kill my mother if she attempted to take me and my sister away from him. He was expecting her to take care of two children in Sicily's corrupt society, with its seriously challenged economy, just so my sister and I could grow up watching him rot away in prison. My mother did not accept this and so moved us to America in September of 1976. I was just about to turn four.

The process of acculturation was not an easy one for my mother; and my grandmother, who also emigrated with us, absolutely refused to be assimilated into the American way of

life. But even with all of the difficulties of adapting to a new language, a new culture and different societal rules, my mother managed to keep us clothed, fed and sheltered. We received a lot of assistance from social welfare and lived in the poorer sections of a small New Jersey town known as Penns Grove.

My mother worked in the garment industry. When I later visited my mother's workplace, as a young adult, I saw that it looked no different than the sweatshops that now exist overseas. My mother was a creative person by nature and would have loved to have been a fashion designer. I suppose this was the closest thing to her dream and so perhaps that made it bearable.

But not even her daydreaming could alleviate the amount of stress and pressure that she faced when it came to surviving and not looking back. Failure meant returning to Sicily where she would have to face the ghosts of her past, including my father. So she pushed forward but unfortunately vented her anger and frustrations on me and my sister. We knew nothing of what my mother was experiencing mentally and emotionally - we were just children at play.

The physical abuse that I received as a child, along with the emotional abuse that my mother received daily from her mother, would ultimately shape my perception of life and the future that I would create. Through my young eyes, the world was a hostile place, for in my home, anger, frustration and sometimes violence permeated my day to day life. Nowadays, as an adult, I can somehow imagine how difficult it must have

been for my mother to deal with what she faced. But the kind of violence that she manifested towards me and my sister is something that I have yet to be able to justify. How a mother can take her small son by the hair and drag him across the floor over to the wall, so that she can beat his head against it - in an effort to demonstrate to him how *"hard-headed"* he is - remains an experience in my mind that I cannot rationalise nor reasonably understand.

What I do understand is that these events would ultimately influence the choices that would inevitably shape my future. I became a very rebellious youth, lost interest in school and chose friends who held similar attitudes. At the age of 9 I began abusing alcohol and drugs, stealing, I became very violent towards myself and others, smoked cigarettes and overate. Healthy living was never a part of my thinking.

By age 12, I stole my first car and got caught. From then until the age of 22, I would end up spending about 4 years going in and out of boys' homes, jails and prisons, several times having been a victim of police brutality. I was once hospitalized with both eyes swollen shut and deep slashes across my back when the police maced me and dragged me by my legs across the asphalt with no shirt on. After a decade of negative choices and multiple criminal offences, the Courts finally sentenced me to 7 years in New Jersey's adult prisons.

After about three years of living in that kind of environment, coupled with my childhood memories, I had lost all hope and desire for freedom. I had even gone so far as to sabotage my efforts for an early release by joining a violent prison gang

known as the Latin Kings. My way into the gang involved participating in a war against rival gang members. In a large prison yard, I watched as 200 gang members faced off with the most hateful of intentions. I witnessed a man swinging a thick, leather weight-lifting belt with a 10kg iron plate attached to the end of it. It was a surreal scene from some barbaric past life. I was terrified, yet I obviously didn't really care if I died or not, for I had been given a choice and was even encouraged by my fellow gang members to not get involved because I would be ruining my opportunity to go home. Isn't it amazing to think that some people would die for their freedom, while others would rather die than to be set free!

Fortunately, no one was killed, but that riot landed me in Newark's Northern State Prison. It was at this point that I realized that I had buried myself, alive, in a concrete tomb.

A Time for Change

The motivation to consider changing my perception of life came when the news reached me that a fellow gang member, who I had just watched go home three months earlier - after having been in prison for 10 years - was back serving another sentence. *"How can this be possible?"* I thought to myself, *"How can someone return to a hell like this after only three months of freedom?"*

I began to ask the other prisoners because I certainly could not make sense of it myself. The others laughed at my seemingly silly question and simply told me, with a sense of unquestionable certainty, *"This is our way of life!"*

I rejected that idea immediately because it seemed absurd to me that being in such a hellish environment could constitute a "way of life." Again they challenged me by rhetorically asking, *"What do you think you're going to do when you're out in the free world; get a job? Be a good little boy? Start over with a clean slate?"* They laughed at my ignorance and reminded me that I was marked for life as an outcast, a reject, a failure, a criminal, an unforgivable fuck-up!

As much as I hated to hear those words - let alone accept them as true - when I was finally alone in my cell reflecting on what I would do once freed, I had to accept that they were right, for my only thoughts were of how I would make sure that this time I would do my very best to not get caught! I was indeed a criminal-minded outcast, unworthy of forgiveness. Thus began my spiral into a deep, suicidal depression.

Yet I was blessed, as we all are, with an inner-wisdom that reminded me of the goodness that exists in everyone, and that no matter what is done to smother that spiritual flame, it cannot be extinguished.

Late one evening, I decided that they were wrong about this inescapable "way of life." This was not my only choice! It dawned on me that if I had the courage and willingness to die, then why should I not use that same courage and willingness to live! I had already accepted death as an option, so what would I have to lose if I also included life as one? Death is the ultimate fear for most people, and if death could not be used as a force for threatening my choices in life, then anything less than that - losing money, a relationship, my home, acceptance, etc. - was rendered ineffective as a way of keeping me from reaching for positive goals in life.

It should be obvious to you by now that of those options, I chose life over death. But I didn't allow myself to simply define life as "*being alive, eating and breathing.*" I had reasoned with myself that if I were willing to go to the extreme negative of killing myself, then to choose life would mean that I would seek out the opposite extreme, which was a path towards optimal wellness and emotional freedom.

But how would I do this? The reality was that I was still in prison surrounded by cynicism, pessimism, hopelessness, ignorance, sarcasm and aggression. Who would guide me, advise me and show me some positive options? Certainly not the other prisoners and definitely not the prison guards!

Stepping Forward

In reality, my first step had already been taken when I simply determined that where I was and how I was living and thinking were not where I wanted to be. I wanted something better. The next step - in the absence of some external guidance - was to simply find one positive decision that I knew would be a constructive choice and to actualise it then and there.

So I grabbed my cigarettes and eliminated that habit from my life! I knocked on my "*neighbour's*" wall and asked him if he wanted my cigarettes. He thought I had gone mad! Not only was I offering to give him my most valued asset (in prison, cigarettes are also used as currency) but it was also after midnight! Of course, he accepted once he realised that I was serious and that was it... *I quit!* I was no longer a smoker. I began to incorporate into my life a very valuable lesson that I gained from that experience, which I still use today, and that is - I did not make a big deal out of this choice. This was not a goal that I was working towards. It was a life decision. I made it and I moved on. Many prisoners didn't even notice for many weeks that I wasn't smoking anymore. How often do we set goals and then tell the whole world about them, make a big deal about it, only to end up being overwhelmed by the pressure of having to achieve them because everyone is looking and waiting to see if you are going to "*pull it off this time.*" Positive choices that are life affirming should be made in silence.

So smoking was obvious, but what else was there to do? To my great fortune, I had a tiny radio and I began listening a programme called *Natural Living*, which explored the many aspects of holistic health. I began to listen and learn about an entirely new world of possibilities when it came to achieving optimal wellness.

I learned about diet, nutrition and stress management. Many of these concepts were very new to me. I hadn't a clue what an antioxidant or a cruciferous vegetable was! Tai Chi, Chakra balancing, juicing and supplementing were all unfamiliar ideas to me. In many ways, I was listening to a foreign language! But I sat each day and took notes, looked up words in the dictionary and more importantly, began to put into practice whatever I could. My plan and my promise to myself was that if I could manage to create a positive lifestyle in this environment - something the other prisoners rejected as a possibility - then it wouldn't matter where I ended up in life, I would still be able to maintain my health and happiness. This would be the birthplace of my unforgettable promise!

So I began to eliminate things like sugar, wheat, coffee, dairy and meat from my diet. I would exchange these items with others for fruits and vegetables - which for the most part they did not eat anyway. I was amazed to see at one stage that most prisoners abhorred fresh fruit, for as the word spread that I would exchange the foods that I did not eat for fruit, many prisoners freely placed their apples and oranges in the food slot of my cell rather than throwing them in the bin.

I began keeping a journal, meditating and praying, as well as incorporating an exercise programme into my daily routine. I also discovered other radio programmes that delved into quantum physics, the environment, culture, history, international politics and much, much more. My tiny radio became a classroom and I sat there learning as much as I could about the outside world. For the first time in years, I began to believe that there actually was a wonderful world on the other side of those seemingly impenetrable walls.

For the next six months, I studied and applied everything that I could to improve my well-being on all levels. I stopped allowing people to share pessimism, sarcasm, gossip, cynicism or others forms of negative talk with me. I simply asked them to skip my cell if they did not have anything positive to share. Most of the prisoners just left me alone because they simply assumed I was going mad and that I would soon "*snap out of it*" and fall back into what they considered "*normal*" for prison life.

Realigning my Life Energy

As the time approached for me to be released, I felt an overwhelming sense of transformation and optimism. I envisioned a new life that did not include the possibility of returning to the criminal world.

About a month prior to going home, I heard one of Gary Null's Sunday evening shows on the radio where he outlined a model for understanding human nature through his *Natural Life Energies* concept. It addressed human nature from the viewpoint that we are born with an Energy that influences how we think and behave in life. Seven different Life Energies were described and I instantly identified mine. This simple source of knowledge shifted my entire perspective on why I was the way I was, and more importantly, what I could do to realign my new life with its original purpose. It really helped me to focus my spiritual energy so that I would not lose sight of how to maintain balance in my mental, emotional and physical energies, while continuing to grow in a positive and constructive way.

The Free World?

Once home, my mother was amazed to see my new lifestyle and attitude. My sister and some of my friends were also inspired by my changes and began to really believe that my criminal life was behind me. Other friends simply faded away as they realised that I was no longer connected to the past that we once shared.

One of my childhood friends quickly helped me find a job working with his parents as a dishwasher in their diner. My first pay cheques were quickly and happily spent on healthy food, supplements and some important books. I continued to educate myself by going to the public library, and in the evening, I would use my journal to write about my hopes and dreams for the future. My relationship with my sister, who was now a Registered Nurse, was growing stronger and we began to make plans to open a Holistic Health Centre.

Each morning I would spend time by the river and I would pray and be grateful for everything that I had in my life; one of the main things, of course, being my freedom! In the midst of all this enthusiasm and optimism, I began to notice something very unusual and extremely confusing about what I perceived as the free world. The people that I would encounter throughout my day were living with a sense of frustration - as if they were somehow trapped in a cell with no way out. Having seen the faces of prisoners, including my own, day after day, month after month, year after year, for more than five years, I knew very well what this looked like. It is an image that has been permanently imprinted in my

memory. This would be my first awakening to what I now see as the *Emotional Prisons* that people are living in.

Then I remembered one of the first lessons I was given by some elder prisoners when I first began my sentence - “*These walls,*” they said, “*may be able to confine your body, but they cannot confine your mind.*” Somehow, the opposite has become true in the so-called *free world* - society has not confined your body, but it has found a way to confine your mind! These people, and many other individuals like them today, had imprisoned themselves emotionally and mentally. I found that people could not enjoy living in the moment because they were utterly crippled with fear. This began to open my eyes to the possibility that I was not in “*the free world*” and that in fact, freedom was not based on a physical reality but rather a mental, emotional and spiritual perception.

These insights helped me to reinforce the different principles that I have come to understand as being essential for optimal wellness. One of these insights allowed me to see that when others are not willing to be free, I myself should disconnect from them and continue to work on my own freedom. Imprisoned souls - with little or no desire for liberty - will only try to pull you into the walls of their dramas, tragedies, limitations and excuses.

So I focused my intentions on becoming ever more determined to hold fast to my original promise that I would transcend whatever limitations I may be faced with, regardless of whatever environment I might find myself in. What came next was a challenge that would determine

whether or not I was honestly ready, willing and prepared to keep that promise.

The Ultimate Challenge

As my 28th birthday was approaching in November of 2000, my sister and I went to get our Green Cards renewed. We were not American citizens, although we had lived in America since we were children. So we took a trip to the *Immigrations and Naturalisation Services* (INS) to go through the renewal process. I was not ready for what would amount to the shock of my life. I was arrested and told that I was going to be deported to my country of origin - *Italy!*

Apparently some laws passed in 1996 to counter terrorism, in essence, labelled all non-citizens - who had been in prison - as potential terrorists. I was placed in a detention centre - with no right to a lawyer or a trial - where I had to await an escorted flight to Rome.

As much as I wanted to make sense of it all, I couldn't! I became depressed and suicidal all over again; not because I hated life as before, but rather because I now loved it so much that I could not bare the thought of having this new chance at freedom taken away from me. I had only been home for 53 days and needless to say, it didn't seem fair.

What would I do in Italy? How would I survive? I didn't know the language, the culture or the social norms. I had no family or friends to reach out to. I simply did not want to face this challenge.

Then I remembered my promise! So I got myself together and began to put back into practice those principles of wellness

that transformed the final months of my prison life. I created an exercise programme, began meditating and praying again and started a new journal. I went to the detention library and researched the encyclopaedias about Italy and soon learned about the European Union. I quickly decided that I would simply rebuild my life in Ireland. My reasons for choosing Ireland at that moment were spiritual in nature; I have no other way of explaining that decision.

Finally, after four months of bureaucracy, I was escorted to Philadelphia Airport in March of 2001 by two INS Officers. They were very kind to me and felt sorry for what I was going through. That must not be an easy job for them, having to see someone torn away from the only life he had ever known. They were descent enough and trusting enough to allow me to sit on my own without handcuffs during the 10 hour flight. I did not sleep at all!

Rome, But Not Home

Once in Rome, the INS Officers transferred me over to the custody of the Roman Airport Police and quickly disappeared into the crowd. I didn't know what to do nor how to speak fluent Italian. For a moment, I began to think that they were going to put me in prison because I had nowhere to go and no one to call. I had only \$500 and just wanted to buy a ticket for Dublin and get out of there.

Soon the *Carabinieri* - Italy's State Police - came to collect me and I got really nervous. They took me to the police station and tried to communicate with me. It wasn't easy, nor was it fun. In essence, I came to understand that if I signed a paper that they had in front of me, I would be set free. Of course, I could not read what was on the paper but I just wanted to be left alone at that point. I just wanted to be free to walk away and restart my life. So I signed it, they gave me a copy and took me back to the airport. Finally, I stood there all alone, and with a smile, I realized that I was free again.

Back to My Roots

That sense of freedom was again challenged when I realized that I had nowhere to sleep and that I had no one to turn to for help. The only thing I had were two addresses, one was an address that my sister found on the Internet for our father and the other was an address my mother gave me for a cousin - both were in Sicily. I was so tired, confused and scared that the thought of going to Ireland had escaped my mind. I decided to take my chances on finding my father first, so with what little money I had, I bought a ticket for Sicily and arrived the next day in Giarre.

Once I arrived in the town where I was born, I was again faced with the reality that I did not know how to go forward. Not knowing how to speak properly, I simply sat on a park bench and tried to determine what would be my next move. I had no luck finding the street that matched my father's address, for it did not exist.

As the day wore on and my options became more limited, I decided to try the other address for my cousin who spoke English. So I began my trek across Sicily going from the extreme East to the extreme Southwest finally reaching the small town where my mother was born - *Campobello di Mazara*.

My cousin was extremely shocked for not only hadn't she seen me since I was just a child, but it also turned out that my father had just visited her a month before - *looking for me!* I was excited to finally be hearing some good news, but my

cousin quickly sat me down to explain that my father had come to find me because he was dying and just wanted to see his children one last time before his cancer completely consumed him. I didn't feel discouraged or sad for I had learned so much about health that surely I could give him some advice.

The next day I journeyed back across the island to the address that my cousin gave me, which was actually an address for my aunt, who was my father's closest sister. She too was shocked and quickly spread the news throughout the family. The next day, preparations were made for me to finally meet my father after nearly 27 years. The irony of it all was that it was *Father's Day* in Italy! He thought it was some kind of cruel joke until he saw his entire family in his front garden. I just went with the flow of things and tried to put my circumstances out of my mind. I was rested and felt my optimism returning.

My father looked so old when I saw him; he could have easily passed as my grandfather. The cancer in his lungs was spreading throughout his body and literally eating away at him. It was a joyous reunion and I was welcomed to stay with him until my "*return flight to America.*" I could not find a way to tell anyone that I would no longer be returning to America, so I just kept saying that I hadn't decided on what I was going to do next.

I showed my father the paper that I had to sign and he quickly told me that I should just ignore it. It was a notice to report - **within 5 days** - to the Military Base in Catania where I would

receive further instructions for fulfilling my obligatory military service - which I was required to serve as an Italian Citizen once I turned 18. This also meant that I could not leave the country until this obligation was carried out; that included not being able to travel throughout the EU. I was a prisoner once again, only now, my prison was Italy!

It didn't take long before the stress of holding back the truth of my circumstances from my father became too much for me to bear. I explained to him what had happened to me and he didn't want to believe it. I showed him my expulsion papers and he told me to pack my things and leave. I was hurt, but I understood how poor and sick he was. He would not listen to any of my advice on alternative healing, for it all had to begin with faith, which he had very little of at that point.

The Monster Returns

I spent the next 6 months in Sicily living with other family members and strangers that I met along the way, sometimes for a few weeks and other times for only a few days, but ultimately I'd be asked to leave once my past was made known within the neighbourhood. I slept on park benches, beaches, trains and other places until I decided to go back to my father to ask for help again.

My father took me in but was not happy about it. His family made him feel guilty for not supporting me after so many years of searching and wishing he could see me again. A couple of days later, as I was sitting in the sun enjoying the beautiful Sicilian weather, my father called me into the house. He told me to sit down and look at the television. It was September 11th and I sat traumatized as I watched the World Trade Center collapsing. My father hated America, for in his mind it was the place that took his children away - so his attitude was, "*That's what they get!*" He told me to just get over it and go take a walk.

That night I couldn't sleep as I thought about the fact that I was deported for being a "*potential terrorist*" simply because I attempted to steal a car and spent 5½ years in prison paying for it. I was enraged by the idea that a Government could be so idiotic as to believe that real terrorists would involve themselves in petty crimes. I felt a sense of insanity when I attempted to look at the whole picture of my life.

The next morning I left without saying good-bye with only the clothes on my back. I was going to Rome to protest in front the American Embassy! I just couldn't take any of these challenges anymore. The train ride to Rome was long and gave me time to allow my anger to subside into depression. With what little money I had, I got a room in a hotel and sat there contemplating how I could end my life. I drank several litres of cheap wine to numb some of the pain but I continued to feel this current of electrical anxiety running through my body and I just wanted it to stop.

I found a pipe in the corner of the ceiling that was strong enough to hold my body weight and got a sheet ready to tie around it. The thought of not knowing how it would feel to have a sheet clutching around my neck frightened me, so I took my hands, put them around my neck and began to squeeze as hard as I could. I held my breath with my eyes closed as the blood supply was being cut off from my brain. It was the most horrible feeling ever to open my eyes and realize that the man who was choking me was the monster that I thought I had left behind in that prison cell - the one who had given up on life! I collapsed and began to cry uncontrollably until I fell asleep.

I was out of money, had no food and couldn't even manage to take my own life. To make matters worse, when I had previously tried to explain this to the Military they said, *"That's your problem! All we're concerned about is that you do your 10 months of military service or spend 2 years in our prisons!"*

Angry is not strong enough of a word to describe how that made me feel! Not even rage would do! But once I found myself out on the streets again, those emotions fell straight into depression and fear. These were challenges that I had never faced before. I had no point of reference, no source of guidance, and for me, crime was no longer an option.

I slept on trains and sidewalks until eventually I ended up in a homeless shelter in Rome which housed about 200 people. The structure was not that different from a prison environment so I quickly adapted and began to regroup my senses.

A Promise Remembered

Once again, my unforgettable promise came to the forefront of my consciousness and I began to incorporate the principles for wellness back into my daily life. This baffled the staff at the homeless shelter, as well as the other people living there.

I refused to do my military service and was given the option of prison or Civil Service. Naturally, I chose Civil Service as a *Conscientious Objector!* To my great fortune, after a few months, I was given some assistance by the social welfare department who found me a halfway house where I did not have to pay rent or bills. As a Conscientious Objector, I worked full-time but was only paid €3 a day. Yes, that's right, €3 for a full day's work!

But that certainly did not stop me from enjoying life. I exercised in the public parks, cooked my own meals, saved my money to buy some supplements and studied in the public libraries. Each challenge was always connected to a solution and this is a universal truth that remains a part of my life to this very day.

Due to the kind of work I did, mostly administrative, and the kindness and generosity of the people that I worked for, I was able to continue researching holistic health via the Internet. My days were spent constantly focusing on the positive energies that I wanted to manifest and attract into my life.

Finally, I was truly free after my 10 months were completed and for the first time in my life, I could actually choose for

myself where I wanted to live and recreate my life. America was my mother's choice. Italy was the American Government's choice. Now it was my turn to freely choose... *and I chose Ireland!*

On the 20th of April 2003 at 7am, I arrived in the Busarus Station in Dublin after days of travelling by bus across Europe through the brilliant countryside and cities of Italy, France and England. What a joy it was for a man who had just spent 5½ years in prison seeing these kinds of images only in books and magazines.

From that beautiful Sunday morning in Dublin until this very day, I have constantly worked on rebuilding an entirely new life which can only be described as the antithesis of my old life - which by now has become a distant memory. I have continued to face one obstacle after another and have in every case reaffirmed my belief that with each challenge there is always a solution worth searching for.

I have not yet perfected the art of living and have many more positive values to incorporate into my life. I do not share this story to say "*woe is me*" nor do I seek sympathy; rather, I wish to show that I have an unshakable sense of optimism when it comes to problem-solving. I also share this to let you know that I am no stranger to the walls of anger, fear, guilt and shame that make up our *Emotional Prisons*. I did not learn to be optimistic from a book, a film or some motivational guru. I experienced it and continue to experience it as part of the process of my life and growth. And a final point for the purpose of this story is to remind you that

growth is a process that takes time, persistence and patience -
it does not happen overnight.

Part 2:
The Philosophies

The Beliefs

There are many reasons why I have written this book. I suppose the most important reason is that I hope it will inspire people to consider making some positive choices in their lives. For many years now, people have told me that I should write an autobiography because my story sounds so inspiring. But I have told my story to many people and little has changed in their lives as a result. Therefore I have always thought that an autobiography would simply be entertaining rather than truly motivational. Still, I have always wanted people to know that because of my experiences, I cannot accept the belief that the challenges that we are facing in life are insurmountable. So in this way, my story now serves a purpose.

What I will share now are the different beliefs that have shaped my perceptions, provided guidance for my decisions and sustained my optimism, as well as healed the many of the hurts that could have consumed my life by now.

In the many years that I have explored the possibilities of living a life of optimal wellness, I have come to realize that one of the main reasons why most people don't apply all of the great information that is available to us from all of the masters who have come before us, is that people just don't feel good about themselves or their lives. When you don't feel comfortable in your own skin, you're not going to have much motivation to raise your standards.

I have also found that a lot of one-on-one therapies can create a kind of co-dependency upon on the therapist. And although there are many gifted healers out there who I respect very much, I have always sought out therapeutic techniques and insights that create a true sense of self-empowerment and freedom from emotional traumas.

I have also found, however, that it is not always that easy to get to the roots of your emotional problems on your own, in which case the assistance of a friend, partner, family member, coach or healer can take you beyond where you have taken yourself.

My hope is that we can all find a space somewhere or with someone who can give us that often needed extra push in a different direction. So often, many of our difficulties in life are not so different from what others are experiencing in their own lives, and so sharing and breaking through your barriers can give others insights into how they may also find a way through their own.

So what I hope to provide with this section is some information that you can use in order to have an understanding of what you can do to *HELP YOURSELF* as I have helped myself though the many challenges that you've just read about.

What will follow are some things that I have learned over the years that have helped me to have a deeper understanding into what people are experiencing on many levels in their lives. These are simply some things to consider when determining

how and if you want to approach your own sense of emotional and mental freedom.

Meridian Stimulation

Meridian Stimulation is the primary technique with which I work when seeking to address the emotional imbalances that may be disrupting our day-to-day lives. It is something that you can do on your own or with others, so it is truly a self-empowering tool. It is not the supreme solution nor the be-all and end-all of healing modalities, but it is by far the most powerfully effective technique that I have experienced and watched others experience when done properly and consistently.

As the name suggests, the process involves the stimulation of the body's meridians. Meridians are channels that allow for the flow of energy throughout the body, especially the organs. These meridians can be stimulated by simply tapping with one's fingers on certain points of the body where the meridians run.

There are many theories that attempt to explain why this works to help with emotional balancing. I have my own very brief and simple hypothesis which will be presented in the chapter entitled *Growth vs. Protection*. Whether my theory is correct or not is of little importance. What is important to consider is that for many, many people *Meridian Stimulation* works!

This process does not take a lot of your time, it is easy enough to learn and it doesn't hurt, so you really have nothing to lose. So let's begin!

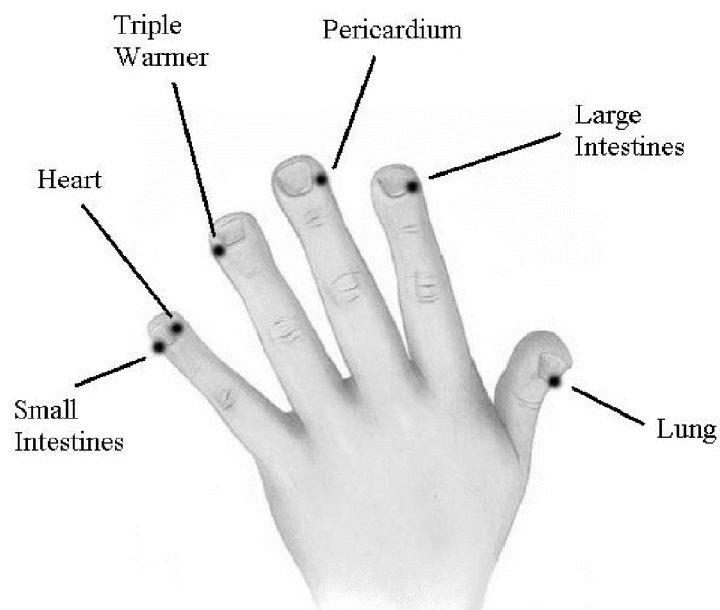
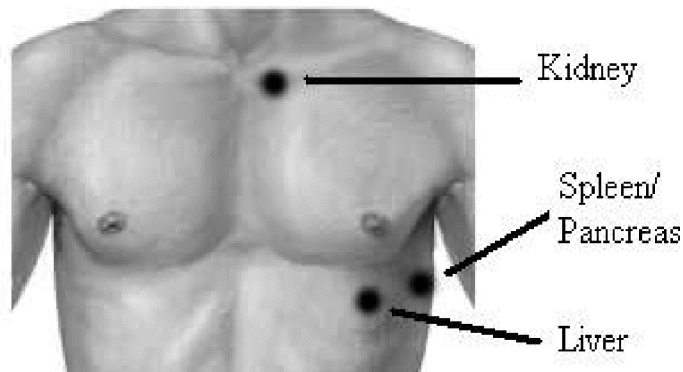
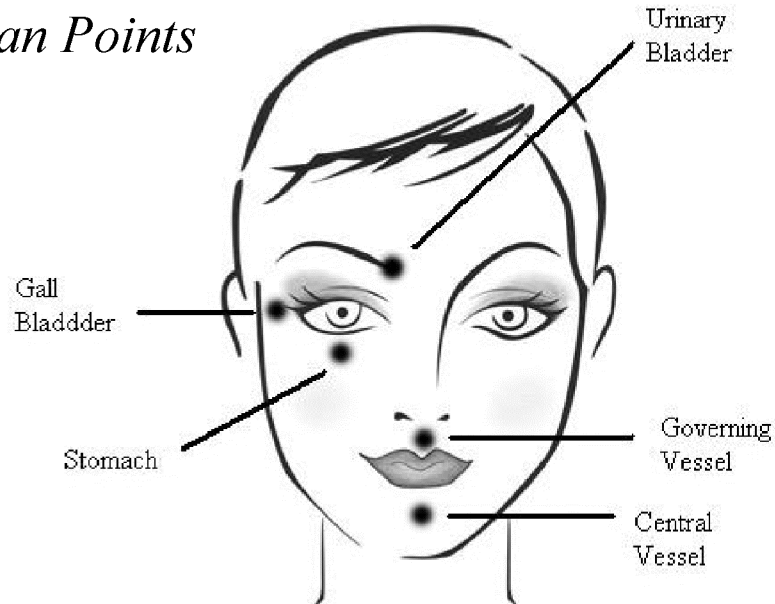
Identify the Problem

First we begin by identifying the problem, be it anger, a troubling memory, sadness, an uncomfortable feeling, anxiety, disturbing words, fear, etc. Then focus on those words, images or sensations in the body that create the negative feelings. Try to amplify those feelings as much as you can. At this point begin tapping about 5-7 times on each of the points on your body that correspond to the 14 meridians while allowing yourself to express or describe the problem. If you have difficulty describing the problem, just use a few words like – I have this fear or this anger, etc. - repeatedly until you begin to feel a sense of calm. If you have a lot of mental images going through your mind and your words cannot keep up with them, simply focus on the images until you attain a sense of calm that will allow you to verbalise the issue. If you do not get images but can describe in words what the problem is, that is fine. And if it mostly feelings that you are experiencing, simply focus on them, describe them and what you think about them, all the while continuing to tap on the meridian points.

The objective is to allow yourself to express the problem while using *Meridian Stimulation* to relax your energy system, which is generally disrupted when a problem causes you to be emotionally upset. You may find that your perception of the problem begins to shift from one aspect to another or from one memory to another. That's good. Just stay with it until you can see your problem in a more positive light. Continue to tap on all 14 Meridian Points in a cycle until you feel calm enough to evaluate how you are feeling

about the issue you are trying to resolve. Ideally, you will want to continue to refocus on the problem until you no longer feel any negative emotional reactions to it.

The 14 Meridian Points



It's that simple and it really doesn't take a lot of time. Now this does not mean that the problem will just vanish with one round. *It could...* but generally a lot of our emotional problems have many aspects to them and are connected to other problems that also need to be addressed. At this point it is really a question of creativity and intuition. You know best the many layers involved in your problems. The objective is to get your intensity levels down so that you can feel better about the circumstances. Please, please, please do not underestimate the effectiveness of this technique.

Emotional Prison

The opposite of *Emotional Freedom* is obviously to live in an *Emotional Prison*. Most people have a basic sense of what that feels like. Our fears, anger, guilt and shame can become the walls that keep us from moving forward when wanting to make efforts towards more health and happiness. But many of us have mastered the ability to cope with this prison and simply adapt to it. And we can do it for so long that we are not familiar with any other way. We completely forget about what it means or once felt like to be emotionally free. So what do we do when the door is opened?

That is the scary part because we may have adjusted our lives to the pain of our Emotional Prisons so much that we will sabotage any efforts to go beyond those walls for fear that too many things may need to change in order for us to really be free. Remember this, unlike physical prisons which are made of concrete and steel, our emotional prisons are made up of our *life circumstances* - our relationships, the state of our body, our work and home environments, our diet and social circles - as well as our conditioned beliefs. To free yourself of them may threaten your present sense of security and the comfort that others may find in you being the way that you are - *even if that means you being sick and unhappy*. The question you must face is how emotionally free do you want to be?

Perhaps you don't want a lot of freedom but would like to be better able to cope within your present walls. I would suggest you use Meridian Stimulation in limited ways to address only

the tough emotions that make it really difficult to be happy. Otherwise, you may find that without some of your fears, anger, guilt and shame, you may make some very different choices in your life that would lead you to tear down walls that you no longer want to live behind.

From Life Energies to Life Circumstances

Emotional Prisons can take decades to build and just as long to break down if we do not have the proper tools and awareness to approach the task. Understanding how these prisons are constructed can give us somewhat of a blueprint for how to deconstruct them.

We are born into this world with one thing that is uniquely ours - our *Life Energy*. Within this Life Energy is encoded our *Spiritual Self* and our *Life's Purpose*. It does not come from our parents nor from the environment that we are born into. It is the *Primal Energy* that preceded this life and that will live on once our journey here has come to an end.

As we grow from infancy, our first priority is to connect to those people in our environment who will nurture and guide us through our development. This is not always a smooth transition if these people are in conflict and have not found a way out of their own Emotional Prisons. As infants, we had little choice in the matter and it is here that we begin to find the roots to our present circumstances. Those people who conditioned us, gave us the beliefs that we now use to create our *Life Circumstances*. Those life circumstances can lead to success, health and happiness or into an Emotional Prison, depending upon which beliefs we've accepted as true.

For many years I have believed that the way out of these prisons lies primarily in the changing of one's belief system. I have now come to understand that it is our *Life Circumstances* that we must first be committed to changing

before dealing with our conditioned beliefs; for it is when we become active in our efforts to change those life circumstances that no longer suit us, that we come face to face with those conditioned beliefs that imprisoned us in the first place.

In essence, we must work backwards in an effort to return to our original *Life Energy* and begin again. Our plan for emotional freedom must first take into consideration the circumstances that we want to change. Then we must commit ourselves to actively making whatever changes need to be made and brace ourselves for the onslaught of our conditioned beliefs. And trust me, those belief systems can be ruthless and relentless! This may then require us to disconnect ourselves from the people who shared the same beliefs that kept us trapped within our limitations. This is often a very difficult thing for people to do but I have found that in most cases, it is necessary in the initial stages of our transformation for true freedom to be achieved.

Once we have succeeded in the above efforts, we now find ourselves realigning with our *Life Energy* and starting over. Only now, as adults, we can choose who we want to harmonize our energies with and which beliefs we want to accept or reject. In this way, we can now create new *Life Circumstances* that honour our original purpose in life.

Primal Energies

Primal Energies are the energies that I believe we are born with. They do not come from the environment nor do we inherit them from our parents. These are the Energies that precede life and govern the process of natural growth and healing.

What follows are some ideas that could help you to better understand what we are dealing with when we are trying to feel more at ease in our own skins. These ideas come from some of the more important philosophies that I have studied over the years. The purpose is to give you a different perspective on how you can approach whatever circumstances you may be facing in your efforts to better understand your life.

The Spiritual Self

The myth that our DNA and Genes determine who we are was shattered in the 1970s, when Dr. Bruce Lipton, a cellular biologist, removed the nucleus of human cells and watched as they continued to function as normal. The only thing that they could no longer do was reproduce, thus showing that the Genes and DNA were not the "*brain*" of the cell, but rather the "*reproductive system*."

This led to the obvious question of how the cell was able to know what to do and how to survive and grow in its environment. With a study of quantum physics and the Eastern Philosophies of the body's energy systems, Lipton was able to perceive the cell in an entirely different light and offer us a more evolved and enlightened perspective.

The "*brain*" of the cell is actually the outside layer, which is essentially the equivalent of our skin. Many people are not aware that our human brain is not an organ, but rather is part of the largest organ of our body - *the skin!* On the outer layer of our cells, there are tiny liquid crystals known as *Receptors* which function much like antennae - they receive signals from the surrounding environment which allow the cell to know what is happening in the vicinity and how to respond. So for example, there are *Calcium Receptors* on our cells which can identify if there is calcium in the environment. With this information, the proper systems *within* the cell are prepared for the absorption and utilization of calcium.

This concept also extends to our emotions. We have *Hormone Receptors* that detect stress hormones in the environment and prepare the cells of our body - hence us - to respond. So if you are angry, depressed or in fear, all of the cells of your body will know it and make preparations to fight, flee or freeze.

A problem arises when our cells are receiving more signals than normal for a particular thing in our environment - like fear. This causes the reproduction of the next generation of cells to have more Receptors that detect fear and less Receptors for the other normal functions of life - like the proper absorption of calcium for example. This is why many people can have seemingly healthy lifestyles, yet they are still getting sick because of their negative perceptions and attitudes. And this equally applies to those people who do not have a healthy lifestyle, but who are genuinely happy and therefore don't get as sick.

Let us now move to the reason why this is relevant to our discussion of the *Spiritual Self* and what we can do to be more comfortable within our own skins. Amongst the many types of Receptors there are *Self Receptors*. As the name suggests, these are “*antennae*” that receive information about who we are as a unique individual. These Receptors will only accept signals from our *Spiritual Self*. If you place your cells into the body of another human being, they will be rejected and destroyed. This is why immune systems are intentionally suppressed when organs are transplanted, and also why people who have had transplants have been shown to take on certain *behavioural characteristics* of the organ donor - even

when the donor is dead! Essentially this all means that we are not "*in*" our bodies, but rather transmitting information "*to*" our bodies from an outside source - another energetic dimension, if you will.

For this reason, I find it of utmost importance that we take good care of the physical body that we have assumed responsibility for. Optimal wellness and emotional freedom are directly linked to your understanding of who you really are and what your purpose in life is. The trouble is, too many people are living within *Emotional Prisons* and are not really "*in contact*" with their *True Self*. Because of the prisons we live in, the cells of our bodies are more tuned in to anger, fear, guilt and shame than they are to our *Spiritual Self*. People identify more with their fears than with their authentic nature and hence are making life decisions, not based on an intuitive sense of what is good for them, but rather a conditioned reaction to what they feel they must do.

Primal Energies are not of this world, but rather work from another dimension to influence us!

The 7 Natural Life Energies

When facing the question of who you really are in life and peeling off the layers of who you are not, I believe that we can often benefit from knowing that there is something under all of that negative emotional conditioning, something that we were born with, a *Primal Energy* that can guide our lives.

The *Natural Life Energy* concept and model has been one of the most important gifts to have come into my life. It has given me the power to be able to firmly re-evaluate and challenge those beliefs that were part of my conditioning.

It has given me the understanding that *Wisdom* precedes *Knowledge* in all things. Wisdom is the innate, intuitive knowing that we are born with. Wisdom is what allows our heart to beat without having to be told or reminded. Wisdom is the energy that knows what temperature our body should be within at all times.

It knows this because it has the memory of who and what we were and are meant to be. Wisdom is always working to create harmony in our body and life, even when we work against it by making negative choices. If Wisdom has the power to keep our bodies in harmony, why should it be so difficult to comprehend that this Wisdom, or *Life Energy*, also has the power to keep our mental and emotional states in harmony.

Knowledge is what we gain from the external world around us. Knowledge obtained through the conditioning that we

receive throughout life is meant to help us better adapt to whatever culture, society or physical environment we are born into. This Knowledge comes from our parents, teachers, leaders, families and friends. But this Knowledge is based on the perception of what one sees around them as opposed to what one innately knows. If a perception is distorted, then the Knowledge will be distorted. If the Knowledge is distorted, then the conditioning will create conflict in the soul which is adjusting itself to this physical life.

Life Energy is the intelligent force that works unconditionally and constantly to create harmony in the Universe and it is this force that has organised humanity into a spectrum of 7 natural manifestations of human nature. Each human being is born with one of these 7 *Life Energies* and each Life Energy is an integral part of the holistic functioning of humanity.

The 7 Life Energies:

Dynamic Aggressives are the natural born leaders who are driven to change and control the environment they find themselves in. They are the most charismatic of all the Life Energies and have an innate ability and drive to control what is around them with the intent of creating growth and unity within groups. They have great visions, huge egos and the courage to take whatever risks needed to achieve their goals.

Dynamic Assertives are also natural born leaders but have no desire to control anyone or anything other than their own lives. They lead by example and by challenging the status quo, thus making them trendsetters. They are fiercely

independent and unafraid of living outside of the box. They are non-conformists who do not live comfortably within the script that society has written for the average person. They do what they feel is right for them and not what others say is right. They are very introspective and have a deep understanding of who they are. They do not seek their identity outside of themselves and do not allow themselves to be defined by others. They know their own *Spirit* very well, thus they are, in that sense, very spiritual but not necessarily religious. They do not trust authority, nor are they afraid to challenge it directly or indirectly. They are the curious truth-seekers and the ultimate revealers of the truth, even when others are not ready to see or hear it.

Dynamic Supportives are the great communicators and mediators. They know how to bring people together and how to empathise with whoever they come into contact with. They have the innate ability to sense and literally feel, as if it were their own, the emotions of others. They are, in essence, emotional sponges. They are compassionate, giving and genuinely enjoy helping others. They are charismatic but use it not to change the world or challenge authority, but rather to motivate others. They are the greatest listeners and the best friends you will ever have in your life.

Creative Assertives are the natural artists and interpreters of life. This is the one Life Energy that has the qualities of all the Life Energies combined into one. They are the most sensitive of all the Life Energies and this sensitivity gives them a heightened awareness of what surrounds them emotionally and physically. They perceive colours, sounds,

emotions, tastes and aromas more intensely than others. They have a great need at times to be alone to pursue their creativity. They are thoughtful, generous and supportive but need to be appreciated for what they do, partly because they are so outwardly focused on the reactions they receive from others in an effort to better understand and define themselves. They have an innate need to create and that desire is non-negotiable. Creativity is an integral and essential part of their life in the same way that breathing is an essential part of staying alive.

Adaptive Aggressives are the ultimate survivors, as well as the ultimate deceivers. They are the chameleons of humanity who have the innate ability to immediately blend into any environment or group. They are the ones who create opportunities in life that allow themselves and others to advance. They are socially aware, trendy and have a great capacity for multitasking and problem solving. They are energetic, exciting and adventurous. They're not charismatic but rather very charming. They are not intimidated by powerful and influential people with strong personalities. In fact, they gravitate towards them and work well with them in facilitating and finalizing projects.

Adaptive Assertives are the great organisers and fixers in society. They are very firm and dependable. They do not seek to draw attention to themselves. They are the whizzes, the geeks, the nerds who know how things work and hence how to fix them when they are not working. They actively seek to understand how to best adapt to an environment in the most practical and frugal way and how to best maintain that

environment so that it continues to function smoothly and efficiently. They are family oriented and not afraid to affirm what they believe is right or wrong in their lives and their society. They do not actively seek to change others and have a need to fit in.

Adaptive Supportives are "the masses," "the people," the foundation of any society. This is the largest group of all the Life Energies and they seek to live the simplest life. They enjoy predictability and routine, and seek it out as part of their need for security and certainty. They are followers by nature and look for authority figures to instruct them on how to live life and fit into their environment. They are quiet, non-glamorous, charitable and very family and community oriented. They do not draw attention to themselves nor do they take risks. They are dependable and will follow instructions without question, especially if those instructions come from an authority figure. They do not like change and are very uncomfortable when it is forced upon them, but they will find a way to adapt to it if necessary.

These are the *7 Natural Life Energies* that make up humanity. Each person must master the positive qualities of their Life Energy so that they can live in harmony with themselves and others. Identify your Life Energy by examining those actions and thoughts that genuinely make you feel good about yourself. When you are living in alignment with your *Wisdom* – your *Life Energy* - you will feel happy. It's that simple!

Epigenetic Energies

Epigenetic Energies, as opposed to Primal Energies, are those energies that we take on as a result of our conditioning throughout life. These are the many dense layers that have been superimposed upon our Spiritual Self. This conditioning very often takes us away from the natural flow of who we are, which creates that sense of not feeling comfortable in our own skins - which in many cases has a literal meaning.

The Language of the Body

Our bodies can be shaped by chronic tensions created by constant fear, anger, guilt and shame. So much so that our bodies can manifest distortions in our musculature and posture, which in turn can also alter and influence our personalities - not always in a positive way.

When working with *Meridian Stimulation*, you may want to pay attention to the sensations and tensions in your body. They could be telling you something about some conditioned response that the body has been manifesting for years. Using *Meridian Stimulation* can sometimes release these tensions in very unusual ways that may confuse you and hence cause you to not allow the process to take its natural course towards releasing and healing. I'll share with you a personal experience that may better illustrate this for you.

Once while I was using *Meridian Stimulation* for some negative feelings that I was having, I noticed that I was experiencing a tension in the back of my neck on the right side. This tension was not new to me for I've felt it off and on for years. Because I did not know exactly what was bothering me, I simply focused on the feeling and the tension as I tapped on the meridian points. After a moment, my head began to sway back and forth as if I were saying no. The swaying became stronger until it turned into an almost violent jerking of my head to the left. I stayed with it, although I could no longer tap the meridian points on my face, so I simply continued with the other points on my upper body and hand.

After about 30 more seconds of this, I remembered a time when my mother unexpectedly slapped me very hard on the right side of my face because she did not like the question I had asked. Essentially, what my subconscious mind had done was to associate asking questions with bracing my head for this slap, hence creating this tension in my neck. It turns out that the night before, I had been at a public talk where I had asked the speakers who were sitting fairly close to me some challenging questions. The next day, I woke up with this tension and this bad feeling. Once a connection was made to the source of the emotional tension, while continuing with the *Meridian Stimulation*, I was able to change the energy flow associated with that memory and its conditioned reaction to the present event. Both the tension and the feeling went away. I hope this example helps to paint not only a better picture for how to apply Meridian Stimulation but also to help you see how many layers can be involved in our emotional imprisonment.

The Language of Illness

Our illnesses can also communicate something to us about our emotions. It is our body's way of getting our attention to let us know that something is out of balance. Knowing that our physical problems can very often have emotional components, we can use *Meridian Stimulation* to address them by focusing on the physical ailment or discomfort and tapping on the points until you get some relief or some memory that may be linked to the illness.

Our physical pains can sometimes indicate for us the emotions that we need to do more work on. In other words, not all physical pain results from emotional imbalance. Sometimes a physical pain is simply a physical pain. I'm a bodybuilder, for example, and sometimes I pull a muscle while working out. During the healing process, unresolved emotions may surface when the pain is most intense. Addressing those emotions accelerates the healing process.

Imagine two different people bumping into something with the same intensity, hitting the same part of their body. One may begin to cry and get really sad, while the other person could become intensely angry and begin shouting - same injury, same body part, same intensity, different unresolved emotion. So illnesses and physical pain can be used constructively to assist us in our efforts towards emotional freedom.

The Language of the Inner Child

Imagine, if you will, a tree. Within the tree there are many rings that represent the years of life that this tree has experienced. When the tree is cut down and you observe the trunk, you can look back into the history of that tree and see what it experienced when it was 5 years old, 12 years old and so on. All of these rings were still a living part of the tree whilst it was still growing and evolving. There is no separation between the 5 year tree and the 50 year old tree - *it is all one.*

The same is true for the human being. The idea that "*once upon a time*" you used to be 5 years old creates the illusion that who you were when you were 5 years old is no longer present with you today. The reality is that every experience that you have had in your entire life is still present with you today and resonating certain needs and desires that may not have been met during those times. What is also resonating is the trauma - and other discomforts - that your *Inner Child* has experienced. The Inner Child is still seeking a resolution for what it did not understand and it may be doing so in such ways that prevent your adult self from making more reasonable choices. It is not that the Inner Child does not want you to be happy and to succeed, but rather that this Inner Child is speaking to you with a limited language and is needing you to comfort him or her on that level. The rational mind of an adult does not make sense to the innocent mind of an Inner Child that has been betrayed, abandoned, rejected, abused or ignored.

Examples are often the best way to help you understand what is being taught. I once woke up on a Thursday morning knowing that I was going to a weekly *Buddha Bag Meeting* which I enjoy attending very much. But something didn't quite feel right. Surely it had nothing to do with the Meeting, although strangely enough it was the same feeling that I had had the previous Thursday morning.

I sat on my bed with total silence in my room and began to use *Meridian Stimulation* even though I did not know exactly what for. I just tapped while describing what I was feeling. After a few moments, I began to cry uncontrollably as my shoulders rose up with a great level of tension in my neck. My head was sinking down between my raised shoulders as if I were being attacked. I closed my eyes and suddenly I began to say "*Please don't hit me, I was just playing with my friends!*" in a very childlike voice. This became more and more intense and went on for about two minutes until a wave of calm energy began to pour over me.

If you have read the story that I included at the beginning of this book, you may remember my commenting on an experience of my mother violently abusing me to the point of beating my head against a wall. What I was experiencing that Thursday morning was related to that incident, for my mother was punishing me for having stayed out too late playing with my friends.

My Inner Child had associated having fun with my friends, particularly in the evening, with the possibility of being punished for it. It makes sense to me now why, as a teenager

and young adult, I would so grossly abuse alcohol, drugs and overeat when I was out for the evening with my friends. I was attempting to push down that anxiety that accompanied socializing in the evening. More recently in my life, I became aware that I was using many excuses - like the fact that I don't drink alcohol, don't like to eat in restaurants and many other seemingly legitimate reasons - to avoid going out in the evening.

When I realized how much of a limit this was placing on my life, I decided to change those circumstances. Now please pay attention to this insight because I would like you to understand the many ways in which you can empower yourself on your own. By attending the *Buddha Bag Meeting* I was actively changing my Life Circumstances. I knew that this was a place where I did not have to drink alcohol, nor eat food that conflicted with my diet, nor be involved in anything negative - in other words, I had no legitimate excuse not to go out and enjoy myself in the company of friendly people. Of course, my Inner Child had a completely different perspective. Nevertheless, my intent was to face this limitation and transcend it with the unsuspecting help of others, for I had gone as far as I could on my own.

Changing your *Life Circumstances* can be as simple as finding the environment that exposes you to the very boundaries that you are seeking to push back. I have found myself in supermarkets standing in front of biscuits or chocolate, tapping on myself in an effort to be free of my sugar cravings. Changing one's circumstances can also be something more structured like a support group or a therapist.

In any case, carefully choose your new circumstances so that you can take your time and unpeel those negative reactions piece by piece.

Allowing your Inner Child to speak while using *Meridian Stimulation* can change the negative emotions that the Inner Child is feeling. It is important to allow that Inner Child to say whatever it needs to say, even if it's "*I hate you, I wish you were dead!*" These suppressed expressions will - for the rest of your life - be seeking an outlet, and if you do not find a constructive way of releasing them, you will find yourself in uncomfortable circumstances saying and doing things that will leave you and those who are in your life feeling bad and confused.

My Inner Child never had a chance to explain himself to my mother. For years, this innocent Child had been not only saying "*please don't hit me, I was just playing with my friends*" but also asking my "*adult self*" to avoid anything that resembled that experience. Through my personal commitment to attend the weekly *Buddha Bag Meetings* - something that I had previously attempted to do without these tools and insights and only lasted two weeks - I was able to create a circumstance within which my Inner Child could gently let me know what was bothering him without overreacting and causing me to sabotage my efforts to heal. It is wise to find a place where your Inner Child can feel safe enough to peep its head out and let you know what it perceives.

Once my Inner Child had expressed itself on this particular issue and was calm, I then began to explain to him - from my adult perspective - what had happened and basically instilled within him a sense that it wasn't his fault and that there is no longer any need to be afraid that something like that will happen again. This was all done while continuing to use *Meridian Stimulation*. I now enjoy going out in the evenings and no longer have any negative feelings associated with it.

Growth vs. Protection

At any given point in our lives, we are either in a state of growth, based on a loving and nurturing environment, or protection, based on the fearful perception of danger in our surroundings. If we are perceiving our external world as dangerous, our internal world responds by redirecting blood and energy away from our growth systems - digestive, immune, lymphatic, reproductive, creative forebrain etc. - and into our protective systems - arms and legs to fight or run, limbic hindbrain, etc.

There have been volumes of books and research presented from all over the world that demonstrate how a false negative perception of our environment can detrimentally hinder our growth. My theory on how *Meridian Stimulation* works is very simple... our negative reactions to our circumstances in life put us in the protective mode, thus redirecting our energies away from growth. By stimulating our meridian system, we are sending signals to our body that what is being perceived as dangerous is essentially a false alarm. Each of our *14 Meridians* corresponds to a major growth promoting organ or system and so by stimulating those meridians during these false alarms, we redirect the energy back towards growth and reprogram our subconscious mind to no longer associate those particular circumstances with danger. I believe it's that simple!

Part 3:
The Elements

The 7 Elements of Optimal Wellness

In November of 2006 I wrote a very tiny booklet entitled “*The 7 Elements of Optimal Wellness*” which I never published because when I looked at it, I realized that most people were not going to go that far in their efforts to be healthy. Intuitively, I knew this but I didn't really know why. I believe that I now understand that the main reason why most people are not seeking optimal wellness is because they are living within the walls of their Emotional Prisons.

With the story of my journey as an introduction, I now see a greater possibility to make the suggestions that I have for years been making to those who I have advised on their health and happiness. I believe that once you begin to feel better about who you are and more comfortable in your own skin, that some of these *Elements*, if not all, will naturally come to the forefront of your consciousness.

Element 1

Determine Where You Are and Where You Would Like To Be

How happy and healthy are you? More importantly, how happy and healthy would you like to be? And of greater importance than that is: how happy and healthy do you feel that you deserve to be? Be honest with yourself when facing these questions.

If you have decided to read this section, then we can at least assume one thing - that emotional freedom and optimal wellness are something that you are at the very least curious about. And at the end of the day, who doesn't want to be happy and healthy!

Well you have to begin somewhere with this journey. Let's begin by evaluating - with complete honesty - just where you are in life. You should do this on your own so as not to allow outside influences to distract you from your own genuine thoughts and feelings. Here are some areas that you should reflect on:

- Body
- Health
- Career
- Appearance
- Relationships
- Friends
- Home
- Education
- Country

- Diet
- Social Life
- Happiness

Spending a small amount of time each day exploring these issues can do you a world of good. You will begin to have a better sense of where you are and where you would like to be. Writing down your thoughts about each of these areas allows you to concentrate on the best ways to describe what you are thinking, seeing and feeling. Don't worry about grammar and spelling. Just simply write freely and allow your mind to take your pen wherever it needs to go.

This may seem like a simple *Element*, almost insignificant. But how many people out there actually take the time to examine their own lives? The more relevant question that I should ask is, how many people are so busy examining the lives of others? We spend so much time concerning ourselves with what celebrities are doing, what they're wearing, what they're eating, where they're living. We're gossiping about people we don't even know. How are we going to get to what is essentially important for us if we do not take the time to look at ourselves and determine where we are?

This is not a "*once off*" Element, meaning we don't focus on this once, make goals and then move on, never to return to it again. I've had to return to this Element many times in my life because in order to grow, you must always take the time to look at the best that you have been - and are - and see if you can do just a little bit better. Now that doesn't

mean that you should spend the rest of your life being unsatisfied and unhappy with where you are or with what you have. Enjoy the moment and appreciate all that you have right now but do not assume that you have reached the end of the road towards optimal wellness. Do not allow yourself to stagnate because there is no such thing as neutral when it comes to health and happiness. You are either processing wellness or illness in any given moment of your life.

Once you have an idea of where you are, ask yourself if this is where you would like to be. Is this your best? Can you do better? Begin to set some new standards in every area that you feel can be better and focus your energy on them.

Do not share your goals with others, just work on them quietly without the need to have others recognise you, accept you or validate your efforts. This does not mean that you shouldn't ask for assistance when needed, but rather that the goal itself is for you alone to focus on.

When determining where you are now, also focus your attention on the best you can do with what you presently have before concerning yourself with where you ideally wish to be or what you ideally wish to have. Relentlessly chasing your goals will take you away from the present moment. This very moment is the only reality within which you can work. Learn to project good thoughts and ideas into the future but always return immediately to the moment and show gratitude for what is present in your life now.

Element 2

Elimination and Detoxification

So many people go on detox program. So many people seek to detoxify their bodies from time to time. However, if you want optimal wellness, you need to look at detoxifying your life. And that must be done firstly by eliminating those things that are creating the toxicity in the first place. That is true detoxification. Let's look at some of my recommendations for what you may want to consider removing from your lives in order to have a healthier and happier lifestyle:

- Meat
- Coffee and Caffeine
- Negative News
- Dairy
- Environmental Pollutants
- Processed Foods
- Wheat
- Fluoridated Water
- Cigarettes
- Unfulfilling Relationships
- Gossip
- Sugar
- Unsatisfactory Jobs
- Toxic Emotions
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Toxic Cosmetics
- Chemical Cleaners

I invite you to find creative ways to remove these things from your environment, your bodies and your life. Take your time and take on only those challenges that you feel confident you can find a solution to and that can be attained within the context of your present life circumstances.

Please be mindful that anything toxic taken into the body or mind in moderation is nevertheless still toxic. Tell one little lie everyday for a year and see if people find it easy to believe that you are an honest person. Prick yourself with a small needle in the same exact spot everyday for a year and see if the pain remains the same as the first time.

Moderation is a myth when we understand the *Tipping Factor*. The Tipping Factor assumes that our experiences in life are cumulative, meaning that our actions are not isolated incidences that are not relevant in the future. What we do accumulates and so long as our bodies and minds can handle it - or better put - defend us against our negative choices, we won't feel any noticeable consequences. But eventually the scales will “tip” out of our favour and we will see the manifestation of the many repetitive wrong choices we have made. One pack of cigarettes won't kill you but one pack a day over twenty years can.

Keep in mind that when eliminating toxins from your life, you may and often will experience a *Healing Crisis*. This is essentially your body or mind going through withdrawal. Your body is readjusting to life without that toxin. Be diligent and patient. You may actually feel worse before

you start to feel better. But if you are aware of this beforehand, at least you can be prepared and have less confusion and frustration when you are facing this challenge. There are many supplements and techniques that can assist you in going through this process easier and quicker. This Healing Crisis also applies to emotional detoxification.

Element 3

More Life with Living Foods

Now that you have taken out of your life what shouldn't be there, you can begin to focus on the good things that you can choose to bring into your life for the wellness that you seek. It is my belief that most of you know what these things are. I would only like to add that "*living foods*" should also be seen as a metaphor for those things that nourish us on every level. So once you have eliminated the negatives in all areas, begin to discover and explore their opposites: joyful relationships, meaningful careers, happy friendships, positive news, inspiring films, constructive conversations, pleasant music, revitalising aromas and much, much more should accompany the actual foods that are good for our bodies.

The root definition of *vegetarian* is **eating to enliven**. Sugar - as only one example - does not enliven you although it does come from a plant. Choose those substances or methods that indeed enliven your life. Organically grown produce is the best source of living foods. Fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts, grains, seeds, seaweeds, pulses and healthy oils are all excellent choices which can be combined to give you what you need to sustain and maintain a healthy body. The variety is abundant so you should give yourself the time to study and learn what these good foods are and what they do. Educate and empower yourself!

Element 4

Compensation through Supplementation

Our reality today is that we are dealing with many external, as well as internal, influences that are having a negative impact on our health and wellbeing. This in turn requires an extra effort on our part to *compensate* for the damage caused by these influences.

A balanced diet does not compensate for a stressful job or relationship. Stress creates cortisol, which creates free radical build up, which requires antioxidant support. Our air and water is polluted. We commute on public transportation or work in closed environments where germs, viruses and bacteria are easily spread.

The reality is that none of us have had the ideal life, with the ideal diet, in an ideal environment. We have all at some stage in our lives made negative choices which have impacted our bodies in a negative way - mostly by creating DNA damage in our cells. When cells do not reproduce properly, our organs - be it our skin, brain, liver, etc. - at some stage will begin to break down.

But we can compensate for this through supplementation. And furthermore, through supplementation, we can limit any further damage, because whatever nutrients can help to improve a condition, can also help prevent that condition. The scientific studies that support the use of supplements to improve health are now in the hundreds of thousands.

I do not like to limit my views in any area of these *Elements*, so allow me to add that we should even *supplement* our emotional life with more joy, laughter, fun, happiness, love, passion, pleasure and bliss. These are all very health promoting!

Element 5

Revitalise with Exercise

Exercise has been shown to increase the strength and longevity of the heart. It helps people recover from depression. It revitalises the body and mind, putting you in a great mood for hours after the workout is finished. Not only does it make you feel great, but it will also make you look great! All of the nutrients from your food and supplements will be better absorbed and circulated properly throughout your body when you have a stronger heart pumping more blood throughout your system.

The ideal exercise programme includes a good stretching routine before and after each workout, which should be a combination of both aerobic and anaerobic exercises. The aerobic strengthens and lengthens the life of the heart and improves circulation while the anaerobic tones and strengthens the overall body.

You can either exercise at home or in the gym. Most gyms have everything you need in order to put together a programme that works on each part of your body, as well as your heart.

If you choose to create your programme at home, get yourself an aerobic stepper or a mini-trampoline for your cardiovascular workout, or simply get one of those follow-along aerobic videos. Of course, power-walking or jogging is also great. You should also get some weights. It doesn't cost that much for a lifetime of wellness.

You should begin with the resistance training, which only takes about 15-20 minutes but requires more energy. Never lift more weight than you can handle whilst breathing normally. In other words, focus on your breathing and not on how much you can lift. If you find that you are holding your breath in any way, the weight is too heavy. Be sure to drink plenty of water throughout the entire workout.

Now we move into the aerobic exercise. The cardiovascular part should be a *minimum* of 20 minutes within your ideal heart rate range. Your heart rate range is the number of beats per minute that your heart should be beating within in order to have a positive impact on your health.

To determine what this range is, begin by subtracting your age from 220. Then, use that number to find your ideal range, which is between 65% - 85% of that figure. To get the best benefit from your aerobic exercise, you should not fall under 65% for at least 20 minutes straight. Try not to go over 85% for it will put too much stress on the heart. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to get your heart rate above 65% with little effort.

To be consistent with my philosophy, I will add that you should also exercise the brain: puzzles, poetry writing, letter writing, drawing, playing a musical instrument and any other hobby where you are actively engaged in thinking and creating are ways to exercise the brain. This does not include passive activities like watching an educational programme, reading a book or looking at artwork. Be active, not passive!

Element 6

De-Stress Your Life

There's no argument when it comes to admitting that we are a highly stressed society. And it's not because we live in a nation that is lacking resources. In fact, quite the opposite. Yet with all of this abundance, people do not seem to know how to relax and enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

We're always looking for something else that will make us happy. But we never seem to find "*it*." With so much choice and variety out there, we remain fixated on the idea that we can't move on to something better or live a simpler existence.

Everything is rushed, chaotic, irrelevant and draining. So we stay chronically stressed and blame the world around us for that stress. Then we look for ways to relieve that stress. And we either do that through *destructive or non-constructive sublimation*.

Destructive Sublimation is the drinking, smoking, taking drugs, overeating, etc. that we do in an effort to distract ourselves from the built up angst and anger, frustration and fear that stress has generated in us.

Non-Constructive Sublimation is the yoga, meditation, spiritual retreats, self-help books and empowerment lectures – that are all positive in what they can do to assist someone on their road to optimal wellness – but for the person who is simply using these events to relieve stress, it

is *non-constructive* because it does not deal with the underlying cause of the stress.

Your job can stress you out and you can choose at the end of the day to drink alcohol or go to a yoga session. But the next morning, you are right back in your stressful job. Have you de-stressed your life or have you de-stressed a couple of hours in your day?

I'm suggesting we begin to focus on getting to the root of what is causing the stress and change it. Find another job or learn some new skills that will allow you to enter into your ideal work environment or create your own business. Find another partner, friend or social circle - there are millions of people out there with whom you can form new connections. Again, get rid of the unnecessary stress by accepting that you have options and then find constructive ways to actualize the best of those options.

Another huge factor in stress management is perception. You need to examine your conditioning, particularly from your childhood and determine whether you are responding consciously to the moment or reacting from the past. Learn to reprogram your subconscious mind through *Meridian Stimulation* so that you don't continue to react irrationally to the world around you.

Then, if you want to enjoy the enormous benefits of things like Yoga, Tai Chi, meditation and spiritual retreats for the purpose of enhancing your life, by all means do, but don't assume that these will help to compensate for all the

debilitating effects that stress can have on your body and mind if you allow it to remain a part of your life.

Element 7

Re-evaluate and Challenge Your Beliefs

In my recent evolution I have come to understand that emotional freedom does not necessarily equal spiritual alignment. What this means is that just because you have found successful ways to keep yourself emotionally balanced does not necessarily mean that you are on your spiritual path in life. No longer feeling stressed around your boss - who perhaps reminded you of your critical father - does not necessarily mean that your job honours your life's purpose. No longer arguing with your girlfriend or boyfriend - who perhaps reminded you of your controlling mother or father - does not necessarily mean that she or he is your Soulmate.

Emotions need to be balanced but the Spirit does not. The Spirit is perfect and complete. But when your emotions are all over the place and causing you to react inappropriately to your life's circumstances, you will not be in harmony with your essential nature. Once you have developed your abilities to consciously choose how you want to emotionally respond to what you face in life, then you must turn your focus towards choosing to honour the real you. And hence we come to this final Element.

What you believe is what you will manifest in your life - good or bad! But who, up to this point, has been determining what you should or should not believe in? Examine where your beliefs come from and determine whether they are serving a constructive purpose in your

present life. Are you genuinely happy with your Life Circumstances? If not, find a way to change them and begin to challenge and replace those conditioned beliefs with life-affirming ones.

Start to look more deeply into who you really are as a unique individual and begin to focus on the deeper definition of who you believe you should be. I highly recommend looking at the *Natural Life Energy* model to discover which of the 7 Energies your primary Life Energy and begin to align yourself with its positive flow.

Final Thought

I don't want people to be impressed with my life unless they are going to become equally impressed with their own lives. We all have a story to tell, but more importantly, we all have our own story to continue writing. What would you like to see written on the pages of your life? It is your divine right to choose your own script and to reject that which others have written for you if what they have written does not bring you health and happiness.

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"I don't want people to be impressed with my life unless they are going to become equally impressed with their own lives. We all have a story to tell, but more importantly, we all have our own story to continue writing. What would you like to see written on the pages of your life? It is your divine right to choose your own script and to reject that which others have written for you if what they have written does not bring you health and happiness." - Tino Curione

Tino Curione was born in Sicily, Italy and was raised in Penns Grove, New Jersey, USA. He's a public speaker and blogger. He's lived in Ireland since 2003.

