

Putting the BROKEN Pieces Back Together,
A Guide to Building a Life That's Been Shattered !!!

Introduction & Chapter 1

Introduction



You never know when a single decision will change your life... Forever.

It was a hot, balmy summer evening in July, 1980 when I rushed a friend, Mark, with an invitation to go cruising on his motorcycle and see an outdoor concert on the Southern Illinois campus. I was a Fashion Design student in my junior year of college, just shy of 21 years old. Now, let's see, I could study for a psychology test or go with a cute boy to a concert on a motorcycle? The decision was easy and quick and off we went having an amazing time, singing and dancing on a perfect summer night. On our way home, we came upon a construction zone, traveling about 60 miles per hour, we hit a deep pothole, and upon impact, we flew over 60 feet in the air before landing. The first of many blessings came within the hour; a professor happened to be cruising around the remote area in his 4-wheel Jeep when he saw Mark's red baseball cap on a dirt mound, heard the motorcycle still running and drove to the nearest farmhouse to call 911. The ambulances arrived quickly and found Mark first. He was on top of a dirt mound and had died instantly upon impact, breaking his neck with no chance of survival. The paramedics continued to scour the

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area and spotted me in a pile of rubble. I was a mangled mess, apparently I had landed on my ass first, then flown forward, crushing all the bones in my face, my nose had been torn from my face and was dangling. They carefully scooped me up, but realized the local hospital was not equipped to put "Humpty Dumpty" back together again. They quickly

decided to fly me via helicopter to St. Louis University Hospital an hour away.

Once they got me to ICU attempting to revive my collapsed lung, my dear parents, tucked in late that night, received the call every parent dreads. They were told that their daughter had been in a very serious motorcycle accident and was not expected to make it through the night so to come as soon as possible. Oh, the Shock...the Horror...the Dismay. Knowing they could not wait until morning, they made the necessary phone calls, packed their bags and started on what's been deemed, "the longest drive of their lives." The fog, thick as pea soup, extended their drive from hell, normally 6 hours to 9 hours in pure silence. Between prayers and tears, my mother recalls planning my entire funeral as I can only imagine as the hardest thing a parent would have to endure.

Upon arriving at the hospital, my parents met with the doctors first. They were in a state of disbelief and emotional exhaustion and held tight to each other as the doctors forewarned them of all of my injuries. As my parents entered the Intensive Care Unit, there were five beds. They walked right past my bed thinking, "that poor thing" and then gasped when they realized "that poor thing" was their baby girl.

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I was utterly unrecognizable, by then, my ears had engorged with fluid in an effort to protect my brain and rested on my shoulders. My nose, which had been saved by the nurses putting it on ice, had been temporarily reattached and spread halfway across my face. In addition to the crack in my skull, every bone in my face had been broken and appeared crushed and flattened and was covered with dry, crusted blood. I hope to never know the depth of the horror they must have felt at that moment seeing me so unrecognizable, helpless and fighting with every breath to stay alive. My mother was so horrified and distraught that she could only stay in my room a few minutes at a time. My father said all he wanted to do was hug me and tell me everything was going to be

okay, but he couldn't come within a foot of my bed without me screaming in excruciating pain. The doctors told him my nerves were exposed in my spinal column due to my broken vertebrae and even with all the morphine that I was given, the pain was so severe they could not come near me. My heart just breaks to this day thinking about how horrible and helpless my parents must have felt.

After several days in ICU my lungs were stabilized and had moved me into my own room. This is where the rebuilding of my shattered body would begin as they attempted to put me back together again. I was still incoherent at this point and having momentary outbursts of anguish and severe pain. The doctors asked my parents if they had a recent photo of me, so they would have a reference point where to begin. All the doctor could say was, " WOW, we sure have our work cut out for us." They were also waiting for the results to know if there was any permanent

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damage or paralysis due to the injuries to my spinal column before they could make any decisions to stabilize my broken vertebrae.

Each day brought new challenges as the teams of doctors and interns would collaborate on the most strategic plan to put me back together again. The loving support and prayers from my family and friends was overwhelming and a great comfort to me and my parents during this challenging time. We all felt God's loving presence and we're grateful for every little bit of good news. The first great news we heard was from the orthopedic surgeons stating that the x-rays showed no permanent damage to my spinal cord so they could start fitting me for a body cast that would go from my neck down to my hips. After that, they could schedule the first of many major facial surgeries in an attempt to try to make me resemble myself. At this point I had still not looked in a mirror and my parents didn't want me have anything else to focus on but my healing from the inside out.

My sister Julie, who was only 18 years old at the time left her job to come and be with me and be a loving support to my parents. My brother Mark, 21, came shortly thereafter, taking a 26 hour bus from Albuquerque to feed and support and staying at a convent at night.

My family took turns feeding me and reading to me as I was completely dependent on them to help me . One day as my father was spoon feeding me, I stopped him mid- slurp and reached for my upper jaw, which was not fully attached. As I moved it from side to side infectious fluid came gushing out of my mouth and nose so rapidly that my father couldn't catch it and screamed for

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the nurses to come and help. When the doctors arrived, they were ecstatic. This was the miracle they had hoped for! If this fluid had gone up into my brain through the crack in my skull, instead of down and out, it would have killed me. Another Miracle!

Wow, the healing prayers and beautiful blessings that were bestowed upon my family and myself at that time were immeasurable. One of the nuns who came to visit me daily said that I had many angels all around me protecting and nurturing me and I felt them holding and loving me. I recall my first coherent thought was to God, thanking Him for saving my life, vowing that I would use this precious gift to be of loving service to Him. I knew that I had been spared and that every breath was a blessing I was truly grateful for it all...the Love of family, friends and the angels.

In the numerous weeks that followed, I had countless visitors; all of who were aghast at the sight of me, but were loving and encouraging as we focused on being grateful for my survival. After two months, I was getting restless and anxious to go home. With all the surgeries behind me the doctors finally agreed to release me to. Hospital closer to home as it became increasingly difficult for my family to be away from their jobs and life back home. It was a great comfort to all of us to be able to continue my rehabilitation nearer to home.

Upon my release the doctors told me three things: we've done the best we could, but we don't think you will ever walk again without assistance, you will never have children and only time will tell how your face will heal. We did the best we could putting you

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back to together. I thanked them from the bottom of my heart for all they had done for me, but I knew that if God gave me this second chance to live, He would also make sure that all of my Dreams would come true. I always wanted to be a mother and have a beautiful family and live a long, healthy, active life. This is where my true Faith stepped in and guided me.

I knew it would be a long, arduous recovery and rehabilitation, but I was determined to get back on me feet again and get on with my life. Even on the most difficult days when I was impatient and in pain, I focused on the immense gratitude I felt and kept my attitude positive. I could feel the strong presence of God with me and knew that I was not alone and with Him all things were possible. Patience and perseverance accompanied my daily challenges as I struggled to walk again. Each step was painful and awkward at first as my muscles had atrophied to the extent of almost non existence. But every day I took more steps than the previous and kept my vision on the goal of walking on my own one day and becoming healthy and strong once again. It was so painful to see myself in the mirror and there were times when I just cried in hopes of being pretty again, but I kept my focus on my healing so I wouldn't go into a pity party.

By the one year anniversary of my accident, which I lovingly celebrate as my re-birthday, I was walking on my own, without a walker or cane. I had returned to college to finish my degree in Fashion Design which was a dream of mine since early childhood. The challenges that I faced daily, especially being in an environment and profession where vanity and physical

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appearances were so important, kept me focusing on my inner beauty as my face was still very deformed. To date, I had undergone three major facial surgeries, each time attempting to reconstruct my nose and stabilize my cheekbones to more closely resemble my old pictures. I distinctly remember moments when I would catch a glimpse of myself in a mirror in hopes of seeing the old me again, but she was gone. Now my hope was to look attractive again, so I would not be turned away from others who were repulsed by my appearance. When I'd feel a pity party coming on, I would dig deep inside and find my gratitude and Thank God for my amazing life and all of my blessings. Gradually, over the next couple of years, the swelling in my face subsided and the previous contours of my cheekbones started to take their former shape, I was looking more myself again.

Soon after graduating college, I met my husband and the dreams of starting a family were foremost on my mind. Even though the medical doctors told me that I would not be able to conceive and carry a child, I believed different. I had broken two vertebrae that were affecting my blood flow to my ovaries and my pelvic area which had technically convinced them that it was not possible for me to conceive or carry a child. However, I was a firm believer in chiropractic care and had been receiving regular adjustments for 2 years. I believe that due to that treatment and my strong Faith, my miracle babies were born. I guess you could say, "I'm 3 for 3" in proving the doctors diagnosis' to be false.

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I have come to know that we are the M.D. (Major Deity) of our own life's path and it is up to us to stand strong for the dreams in our Hearts and live the life we truly desire.

I am joyously living in the beauty and magnificence of the mountains in Big Bear Lake, CA., surrounded by the splendor of nature. I love hiking daily and I live in such Gratitude for the extraordinary journey I am on. This place is truly a sanctuary for my soul as I continue to do God's work through my writing, speaking, teaching and coaching. I love sharing the beauty of this place by facilitating annual Sacred Retreats where women fall deeper in Love with themselves and their lives.

My life continues to unfold in wonderful ways every day and it is the grace of God that is my guiding light. One of the greatest gifts in being that close to death is realizing that I don't fear death, but I fear Not living life to its fullest. So living presently, passionately and purposely has been my motto ever since.

...after all, this isn't a dress rehearsal, this is the only life we get.

It is truly by the grace of God, angels of mercy and countless prayers that I am blessed to share my story of LOVE with you. Nameste

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Chapter 1 ~~~~ ♥ ~~~~

Acceptance to Appreciation

"Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune." ~William James

When life throws you a curve ball and you feel like you've

been knocked out of the park, what do you do?

Do you let it take you down, asking yourself "Why me?" Or,

"This shouldn't have happened to me." Do you let yourself have a pity party, keeping you down where you feel isolated and alone with few options. Or, do you give yourself some space to breathe, shake yourself

off and look at the situation and access your options and possibilities? There are many different ways you can accept the situations you are given in your life to experience yourself in the highest light.

We all have defining moments in our lives that take us down life's highway and we get to choose what direction we take. It is

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your awareness of yourself and your relationship to life that all of your decisions are made. You are given this precious gift of life and it is up to you to make the most of it. It is life that is breathing you and your connection to life helps you decide what is possible in that moment. What is your belief about this thing called life? Whether you call it Life, God, Spirit ...when you believe you are connected, guided and supported by this friendly Universe, you have more choices on where your mind and heart will take you in these moments.

Albert Einstein said, “ *We either believe that everything is a miracle or nothing is a miracle.*”

When you are given shocking news or faced with a life challenging situation, it is essential to step back, pause and take a breath. Then you can look at the situation from the "observation station" so you can view it from many angles and perspectives. Looking at the facts of the situation without any emotional attachment will help you see more options and make clearer decisions on how you will move forward. President Roosevelt had a practice of going out and gazing at the stars in the sky when he was facing a "large" problem and he would stay there until he could feel the problem get smaller as he connected to the enormity of the galaxies and the Universe, then he would go to bed and rest easier. He let himself get a perspective of Truth that allowed him to be open to the solution from a bigger perspective. Allow yourself some space and time to just be with what is before you; and

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breathe deeply to settle your nervous system so you can listen for Divine guidance of the next steps to take. As you listen from a place of Peace in your Heart, it allows you to move forward in response and not reaction.

Acceptance of the situation and yourself will give you a higher perspective from which to move forward. Finding that place deep inside that knows you are divinely guided and protected and you have what it takes to do what needs to be done to make the most of the situation you are facing.

Katie's Story (A Mother's journey)

I buried my son in the earth on the fourth day of August in

2010. He died in the crook of my left arm five days earlier. His certificate of death reads "progressive brain tumor." My son Aidan, the most wonderful gift I will ever know, lived a cruelly abbreviated life, just three years, two months and 13 days, because his cancer was more sophisticated than the current treatments that were available in 2010.

I understood, from the moment that I learned Aidan would die, that I would never get over his absence. I would only learn to live with it and accept it as best I could. I liken it to being handicapped. When someone loses an arm, or a foot, or a finger, over time they learn to adapt. Grieving the loss of Aidan has been similar. The day he died, I lost an extension of myself and I am

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forever changed because of that loss. Over the past few years, with a great deal of work, I have learned to adapt and function differently. I choose to go to the joy and I choose to be hopeful. Those are two very conscious choices that I make every day. And they have helped me immensely in the grieving process.

Most bereaved parents experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Since Aidan's passing I have experienced some of the classic symptoms of PTSD including nightmares, sleeping difficulties, the inability to concentrate, and of course, great sadness. More important, and I believe less talked about, is the experience of Post-Traumatic Growth. Wikipedia defines Post- Traumatic Growth as a positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. These sets of circumstances represent significant challenges to the adaptive resources of the individual, and pose significant challenges to individuals' way of understanding the world and their place in it. Post-traumatic growth is an experience of improvement that for some persons is deeply meaningful.

The positive personal changes I have experienced since Aidan's death are astonishing and I have come to appreciate the blessings in my life. My relationships are richer and more meaningful. I have learned to let go of what doesn't serve me, both personally and professionally. I have turned my experience into something hopeful for other families. I have learned to be more resourceful in my mothering as death does not unmake a mother. Aidan's life was

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much shorter than I could ever imagine. However, I still feel called to parent Aidan by fulfilling his potential here, by sharing his story and continuing to weave his life into the everyday fabric of mine.

Challenging situations always offer you the opportunity to search for the highest and best part of you. The part of you that knows you have the power to dig deep and look for the strength you have to do what is needed to accept the situation and grow from it. You start to trust yourself that you are divinely guided and be kind and loving to yourself through the process. When you come to accept "what is" and you release any sense of resistance, you experience an energy of "flowing with the

tide" instead of swimming upstream. You put yourself in the rhythm of the experience and move into a place of peace and acceptance that opens you to allow your heart to look for the gifts this situation came to give you. You have the opportunity to experience serenity and calmness in your heart as a guide on this journey to understanding a bigger part of you that is connected to all of life.

You can get knocked off your center, your place of balance and strength, if you allow yourself to be taken down by the "not good enough" syndrome. You know, that niggling little voice in you that has the power to stop you from achieving the progress you are striving for. It's the one that plays in the playground of comparison and competition, and the moment you start engaging in it, you're sunk. It has the power to get you every time, so keep a look out for

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it. It has a tendency to sneak up and bite you when you least expect it. It is vital to your movement forward, that you stay focused on you and the things that are helping you to feel better about yourself. Pay attention to your thoughts that are keeping you stuck or stagnant and keeping you from moving forward.

So pay attention to when you are making progress and all of a sudden you get distracted and start moving in another direction. Ask yourself, "What do I feel about myself in this moment?"

"Not smart enough?

Not resourceful enough?

Not Good enough to deserve this?"

You want to know that part of you that is holding you back, it

has great information for you, so allow yourself some time to hear what it has to say to you. We have many parts of ourselves that have roles to play in our lives, so we want to honor all of them. You want to spend

time getting to know those parts of you that allow you to feel a deeper connection your higher self. By doing this you become familiar with the many parts of you, and you will recognize when you are being directed away from your true desire. With this deeper relationship you will begin to know which voice is guiding you. You will want to start to listen and honor the one that is speaking to the Truth that you are, "Smart enough, strong enough, resourceful enough" to achieve anything you truly want.

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We all suffer from some form of limitation we place on ourselves that keep us where we are and not reaching for more. Gay Hendrix, in his book, "The Big Leap" calls this the upper limit problem. We all have a set point within us that we allow only

so much good to come into our lives and then we sabotage more good from coming. This is a pattern that is stemmed from what we believe we deserve. So as we start loving and accepting ourselves even more, recognize the patterns that hold us back from more, we can increase the amount of good we will allow in our lives and feel a greater sense of Peace, Joy and Fulfillment. This is a process and a practice that will continue to assist you throughout your lifetime. As you stay open to see the patterns that are holding you back, you can consciously make new choices that will bring you even more happiness in your life.

Take a moment to send a loving glance of *acceptance* of a situation in your life and look for the blessings it came to give you. Open your heart to truly receive all the gifts this situation came to give you. When you look at every situation with the intention to see beyond the apparent surface of it for the blessing it came to give you, you open yourself to receive the deeper meaning and the gift. This is how you stay on "Higher Ground" instead of being a victim and letting the challenge have you. Celebrate your resiliency, courage and strength and stay on your path to creating even more good in your life.

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Acceptance is key to feeling a sense of Peace about your situation...any situation, whether its life threatening, personally challenging or a situation you are handling with your children. If you can step back, take a breath and look at it for the gift it came to give you, you can feel a sense of Peace for yourself. This feeling of Peace is your natural state and comes from being bigger than the

issue itself. You are putting yourself in harmony with the God presence in you, the part of you that is perfect, whole and complete.

We were all made in the image and likeness of the one who gave us life, God. So we are all a part of God, our creator, so we have the Power within us to connect to that part of us that knows how to create anything. It is up to you to align with that Power and generate the feelings that will open you to the *acceptance* of *what is* and literally rise above it . You can move from fear, doubt and worry to Peace, Joy and Harmony.

"*With God all things are possible*". This is how you get with God.

I remember during my healing process I would remind myself that this is temporary and that everyday I'm getting stronger and stronger. I used visualization to help me with every step I took, seeing myself walking back on campus and walking down the aisle of my wedding. I let those images have more power over me so I could move past the crazy thinking of what's broken and how hard it was. I turned my attention to believing more in what was

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possible and the dreams I had for my life than in the difficulty I faced in taking each painful step and learning to walk again.

Back in 1980 they did not have extensive physical therapy; they essentially put me on a slant board after having been flat on my back for over 2 months and they stood me upright for a few minutes several times a day so I could get used to the blood moving down my body. Then for a week, they showed me what I needed to do to teach my legs how to walk again; heal, toe, heal, toe. When the week was over, they sent me home with a walker and said " now you're on your own, best of luck."

As I continued to move forward every day and face my challenges head on, I came to understand the importance of *appreciating* myself through the process. I began to appreciate myself for the effort I was making and the progress I could measure everyday. I used appreciation as a tool that escalated my progress and helped me have a better perspective of myself and the challenges I was facing. Afterall, we are the ones that decide the meaning of things and from wht perspective we are going to view the situations in our life...so lets look at things fro the highest perspective we can.

“ Appreciation is the highest form of prayer, for it acknowledges the presence of good wherever you shine the light of thankful thoughts.” ~ Alan Cohen

What you *appreciate*...*Appreciates* !!! Understanding this principle has the power to change everything in your life for the

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better. When you look for the good in things, you will find them and then even more good will reveal itself to you. If you're having a challenge in a relationship, stop and let yourself look for some good qualities of that person or in the relationship you have with this person. Let your mind start to search for the things that you appreciate about them, perhaps their sense of humor and that he makes you laugh at times when you're down, or his thoughtfulness

in bringing you flowers just because it was Tuesday. And then feel the shift inside of you as you put your focus on the Good in him and the challenges seem to magically dissolve. This is a Spiritual practice that you can use to really change the energy of how you are feeling about yourself, a situation or another person and it will always bring about a higher result.

Jenny, a sweet, caring, giving client of mine was feeling really lost in her 23 year marriage. She came to me with a heavy heart and shared that she and her husband had pulled further and further apart and she really didn't know what to do. She still loved him, but felt they had nothing in common and were essentially roommates. She wanted to find that spark again, so I helped her make a list of the qualities she admired about herself and him. It wasn't easy at first because she had been focused on what he wasn't doing, and what he wasn't giving to her. But as she began to *appreciate* the things she loved about him, he started expressing those parts of himself again and they rekindled their flames of love. They started appreciating each other in a whole new way.

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That brought them closer and opened up new pathways of communication from Love and Truth and they are experiencing a beautiful relationship.

When you take time to truly appreciate yourself and others and the progress that you are making, you start generating the positive energy that brings about a momentum to catapult you forward to experience even more success. And as this momentum builds, you can step back and *appreciate* the situation and start looking for all

the blessings and gifts it came to give you. Without this situation you would not have had the opportunity to know your own strength, your perseverance, your ability to push through the obstacles and

acknowledge yourself that you can do anything you set your mind to and put your attention and interest on.

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EmPowerment Exercises.

Move you from "*Acceptance to Appreciation*" !!!

1. What challenging situation are you facing right now?

2. Can you look at it from the "observation station" and *accept* the gifts that it came to give you?

3. What 3 blessings can you acknowledge you have received from the lessons of this situation in your life?

4. What do you *appreciate* most about yourself and how you are growing through this situation?
