

Embracing Your *Authentic* SELF



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and 14 other extraordinary women!

Women's Intimate Stories Of

Self-Discovery & Transformation

Compiled by LINDA JOY

Edited by BRYNA RENÉ

Embracing Your *Authentic* SELF



Women's Intimate Stories Of
Self-Discovery & Transformation

Published by Inspired Living Publishing, LLC.
P.O. Box 1149, Lakeville, MA 02347

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9845006-2-8
ISBN-10: 0-9845006-2-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011935552

www.inspiredlivingpublishing.com
(508) 265-7929

Cover and Layout Design: Rachel Dunham, www.hummingbirdcreativeconcepts.com

Editor: Bryna René, Aphrodite, Inc. www.wordsbyaphrodite.com

Printed in the United States.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to...

Every woman who, in honoring the calling of the still, small voice within, has taken her first steps on the winding path to authenticity.

Every woman who bravely chooses to brush aside fear and self-doubt, and peel back the layers that hide or darken her divine light.

Every woman further along in her journey who lights the way for others to follow. Thank you for being a beacon.

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And also to...

Niki, my beautiful daughter, who embodies the qualities of an authentic woman with grace and compassion—and who, in just a few months, will bless the world with a child of her own. You are, and always will be, my shining star.

The multitude of extraordinary women who have come into my life over the last twenty years. Your wisdom, bravery, and generosity of spirit have touched me beyond words. My greatest wish is that I may light the way for others as you have for me.

My coauthors, who entrusted their stories to me and allowed me to share their spirit nets with the world.

The extraordinary team of women with whom I am honored, blessed, and humbled to work to bring this project to life: Rachel Dunham, the creative visionary behind the visual graphics of this book (and all my brands), who continues to amaze me with her innate gifts; Kim Turcotte, Project Manager and owner of Grow Your Divine Business, who has a gift for breaking down my big dreams into bite-sized pieces and bringing them to life; Bryna René, Editor for Inspired Living Publishing, who brings the essence and truth of each story to light with ease and grace.

And finally, to...

The countless women around the world who continue to embrace and support my mission to inspire women to live deeper, more authentic, inspired lives. I am humbled by gratitude, and I love you all.

PRAISE FOR

Embracing Your Authentic Self

“Living authentically takes courage, conviction, and self-love, and that is exactly what *Embracing Your Authentic Self* inspires readers to experience. It reaches into the hearts of readers and empowers them to live a life that is lovingly detached from the opinions of others and aligned with their own deepest truth. I invite you to embrace this book and dare to be yourself.”

– Laura V. Grace, author of *Gifts of the Soul* and *The Intimate Soul*

“In a world where far too many of us are wearing the mask of who or what we are ‘expected’ to be, when we are gifted with the authentic truth there is no denying its presence. The stories gathered here from women who have traveled the path to burn away the mask and step into their true nature are inspiring, uplifting, motivational, and filled with the power of their own deep spirit. Take the time to really read these messages—both the ones on the page, and those that emanate powerfully from between the lines! Laugh, cry, and be open to what it means to be who you *really* are!”

– Amethyst Wyldfyre, Navigational Guide and Divine Destiny Mastery Mentor for Messengers

“I just finished reading *Embracing Your Authentic Self* and I couldn’t put it down. It is a book like none other I have read. The depth, honesty, and courage of each woman’s story brought tears to my eyes and blessed me in many ways. Their real-life stories of transformation...will help readers go within to discover and embrace their authentic selves. The journaling questions at the end of each chapter are very helpful. If you want to be inspired and find your authentic self, this is the book for you. I know it will change your life, just as it has mine.”

– Pat Hastings, Author of *Simply a Woman of Faith*

“I felt a deep spark within me as I read one of the stories, calling me to deepen my faith in the force that guides my life... [This book] reactivated a sense of wonder inside of me at the power that comes when you’re stripped of your fears.”

– Fia-Lynn Crandall

“*Embracing Your Authentic Self* is filled with stories that share surprising truths. As a reader, I felt so honored to be let in to these authors’ inner worlds—their deep experiences, the little lies they told, their “coming out” with the truth. Their healings helped me heal, their light upon their darkness shed light upon my own. I enjoyed their triumphs more deeply because of the vulnerabilities they share. Linda Joy and Inspired Living Publishing have created another treasure. If you’re looking for a great book for a friend (or yourself) this is it. I look forward to sharing it.”

— **Lisa Tener**, book writing coach and author

“Having experienced her own transformational journey, Linda Joy recognizes the healing power of a journey shared. She has gathered together a stunning array of women, each with a life-changing story that will inspire, encourage, and empower you to embrace your authentic self.”

— **Elizabeth Harper**, color intuitive, visionary artist and author of *Wishing: How to Fulfill Your Heart’s Desires*

“Linda Joy is a woman standing authentically, embracing others in sharing their stories and inspiring them to step into joyful living. As this book goes out to the world, the inner joy shared will inspire others to live more truthfully. Thus Linda’s mission, inspiring joyful living, will multiply at a miraculous rate.”

— **Kate Michaels**, Core Alignment Specialist and Author

“Linda Joy has done it again! *Embracing Your Authentic Self* is a book that is sure to inspire, heal, and transform women’s lives all over the world. Don’t miss it!”

— **Terri Amos-Britt**, author of *The Enlightened Mom* and founder of TheEnlightenedMom.com

“[In *Embracing Your Authentic Self*] Linda Joy has brought some amazing women together to share their poignant moments of self-discovery. As you read these stories you will be touched by how they worked through the difficulties in their lives. Women are being called to discover their authentic selves, and as you witness their transformations you will know that you also can take the necessary steps to develop your full potential.”

— **Kris Steinnes**, author of the award winning book *Women of Wisdom: Empowering the Dreams and Spirit of Women*

“This book is 100% authentic. Filled with wisdom, depth, insight, and a beauty that will empower and move you to believe, honor, and trust in your own inner beauty. Expect to be inspired to live your life to the fullest, and to be exactly who you are. A heartwarming and hope-filled read!”

– **Linda Pestana**, author of *Voices of the Heart*

FOREWORD

by Nicola Phoenix
SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGIST

*L*ife is an ever-evolving journey of grace. However, there are points within this journey when we find ourselves questioning how we spend our sacred moments. Looking back, these moments stand out as turning points in our personal transformation, as if we were being coaxed to see so much more—yet at the time, as we faced despair, fear, anger or disappointment, we may not have realized the importance of these valuable life lessons. Too busy coping with what was happening, looking for answers to ease our suffering, we may have been unable to see the gift of transformation that was occurring.

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As the world becomes ever more goal-focused, we condition ourselves to see the end result as the “win,” and often totally disregard the essential stages that we needed to experience in order to transform ourselves. The mindset of win or lose, success or failure, has become so ingrained that, during the in-between stages of the journey itself, we continually wish to be *elsewhere*. However, as you will notice in each of the inspiring stories in this book, the present moment, however uncomfortable it may be, holds the fertile environment for us to wake up to our authentic self and its Divine expression in *every* present moment, not just the “winning” ones.

As we shed the illusions of who we thought we were, the roles we thought we had to play, and our beliefs about our own self-worth, we see that the greatest connection and most rewarding relationship possible emerges: our relationship with ourselves. Stepping into a more conscious way of

being provides a platform for immense growth, because a life with peace in our hearts and fulfilment in our every expression is our birthright.

The conditioning of your informative childhood years, and the experiences that have led you to where you stand today, may not support this idea. In fact, this idea may be in conflict with your existing belief system. So often, we are taught to look outside of ourselves for the Divine; to nature, or to a vision of God which is so great that to think of ourselves as “divine” seems almost a crime. We build images of ourselves as separate from the great and incredible, and our low self-worth reflects this disempowered state.

As we begin to wake up, however, we see that we are like pieces in a huge jigsaw puzzle: part of the Universe, not apart from it. Once we realize this, we no longer need to separate ourselves from the incredible, from each other, or from our state of radiance. The same spark of magnificence which flows through each and every one of us is the expression of the Divine energy that resonates through the Universe. We do not need to change to please other people, or try to be like someone else, or spend endless time creating an identity that will make us look or feel “good enough.” The fact that we have shown up to experience this divine life in all its glory is enough to make us matter.

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You may discard these words because part of you is still holding on to the old idea that you are not good enough. Yet a part of you—one that does not need to be labelled or investigated—is still reaching out for something more, saying, “I can’t stay with these feelings of suffering any more. I am going to shrink inside unless I spread my wings and start being the person I have the capacity to be.” Honoring this feeling, and building your life to resonate with this expression of you, is a wonderful way to embrace your authentic self.

The journey toward allowing this divine essence to be expressed starts the moment we realize that there could be *another way*. The paradox of suffering is that at times we need it to help us to wake up, yet once

we are awoken we need to be brave enough to step away from it. By opening this book, you acknowledge that you have already arrived at this place; that you are ready to leave behind negative feelings too heavy for a being who was sent here to shine. Each inspiring story that you will read, every message of learning and point of reflection, will assist you in realizing your capacity to live authentically from your heart's wishes and express your unique message to this world.

My work is to teach people to see in themselves what I see in them so clearly: that they are perfect right now, where they are. If a book were to be the demonstration of this valuable lesson in life, you are holding it in your hands. These stories prove that we can move beyond the limitations and habitual self-criticisms of the past in order to find ease, comfort, and true joy in the present. Storytelling gives us permission to see what is possible—how, from one spark of questioning, a feeling or an idea can be turned into reality. Use this book as a springboard to share your stories with other women, and continue the remarkable work that Linda Joy has created.

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Be in touch with your feelings. Honor them: they are sacred. They are your divine calling, and therefore they are authentically you. More than anything else, you deserve to be happy and fulfilled. That is why you were put here in the first place.

With love on your journey,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicola Phoenix". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Nicola" and "Phoenix" being capitalized and prominent.

Spiritual Psychologist
London, England

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INTRODUCTION

by Linda Joy

PUBLISHER

"You can see the core of yourself—the hidden reassurance of yourself—in a teaching story, in my story, in your story, and all other stories"
- Gangaji, Spiritual Teacher

From the earliest times, storytelling has been one of the most important tools used to inspire, empower, teach, and comfort. In the sharing of stories, family members passed on the wisdom and values of previous generations, and communities passed on the culture and history of their people.

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As little girls, we were enraptured by the stories our parents told us as they tucked us into bed at night. Whether fairy tale classics or stories of their own childhoods, these stories were a vehicle for us to envision possibility, experience the power of imagination, and believe that anything was possible.

You are a storyteller. We all are. Each time you share your daily experiences or your intimate hopes, dreams and fears with your girlfriends, you are a storyteller. Each time you sit around the dinner table, reminiscing about your childhood with your family, you are a storyteller. The stories we tell one another—and ourselves—are powerful tools to communicate our unique experiences and beliefs; the essence of who we are.

In the book, *Who Says? Essays of Pivotal Issues in Contemporary Storytelling*, Anthropologist Robin Ridington proposes that “stories are

a spirit net.” The moment a life experience occurs it becomes a part of our essence (spirit net); eventually, through storytelling, that experience is sent down as part of our collective history, and passed from generation to generation.

When I first read those five powerful words, “stories are a spirit net,” I felt a connection deep within my soul. They fully captured my personal mission and the work I do in the world.

I use the term “authentic storytelling” to describe the styles and types of stories I strive to share through my publishing projects. I have always been drawn to the personal, intimate stories of women who have not only lived through unique and sometimes painful life experiences, but who came out the other side armed with wisdom, love, and the hearts of warrior women.

2
— Authentic storytelling showcases the essence of the storyteller or writer as she steps forward to share her triumphs and tragedies, lessons and insights. They are shared with the intent to empower, inspire, and guide the reader toward the realization that she too has the innate power to overcome any perceived obstacle and achieve the life of her dreams.

There comes a time in every woman’s life when she experiences a yearning from within; it is a restlessness, a calling from the deepest recesses of her heart. She feels this gentle nudge, and strains to hear the words that are whispered to her. But she won’t be fully be able to appreciate what she hears until she walks the often bitter road of self-discovery, slowly peeling back layer after layer of false masks and limiting beliefs until the separation between herself and her soul no longer exists. On that day, she will come face-to-face with her authentic self, her truest incarnation. The two can then become one, embracing, dancing, celebrating the homecoming.

My story is very much like those of the other amazing women whose authentic storytelling is featured on the pages of *Embracing Your Authentic Self*. Who knows—my story may even be yours!

On a beautiful spring day in 2001, I experienced a transformational moment which forever altered the trajectory of my life and launched me on a journey of self-discovery which continues to this day. This journey, like those of the heroines of our favorite fairy tales, took me down the winding roads of Self-Esteem, through the valleys of Pain and Despair, and across the breathtaking mountains of Hopes and Dreams, as I sought the greatest treasure of all: my authentic self, the self who has always been there, quietly waiting for me to bring her out of the darkness.

Every heroine needs tools to help her along in her quest. The written word has been, and continues to be, one of the most powerful tools in my transformational toolkit. Words have empowered me throughout my journey from single welfare mom to best-selling inspirational publisher. The wisdom contained within the books that became my friends and companions gave me the solace and inspiration I needed as impetus for change. Always, when my days seemed darkest, a word, a sentence, a paragraph would jump off a page at me, and provide me with the fuel I needed to keep moving forward.

In this book, you will meet twenty-six extraordinary women whose stories of self-discovery and transformation reveal the truth of their experiences. Warrior women all, each has come through her personal quest having released the unwanted baggage of the past, and given herself permission to heal. Now, these women are standing tall and shining their brilliant lights for others who are ready to begin their own journeys. As they welcome you into their spirit nets, they will show you how you, too, might choose to view life through the lens of possibility, and embrace the shimmering treasure that is your authentic self.

My greatest wish for you is that you discover on these pages the message your heart needs and your soul longs for, and that this message takes you one step (or many) further along the path to your authenticity. Take the time to work with the themes in each story using the “Tune In to Your Authentic Self” journaling prompts after each story; let the questions be like candles in a dark room, guiding your way toward understanding.

It doesn’t matter where you’ve been, or what setbacks you’ve experienced; just like the heroines of great fairy tales, we all have the potential inside us to live happily ever after. Tomorrow is a new day, after all, and you have the power to choose the lens through which you will view it.

May your story be a great one, and may all your paths be *inspired*!

With love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Joy". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large, elegant 'L' and 'J'.

Publisher,

Inspired Living Publishing, LLC

CHAPTER ONE



THE POWER OF *Truth*



Seeing is Believing

Saskia Röell

I stare into the fire. I am moments away from standing right in the middle of it. I am beyond fear. I tremble uncontrollably and even my jaws clatter. Nobody pays any attention to me. The orange flames shoot like arrows into the New Mexico sky. In their quest to reach the sky, they sizzle as they passionately meet the falling snowflakes for a wet kiss.

“Get out of here!” my fearful self says. “You’re out of your mind!” Little did I know that I had to be a bit out of my mind in order to survive the sacred ritual that was about to begin.

I thought good karma would save me from having to walk through the fire, as my flight was leaving before the fire walk. But I was wrong. They rescheduled the fire walk. I tried to talk them out of it, assured them that they didn’t have to reschedule just because of me. “My time will come,” I told them with great confidence. But they didn’t listen. They were glad to reschedule so I could be there. “You wouldn’t want to miss it for anything in the world” they said.

I couldn’t have disagreed more. But somehow, somewhere, deep inside me, I heard Soul’s whisper: “Stay,” was all she said. I wondered if she realized that I have a body made of flesh and blood.

I will soon find how good my karma is: the only way out is through. There is no escape. My time has come.

The people laugh and sing while they help build up the fire until it’s as big as it needs to be. We’re told to pick a log and throw it into

the fire. Our logs represent our issues. The idea is that the fire will transmute our issues, but right now, I couldn't care less about any of my issues except one: how to walk across this fire. I look for the biggest piece of wood I can find and, with a nonchalant swing, throw it into the blaze. I honestly don't think the fire can transmute my fear, unless I figure out how to stand on my bare feet in the middle of the hot burning coals.

I shiver and look into the starlit sky above me. If I didn't know better, I'd think I was in paradise. The sound of a pack of howling coyotes brings me back to reality. For once, they don't scare me. If I can face walking through a fire, coyotes don't bother me one bit.

Then I hear the instructor say we're almost ready to go. She asks us to come with her into the meditation building. It doesn't take her long to explain. "Seeing is believing," she says. "It's mind over matter." I'm upset that the instructions are so sparse. We're told to ask our higher selves *if* we can walk today. And, if so, we need to ask for a message. So I ask, and I hear Soul's immediate answer: "Yes, you can walk the fire three or four times, but float weightlessly and soar like an eagle. Make sure you walk with ease and grace." She repeats the words "ease and grace" three times. Did I hear that correctly? I couldn't have made it up. *No, I think. One crossing will be plenty for me.*

The last thing the instructor adds is that we cannot walk by tapping into our courage. We can only walk if our higher self gives us the green light. I am at a loss because usually my courage *is* my strength.

A minute later, I'm standing at the edge of the fire. I'm frozen in place. Everyone else walks. As they go back and forth, I decide to give myself permission not to go. I talk myself out of it. I tell myself I think it's very brave to be the last one standing. Then, something happens. I become mesmerized, fascinated by the magnetic pull of the hot coals. I can't take my eyes off the people

who scream at the top of their lungs and run over the fire. Seeing is believing, yet I gasp in disbelief at what is happening. One after another, people walk quickly across the fire. And suddenly, without thinking about the instructions from my Soul, I decide to cross to the other side, too.

I'm in a rush. I no longer want to be the last one standing, and there I go. But my fearful self is in charge. I forget my Soul's eagle image. I forget to walk with ease and grace. Instead, I run as if my life depends on getting to the other side. After I'm across, I feel a burning pain in my feet. When I look, there are big blisters on each foot. Now I feel ashamed and stupid that I didn't listen to my Soul. I should have walked with ease and grace. *Did I fail Soul's test? Do I dare to trust her?* My feet are in bad shape. So am I.

I stand motionless in the snow for a few minutes. I take my time to contemplate, but deep down I know my truth. If I want to walk the path of the Soul, I'd better believe what Soul says. I have to cross again. *Who would walk through fire with burnt soles?* But this is a crucial moment. To walk my talk, I have to listen to my Soul and risk my feet. I have no choice. I've trusted Soul before and now I'm being asked to do it again. Will I make it through?

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I take a breath and deliberately put my right foot into the fire. I walk. With each step, I mumble the words "ease and grace." Slowly, I set one foot after the other. I begin to float. I spread my wings and soar above the fire. My body feels weightless. I walk three more times. It even feels as though the hot coals soothe and heal my wounds. With each step, my feet sink deeper into the coals, which now feel like soft cotton balls.

After three crossings, I stop. I know I've passed the test. My feet tingle and my heart bursts with joy.

That night, as I lie in bed, I glow from head to toe. I think about that crucial moment of choice. I had been asked to trust Soul's guidance on a much deeper level than ever before, and I'd almost lost all of what I'd learned so far. That was close.

I imagine myself as an eagle soaring above my life. I see the times I've courageously followed the footsteps of my Soul, how I've learned to listen and leap—not once, but many times. In that process of listening and leaping, I lost my best friend, my marriage, my job, my country, my pets, and my country club life—all of which I'd dearly loved. But I gained the man of my dreams, five beautiful children, the house of my dreams in the land of my dreams, and work I love. It hasn't been easy, and I had to go far outside my comfort zone. But I did it. I shed my baggage and let go of my deepest fears. I made extraordinary choices and met extraordinary challenges. I listened, no matter what, and miracles happened.

12 I smile as I fall asleep, thinking of Soul. When I wake up the next morning, I look at my feet and laugh. As our instructor said, "Seeing is believing." The blisters are gone. The soles of my feet are healthy and pink. I feel so alive.

My Soul smiles back.



TUNE IN TO YOUR *Authentic* SELF

Have you ever done something that terrified you? What was the result?

Think of occasions when you've trusted your instincts, your faith, or messages from your Soul. How did those situations resolve? Would they have turned out differently had you ignored your internal wisdom?

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When she woke up the morning after her fire walk, Saskia's feet were completely healed. Have you ever experienced a miracle in the wake of trusting your Soul?

AFTERWORD

Editor's Note

Not too long ago, I attended a Zen and Yoga workshop at a local Buddhist retreat center. After a cleansing asana practice, we sat down to begin our thirty-minute seated meditation.

“You don’t need to use a mantra,” the instructor told us. “But if you prefer to do so, here is a simple one that a lot of our students like. As you inhale, say to yourself, ‘What am I?’ And as you exhale, say, ‘Don’t know.’”

“That’s silly,” my mind said. “I know who I am. I’m Bryna!”

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But what is “Bryna?”

As I worked with the mantra in the quiet, my eyes started to twitch. My breath came faster; I shifted uncomfortably on my cushion. Again and again, I inhaled and asked the question, *What am I?* And with each exhale, answers popped up like corn in a kettle. I have been a teenage rebel-without-a-cause, a starving singer-songwriter with crippling stage fright, and a sassy hairstylist at an exclusive salon. I have been the founder of a successful freelance writing and design business, and the owner of a not-so-successful natural foods store. I have been the wife of a good man, and the wife of an alcoholic. (Yes, the two were one and the same.) I have been in love, and I have been divorced. I have been cynical, and I have been optimistic. I have been alone, and I have experienced the love of a beautiful, supportive community.

It wasn't long before I started to hear the underlying refrain. *I have been, I have been, I have been.* I was shocked. Was this pile of "has-beens" the foundation upon which my identity was built? Was my ego really so attached to all of the accomplishments and failures of the last thirty-two years that I couldn't step back and look at "me" as I existed in the moment? Why couldn't I examine my Self without first listing all of the qualifying factors?

Why did I need to provide a definition of "Bryna?"

I took a deep inhale, breathed it out, and for the first time was able to complete the original mantra. *Don't know.*

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Randall Curtis, a nationally-renowned astrologer, writes about the "Curse of Identification" in his book, *Planetary Clusters*. Basically, when we identify with the events and relationships in our lives, past or present—when we create an identity around them—we *become* those events and relationships. By telling ourselves stories about ourselves, we take on the roles of characters in those stories, playing the parts assigned to us by our "narrator," the intellect. Only when we shift that identification (or better yet, let go of it completely) can we begin to uncover our truest, most authentic selves—the luminescent, valuable, divine, utterly human beings we are right now, in this moment.

Every one of the women in this book needed to make a shift to transform her life. Sometimes, this shift was a physical one, but more often it was a shift of *identification*. No longer content to be who they were, our authors rewrote their internal scripts to better reflect the strong, authentic women they knew they could, and *would*, become. In the mirrors of their stories, I saw fragments of myself reflected back at me. Their words jumped off the pages and into my heart, planting seeds of inspiration on days when life felt like it was all too much to handle.

The day after my divorce was finalized, I read Aimée Yawnick's story, and realized that I, too, have buried my authenticity beneath a protective, glossy exterior, to the detriment of my relationships. I saw my own insecurities at play in Lisa Marie Rosati's wake-up call, and wondered if my subversive "little liar" is in fact a close cousin to Rev. Nina Roe's. Just like Saskia Röell, I have doubted the words of my Soul, only to find that I was cared for all along. And while I have yet to experience the ecstasy of complete self-acceptance that was the beginning of Aysha Strausbaugh's miracle, I have hope that, someday, I will.

So who am I: the former wife of an alcoholic, a failed songwriter, a frightened and cynical seeker of abuse? Or am I a successful yoga instructor, writer, and editor; a confident and beautiful woman who trusts in the power of the Universe and the acknowledges the blessings that surround her every day?

Don't know—but the choice is, and has always been, mine to make.

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Yours in gratitude,

Bryna René

Editor, Inspired Living Publishing, LLC

ABOUT OUR *Authors*

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Sharon Babineau is an award winning inspirational speaker, decorated military soldier, mountain climber, hockey player, mother, and volunteer. She is the founder of a not-for-profit organization called Maddie's Everlasting Wish, named in memory of her daughter. Sharon inspires others to embrace their right to happiness, and has facilitated workshops, seminars, and support groups for over a decade. She walks her talk with a powerful story of inspiration and hope. Her story has appeared in print and on television and radio, including a feature on "No Opportunity Wasted with Phil Keoghan" (Amazing Race). Contact Sharon at sharon@mindbreak.ca or visit www.mindbreak.ca and www.maddieswishproject.com.

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Nancy Fisher has been mentoring people in their life transitions for the past 20 years, first through her private home care business, and now as Founder of Onward and Upward, her Life/Business coaching practice which empowers women to increase their potential to find their true life's purpose. She is a mother, grandmother, inspirational conference speaker, golfer and life enthusiast. Clients describe her as motivator, mentor, business consultant and very empowering. Visit Nancy at www.onwardandupwardscoaching.com, or e-mail nancy@onwardandupwardscoaching.com

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As an Angelic Life Coach and Reiki Master, Carolyn McGee loves helping people to discover the joy of self-belief. She works in partnership with the angels to assist others to uncover their true passion, connect with their inner radiance and follow the path of their life purpose. Carolyn has learned from her every experience and relationship, and can guide you to find the hidden gifts in the challenging ones. To learn more, please visit www.gatewaytoyou.com.

Lisa Michaels

Celebrated elemental wisdom teacher, author, and Natural Rhythms President, Lisa Michaels, teaches you how to connect with the profound power of Nature so you can dramatically increase your ability to thrive in every area of life. Chosen as a Hay House Mover & Shaker, Lisa can help you ignite your inner gifts and create more dynamic success through her products, workshops, and facilitator and coach trainings. Download a free Natural Rhythms Starter Kit at www.naturalrhythms.org.

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The Balance Whisperer, aka Cathleen O'Connor, is a specialist in authentic business branding, a keynote speaker, intuitive dream analyst, life and business coach and the author of *Harriet Takes the Wheel* and *The Everything Law of Attraction Dream Dictionary*. Her CD, *From Stress to Serenity*, features guided imagery meditations for your daily life. Cathleen loves to inspire other women to act on their most cherished dreams and create lives of joy, fulfillment and success. Find Cathleen online at www.thebalancewhisperer.com.

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From live TV to live events Michelle Phillips has inspired millions! As a celebrity makeup artist and Life Coach she works with people everywhere to bring out their best from the inside out. She shares this message in her speaking programs, TV appearances, radio show on Hay House Radio, and in her new book, *The Beauty Blueprint: 8 Steps to Building the Life and Look of Your Dreams* (Hay House, 2011). Connect with Michelle at www.michellephillips.com.

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Joani Plenty is a coveted speaker and motivational writer who is committed to excellence. One of her passions is inspiring others to do the same. Joani is a member of Coachville, NAFE and Women Speakers Association. She spends her spare time as a voiceover actress and singing in front of the mirror with her hairbrush microphone. Joani is currently writing a children's book, lives in NJ with her family and "Phil," the groundhog who lives under the shed. Find her at www.joaniplenty.com, or e-mail jplenty@joaniplenty.com. You can also "friend" Joani on Facebook.

Rev. Nina Roe

Rev. Nina Roe is the Founder of AngelsTeach. She discovered her life mission in her forties: to mentor and teach inspired souls how to connect with their angels and reclaim the magic of everyday life. For information about online classes, readings and the Living with the Angels™ membership program, visit www.angelsteach.com.

Saskia Röell

Saskia Röell is the connection to your Soul. Using her own life as living proof that extraordinary choices lead to an extraordinary life, she expertly helps others do the same. As a Soul Empowerment Coach, best-selling author, coauthor with Jack Canfield and Deepak Chopra, speaker, healer, and mother of five, Saskia empowers you to move out of your comfort zone, break through your fears, and go after your heart's desires. She works internationally with people from all walks of life and has successfully helped many people live their biggest dreams. Find Saskia online at www.yoursoulguidance.com and www.suitcasefulloffaith.com.

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A self-made success through a lifetime of deep inquiry and rich experience, Kathleen E. Sims, C.H.T., C.R.C., has emerged as one of the Global Leaders in the field of Love, Purpose and Creating a 'Juicy' Life. She is a coauthor of the best-selling books *Wake Up Women—BE Happy, Healthy & Wealthy*, *Wake Up—Moments of Inspiration* and *A Juicy, Joyful Life*, as well as a motivational speaker, Love and Spiritual life coach, trainer, and hypnotherapist. She is committed to helping others live purposeful lives filled with abiding, lasting love. Call Kathleen for a free consultation at (925) 674-9003, or check out her websites: www.lifetimeconnection.com, www.thewonderofwomen.com, www.liveyourvisionworkshop.com, and www.innertrails.com.

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Aysha Strausbaugh is a Making Miracles: Bonding Before Birth life coach and Core Alignment Specialist, as well as an amazing hairstylist, entrepreneur, circus performer, and previous owner of Studio Catwalk Hair Salon. A member of Alcoholics Anonymous since 1989, she is a lover of dance, karaoke, family, friends, Disneyland, laughter, stories, and babies. In 2008, Aysha gave birth to her miracle daughter Chloe, proving that the impossible is possible if you just believe; hence, Making Miracles Coaching was born. Learn more at www.makingmiraclescoaching.com.

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Kim Turcotte

Kim Turcotte gets jazzed about helping service-based businesswomen get clear about their own passion and purpose. She helps them to uncover their Core Purpose and create a strategic plan to build their businesses around this purpose. Kim doesn't just support clients through creating a solid business strategy; she has the technical skills to support them through the implementation of that strategy. No more getting stalled mid-process! Kim and her team help clients create systems, automate their businesses, and build websites aligned with their passion and purpose! To learn more, visit Kim online at www.kimturcotte.com.

Shann Vander Leek

Shann Vander Leek: successful television advertising sales maven turned international Life on Your Terms Accelerator, yogini, and author of *Life on Your Terms*. Unconventional and delightfully curious; she is a wildly sought-after transition coach who inspires powerful executive women in transition to get focused now, follow their passion and create more balance in their lives. Accelerate your life on your terms with Shann's Signature Coaching System. Find Shann at www.shannvanderleek.com or www.truebalancelifecoaching.com.

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Kati Neal Verbarg

Kati Verbarg is a freelance writer located in Portland, Oregon, and often writes about subjects related to self-esteem. Recognizing that her related challenges were not necessarily unique to her, she founded Truly B, a media campaign advocating a positive sense of self-worth in girls of any age. Kati is dedicated to spreading messages that inspire an awareness of self-talk, personal responsibility, the importance of choice, and all that is beautiful, brilliant, bountiful, benevolent, brave, and boundless about us! Visit Truly B at www.trulyb.com.

Aimée Yawnick

Balancing the Spiritual Laws of the Universe and practical proven tools and techniques, Aimée helps her clients achieve higher levels of confidence and self-worth so they can discover and fulfill their Divine purpose. Aimée guides the way and clears out the junk so you can easily embrace the woman you are meant to be. Grab your free copy of Aimée's revolutionary report, "Your Inner Guide To Good Fortune," at www.coregrowthanddevelopment.com/eyas.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Linda Joy

Linda Joy is one of the premiere voices in women's inspirational publishing today. Following the calling of her heart, Linda lives her soul's purpose as a best-selling publisher, sought-after inspirational speaker, and Conscious Business Catalyst dedicated to inspiring women to live deeper, more authentic, inspired lives. She is passionate about helping women around the world rediscover and reconnect with their inner wisdom, and trust in the power of their dreams.

In her twenty-year journey from welfare mother to award-winning entrepreneur, Linda learned firsthand the power of passion, courage, and perseverance. She has walked the walk, and believes that there are no failures in life—only lessons to be learned and shared. Linda has been invited to share this heartfelt wisdom both at colleges and women's forums and through global virtual events such as the *100 Women of Destiny* tele-summit, where she shared the virtual platform with visionaries like Marianne Williamson, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and Mallika Chopra. As host of the *Inspired Living Secrets* tele-seminar series, twice a year Ms. Joy invites twenty-four of today's leading visionaries in the fields of personal and spiritual development, natural health, and human potential to share their wisdom with her audience. The *Authentic Conversations with Extraordinary Women* podcast series uses authentic storytelling as a tool to help women transform their lives.

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With the mission to inspire women to live from the inside out, Ms. Joy founded *Aspire Magazine* in 2005. Now the premiere inspirational digital magazine for women, *Aspire* publishes six content-rich issues per year featuring today's leading visionaries, authors, and speakers, and reaches subscribers around the world. As part of her personal

commitment to bring women the resources to live authentically, Linda donates free issues of *Aspire* as part of her global “Mission to Inspire 100,000 Women” campaign.

In early 2010, Linda dove deeper into the power of authentic storytelling, and Inspired Living Publishing was born. Hours after its release in September 2010, ILP’s first book, the anthology *A Juicy Joyful Life*, hit #1 in Amazon’s Hot New Releases in multiple categories. With the release of *Embracing Your Authentic Self*, Ms. Joy continues to bring women’s stories to life, and in 2012 Inspired Living Publishing will move toward publishing full-length works by women authors in the inspirational genre.

To Learn More about Linda Joy – visit www.linda-joy.com, Twitter: @LindaJoy

To Claim your Free Subscription to *Aspire* Magazine – visit www.subscribetoaspire.com

To Tune in to Inspired Living Secrets – visit www.inspiredlivingsecrets.com

To Listen to Authentic Conversations – visit www.authenticconversationswithlinda.com

To receive updates on upcoming publishing projects – visit www.inspiredlivingpublishing.com

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Bryna René is an accomplished freelance writer and editor dedicated to helping entrepreneurs, visionaries, and spiritual beings around the world bring their messages to light through online and print media.

The editor of *A Juicy Joyful Life*, the first best-selling anthology from Inspired Living Publishing, Bryna has also coauthored and edited numerous successful non-fiction books, and her short fiction has placed in several national and international competitions.

When she's not lovingly molding the written word, Bryna builds websites for holistic businesses. She also teaches Vinyasa and Prana Flow® yoga through weekly classes and workshops at studios across Rhode Island and the U.S.

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Linda Joy,

Best-Selling Author and Publisher of *A Juicy, Joyful Life*

Embracing Your Authentic Self brings you the stories of 26 extraordinary women who have removed their false masks, stepped past the labels that once defined them, and reconnected with their personal power. Today, they're standing tall, embracing their authenticity, and stepping boldly onto the path of self-actualization.

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These raw, revealing tales of empowerment and new beginnings prove that each and every one of us have the potential to live authentically and joyfully. Each touching story is followed by three journaling questions to help you journey deeper into your truth and reconnect with your truest self.

Share your journey toward your authentic self at
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Cover Design by Rachel Dunham
www.HummingbirdCreativeConcepts.com

US/CANADA \$16.97

ISBN: 978-0-9845006-2-8



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