

CHANGE

YOUR

LIFE

IN

5

PRACTICAL STEPS TO MAKING
MEANINGFUL CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE

1 CLARIFY **2** CONQUER **3** CHOOSE
4 CELEBRATE **5** COMMIT

SUE BELTON

FOREWORD BY KAREN KIMSEY-HOUSE,
CO-FOUNDER OF THE CO-ACTIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE

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5

*To my daughter Amelie, I feel privileged to be chaperoning
you through this first part of your journey. May you always
live a life of true choice. Love ooo!*

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MEANINGFUL CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE**



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FOREWORD

I began college doing an English Education major and then got totally enamoured with the theatre. Following this, I became really excited about coaching and somehow I ended up as the co-founder of a global coaching organization.

As I look back over my career, I see that it was impossible to know where I was headed. The two important things that guided me through all the crazy twists and turns of my personal yellow brick road was the determination to follow my heart and the power to choose the path that was most compelling.

Don't get me wrong, I managed to generate plenty of catastrophes and breakdowns along the way and everything was definitely not rosy all the time. Yet the ability to recover and the power to choose always steered me back on course. Now,

looking back, I can see that every single brick in that road mattered and contributed mightily to a life of love, fulfillment and joy.

One of the things I like about Sue is that she has followed a similarly diverse, challenging and painful pathway. Then from the depth of her own experience, she wrote *Change Your Life in 5* because she wants people to know that they have the power to change things and to choose the life that they want.

We live in a complex time, full of uncertainty, volatility, chaos and ambiguity. It's pretty easy to get overwhelmed and feel like the only thing to do is to crawl back into bed and pull the covers over our heads. We very much need models and tools that ground and fortify us and that empower us to approach ourselves and our world with positivity and hope.



Change Your Life in 5 is such a book. Read it and more importantly, *use* it.

We all yearn for lives of richness, satisfaction and fulfillment. In *Change Your Life in 5*, Sue provides a simple, easy-to-use guide for creating precisely that. So get started right now. Be bold and begin the journey *now* to create the life you want. There is no other moment to wait for.

One of my most fervent desires is that those who CTI has touched will use what they have learned to 'pay it forward' and contribute to making the world a better place for others. That's one of the reasons I am so delighted to be writing this foreword. It gives me the chance to celebrate Sue's beautiful book as she 'pays it forward' to you.

Working with this book will generate internal harmony and fulfillment for you which will then be reflected eternally. So, as

you change your life in five, you will also be making our world a little brighter and a littler more whole. In many ways, large and small, you will be 'paying it forward'. Isn't that what we all want, ultimately?

With respect and gratitude,
Karen Kimsey-House

INTRODUCTION

Choice – an act of choosing, the right or ability to choose.

Change – make or become different, exchange one thing for another.

Whatever your situation, whatever life throws at you, you always have a choice and you can *always* change it. I know this is a radical statement, but this is what I have learned from my own personal journey, and as a coach I have helped hundreds of clients do the same. When I was at my lowest, when I felt stuck and trapped and was unable to see a way out, I was lucky enough to find coaching. I discovered there is always a way out, and there is always a different, better way to live.

My story

I had been signed off work with depression and anxiety and had been put on medication. My daughter Amelie was just over a year old and my planned return to work after a year's maternity leave had gone disastrously wrong. It started with

my mum breaking her wrist: she was due to look after Amelie three days a week while I returned to work part time as a producer at the BBC. It was a job that I loved and, until I gave birth, I had spent my entire adult life studying and working very hard. I was your classic 'over-achiever' – working long hours often at the expense of my health, wellbeing and relationships.

My mother's broken wrist meant that my partner's mother had to look after Amelie while I went back to work. At the end of a long day at work, I walked into the living room to see Amelie red, flushed and floppy, sitting on the knee of a woman that wasn't me. I remember holding onto the door frame, feeling desperate for something to steady me. I couldn't leave her like that again.

I went to work the following day and the next, but I became more and more desperate,



and found it increasingly difficult to see a way out. I went to see my GP hoping for a solution. She asked me a series of questions; it was clear I was suffering from a mixture of anxiety and depression, and I was prescribed medication. I can't remember much about what followed, but I know I left my job and didn't go back.

What I do remember about that time was the feeling of sheer panic and fear. I had spent my whole life achieving, doing what many saw as a pretty impressive, glamorous job. What no one had told me was that my job would not allow me to bring up my daughter in the way I wanted. I wanted to do something meaningful and stimulating, but I also wanted to see her grow up. On a practical level, I needed to pay my part of a fairly hefty mortgage, plus bills, and I didn't know how I was going to do all of that. This

situation and my mental state took its toll on my relationship with Amelie's father. Up until this point, I had always been the strong one, but now I was a mess – at home with a baby, unable even to go on public transport. I started to have panic attacks and to drink heavily. I didn't have a clue about what I was going to do. I could only manage what was necessary to get through the day and take care of my daughter.

While I was signed off, the BBC announced a round of redundancies. I knew I had to take my chance while I could. I didn't know what on Earth I would do after leaving, I just knew I had to take the opportunity to find a way out. It was both one of the easiest and one of the hardest things I've ever done. Making the decision felt like a no-brainer but afterwards the reality kicked in. I struggled with my whole

I believe we always have a choice, and can always change things, even when we think we can't.

identity: I was no longer a *producer*, but who was I? How could I lead the life I really wanted?

It was during this time that I had a chance meeting with a former colleague. She had retrained as a Life Coach and told me how much she loved it – being naturally curious about people (snap), wanting to help them (snap), and having the freedom and flexibility to work around caring for her daughter (looking good so far). It all sounded great, apart from the fact that I'd never previously been brave enough even to work freelance and forego a regular salary, let alone consider running my own coaching practice.

I had nothing else lined up, no other ideas and options on the horizon, so I decided to look into it. After a lot of digging, research and phone calls, I found the

Co-Active Training Institute (CTI). I was offered a coaching session over the phone to see what it was all about. Within 45 minutes my coach had pulled me out of the hole I was in and taken me to a place where I felt there were options and that I had the power to change things.

I didn't know how she'd done it, all I knew was that she had asked me to physically move around my bedroom, sitting and standing in different positions, each one making me think and feel in a different way. Then I chose the one I wanted to go with and that was that. I literally *felt* different, *thought* differently, and had made a choice to get out of the place I was in, and *do* something to take back control of my life.

Although my journey from that point to this has been anything but plain sailing, coaching has helped me get in touch with



who I really am, what really matters to me, and design a life to make me feel happier and more fulfilled. It has helped me overcome my extreme workaholism (although I am a work-in-progress, as many of us are), helped me give up my heavy drinking and excessive shopping habit, challenged and shifted my major fears, doubts and insecurities, and helped me build a solid, stable life for me and my daughter. It has also helped me honour and live my life's purpose, which is to help others do the same.

Why I wrote this book

Over the past 12 years, I have worked with hundreds of clients who have also revealed how dissatisfied they are with their lives but who are convinced they don't have a choice, that they *have* to live like this (but can't

bear it), that they need to stay in their job (but it's killing them inside), that they *can't* do what they dream of doing (it won't pay the bills), and are scared they will fail. They feel shame that they don't know how to get out of their situation. Many of them don't understand why they have ended up at this point, why they feel trapped without joy in their lives and no possible solution in sight. They have tried to change things, to make things better, but nothing has worked.

Don't let this be you. Don't wait until it's too late before you realize that you've wasted your one precious life – by doing a job you hate or not going for your dreams for fear you will fail. This is why I started my *Change Your Life in 5* video blog a couple of years ago and why I've written this book. I want as many people as possible to know that life doesn't have to be like this.



I want people to know about the information that is available – the tools and techniques I’ve learned along the way and use with my clients on a daily basis. These tools will help you to live your life from a true place of *conscious choice*. You won’t learn these skills at school: how to live a value-lead life; how to best deal with fears, doubts and insecurities; how to choose how you respond to anything; how to take care of your mind body and spirit; how we all have a purpose – and what that is.

My purpose is to show you you always have a choice and you can always change things – even when you think you can’t. It’s what coaching has done for me and it’s what I want for you. Judy Rich, the woman who blew my mind in 45 minutes, became my first coach and is now a very dear friend. In our early days of working together, she sent

me a lovely card as encouragement during those tumultuous times. I have it up on my wall to this day, as a daily reminder: *She not only saw a light at the end of the tunnel, she became that light for others.*

Based on my own journey, extensive research and training, and just over a decade of working with clients, this book and the five core principles I have developed will guide you through a process of learning how to make *conscious* decisions and change *anything* in your life you are not happy with. I see my courageous clients doing this on a daily basis. I see them take step after step, stumble and fall, and then get up and carry on as they make new choices and take positive action. As one of my clients put it beautifully last week, ‘I thought I didn’t have a choice, but now I know I do.’ And that’s what I want for you too. My wish is that you use the



information in this book to help you start living your life from a true place of choice.

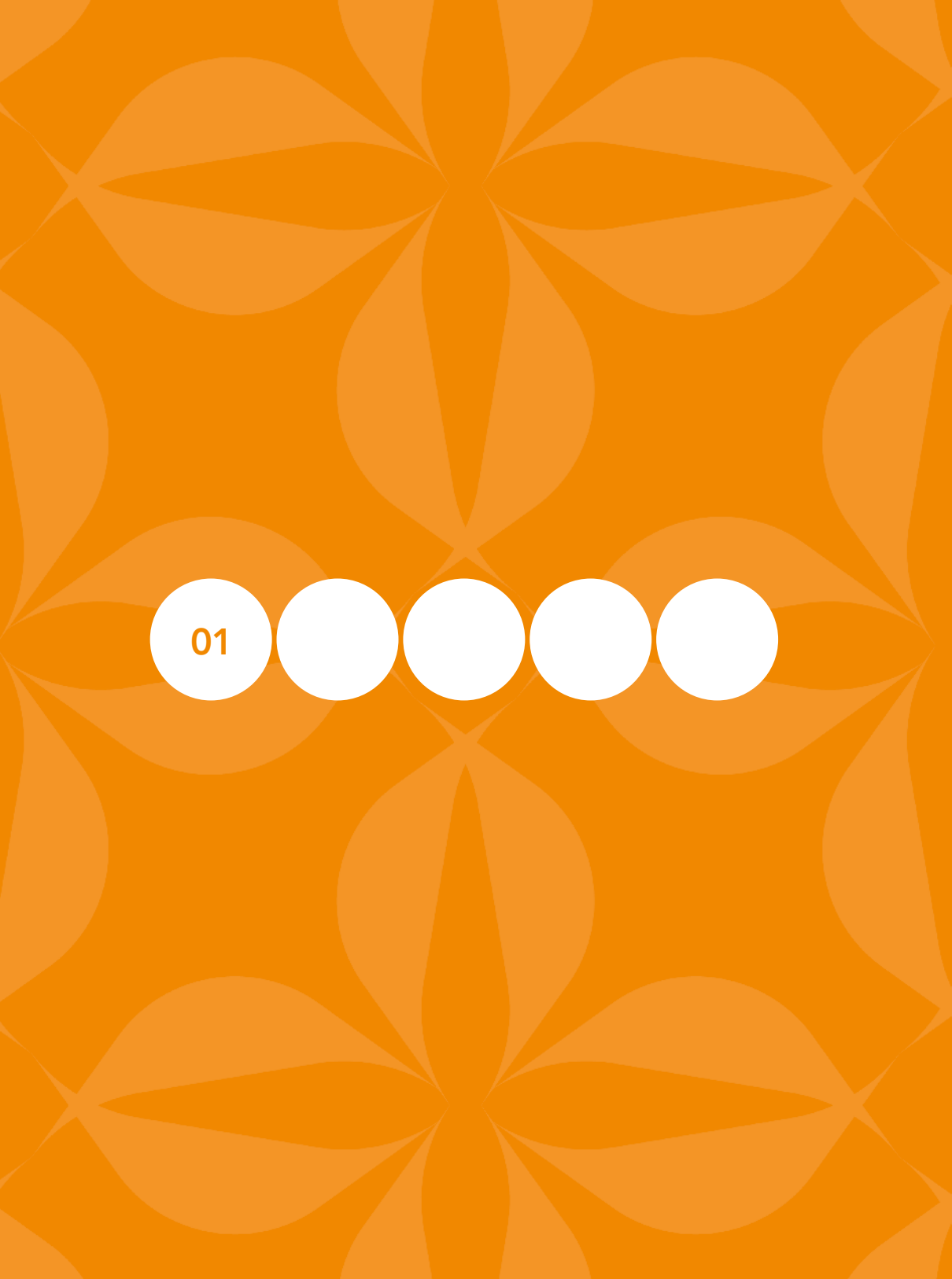
How to use this book

This book is structured around five core principles. Start with any chapter, depending on where you need the most guidance. If you feel completely stuck – then start with CLARIFY (what is really important to you and why you're here), then go straight to CHOOSE (to shift yourself away from where you are trapped). If you start with CLARIFY but feel that the focus on dreams is not for you, then go straight to CONQUER, to identify and deal with the beliefs that are preventing you from changing your life. If you are paralyzed by perfectionism or feeling not good enough, go straight to CELEBRATE. If you're exhausted and have no energy to spare, go

straight to COMMIT (how to create the time and space needed to create change).

Making changes in your life is not a linear process – as individuals we each have our own blind spots and areas that need attention. Check in with where you are, and if you don't know, that's fine too.

When you have chosen a chapter, read it thoroughly, re-reading if necessary. Then create the time and space to do the exercises before moving onto the next chapter. Working through these exercises will ensure you get the most value out of this book. Any permanent, meaningful change requires increased self-awareness plus consistent action. That's why I have written the book in this format – to give you both the relevant psychological theory and brain science, plus the accompanying practical coaching exercises.



01

CLARIFY

From the Latin *clarus* meaning 'clear' or 'distinct';
to make coherent, easy to see, certain, definite.

Does your life feel meaningless? Are you often anxious? Do you feel disconnected from your loved ones? Do you feel stuck in a rut and is this having a negative impact on your mental health and general sense of wellbeing? Do you want to feel like this for the next 20, 30 or 40 years?

If you have forgotten what makes you really happy, what you want, and where you want to be in life, the first thing you need is *clarity*. This chapter is all about discovering why you are having these feelings and what

to start doing to change them. It will give you the clarity that you need. It will help you identify and take time out to discover what's really important to you – which may not be exactly what you thought, and could even be a complete revelation. You will discover what's going on beneath the surface, and what to do to start changing things. You will identify your core values and your life's mission statement, and create a clear future, which will make you feel happy, satisfied, and more at peace.

IS THIS ALL THERE IS?

It's natural and normal to reflect on your life, and sometimes big life events such as key birthdays or milestones make you do this more, encouraging you to question what you're doing and why. Hopefully you feel pretty content and happy with where you are and where you're going. However, when you are forced to stop and think, a feeling of uneasiness can emerge. Have you ever asked yourself any of these questions: How did I end up here? What am I doing with my life? Is this all there is?

I've been coaching since 2008. Since then, every single one of my clients has said at least one of these things during our very first meeting. Either they've been feeling like this for a couple of years, or something big has happened in their life which has forced them to question everything.

They're usually at a point where circumstances seem to have come to a head, when they can no longer tolerate what their life or current situation has become, when they feel a bit lost or despondent, or they've lost their spark but don't really know why or what to do about it. They want more than

'this'; they feel their life has no meaning, but don't actually know what could bring them more of a sense of satisfaction and joy.

It's a scary place, and there doesn't seem to be any escape. Trust me. I know. I've been there. I had my daughter, Amelie, at the age of 34, and while initially it was great, and I took a whole year out, I did what many people do from that point onwards and had everything planned out: return to work, childcare arranged, done. Then I started to feel a real sense of, 'Uh-oh, this doesn't feel right', and what I actually started to want didn't fit with my previous plan. I vividly

remember the day when it hit me like a proverbial sledgehammer to the head. I'd gone back to my job as a television producer and had been out filming reactions to the stabbing of a teenage boy. I'd got off the bus at the end of my road and was literally running to get back to Amelie; it was just turning 7pm. I walked into my flat and saw her there – on her nan's knee – all floppy and red. She'd been ill all day. I felt a huge visceral reaction, and I stood there in the doorway and thought, 'No, this isn't right; what am I doing?' But I didn't know what to do. I knew I didn't want 'this', I just didn't know what I did want or how I could possibly get there.

This is always how my clients feel when they come to coaching. They may present as wanting a new job, having to decide whether to go further up the career ladder or start their own business, whether to move to a new place etc., but underneath they all feel that the life they are living is just not right for them, but they have no idea what 'right' would look like. Not so far underneath the surface of their everyday lives, they feel confused, frustrated, bored, angry – and they just don't want to feel like that anymore.

IS THIS YOU?

- You've got it all, but you feel empty, unhappy and directionless.
- You've overachieved your whole life but are finding it hard to think about what comes next.
- You're going through the motions of living the life you've built, but you're no longer taking any joy from it.
- You don't feel like you've truly achieved your full potential.

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

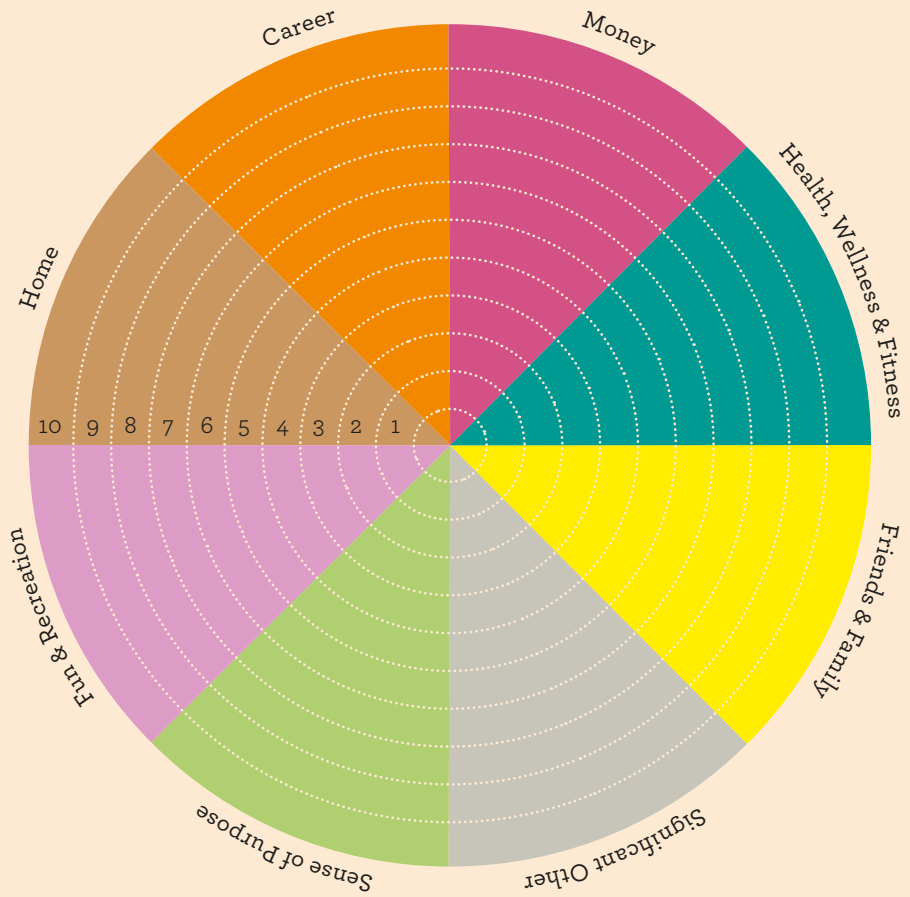
Think about the different areas of your life, and give each one a rating out of ten for the amount of satisfaction you feel with it: 0 being completely dissatisfied, 10 being completely satisfied.

Link up the sections by drawing a line to create a new outer edge and then answer the following questions.

01

Which areas need the most attention?

TIME TO WRITE



02

What does living like this cost you? For example, being truly happy or quality time with your family.

03

Fast-forward five years. If you don't start changing things now, where will you be?

04

When you are 80 or 90 years old and look back on your life, what do you want to be able to say about how you lived it?

05

What is one thing you can do, this week, to improve the score of one of the lowest-ranking sections? Make sure it is specific, measurable and time-related. For example, 'This week I will go for two 30-minute walks in the woods'.

Most of my clients talk to me about one or more of the feelings outlined below. They are trapped in their own heads, bound up by fear, overburdened with responsibility, and feeling guilty and frustrated for not being able to think and plan their own way out of their current situation. They never feel present or at peace, and are unable to take a moment to enjoy the fruits of their hard work. Consider which of the following describe you:

01. Unhappy with your career

You used to be ambitious and innovative. Now, you hate your job, feel too old to move and are unfulfilled, but are too blocked and scared to control your own future. This book will help you discover what's happened and why, and what you can do about it.

02. Anxious and overwhelmed

On edge and struggling, you feel stuck, flat and lost. Sometimes a new bag, holiday or house will quell the fear, but it always comes back. You're a go-getting over-achiever; impatient about your inability to change your life for the better. In this book you'll uncover the fears, doubt and insecurities that are holding you back and will quickly, effectively and pragmatically set you on a new path.

03. Unfulfilled and empty

You wake up feeling there must be more to life than this, but think you've left it too late to fulfill your potential. Work consumes your time and energy: you're 100 per cent responsibility and 0 per cent contentment. Reading this book will give you clarity about what you want, so you can have the impact and make the contribution that you dream of.

04. Guilty

You've worked hard to achieve the career, relationship, maybe children, and the lifestyle you've always wanted. You just don't want it any more. You feel that you should be happy, and you try to be grateful and enjoy the fruits of your hard work, but you can't. Reading this book you will identify what you want in your life from now on and ensure you get it.

The conflict

Everything you are feeling is absolutely normal. Everything you are struggling with and feel hopeless about is a part of human psychological development. Psychologists refer to it as *individuation* (Carl Jung) or *self-actualization* (Abraham Maslow).

Whatever you want to call it, it amounts to the same thing: a drive or need to become

‘A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization.’

ABRAHAM MASLOW

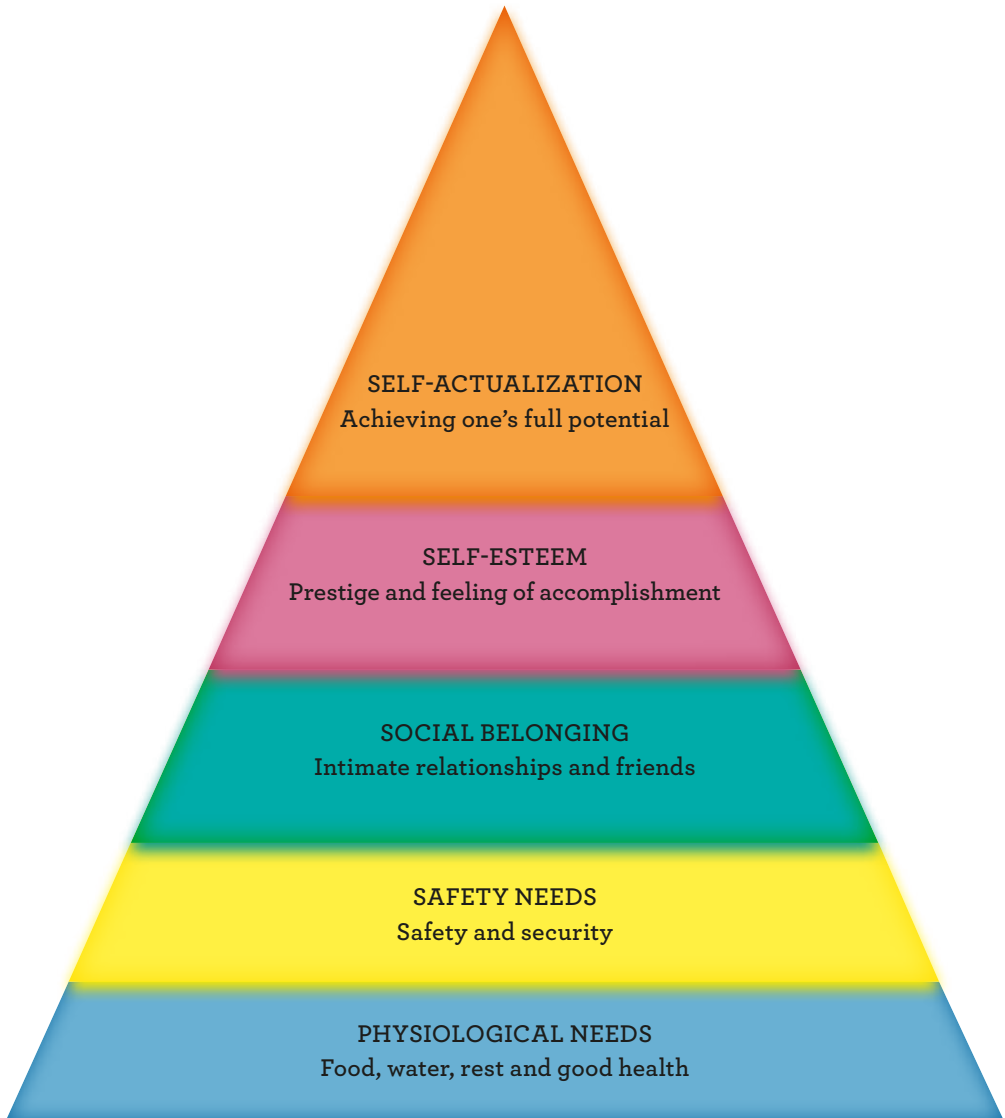
our true selves – who we truly are when we are performing at our full potential, and using our own *natural* set of talents and abilities versus what we have been told or ‘conditioned’ to believe.

Jung believed that it’s a natural drive within us – to want more meaning in life; Maslow believed it is a need that develops once our material needs have been met, when we naturally want to have more meaning and purpose in our lives. I believe it’s a mixture of both – both a natural drive and something that happens when you have all of the things you’ve been striving for.

Take a look at Maslow’s hierarchy of needs on the following page. This illustrates his idea that we all have certain basic needs, and fulfilling these helps us to thrive. He groups them into five levels; you have to fulfill the needs of one level before you can move up to the next.

The problem comes when the life we have, the life we have created and built for ourselves doesn’t actually fit who we truly are – i.e. our *natural* talents and abilities. This is because up until a certain point (usually around the age of 35), we have designed our lives based on what we have been told we *should* be doing, *can’t* do, or on only what is *possible* for us to do in life (in order to earn a living, support ourselves etc.).

This is all perfectly normal: we learn the ‘rules of life’ from who or what we see around us – parents, teachers, sometimes religion, society in general – but all of these have just been following the ‘rules’ that have been passed down to them. We follow these dictates in order to belong, to fit in, and to survive in the world as we know it. So, we enter careers that we have been led to believe are right for us, follow a path that has been laid out in front of us as ‘the



way', and even choose partners based on what we learn about relationships from our parents.

This is where the conflict or 'midlife crisis' comes in. The conflict happens when we find ourselves stuck between two worlds: the life we have created, but which no longer seems to fit or bring us any joy (let alone passion); and the yearning we have within us to actually follow our true path and calling in life – basically be who we were always meant to be.

If you don't know or understand what's going on beneath the surface, this is the point at which a sense or feeling of 'crisis' occurs. This is when you see people trying to 'fix' themselves to make themselves feel better, or trying to suppress their feelings of confusion and malaise by *external* means. This is the time at which people typically move house or area, leave their long-term partners (and yes often have affairs with a younger/more successful/better-looking version of their partner), or dive further into their careers – all in the hope that they might regain that sense of satisfaction and joy they once felt.

This is when we see the cliché of the middle-aged man buying a sports car or a motorbike, or suddenly taking up cycling (equipped of course with the latest bike and

all the skin-tight cycling outfits). Men will strive to appear more youthful or more adventurous, or to look as if they are 'achieving' something – all to make themselves feel better about their lives.

Women will often begin to question their work and personal achievements, and start thinking about different ways of earning a living – typically starting businesses of their own or 'portfolio careers'. Women have more financial freedom now than ever before, and are therefore much less likely to 'put up and shut up' than previous generations. Statistics show that today's women are now less financially dependent on their partners, and are able to afford the kinds of life changes that were once only available to men (about 25 per cent of wives today earn more than their husbands). Women are also now *almost* as likely as men to have affairs, and two out of every three divorces are now initiated by women. So when faced with the question, 'How do you really want your life to be?', women are now much more likely to make a radical change and move on.

Waking up

I think it's time to rebrand the 'midlife crisis'. I like to call it 'waking up', and I see this as a completely positive life stage to go through. Or rather it *can* be. If you know what's going on under the surface. If you use this time in your life to question, re-evaluate, and do some challenging work around redesigning your life the way you *really* want it to be, you will get to enjoy many more fulfilling years.

This is when people come to me for coaching. My guess is that this is why you are reading this book. You know that things just don't feel right, your unhappy and you just don't know what you *do* want, or you do know deep down, but just don't feel it's possible.

Well, I'm here to tell you the same thing I tell all of my clients – whatever you truly want (even if you don't know what that is right now), *is* possible. Not only is it possible, you can have it. It will take some serious questioning, a lot of courage, and some hard work to get you from where you are now to the place that will make you feel truly happy, satisfied and fulfilled, but trust me, it's worth it.

You only have to look around you to see the effects on people who have not faced up to these questions and actually taken action.

It takes a lot of courage and hard work to face up to the big questions at this stage in your life. If you do not listen to the questions, thoughts and reflections you are now experiencing and which have encouraged you to read this book – you will be faced with many decades of regret, resentment, boredom and anger.

An incredible book that brings this point home is *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying: A Life Transformed by the Dearly Departing* by Bronnie Ware. Bronnie is a nurse who worked in palliative care for several years and wrote about what she learned from working with her patients. She undertook a series of interviews with patients and went on to compile a list of their top five regrets:

01. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.
02. I wish I hadn't worked so hard, and so much.
03. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings more.
04. I wish I'd been better at staying in touch with my friends.
05. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

Wow, what a list. The one that hit me the most the first time I read it was number two: 'I wish I hadn't worked so hard, and so much.' This is something I am working on at the moment, as it is a regret I definitely do not want to feel on my deathbed, and one that I know I will if I don't take action. I have struggled with this for a long time and am now consciously working fewer hours, taking more time to relax and enjoy life, and spending a lot more time with friends and family. I have turned off almost all the app notifications on my phone; I am taking more time out to do fun things with my daughter (rather than fitting in 'just one more hour of work'); and also forcing myself to take more rest days and to spend more time, out in nature, with my boyfriend and friends. How about you?

You can absolutely change your future. You do not need to be one of those people with the regrets listed on the previous pages – you do have a choice. It's *my* life purpose to show you that there is a different way to live, and that it can be exactly how you want it to be.

To change your life will take great courage and hard work, but with this awareness, together with the positive actions that this book suggests, you can

start designing the life you were meant to live. If you completed the exercise on pages 18–21, you have already made a start).

If you don't yet know what your 'ideal life' actually looks like, then read on so you can start to clarify now.

Your ideal life

You only get one life. This is it. Seriously, I think this vitally important fact becomes lost in the reality and grind of everyday life. Whatever your religious or spiritual beliefs, this is the only life you have right now.

Take a moment to ask yourself the following questions: Is what you are doing right now, and the path you're on, *it* for you? Is what you are doing right now fulfilling? Does your life bring you joy? Are you living the dreams and goals you had as a teenager or in your early 20s; has it all panned out as you imagined? My guess is not, and my guess is, as you're reading this book, that deep down you know there must be more, or at least you *hope* there is. Even on a day-to-day basis – is this really how you want to be living your life – for the next 20, 30 or 40 years?

THE REGRET BUSTER

01

Looking at the list on page 26, write down the regrets you do not want to have, or think of and write down your own.

02

What are the things you will do to start busting these regrets now?

FULFILLMENT

I trained with the Co-Active Training Institute (CTI) and one of their core principles is *fulfillment*. They believe that we all have a yearning for something deeper – a fulfilling life with meaning, purpose and satisfaction. How does that sound to you? Possible? Far-off? Does this apply to what you are doing with *your* life? And most importantly, why would you not want that?

Why would you not want to feel, all the time, deep down, a sense of being whole, alive, and satisfied – for the rest of your life? That is what this book is all about and what I want for you, because that's my version of a fulfilling life.

Normally, most of us just focus on what we have or don't have – the 'things' that give us momentary pleasure, such as the shiny new car that makes us feel good for about six months, and then loses its appeal, and so on to the next thing and the next. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with wanting 'things' – the car, a nice house, a successful

career, a great relationship. What I'm saying is, don't assume they will make you feel fundamentally satisfied at any deep level, or for any long period of time.

Feeling 'good' isn't a sign of living a fulfilled life either. Leading a fulfilling life can give you a deep sense of peace and ease, but it can also feel like a struggle. Living a life of purpose and meaning can be the more difficult route to take but it is really worth it, because on the inside you will feel a deeper sense of satisfaction, and know that you're doing what is right for you.

What I have learned is this: our outer worlds truly are a direct reflection of our inner worlds and whatever we believe, will be.

Your version of fulfillment

Most people out there in the world are walking around, going about their daily lives without knowing what it is that would truly 'fulfill' them. This stuff doesn't get taught in schools. We are all so busy just getting by, dealing with the next problem, meeting the next deadline, going for the next promotion, that there is no time to actually stop and ask these questions – or if we do, it feels far too frightening because we don't have the answers (or rather, we think we don't).

What we do is buy another dress, another car, a bigger house, change our partner for a shiny new one – all in the hope that these 'things' will get rid of that gnawing anxiety deep down inside. That anxiety is a direct result of us not fulfilling our true potential, or even identifying what that might be.

We are so conditioned from a very early age (in fact since birth) to think, behave, and believe in a certain way – what we *can* do, *can't* do, *should* do, *have* to do, *don't dare* do or be – in accordance with what others think and believe *is* possible for us (and what they were told was possible for them). So it's no wonder that you've not had a chance (so far) to sit down and ask what your vision of a really fulfilling life looks like. Sometimes it's not all that fantastical.

A couple of weeks ago, a new client came to me because she had been living very 'small' for her entire adult life – her words not mine. What she really wanted, and why she was coming to me, was to 'live an expanded life and get the confidence to start dating'. She was 36 years old and had been living a life that involved work, having a few drinks after work, and then going

home – literally for 15 years. I asked her to visualize her ideal world and to really dare to dream. It took a good while to move her away from what she thought was or wasn't possible, but when she did, all she actually wanted was a slightly fuller life – to live in a town centre flat to feel more connected, to live with a partner, and to have a vibrant social life where again she felt more engaged with others and the world in general. That was it and it was all possible! She had just, up to that point, not dared to imagine it – so how on earth could she have made it happen?

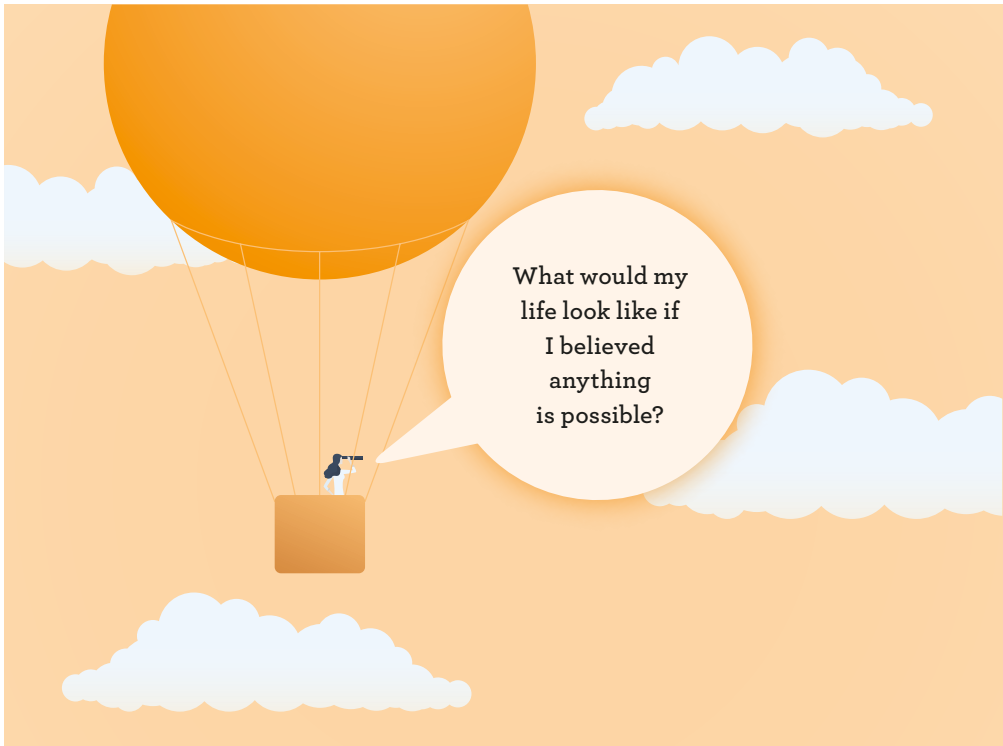
Indeed, what all my clients over the years, and I, have truly wanted, hasn't actually been that far out of reach either – it just feels that way. It feels impossible – so impossible in fact, that we feel we can't go there.

Deep down you do know what you want your life to look like and you know exactly what brings you joy and fulfillment. I see clients every day who have built their whole lives around what they were told was or wasn't possible for them, and yet deep down they feel bored, unsatisfied and unfulfilled. This is normal. What you are experiencing is normal.

Dare to dream

In order for you to really find out what you truly want, you are going to have to put conditioning and fear to one side. You are going to have to *dare to dream*. This is your one time to fantasize and to create your ideal world scenario – what do you want your life to look like?

I know that already there will be a sabotaging voice in your head saying, 'But that's not possible/I can't have that/I'm not qualified to do that/I don't know anything about that ... etc.,' I'm not diminishing what this voice is saying, I just want you to notice this voice right now, know it isn't actually yours (although it feels like it), it's one of the ones you've picked up along the way, and I want you to set it aside/put it away or whatever you need to do to not let it limit you. That's what it's been doing all your life, and my guess is it's no longer serving you – which is the number one reason you're not already living your 'dream' life. The check-in question to ask every time this voice pops up is, 'How is it serving me to listen to this?', and if it isn't – don't! If you really can't set this voice aside at the moment, if it really will not let you even dare to dream, just for a moment, then please pause here and go straight to Chapter two, Conquer, and then come back.



What will most certainly happen as you go through this process, and what always happens with my clients as I am taking them through this exercise, is that even if you can get past those voices to start the exercise, you will keep going back to what you currently think is possible, or what can be achieved within the constraints of money, time and resources.

Every time this happens, keep pulling yourself back to your vision. Keep thinking

about your ideal world scenario of how you would love your life to look. View this as your time to completely dream big, fantasize. You'll be surprised. When I ask clients to do this, and they ask, 'What, really dream, really - what's not really possible?' and they do go there and discover what they want, like the client I mentioned earlier, isn't that fantastical at all - only to them. This is because they have become so used to the sabotaging voices *saying* it's not

‘Fulfillment is the state of fully expressing who we are and doing what is right for us ... wholeness, satisfaction, a sense of rightness and harmony ... everything we most value is in alignment ... The pieces of (our) lives or careers come together in a very personal sense of wholeness and of feeling very alive.’

HENRY KIMSEY-HOUSE, KAREN KIMSEY-HOUSE,
PHILLIP SANDAHL & LAURA WHITWORTH

possible and what they want really isn’t unattainable: living in a lovely cottage by the sea; having a caring partner; running their own business doing something they’re actually passionate about. This is all completely doable – it just seems out of reach for *them*.

As a result of how we have been conditioned, we are all convinced that we can only do, have and be certain ways and things. Let me tell you, this is the biggest hurdle you

have to jump – getting beyond these limiting beliefs. How would it be, what would your life look like if, instead of believing everything you had been told, you actually believed ‘Anything *is* possible’?

DARE TO DREAM

Find a quiet space, somewhere completely private, where you won't get interrupted. Start by reading through the following questions. Stop and think about them for about 10 minutes (set a timer on your phone if that's helpful). Then, stand up, move around, shake out your arms and legs and then settle at a point in the room. Studies by neuroscientists have shown that moving our bodies allows our brain to open up and think in different, more expanded ways. Now, close your eyes and imagine yourself in exactly two years' time. Open your eyes and answer the questions as fully as you can.

01

What does your life look like?

02

If time and resources were not a concern what would you be doing?

03

Where would you be living?

04

What does your home, feel, sound and smell like?

05

Who would you be sharing your life with?

06

What would your daily routine consist of?

07

Where would you be working?

YOUR VALUES

By imagining your ideal life – the things that would bring you joy, satisfaction and use your full potential – you have described a life that reflects what you *value* most. Values are what is most important to you, what you most care about, what makes you tick. This is important, because when we are living a life according to our values, we are leading a truly fulfilling life and feel an internal sense of ‘rightness’.

Conversely, when we are living a life that *dishonours* those values – ignoring them, doing the opposite of what’s right for us (remember all the conditioning that causes this to happen?), then we feel things are ‘not right’ – something that is known as ‘dissonance’, an inner sense of *disharmony*

When this goes on for a long time, or our values are dishonoured to extremes, anxiety, depression, anger, and potentially physical illness can result. This is when clients come to me – when they feel a high degree of dissonance, and when they’ve had enough of feeling like this. They’ve typically tried several of the quick fixes I’ve already talked about, but none of them

have worked, and their sense of unease has only increased.

When I did my coaching training in 2008 with CTI, clarifying my values was a huge revelation to me. It was also a bit of a shock, as it made me realize how my life wasn’t honouring my values and why I felt so lost and unhappy. My top values are: deep connection; learning, growth and discovery; freedom; nurture and altruism; beauty and excellence.

Of course, I didn’t even know what a value was back in my ‘previous life’ as I call it. Reading this list out now explains my negative feelings about my life and work as a television producer.

‘I have learned that as long as I hold fast to my beliefs and values – and follow my own moral compass – then the only expectations I need to live up to are my own.’

MICHELLE OBAMA

Having started out as a local news reporter, I went on to produce many different documentaries. I absolutely loved my job, and looking back at what I now know to be my values, I can see that my job was helping me to live most of them. I loved going into new environments and finding out about how they worked and the people that lived in them (learning, growth and discovery); I loved meeting those people and encouraging them to share their stories (deep connection); and I really enjoyed the rest of the process of filming and piecing programmes together to create a story to be shared with others (beauty and excellence).

However, I began to have problems with other parts of the programme-making process and what I did for a living. I worked on some programmes where the subject matter and the experiences I asked people to talk about on camera were very challenging: I was hearing stories about sexual abuse, drug addiction, rape, domestic abuse, suicide and even murder.

I started to struggle with the lack of aftercare offered to these people (nurture value), who we asked to share their innermost thoughts, feelings and heartache, and then just left them to it – as well as broadcasting their suffering to millions of people. Yes, they had agreed to all this, and yes, in many cases the experience of talking was a cathartic one. However, when the cameras stopped rolling, we literally packed up and left those people with everything they had just disclosed. I vividly remember having interviewed a woman about the murder of her teenage son in a gang fight on her housing estate. I really felt her pain; it had a visceral effect on me. At the end of the interview I wanted to help her and said, ‘Let me know if you ever need anything,’ and she said, ‘Like what?’ Exactly – like what? There really wasn’t anything I could do – and for me that was the problem. I did not feel I was taking care of her in that situation and this did not square with my core value of nurture and altruism – I felt like I’d got what I wanted and I was just leaving.

VALUES CLARIFICATION

Set aside some time and space, and answer the following questions. Really take time out to do this; you will also benefit from doing it once, thinking about it, and then going back and fleshing it out further.

01

Look forward 20 years. You are attending a function where someone is giving a speech about you. What would you want them to say?

02

If time and resources were not a concern, describe the things you long to do.

03

Think about one or two people you know who really inspire you.
What about them is inspiring?

04

What's missing in your life, the presence of which would make your life more fulfilling?

05

What activities have heart and meaning for you?

06

What activities energise you?

07

What needs in the world are you moved to meet?

08

What drives you crazy?

08

Once you've answered the questions on the previous pages as fully as possible, review what you've written. Referring to the list of words on pages 46–47, ask yourself and note down the 10 words that resonate most with you. For example, painting, drawing, writing would mean creativity is a strong value for you.

09

Using this list go back to your ideal life visualization notes and see which of the same values you can also spot there.

Write them down here.

10

Using the list of words on the following pages, circle others that feel very important to you.

11

Place your 10 values in order of priority (1 being not honouring at all, 10 being fully honouring this value) and score each one out of 10 according to whether your current life is reflecting them.

12

Write down which values you are honouring and which values you are dishonouring.

TIME TO WRITE

Contribution/Service

Recognition

Tradition

Time & Space

Peace

Respect

Excellence

Fun

Integrity

Community

Freedom

Joy

Adventure

Wisdom

Authenticity

Challenge

Accuracy

Choice

Directness

Orderliness

Harmony



YOUR PURPOSE

The other key to unlocking a deep sense of 'rightness' in your life is discovering your 'purpose'. By this I mean what you are here to do, why you are here and the nature of your contribution to the world. We all have a purpose, we all have a unique contribution to make to this world, at this time.

When I talk to people about this, they always ask: 'What, you really believe we all have a purpose, we are all here for a reason?' Yes I do!

Using your individual talents and having lived your specific life journey, you have a unique bank of knowledge and wisdom to bring to others. When you discover your purpose, you will know that too - you will feel it. What's great about identifying your purpose and knowing what it is, is that, just like your values, it can act as a compass in your life and as a yardstick by which to measure anything that you are doing or thinking about doing. It enables you to ask the question: 'How is this supporting my life purpose?' Just like living a life honouring your values, staying true to your purpose is

not always the easiest path but it will lead you to a richer and more fulfilling life.

If living a life honouring our values and living out our purpose is so great, you may ask, why we are not all doing it already? For me, and all of my clients, the main reason has always been that fear is much stronger than the desire for fulfillment. This is the fear I described earlier. The fear that leads to self-sabotage, that comes in a variety of forms and creates a feeling of *dissonance* within us. It can come in the form of frustration, boredom, anger or indifference. When clients come and meet me for the first time, I can sense it as they sit there and tell me why they '*can't*' have the life they want, why they '*need*' to be doing what they're doing, how they're not '*good/smart*'/



experienced/wealthy enough or *'too old/young/stupid'* to have the life they really want. We'll go into this in more detail in the next chapter, but just know for now that we all have these voices, and for all of us they have run out of control and have started running the show – the show that is your life.

Through identifying their life's purpose, I have seen clients completely shift how they feel about themselves, their careers and their lives. I have seen them go from a place where they are just trudging along, feeling pretty lost and uninspired and questioning what on earth they are doing (even to the point of giving everything up and starting again), to a place where they have a real mission, true meaning and

satisfaction, and where they are making a difference and a real contribution to the world.

One client I worked with recently is a classic case in point. She had been identified as a 'rising star', someone in her industry with 'high potential'. She was earmarked for great things, had worked her way up, been very successful, had a great salary, good prospects, the lot, but when she came to me she said, 'I just wake up in the morning and wonder what I'm doing. Why am I doing it all? What's it all for?' She was at a complete loss as to why she felt like this and what to do about it, and felt completely trapped by the weight of her work and family responsibilities – she had a husband, two children and a mortgage to pay.

‘Finding and claiming a life purpose gives clients a powerful sense of direction in their lives. The truth they find in the life purpose statement can make them virtually unstoppable.’

HENRY KIMSEY-HOUSE, KAREN KIMSEY-HOUSE,
PHILLIP SANDAHL & LAURA WHITWORTH

By gaining clarity about her life purpose, she discovered that she wanted to make a big difference in her industry to how people were treated, to working conditions in general, and specifically to equality for women within the workplace. She wanted to leave the industry in a better place than it was when she joined. She is now very active in bringing those changes about, has become a spokesperson for creating those changes, and inspires others to speak out and share their experiences. She is making a real difference. Now she gets out of bed with a spring in her step and knows exactly why she's there.

As Simon Sinek, author of the global bestseller *Start With Why* says: ‘Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion ... Our actions should start with WHY not WHAT.’

The fact that you are even reading this book is a result of me having identified my

life purpose. I didn't know it at the time, but the reason I first went into television was because I had a deep yearning to share people's stories. Underneath that, as I now know, is my purpose: I want people to know there is a different way to live and I love sharing the information and tools that show people they always have a choice, and can change things – even when they think they can't.

It was only when I did the Co-Active Training Institute exercise on the following pages that I discovered this was the purpose underlying what I had been doing all those years and why, ultimately what I was doing and how the industry had evolved and worked was not actually honouring my purpose or values. Discovering my purpose has also allowed me to help hundreds of clients discover, and live by their own values – and this is what I want for you.

YOUR LIFE PURPOSE

These guided visualizations and subsequent questions will help you start to formulate your own life purpose or mission statement. As before, create some private time and space for this. Between each of the visualizations, once you have a full, rich image, open your eyes and jot down your answers.

01

Guided inner journey 1

Think of a time in your life when you felt at your most powerful – a time when your spine, arms and fingertips were tingling with excitement, a time when you simply didn't care what anyone thought of you. You were absolutely alive. Notice where you were, what you were doing and who was around you. Write down the answers to the following questions.

Where were you?

What were you doing?

Who was around you?

02

Guided inner journey 2

You've been given a billboard and can put any message you want on it. Thousands of people will drive by and see your billboard every day.

What does it say?

03

Guided inner journey 3

You are getting into a spaceship. The spaceship takes off. You are on your way to an undeveloped planet in the universe. It's a fine planet in every way, but it's uninhabited. You have the power to make this planet whatever you want it to be. When you land, what is it that you're going to make happen: what's the impact you want to have, that's going to create the planet in the way you want it to be?

The ship is landing. The doors open. You touch the planet and say, 'It's going to be this way.' What is 'this way'?

Once you have done all of these visualizations and written down what came from each one, go back and look for all of the impact words and themes that come up. For example, for me, I wanted people to have choice and feel free, and my billboard said, 'You always have a choice.' Now, hone that down to create the beginnings of your life purpose statement:

I am here to ...