HOTEL EARTH

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THE BOOK IN EVERY ROOM

The Game of *Life*

Welcome to Hotel Earth

ELTON TSANG

Life is just a game.
Welcome to Hotel Earth.

The Game of Life

BY ELTON TSANG

A free book. Read it, keep it, pass it on.

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HOTEL EARTH DIGITAL EDITION · 2026

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00

How I Got Here

Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.

Let me tell you the truth first, so you know I am not just repeating nice words I read in a book.

For most of my life I thought I was winning. I was good at a game most people never get to play, and I played it at the highest stakes in the world. From the outside, I had everything. But for years I lived with real pain in my chest – not a feeling, actual physical heart pain, every single day. The first crack came young: my first real heartbreak as a teenager, a pain I carried for years longer than it should have lasted. Later I lost my sister. I lost loves. I tried everything to move it: doctors, psychologists, priests, churches, temples. Nothing touched it. I was a man who had won almost everything and could not buy a single peaceful night's sleep.

Healing did not come all at once, and it did not come from money or winning. It started with sitting down and facing the grief honestly, with help – a good therapist was the first real step. Then I sat in silence for ten days at a meditation retreat and watched my own pain come and go like weather, and I realized something simple that changed my life: everything comes and goes, including the pain.

But the deepest realization came later, in a plant medicine ceremony. I went in with real intentions – honest questions about life. And the answer that came back was so simple it almost made me laugh: *don't take life so seriously. Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.* That was it. That one line cracked everything open. I saw the whole truth of it – that all of this, the wins, the losses, the people, the things, is a game. A beautiful game, worth playing with all your heart. But a game. We are all just guests checked into this hotel for one stay – and even if that stay runs a few decades, we all check out in the end, so why carry it so heavily?

What happened next I will never forget. I started laughing and dancing and singing, talking to whatever you want to call it – God, the universe, life itself – celebrating, so full of joy and so free that a wild thought came to me: *if there is something up there running all this, it would be jealous of me right now.* In that moment I felt like the happiest man alive. And in that moment I truly understood that life is just a game. The pain in my chest, which I had carried for years, was simply gone – and in the time since, with love back in my life, it has never returned.

I have spent a good part of my life at a card table, so maybe this is why the word *game* unlocked everything for me. At the table you learn a strange and beautiful discipline: you play every hand with all your heart, you read the moment, you commit your chips — and then you let go completely of the result. You cannot control which cards come. You can only control how you play them. The players who suffer are the ones who cannot release a hand once it's dealt; they replay it, they curse the river card, they let one bad beat poison the next ten hands. The great ones feel it, let it pass, and stay present for the very next hand. Life, I realized, is exactly the same. Play it fully. Bet on what you love. And when the card you wanted doesn't come — and sometimes it won't — don't take it so seriously. It's only a game. There is always another hand.

And here is the thing I want you to see. Poker is just one game inside a bigger one. So is everything else. There is the relationship game, the school game, the work game, the family game, the money game. We spend our whole lives moving from one to the next, taking each so seriously, as if our entire worth hung on the result of this hand, this exam, this deal. But they are all games inside the one big game of being alive. The moment you see that, something loosens in your chest. You can still play each one with all your heart — I want you to — but you stop letting any single hand decide whether you are at peace.

I came home from that night a changed man, carrying a few quiet promises: to be mindful of what I put into my body and my mind, to bring sweetness into my own life and the lives around me, to have

compassion for myself and others, and to put what truly matters first. And above all, to stop taking it all so seriously. Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.

This book is everything I learned getting from that pain to this peace. I am not a monk. I am not a priest. I am just a man who suffered a lot, found a way out, and now wants to hand that way to as many people as possible — in the simplest words I can find. Because here is the thing I keep noticing: we are all going through the same handful of problems. Different relationships, different dollar amounts at stake, same heart. So if it worked for me, I believe it can work for you.

Read it straight through once, the way I wrote it.

Let's begin.

01

PART ONE

We Are All One

You are not a drop in the ocean —
you are the entire ocean, in one drop.

Before anything else, you have to get this one idea into your bones, because everything else in this book grows from it. We are all one. Not as a nice saying. As a plain fact.

Go back far enough — a billion years, more — and trace your family tree all the way down. Your parents, their parents, back and back and back. Keep going. Eventually you reach a point where my ancestors and your ancestors are the same ancestors. Go back further and we are not even people yet, we are simply life, and further still and we are all just particles from the same source. So when you really look at it, you and I were one thing to begin with. Everything you see — every per-

son, every animal, every tree, the ocean, the stranger who annoyed you today — is just a split, a branch, of that same original one. We only look separate. Underneath, we never stopped being the same thing.

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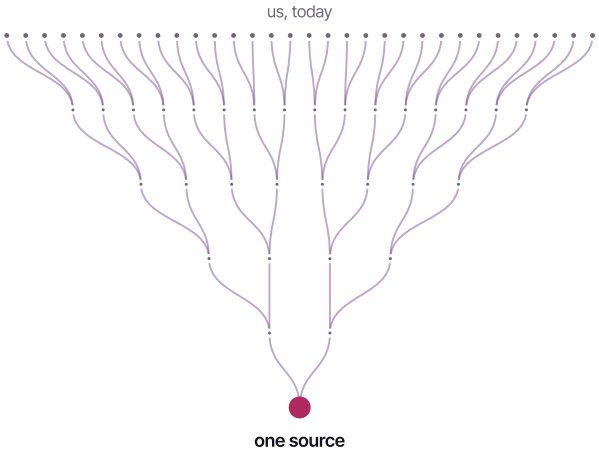


Trace the branches back far enough and every separate line collapses into a single source.

Once you feel this — really feel it — everything changes. Because if we are all one, then:

- **When you hurt another person, you are hurting yourself.** The anger you throw at someone is a hand slapping its own face. This is why resentment poisons the one who carries it — there was never anyone else there to poison.

- **When you help another person, you are helping yourself.** Kindness is not a sacrifice. It is the left hand helping the right.
- **There is nothing to compete over and no one to look down on.** Judging another person is just one wave in the ocean sneering at another wave. It makes no sense once you see the water underneath.

You do not need a billion years to feel it, either. Think of the last time you snapped at someone you love – a partner, a parent, your child – over something small. Who actually carried the bad feeling for the rest of the day? You did. The anger you threw out came straight back into your own chest. That is oneness, in the smallest, most ordinary moment. And the reverse is just as true: hold a door for a stranger, let a tired driver merge, and notice the small warmth that rises in *you*. You were not being kind to them. You were being kind to yourself wearing another face.

This is the deepest reason behind everything else I believe. Why respect others? Because they are you. Why forgive? Because the grudge is against yourself. Why give? Because there is no real line between you and the person you are giving to. Oneness is the root. The rest of this book is the tree.

> *As the line often attributed to Rumi puts it, you are not a drop in the ocean — you are the entire ocean, in one drop. So treat everyone and everything as if it were you. Far enough back, it was — and it still is.*

02

PART TWO

The Foundation: Respectful Autonomy

Peace begins the moment I stop reaching for control over anyone else.

The first principle

True love — and every healthy relationship — runs on mutual respect, not control. Each person is a sovereign being with their own desires, beliefs, and path. When we stop trying to dictate how others should live, suffering ends. For both of us.

This is the bedrock of everything I want to build. Not a soft idea — a demanding one. It asks me to give up the thing the ego clings to hardest: the need to make the world, and the people in it, do what I want.

Why control creates suffering

Trying to control another person is a losing bet, every time:

- **People resist coercion.** No one wants to be forced. You get defiance or quiet resentment — nothing else.
- **Expectation breeds disappointment.** The moment I demand compliance, I've set myself up to suffer when it doesn't come.
- **It kills real connection.** Love extracted through pressure or guilt is not love. It's something else wearing love's clothes.

The alternative

Here's the deal — it's simple to say and harder to live:

- **Respect their choices.** Their life is theirs. The successes and the failures are their own lessons, not mine to prevent.
- **Say what you think, without demands.** Offer, educate, show. Don't command.
- **Accept that their happiness may look nothing like yours.** Support is not the same as agreement.

The only thing I can truly govern is my own action. Peace begins the moment I stop reaching for control over anyone else.

The only thing I can truly govern is **my own action** — a small, solid circle inside a vast world of choices that were never mine to make.

The practice, in real life

This only means something if it survives contact with everyday life. Here is what it looks like in practice – the controlling path that leads to suffering against the respectful path that leads to freedom.

1. Guiding without controlling. When a mother wants her son to stop smoking, *"You're disgusting – stop or you're grounded"* breeds secrecy and rebellion. *"I care about your health, and I've read how smoking harms the lungs over time. If you ever want help quitting, I'm here"* leaves the decision where it belongs – with him. You can educate and express concern. Ultimate agency is always theirs.

2. Trust over possession. When someone fears their partner might stray, *"If you ever talk to anyone else, we're done"* manufactures fear, not loyalty. *"I believe in honesty and commitment. If your feelings ever change, I'd rather you tell me than hide it"* invites the truth. If a person chooses to betray, it reveals their values – not your worth. Love is not ownership. Trust is either present or it isn't.

3. Requests, not commands. Imagine wanting your partner to wash up before bed. *"You're gross, go clean up"* gets you tension and a cold shoulder. *"I sleep better when the bed feels fresh – would you mind?"* gets you cooperation. Same wish, opposite result. People answer a request far more openly than an order – at home, at work, anywhere.

4. Supporting individual paths. A parent who wants their child to take the safe career, while the child longs for a different road – art, a trade, a small shop of their own – can choose *"You'll starve – do as I say,"* which ends in regret and distance. Or they can choose *"I worry about whether it will support you, but I respect what you love – let's talk about how to do it wisely."* Their life is theirs to live. Support without agreement is still love.

5. Letting go of expectations. When a friend cancels again and again, *"You're so unreliable, you never care"* only makes them defensive. *"I love our time together, but last-minute changes are hard for me – let's plan differently"* sets a boundary without blame. You cannot force anyone to prioritize you. You can choose how much energy to give.

Letting go of the wish to change others

This goes deeper than the big conflicts – it lives in the small, constant wishes I carry about how people should be. The wish that a partner would arrange their life around my preferences. The way parents wish their children would learn piano or become a lawyer, living out the parents' dreams instead of their own. To stop suffering, I have to drop the desire to change, control, or impose my wants on anyone. The moment I lay that down, the relationship can finally breathe.

How I build relationships: give first, give more

If autonomy is how I avoid damaging a relationship, this is how I grow a great one. And my way is simple: I give first, and I give more.

If you treat me well, I will return it – and then some. I always try to give back more than I was given. I never want to owe anyone anything; I would much rather they owe me. To me, that is not a weakness. It is freedom. The person who is always repaying a debt is never free; the person who gives first walks light.

And I trust people. From the first handshake, I give everyone the benefit of the doubt. I refuse to live as if everyone is out to cheat me until proven otherwise – what a sad way to move through the world. So I trust, and I let them show me who they are.

I will be honest about the cost, because it is real. Over the years, more than a hundred people have owed me money, cheated me, or taken advantage of my trust. In most cases, I let them – it almost felt like a test, and most failed it. But I still came out the winner, because the few who

passed became the people I trust with my life. I have friendships now more than twenty-five years old. That is the prize. You cannot find people that real without trusting a lot who turn out not to be. I paid the tuition gladly.

Why can I give so freely, and lose so often, without it hardening me? Because of everything in this book. None of it was ever mine to begin with. The money I gave was a bonus passing through. The trust I extended cost me nothing I truly owned. When you stop clinging to what was never yours, generosity stops being a sacrifice and becomes the most natural thing in the world.

I will tell you the truth, though: this is the hard part. I can lose money all day and stay calm. People are different. When someone I love cheats or lies or does real harm, it cuts far deeper than any material loss ever could. These relationships mean more to me than anything – which is exactly why they have also been the source of my deepest pain. But I would not trade the way I live for a guarded heart. A closed fist keeps out the thieves, but it also keeps out the love. I would rather lose a hundred times and keep my hands open.

> ***I can only control my own actions.*** *Stop trying to control others, live your values in plain sight, and you become someone worth following — not because you demanded it, but because you showed it.*

03

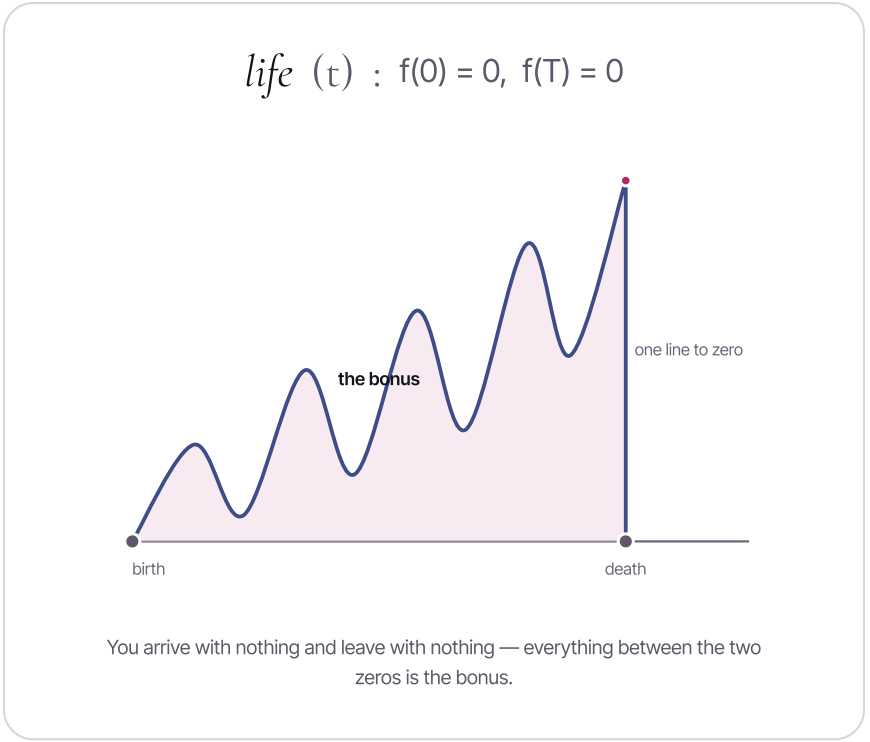
PART THREE

Bonus Living: Why Nothing Is Ever Really Lost

Born with nothing, die with nothing —
everything in between is just a bonus.

Two eternal truths

I arrived with nothing – no possessions, no status, no attachments. I will leave with nothing – no matter how much I gather, death equalizes us all. Life is a temporary curve drawn between two zeros.



You arrive with nothing and leave with nothing — everything between the two zeros is the bonus.

Everything in between – money, possessions, achievements, even the people I love – is a **bonus**. On loan. Mine to enjoy, never mine to keep. Once I truly understand this, loss reveals itself as an illusion. I am not losing anything. I am simply returning what was never truly mine.

I know what it feels like to win a fortune and lose one. I have had both. And I can tell you honestly: the nights I lost everything at the table hurt far less than the years I spent trying to hold onto things that were always just passing through. The clinging was always worse than the losing.

Here's one that still makes me smile. In 2013 I bought twenty thousand Bitcoin. Then I sold the whole pile – way too early, for almost nothing. Do the math on what that became and it's a number that could break a man. And for a while, it tugged at me. But I don't regret it. Not for a second. It was a bonus that passed through my hands, like everything else. Today I get to tell it as a funny story instead of carrying it as a wound. That's the whole teaching: the story you tell about a loss is your choice. I choose the one where I'm laughing.

Why this ends suffering

When I really take in that everything is borrowed, I stop clinging – and clinging is the source of nearly all pain:

- **Gratitude over greed.** Instead of craving more, I appreciate what is already here.
- **Detachment over fear.** Loss stings less when I remember it was never permanent.
- **Freedom over control.** I stop tormenting myself over things I can't take with me anyway.
- **No expectations, no suffering.** Almost all of my pain came from expecting something to go a certain way. Drop the expectation and the suffering goes with it. Hope for the best, plan well, then let life land where it lands – no expectations, no suffering.

The shift, in real life

- **Losing money.** Not *"I lost ten thousand dollars, my life is ruined,"* but *"That money was a bonus while it lasted. I still have my health, my lessons, and the ability to earn again."* Money is a tool that comes and goes. It was never mine to begin with.
- **Material things.** Not *"My car is totaled, this is a disaster,"* but *"I enjoyed it while it lasted. Now I get to experience something new, or to simplify."* Objects are conveniences. They do not define me.
- **Career setbacks.** A failed business or lost job is *"a chapter, not the whole story."* I keep the skills and the wisdom; those travel with me into the next adventure. My worth was never tied to a title or a bank balance.
- **Relationships ending.** Not *"They were my everything, now I have nothing,"* but *"I'm grateful for the time we shared. Love was a gift, not a possession."* People are not mine. They are experiences passing through my life — and that is what makes them precious.
- **Aging and missed chances.** Not *"I'm too old, I missed my window,"* but *"Every year was a bonus many never received. What can I enjoy right now?"* Time was never mine to hoard — only to use.

How I live it daily

- When I gain something: *"This is a nice bonus."* — and I stay detached.
- When I lose something: *"It was just a bonus anyway."* — and I stay at peace.

- When I envy someone: *"Their bonuses are simply different from mine."* – and I stay content.

> *Born with nothing, die with nothing — everything in between is just a bonus. Nothing was ever truly mine, and that is where the suffering ends. Enjoy the bonuses fully — and never need them.*

A note on money and abundance

There is a quiet cousin to all of this worth naming: **abundance**. When I stop clinging, I also stop believing there is *not enough* – not enough money, time, love, or opportunity. Scarcity is just fear wearing a different mask. The truth I keep coming back to is the opposite: there is always enough, and the more freely I give, the more freely life flows back. So I hold my bonuses lightly, share them generously, and trust that the well refills.

Let me say a hard word about money here, because this is where it belongs. A lot of people quietly believe money is the dirty part of life – that the richer you are the less spiritual, and the poorer you are the more pure. I played for some of the biggest money in the world, so trust me when I say I have thought about this one. And I no longer buy it. Money is not the enemy. Money is a magnifying glass – it just makes you more of whatever you already are. Give it to someone full of love and they help more people with it. Give it to someone full of fear and it only feeds the fear. The chips were never good or evil. It's the player who decides what they're for. Money is a tool, like a hammer or a card – nothing more, and nothing to be ashamed of.

And here is what I've actually seen, at the table and away from it: the richest people are almost never the ones holding the most. They're the ones who are grateful. I have known men with a fortune who live in terror of losing it, and men with almost nothing who feel like kings. Real wealth was never the size of the pile – it's whether you trust that life will keep dealing you enough. That's why I can hold money and love at the same time, with no contradiction. A full hand and a full heart were never enemies. You can have both.

Pain is not the enemy

There is one more thing I have to say before we go on, because without it the rest can sound too easy. I am not telling you to avoid pain. I am telling you it is not your enemy.

Every wise person I have ever met was made wise by pain. Not by comfort. By pain. We learn from it, we grow from it, and on the other side of it we are someone larger than we were. The years of pain I carried – the heart that ached every day, the losses, the people who let me down – those years are exactly what made me who I am. I would not hand them back even if I could.

So I have come to a strange and freeing belief: there is no such thing as a bad thing. It all turns into something. The loss teaches the lesson. The betrayal reveals the truth. The heartbreak cracks you open so the light can finally get in. When you stop fighting your pain and start asking it *what are you here to teach me?* – it stops being suffering and becomes your greatest teacher. The pain was never the punishment. It was the doorway.

04

PART FOUR

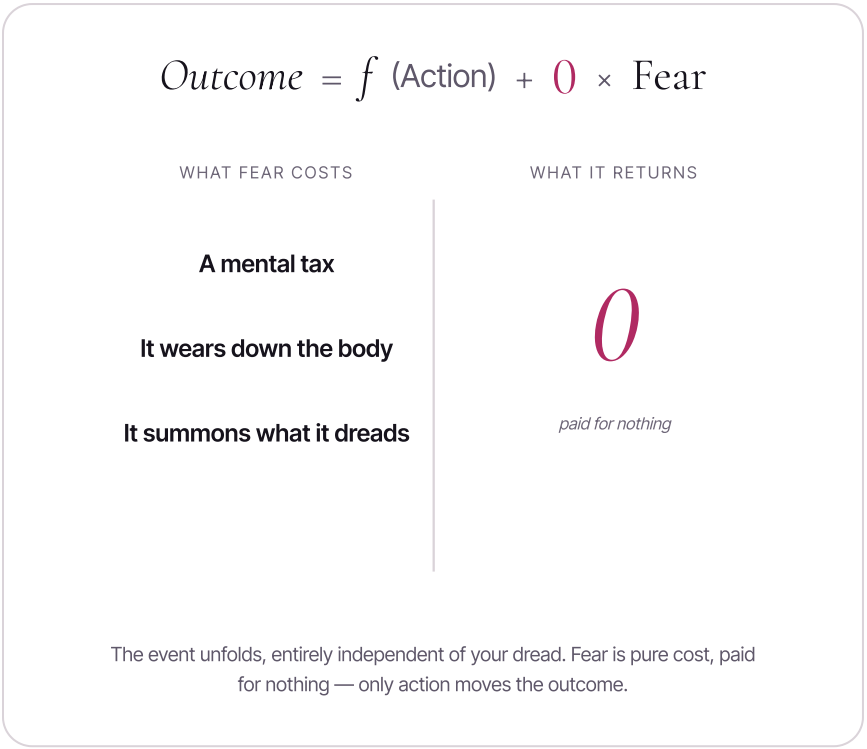
Fearlessness: The Shadow That Isn't Real

Fear is a shadow, not a reality.

Fear is an illusion I create, and it serves me nothing

Fear feels like protection. Examined honestly, it protects nothing. It is a mental tax I pay on events I cannot change.

Fear does not control outcomes. If I fear my child being hurt, I suffer – but I gain no control over whether it happens. If I release the fear, I am at peace – and I haven't lost an ounce of control. The event unfolds, or it doesn't, entirely independent of my dread. Pure cost, paid for nothing.



Action is stronger than fear. I can teach my child road safety without a knot in my stomach. Fear doesn't make me more capable – awareness and action do. Precaution is wisdom; fear is just suffering wearing wisdom's mask.

Fear tends to summon what it dreads. Obsess over failure and you quietly sabotage yourself. Fixate on illness and your body answers with the very stress that weakens it. The person most terrified of going broke is the one most likely to make the panicked decisions that break them.

Fear poisons the body. A mind soaked in fear and resentment slowly wears the body down — a calm, fearless mind is not just happier, it is measurably healthier. (I will show you the hard science of this later, in the chapter on how the mind heals the body.)

I spent years carrying the physical weight of this. The heart pain I described at the start of this book — that was not just grief. Part of it was a body running on fear and resentment for so long it started breaking down. When I finally cleared the fear, the body started clearing too. That is not poetry. That is what I lived.

The same logic frees me from every negative emotion

- **Anger.** My anger won't change the person who wronged me — it only burns me. Better to address it calmly, or let it go.
- **Greed.** Greed is an appetite that never ends. Better to enjoy what I have; abundance flows most easily to a mind at peace.
- **Worry disguised as love.** *"I worry because I love them"* — but worry is not love. Love is trust. I guide, and then I release the anxiety.

The antidote

1. **Awareness.** When fear rises, I ask: *Can I control this?*
2. **Action.** If yes, I act. If no, I release.
3. **Trust.** Life unfolds with or without my worry — so I let it.
4. **Gratitude.** I anchor in what is here now, not in what might go wrong.

> *Fear is a shadow, not a reality. Prepare your best, play the hand, and trust what comes.*

05

PART FIVE

Death Is Not the End: The Soul Goes On

Death stops being a wall and becomes a doorway.

If fearlessness is the heart of this book, then there is one fear we have to face directly – the biggest one of all. The fear of death. Almost every other fear is really just a smaller version of this one. So let me tell you, plainly and honestly, what I have come to believe.

Death is not the end. It is only the end of the physical body.

I believe our soul continues to travel – life after life. The body is borrowed. It wears out, and one day we hand it back. But the part of us that loves, that is aware, that says *"I am"* – that does not switch off. It

goes on. When I look at it this way, death stops being a wall and becomes a doorway.

Now, I know not everyone shares this belief, and I am not asking you to. Maybe you are certain the soul lives on; maybe you are just as certain that this one life is all there is. Either way, stay with me, because the freedom on offer here does not depend on knowing exactly what happens after. Whether the soul travels on or simply returns to the peace it came from, the same thing is true: clinging to the body in terror does not buy you a single extra day. Make your peace with the ending, and you are free to actually live.

I want to be very clear about something, because it matters. **I am not fearful of death at all** – and yet I would never wish to rush it. I will not harm myself, and I do not sit around longing to die. That would miss the whole point. My way is the opposite: I let things be. I live each day as fully and as lovingly as I can, doing everything with love, and I trust that when it is time, it will be time. No fear of the ending, and no rushing toward it. Just a deep peace with the whole journey.

What the people who have been there tell us

I am not alone in believing this, and you do not have to take it on faith from me. For decades, doctors and researchers have collected thousands of accounts from people across every culture and religion who were clinically dead and came back – what we call near-death experiences. One radiation oncologist, Dr. Jeffrey Long, has gathered more than five thousand of these accounts into the largest public collection in the world (Near-Death Experience Research Foundation). What is

striking is how much they agree, no matter who the person is or what they believed beforehand (Psychology Today, common elements of near-death experiences).

Again and again, they describe the same things:

- **Awareness continues** even when the body has stopped — a sense of *self* that does not depend on the body being alive.
- **An overwhelming peace and love**, often described as the most profound feeling they have ever known.
- **A life review** — not a courtroom judgment, but a re-living of their life from the inside, where the thing that mattered most was simply *how much they loved.*
- **The loss of the fear of death.** This is the one that moves me most. Almost everyone who has touched that doorway comes back *less* afraid to die — and far more alive while living.

That last part is the gift. You do not need to nearly die to receive it. You can choose to live, right now, the way these people live after they come back: with less fear, more love, and a deep sense that this life is precious *and* that it is not the whole story.

There is another thread that moves me, though I hold it loosely. A Yale-trained psychiatrist named Dr. Brian Weiss began, as a complete skeptic, recording patients who under hypnosis seemed to recall earlier lives — and who healed real fears and pain in *this* life as a result (Brian Weiss, Many Lives, Many Masters). I want to be honest: this is not proven science, and serious people doubt it. I cannot tell you it is true. But the picture it paints — that the soul comes back to learn, that

the people we love most travel with us, that an old grudge is just unfinished business carried from somewhere further back – rhymes with everything else in this book. Take from it whatever helps you live with more love and less fear, and leave the rest.

Why this changes how you live today

Some people hear "death is not the end" and think it makes this life matter less. I have found the exact opposite. It makes every day *more* precious, not less.

When I am not braced against death, I am not braced against life either. I can love people without the terror of losing them. I can take risks, give generously, and let go of grudges, because I am playing a much longer game than one lifetime. And when someone I love dies – as my own sister did – the grief is real, the missing is real, but underneath it I can hold a quiet trust: this is not goodbye forever. It is *see you later.*

This is the soul piece of the whole book. We have talked about the mind and we have talked about the body – but a human being is mind, body, *and soul.* You cannot leave the soul out and still feel whole. When you make peace with death, you are really making peace with life. The two are the same surrender.

Do not fear death, and do not chase it. Live each day with love, give your gifts, hold your people close — and trust that the soul, like everything good, simply goes on. Death is only the body taking its rest.

06

The Thread That Binds Them

Suffering is clinging, and freedom is release.

These are not separate teachings. They are one truth seen from different angles:

PILLAR	WHAT I RELEASE	WHAT I GAIN
We Are All One	The illusion of separation	Compassion, belonging, an end to judgment
Respectful Autonomy	The need to control *others*	Real love and connection
Bonus Living	The need to possess *things*	Gratitude and peace with loss
Fearlessness	The need to control the *future*	Presence, health, and freedom

Underneath all of them lies a single insight: **suffering is clinging, and freedom is release.** This is the wisdom I have lived my way toward, and the wisdom I want to spread. Every venture, every act of giving, every collaboration I take on from here is meant to carry this truth a little further into the world.

07

PART SIX

The Four Phrases and the Power of Forgiveness

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

If the first pillars are *what* I believe, this is *how* I practice it – the small, daily things that turn philosophy into a way of living.

The four most powerful phrases in life

Four short sentences carry more freedom than almost anything else I know:

GOLDEN WORDS

The Four Phrases · Ho'oponopono

01 I'm sorry

02 Please forgive me

03 Thank you

04 I love you

Four sentences that return you to peace

- **"Sorry."** – *The healing of humility.* A genuine apology dissolves the ego, repairs the connection, and releases me from the weight of guilt. *"I'm sorry I spoke harshly. I was wrong"* gives instant relief to both people.
- **"Please forgive me."** – *The bridge back.* Asking for forgiveness honors the other person's pain and opens the door to trust. *"I hurt you, and I regret it. Please forgive me."*
- **"Thank you."** – *Gratitude turns everything.* It turns pain into a lesson and scarcity into abundance. Instead of *"Why me?"* after a loss, *"Thank you for this redirection – something better is coming."*
- **"I love you."** – *The final release.* Love dissolves fear. It is the last surrender. *"I love you despite the past. I release us both."*

These four phrases are not mine. They come from an old Hawaiian practice of forgiveness called Ho'oponopono, carried into the modern world by Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len and the writer Joe Vitale in their book *Zero Limits* (Zero Limits). I owe them, and the Hawaiian tradition they drew from, a debt of thanks.

Forgiveness is for me, not for them

There is an old saying that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. The woman who spends years hating the ex who cheated only imprisons herself while he moves on, remarried and happy. The resentment harms no one but the one carrying it.

- **Holding on is an illusion of power.** Resentment doesn't protect me; it blocks the very blessings trying to reach me. *"I'll never trust again"* invites more betrayal. *"I release this pain"* opens the door to healthy love.
- **The body keeps the score.** Carrying anger for years quietly wears the body down; releasing it does the opposite. This is not just a feeling – doctors at Johns Hopkins find that the act of forgiveness lowers the risk of heart attack, improves cholesterol and sleep, and reduces pain, blood pressure, anxiety, and stress (Johns Hopkins Medicine). (More on the science of this in the chapter on how the mind heals the body.)
- **Even the unforgivable can be released.** Those who have forgiven people who committed terrible harm against them often describe

the same shift: *"I won't let them own my mind anymore."* Forgiveness is not excusing the act. It is refusing to let the act define me.

A story I lived — the man I hated for seven years

I want to tell you something that happened to me, because it taught me forgiveness in a way no book ever could.

There was a man named Leon. For seven years I carried a hatred for him over money I felt I was owed. Seven years. That anger lived in me, quietly, the whole time – and the only person it ever hurt was me. He went on living his life. I was the one drinking the poison.

Then I went to a meditation retreat, and something inside me finally let go. When I came back, I made a decision. I went to Leon and I said, simply, *"Leon, I forgive you."* I meant it. I was not doing it to get anything. I was doing it to set myself free.

And then something I never expected happened. He pulled me aside, and he told me he would pay back everything. I cried. Years of weight lifted off me in a single moment.

Here is what I want you to take from this. I thought forgiveness was something you give to the other person, like a favor. It is not. The forgiver is the one who benefits most. I got my peace back, and in my case the money came too – but the peace was the real treasure. I had been imprisoning myself for seven years, holding the key the whole time. The day I forgave him, I walked out of my own cell.

And Leon was not the only one. Many people over the years cheated me or took what I was owed, and for a long time I wondered why I kept attracting them. Now I think it was simply the lesson I was here to learn. So I hold no grudge against any of them – not one. Carrying that weight only ever poisoned me, and I am done drinking poison. I wish them well, and I keep my hands open. That is not me being a saint. That is me refusing to let anyone live rent-free in my head ever again.

Practicing it daily

- **The burn letter.** Write down every hurt, then burn the page as a ritual of release.
- **The Ho'oponopono mantra.** Repeat silently, even toward those who wronged me: *"I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you."*
- **Gratitude replacement.** When anger rises, whisper: *"Thank you for this lesson. I choose peace."*

> *Forgiveness is self-rescue. The moment I can say "I love you" — even to an enemy — I reclaim my power.*

08

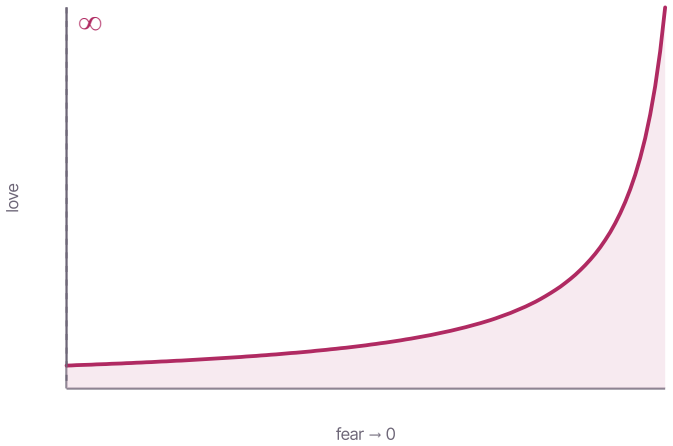
THE CORE

Love or Fear: The Only Two Choices

Fear is a story the mind tells to feel safe.
Love is the only place real safety lives.

Everything in this book comes down to a single truth – and the chapters ahead are simply how to live it. In every moment, I am acting from one of only two places: **love or fear.** Every thought, every decision, every emotion grows from one of these two roots. Understanding the difference – and consciously choosing love – is the whole of the path.

$$\lim_{\text{fear} \to 0} \frac{\text{love}}{\text{fear}} = \infty$$



As the fear in any moment approaches zero, the value of what is left — love — approaches infinity.

What fear is

Fear is the mind's attempt to control life. It wears the mask of protection, but underneath it is only resistance to what is.

- Fear **says:** *"What if something goes wrong?"*
- Fear **feels:** heavy, tight, restrictive.
- Fear **does:** control, doubt, obsess, resist.

It looks like checking a partner's phone, staying in a hated job out of terror of failure, clinging to a grudge in the belief that anger keeps me safe. But fear never prevents pain – it manufactures it.

What love is

Love is the natural state – trust in life, in others, and in myself.

- Love **says:** *"Whatever happens, I'll handle it."*
- Love **feels:** light, open, free.
- Love **does:** trust, allow, accept, release.

It looks like giving a partner space, leaving a bad job because I believe in my own worth, forgiving someone so their actions can't poison my heart. Love is not passivity – it is acting from wisdom instead of from fear.

Why the choice shapes everything

- **Energy follows attention.** Fear breeds more fear; worry finds more to worry about. Love breeds more love; trust finds more to trust. You have felt this: wake up convinced it will be a terrible day, and somehow every red light and rude word proves you right. Wake up grateful, and the same ordinary day fills with small good things you would have missed. The world hands back whatever you go looking for.
- **The body responds.** Fear wears me down over time; love releases what heals and revitalizes me.

- **Freedom lives in the choice.** In any moment I can pause and ask: *Is this coming from love or fear?* — and then choose again.

How I make the shift

1. **Pause and notice:** *Am I reacting from fear right now?*
2. **Breathe and release:** fear thrives in tension; relaxing the body dissolves it.
3. **Choose the lighter thought:** *What would love do here?*
4. **Act from trust, not control:** life unfolds with or without my resistance.

> *Fear is a story the mind tells to feel safe. Love is the only place real safety lives. The choice is always mine.* ***This is the heart of the wisdom I want to give the world: to help people, in any moment, choose love over fear.*** *And when the choice feels heavy, remember the lightest truth of all: Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.*

09

PART SEVEN

The Power of Now

Now is all there is. Focus on the Now.

Here is one of the simplest and most freeing things I ever learned, and I learned it the hard way, sitting in silence for ten days watching my own mind. Eckhart Tolle built a whole beautiful book around this one idea — he calls it *the power of now* — and once you feel it for yourself, you understand why.

There are only three places your mind can be: the past, the future, or right now. And two of those three are traps.

There are only three places your mind can be: the past, the future, or right now.
And two of those three are traps.

The past is gone. You cannot change a single second of it. Replay it a thousand times, cry over it, wish it were different – it does not move an inch. Anyone trying to change the past is wasting their time, because it is the one thing in the entire universe that is one hundred percent fixed. All you do by living there is drag yesterday's pain into today.

The future is not here, and you cannot control it. Worry about it all you want – we already saw that fear changes nothing. Trying to control the future is just the control problem wearing a different mask. You can prepare, then you must release. Living there only borrows tomorrow's fear and spends it today.

So where does that leave you? **Now.** Right now is the only moment that has ever existed, the only moment you can actually do anything in, the only moment that is real. The past is a memory. The future is a guess. Now is the only place life is actually happening.

Think about it plainly. Every good thing you have ever felt — a real laugh, a deep breath, a warm meal, a child's hand in yours — happened *now*. It never happened in the past or the future, because those don't exist except as thoughts. When I finally understood this, the heart pain that had haunted me for years lost its grip, because that pain was made entirely of past and future. It could not survive in the present moment.

Watch how this runs your ordinary day. You lie in bed at night and your mind drags you back through an argument from this morning — replaying it, sharpening the comeback you wish you'd said. None of it is happening now; you are suffering over a ghost. Or you are washing the dishes while your mind races ahead to a bill due next week, a conversation you are dreading, a what-if that may never come — and you miss the warm water on your hands, the only thing actually real. Most of our stress is exactly this: we are physically here, but our mind is living in a yesterday we cannot change or a tomorrow that has not arrived.

So this is the whole practice, and it is dead simple:

- Catch yourself drifting into yesterday's regret or tomorrow's worry.
- Take a breath and come back here.
- Ask only: *what can I do, right now?* Then do that, and let the rest go.

> *You cannot change the past. You cannot control the future. The only power you will ever have is here, in this moment. Now is all there is. Focus on the Now.*

A note on surrender

This is where **surrender** lives. People hear that word and think it means giving up, going limp, losing. It means the opposite. Surrender is doing everything in my power right now – and then letting go of the outcome, because the outcome was never mine to control anyway. I row the boat with everything I have; I do not command the river. The strongest people I know are not the ones gripping hardest. They are the ones who act fully and release completely, trusting that life will meet them. Surrender is not weakness. It is the deepest form of strength.

10

PART EIGHT

Authenticity: Freedom From the Opinions of Others

Trust yourself, ignore the noise.

The other pillars free me in how I treat others and how I meet life. This one frees me in my relationship with myself. Because a person can release control of everyone else and still live in a quiet prison – the prison of needing to be approved of.

The cost of caring too much what others think

When I overvalue other people's opinions, I:

- **Suppress my true self** – and live a filtered, inauthentic life.

- **Give away my power** – and let strangers decide my worth.
- **Manufacture stress** – anxiety over judgments that mostly exist only in my imagination.

Why do we do it? Because we're wired to want to belong (*"if they don't like me, I won't survive"*), trained from childhood to chase gold stars – grades, likes, praise – and quietly taught to trust the crowd more than ourselves.

You know this feeling even if you have never been on a stage. It is the friend who buys a car or a handbag they cannot afford, to impress people who are barely paying attention. It is choosing a degree or a job because relatives will nod approvingly, not because it is yours. It is opening your phone, seeing everyone else's holidays and weddings and good news, and feeling your own quiet life shrink – forgetting you are comparing your ordinary Tuesday to the best ten seconds of theirs. We perform for an audience that is far too busy performing for their own.

I played poker on some of the most televised tables in the world. Every decision I made was being watched, analyzed, commented on. Early on, that pressure nearly killed my game. The day I stopped playing to the crowd and started playing my own hand – just my read, my read alone – everything changed. Authenticity at the card table and authenticity in life look exactly the same: trust yourself, ignore the noise.

How I free myself

- **Reality-check their opinions.** Most people are far too busy worrying about their own image to judge me deeply. Wear the odd outfit in public and notice how few people actually care.
- **Ask whose life I'm living.** *"I'd rather be hated for who I am than loved for who I'm not."* On my deathbed, will I wish I had pleased more people?
- **Upgrade my focus.** From *"What do they think of me?"* to *"What do I think of me?"* and *"How can I contribute?"*
- **Stop needing permission.** Make small, unapproved choices every day – say no, voice an unpopular view. *"My worth isn't negotiable."*

> *As Sadhguru puts it: "If you're always looking outside for validation, you've missed the whole point of life. The only opinion that should matter is yours — because you're the one experiencing your life." The less I need approval, the more magnetic I become. Authenticity repels the wrong people and attracts the right ones.*

11

PART NINE

You Are Already Enough: Nothing Left to Prove

You are already enough. Right now, before you do anything else.

Once you stop living for other people's eyes, there is one last thing to put down, and for me it was the heaviest of all. The need to keep proving myself. I carried it for years without even seeing it.

Here is the truth. I won the things people spend their whole lives chasing. The big tournaments. The money. The applause at tables that were broadcast around the world. And I'll tell you what I learned the hard way: it was never enough. I'd win, feel good for about a day, and then quietly start hunting for the next thing that would finally make me *enough.* Prove I was smart enough. Successful enough. Worth lov-

ing. I kept telling myself the same lie everyone tells themselves – *once I get a little more, then I can relax.* That day never comes. Because if you don't feel like enough right now, no pile of chips on earth will fix it. The hole isn't in the number. It's in the heart, and you can't fill a hole in the heart from the outside.

Real freedom wasn't becoming some better, more impressive version of me. It was finally seeing that I never had to prove a single thing in the first place. You are already enough. Right now, before you do anything else. That one took me the longest to believe – but it's the one that set me free.

Life Is Not an Exam

So many of us play life like it's an exam. Scared of the wrong answer, scared of failing, scared of picking the wrong road and wasting our one shot. As if every choice gets marked right or wrong and someone's keeping score.

But life isn't an exam. It's an experience – and you already know this, you just forget it. When you travel somewhere new, you don't stand on the corner asking which street is the *correct* one. You wander. You get a little lost. You find the good stuff by accident. That's the whole point of the trip. Life is the same hand. Some roads bring joy, some bring a lesson, but I have never once found a road that was wasted – every single one taught me something about myself. There's no answer key. There's just your own experience, and every bit of it counts. This is exactly what I mean when I keep telling you: Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.

Loving Yourself Is Not Selfish

I know a lot of good people — some of the kindest I've ever met — and they all share the same blind spot. They'll love everybody but themselves. They'll forgive the whole world and never once forgive the person in the mirror. They'll pour and pour for everyone around them and call it virtue. I did it too, for years.

Then something obvious finally landed on me: an empty cup pours nothing. If I don't love myself first, whatever love I hand out comes mixed with resentment and exhaustion and a quiet bill I expect you to pay back later — and that's not love, that's accounting. Real love isn't me erasing myself for you. It's me taking care of you *and* taking care of me, at the same time, with no resentment in it. Loving yourself isn't the opposite of loving others. It's the source they both come from.

> *Loving yourself is not selfish. It's the start of everything. Give yourself the kindness you give everyone else. You were always enough.*

12

PART TEN

Living Your Purpose: Finding Your Dharma

Find your dharma, and your work stops feeling like work.

Once you stop living for other people's approval, a bigger question opens up: *what am I actually here to do?* I think this is one of the most important questions a person can sit with, and I believe everyone has an answer waiting inside them.

The teacher who says this best, to me, is Jay Shetty, and he uses an old word from the monks: **dharma**. Hard to translate, but the simplest way to put it is *your true calling – the thing you are meant to do with your life.*

Shetty gives a beautifully simple formula for finding it. Your dharma sits where three things meet (Jay Shetty, Think Like a Monk):

- **What you love** – your passion, the thing you would do even if no one paid you.
- **What you are good at** – your natural talent and skill.
- **What the world needs** – how that gift can actually serve other people.

Where those three overlap, you find work that does not feel like work. You find purpose. As Shetty puts it, *dharma = passion + expertise + usefulness.*

I did not plan poker. I stumbled into it. As a kid I was good at math and loved to problem-solve – I'd play chess against myself, both sides, just for the joy of it. And I loved to risk, to swing high. For years those felt like random traits. Then I found poker, and every one of them clicked at once. I didn't choose it. I discovered the thing I was already built for. That's dharma.

But dharma can move. After my awakening, the ground shifted. Same gifts – the love of a hard problem, the nerve to bet big – but they found a higher table. My game now isn't winning pots. It's spreading this wisdom as far as it will go. So if your purpose moves on you one day, don't panic. It's not a betrayal. It's life dealing you a bigger hand.

Here is why this matters so much, and why I put it right after the work on authenticity and self-worth. A job can change a hundred times in a life. Dharma does not. It is not your title or your salary – it is your inner compass. Many people climb the whole ladder of success only to

find it was leaning against the wrong wall. They were chasing someone else's dream the entire time. Dharma is how you make sure the ladder is yours.

Notice how this ties back to everything else in this book. Finding your purpose is not about grabbing something for yourself out of fear of being nobody. It is the opposite. It is discovering the gift you already carry and giving it away. That is why the monks at Jay Shetty's ashram did not ask each other *"How was work today?"* They asked, *"Have you served today?"*

The practice is simple, and you can start this week:

- **Notice what you lose track of time doing.** That is a clue to your passion.
- **Ask the people who know you what you are naturally good at.** We are often blind to our own gifts.
- **Look for the overlap with a real need.** Where does your gift solve a problem someone actually has?
- **Then point your life at that overlap** — not all at once, but a little more each year.

> *You were not born to copy someone else's life. You were born with a gift that is yours alone — and the world has a need shaped exactly like it. Find your dharma, and your work stops feeling like work. It becomes the truest thing you do.*

13

PART ELEVEN

Creating Your Reality

You are not a victim of your life.
You are the one holding the dial.

Now that you have cleared the path – let go of control, dropped the fear, come back to the present – something powerful becomes possible. You start to pull toward you the very life you want. People find this hard to believe at first. I get it. I would have too, once. But I have seen it work in my own life again and again, and not by accident. I keep a quiet wish list – the things I want to draw into my life, even the ones that seem impossible – and over the years I have watched a startling number of them arrive. I am not going to tell you it is magic. I am just telling you what I have lived.

The best way I have ever heard it explained comes from a book called The Secret, and it uses a simple picture: you are like a radio (The Secret, Law of Attraction).

Think about how a radio works. A station is playing music right now in the air around you, but you only hear it if your dial is tuned to that exact frequency. If you are tuned to a different station, that music is still out there – you just can't receive it. The book says we are exactly the same. Every thought and every feeling you have is a frequency you are broadcasting out into the universe, and like a magnet, that frequency pulls back to you more of the same (Readingraphics summary of The Secret). Feel grateful and hopeful, and you tune yourself to good things. Sit in fear, anger, and lack, and you stay tuned to exactly that, and you wonder why your life keeps playing the same sad song.

Here is the part that ties this whole book together, and the part I most want you to understand:

Your negative emotions are static on the antenna. Fear, resentment, jealousy, worry – they jam the signal. As long as you are full of them, you cannot tune in to what you actually want, no matter how hard you try. This is why all the earlier work matters so much. When you forgive, when you let go, when you choose love over fear, when you come back to now – you are not just feeling better. You are *clearing the antenna.* You are removing the static so the signal can finally come through clean. A clear, loving, grateful mind is a perfectly tuned receiver, and life starts to deliver.

Notice — this is the same truth as the water and the same truth as your own body. Thoughts are not just things in your head. They are signals that shape what comes to you. You are not a victim of your life. You are the one holding the dial.

The practice is simple:

- **Clear the static first.** Forgive, release, let go of the fear. This comes before everything.
- **Tune to what you want, not what you dread.** Hold the picture of what you want, and more importantly, *feel* how it would feel to already have it. Feeling is what charges the signal.
- **Then let go and trust.** Clinging tightly is itself a kind of fear, and it jams the signal again. Want it, then hold it lightly, the same way you hold everything in this book — like a bonus.

> *You are broadcasting all day, whether you know it or not. Change what you send out, and you change what comes back. Clear the static, tune to love, and trust the universe to deliver.*

I'll level with you here, the way I have all through this book. I cannot prove to you that the universe works this way. No one can. Maybe a clear, hopeful mind simply notices more chances, takes more action, and gives up less easily — and that alone is enough to change a life. Maybe it is something more. I do not need to win that argument. I only know what I have seen, again and again, in my own life: clean up what is inside you, and the outside has a way of following. Try it for yourself, and let your own life be the proof.

A Note on Desire — Desire Is Not the Problem

People often think this wisdom means giving up desire. It does not. Desire is just life expressing itself through us – the urge to create, love, build, and grow. Without it there would be no art, no progress, no life at all. Desire is not the problem. **Attachment is.**

The suffering starts the moment I tell myself *"I'll be happy when"* – when I'm successful, when I make more money, when I find the perfect partner. In that instant I have handed my happiness to a future that may never come, and abandoned the only place it actually lives: now.

Here's what I've found instead. I can be happy now *and* still want more. I can be at peace and still build a business; grateful and still chase a dream. The difference is where the wanting comes from. Scarcity says *"I need this to be enough."* Abundance says *"I am already enough – and I choose to create anyway."* From that place, building wealth, love, and impact becomes a joyful expression of life rather than a desperate demand placed on it.

So desire fully – just don't cling. Hold your dreams the same way you hold everything else in this book: lightly, gratefully, as a beautiful bonus.

> ***Desire fully. Create boldly. Enjoy the journey. Release the outcome.***

14

Living It: My Children

My anxiety will not shape their future — my trust will.

If you want to know whether I really believe any of this, watch me with my kids. That is where the philosophy stops being words and becomes a test I either pass or fail, day after day.

I have two children, and I want the same thing for both of them that I have been trying to say in this whole book: I want them to be free. Not free of me – free to become who they actually are, instead of some idea I had about who they should be. It is the same lesson as everything else. A child is not a project to control. They are their own person, on loan to me for a short and precious while.

The hardest part is my own fear. When I am scared they will get hurt, the fear wants to come out as control, or as a raised voice. I have done it. I have yelled when I was really just frightened. And the thing I am

proudest of is not that I never lose my temper – it is that I have learned to go back and say so. *"I was wrong to yell earlier. I was scared you'd get hurt, but I should have spoken kindly."* That is the whole thing right there. They do not learn how to be human by watching me be perfect. They learn it by watching me get it wrong and make it right.

> *The goal is to raise children who can one day walk away from me with confidence and never look back in fear. My anxiety will not shape their future — my trust will. Everything in this book gets tested in this one relationship. And if I can live it here, with the people I love most, it can spread out from there, one relationship at a time, into the world.*

15

PART TWELVE

The Mind Heals the Body

What the mind believes, the body obeys.

There is a reason this philosophy matters for far more than peace of mind. When the mind is freed – from control, from fear, from resentment – the body grows healthier too. The mind and the body are not two separate things. They are one system, in constant conversation.

The science is no longer in doubt

Chronic fear, anger, and resentment keep the body flooded with stress hormones like cortisol. Over time this measurably weakens the immune system, raises blood pressure, disturbs sleep and digestion, and accelerates aging. A calm, loving, forgiving mind does the opposite – it lowers blood pressure, strengthens immunity, and creates the internal

conditions in which the body can repair itself. This is not mysticism; it is well-documented physiology. **The emotions I carry every day are quietly writing instructions to my cells.**

Leading thinkers have spent their lives mapping this. The cell biologist Bruce Lipton, a leading voice in the science of epigenetics, shows that our genes are not our fixed destiny – our environment, and above all our *perception* of that environment, switches genes on and off (Bruce Lipton, The Biology of Belief). As he puts it, genes are the blueprint, but the mind is the architect. Dr. Joe Dispenza has spent over a decade measuring meditators and documenting how shifting from stress into states of gratitude, love, and joy changes the body and supports healing (Dr. Joe Dispenza). And in mainstream academic psychology, Dr. Martin Seligman – the founder of positive psychology – has shown that optimism, gratitude, and meaning are linked to stronger immunity and lower stress (Martin Seligman, Authentic Happiness). If their work speaks to you, go read them for yourself.

What I believe — and how I want to say it responsibly

My conviction is simple: **the earlier a person heals their mind, the healthier their whole life becomes.** So many illnesses are worsened, and some are invited, by years of unaddressed stress, fear, and emotional pain. Clearing the mind early is one of the most powerful forms of prevention there is.

I want to be careful and honest about how I say this, because the goal is to help people, not to mislead them. I will not tell anyone that the mind alone causes every disease, or that healing the mind is a substi-

tute for medicine – that claim is not true, and it could lead someone to delay the care they need. What is true, and what I will stand behind completely, is this: **the mind is one of the most powerful allies medicine has.** A peaceful, loving, fearless mind helps prevent illness, supports recovery, and makes any treatment more effective. Heal the mind early, work alongside good medicine, and the body has its best possible chance.

The water that stayed with me

Here is an image that made all of this real for me. There is an experiment with water that I think everyone should know about – and I want to be straight with you up front: it is the least proven thing in this chapter. I include it not as proof, but as a picture I have never been able to shake.

Researchers took ordinary water, spoke to it, played it music, showed it words – then froze it and looked at the crystals under a microscope. When the water was given love, kind words, words like *thank you* and *I love you*, it froze into beautiful, perfect crystals. When it was given hate, anger, ugly words, it froze into broken, chaotic, ugly shapes. Same water. The only thing that changed was the thought and the feeling around it. This was the life's work of a Japanese researcher named Masaru Emoto, who spent decades photographing frozen water crystals (Masaru Emoto, The Hidden Messages in Water). I should be honest: scientists debate his methods, and his results have never been reliably reproduced. But as an image of how thought might shape what we are made of, it has always stayed with me.

Now think about this. Your body is roughly sixty percent water. So if a thought can change a glass of water that much, what do you think your thoughts are doing to *you*, every single day, inside your own body? When you sit in anger, fear, and resentment for years, you are pouring that into your own water. When you live in love, gratitude, and forgiveness, you are doing the opposite. You are not just feeling better. You are physically remaking the water you are made of.

And here is the part I love most. Ho'oponopono is an old Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness; the modern version carried into the world by Dr. Hew Len and Joe Vitale in *Zero Limits* rests on four simple phrases: *I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you.* The exact four phrases already in this book. That is not a coincidence. The same truth keeps showing up – in a hospital, in an old island prayer, and in your own heart. The mind is that powerful. Love is that powerful.

And here is the hard proof

If the water moved you but you want something a skeptic cannot wave away, look no further than the placebo effect – one of the most studied and most accepted facts in all of medicine. Give people a sugar pill they *believe* is real, and a measurable share of them genuinely heal: less pain, less nausea, better sleep. In one study, a placebo was half as effective as a real migraine drug (Harvard Health). Doctors do not argue about whether this is real – they build around it. That is mainstream science, in a hospital, telling you exactly what this book has been say-

ing all along: what the mind believes, the body obeys. You do not have to take the water on faith. The proof is already sitting in every pharmacy.

> *Take care of your mind today, and you take care of your body for decades. The inner work isn't a luxury — it's the foundation of a long, healthy, joyful life.*

16

PART THIRTEEN

Caring for the Body: The Other Half of the Machine

The mind and the body heal each other — tend to both.

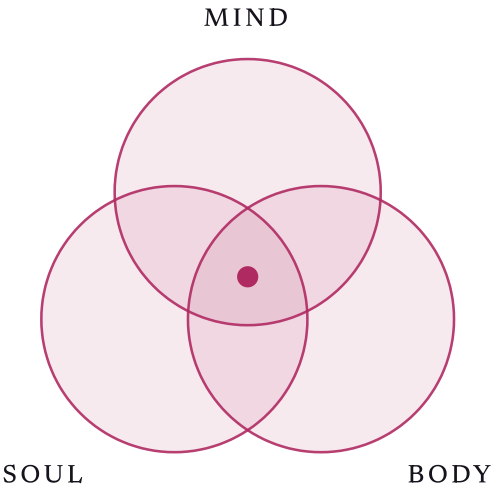
Let me say this plainly. This book is about the mind, because that is where I have done my deepest work. The body is different – I am not a doctor and won't pretend to be one. But I believe one simple thing: **mind, body, and soul are one machine, and all three have to run together for any of it to work.** A clear mind in a neglected body is only half a life.

For most of my life, I never gave my body a second thought. I poured everything into other things – building wealth, chasing love, winning. I smoked for nearly thirty years. I ate whatever tasted good – the

sauces, the fried, the sweet – all the things that comfort you while they quietly take from you. It was only in recent years that I woke up to a truth I had missed: this body is the one thing I can never trade in.

And here is what took the weight off my guilt – that food was built to own me. Modern junk food is engineered to hit the same switch in the brain as a drug: one bite, and you crave the next. It was never about willpower. Then, three weeks before my ceremony, I ate truly clean for the first time – no sugar, no sauce, no processed food, just real food. And something strange happened: I could finally *taste* it. I had been eating my whole life and had never once tasted my food.

Mind · Body · Soul = One



Not three things, but one. They overlap in the center, and whatever you give to one, the other two quietly receive.

So here is everything I know, kept simple:

- **Eat clean.** Real, whole food, close to how it grows. If it was made in a factory or sold in a packet, it's processed — make that the exception, not the everyday.
- **Cut the sweet stuff.** No sugar or sugary drinks. Skip the deep-fried food and go easy on heavy sauces. And if you smoke, stop.

- **Eat less, less often.** Give your body a rest between meals so it can repair instead of always digesting.
- **Move every day.** Raise your heart rate, and lift some weights – muscle is the armor that protects you when you grow old.
- **Breathe and sleep well.** A few slow breaths calm the machine, and good sleep is when the body rebuilds.

Beyond that, stay curious and find what fits *your* body – everyone's is different. People swear by ice baths, saunas, red light therapy, oxygen chambers, supplements. Try what calls to you, and listen to your own body. The earlier you start, the better the body you will carry for the rest of your life.

I won't pretend I do all of this perfectly – old habits are hard, and I still slip. I am no health guru, just a man who woke up late and is trying to do better. But this is the whole point: you are built from what you eat, breathe, and do. Your cells renew over time, so in a real sense you are rebuilding your body every day. Feed it junk and you build a junk machine; feed it well and you build a temple. **Bring the same consciousness to your body that you bring to your mind.** Start today – not perfectly, just consciously. You only get one.

> *The mind and the body heal each other — tend to both.*

17

PART FOURTEEN

The Lineage: Teachers Who Light the Same Path

Five teachers, one path.

I didn't invent this wisdom. I lived my way toward it — and then discovered, with a kind of joy, that some of the clearest minds in history and in our own time have been pointing at the very same truth. Their words give what I believe deeper roots. Five teachers, in particular, light the path I am walking.

Buddha — the root of it all

Twenty-five centuries ago, the Buddha gave the world the Four Noble Truths: life contains suffering; suffering is caused by craving and clinging; suffering ends when we let go of that clinging; and there is a path to that freedom (Four Noble Truths). This is the spine of everything in this book. My Bonus Living is his teaching that nothing is permanent and clinging to the impermanent causes pain. My Respectful Autonomy is his non-attachment – loving without grasping or trying to control. As the Buddha taught, true love includes *upeksha*: equanimity, non-attachment, the willingness to let go (Thich Nhat Hanh on letting go). My whole philosophy is, in essence, his single insight lived in modern life: *suffering is clinging; freedom is release.*

Sadhguru — joy and responsibility come from within

Sadhguru teaches that joy is our original nature and our fundamental responsibility – not something to extract from the outside world, but something to uncover within (Sadhguru, Isha). He insists that the source of every human experience is internal: "when pain, misery, or anger happen, it is time to look within you, not around you" (Inner Engineering). This is the heart of my Fearlessness and my Authenticity. His teaching that I am one hundred percent responsible for my own inner state – that responsibility simply means "my ability to respond" – is the same truth as my own: I can only control my own actions. And it was Sadhguru who reminded me that the only opinion that should truly matter is my own, because I am the one living my life.

Bruce Lipton — belief shapes biology

Lipton gives my mind-body conviction its scientific backbone. His research shows that we are not victims of our genes – our beliefs and perceptions shape our biology, switching genes on and off (Bruce Lipton). "We are not victims," he says; "we are creators." This is Love-over-Fear written in the language of cell biology: a mind rooted in fear and limiting belief writes one set of instructions to the body; a mind rooted in love and possibility writes another.

Joe Dispenza — we can rewire ourselves

Dispenza shows, with measured evidence, that we are not stuck with the patterns of our past – we can rewire the brain and body by deliberately cultivating elevated emotions like gratitude, love, and joy (Dr. Joe Dispenza). If I fall asleep replaying fear and resentment, I program those into my body overnight; if I rest in gratitude and love, I plant seeds of healing instead. This is the practical engine beneath my Four Phrases and my daily practice: the wisdom is not just to be understood, but to be installed through repetition until it becomes who I am.

Jay Shetty — ancient wisdom made simple and livable

Jay Shetty is my model for *how* to share this. He takes monk wisdom and makes it usable for ordinary, busy people: let go of what you carry, grow yourself, then serve others (Think Like a Monk). He teaches stopping the habit of living by other people's opinions, healing fear and past pain, and finding purpose through *dharma* – passion meet-

ing service. His highest principle, that a life of service is the most direct path to fulfillment, points exactly where my vision is heading. From him I take the discipline of keeping the message simple, warm, and within reach of everyone.

> *Five teachers, one path. Buddha the root, Sadhguru the compass, Lipton the biology, Dispenza the method, Shetty the way to share it. I stand on their shoulders — and add one plain message anyone can carry.*

18

PART FIFTEEN

How to Actually Live This

You don't change by understanding. You change by doing a few small things every day.

Here is the most honest thing I can tell you about this whole book. Knowing all of this changes nothing. *Practicing* it changes everything.

Most people can already name their fear, their anger, their resentment. What they are missing is not the understanding – it is a *method* to actually change it. So this chapter is the method. These are the simple, free, daily practices that take all the ideas in this book and slowly turn them into who you are.

Start with meditation — it opened every door

If I had to name the one thing that opened every other door for me, it would be meditation. After facing the grief honestly, this was the practice that changed everything. It is what calms the mind, helps you understand yourself, and makes you conscious enough to actually catch yourself in the moment and choose differently. Without that quiet, all these other ideas stay as words on a page. With it, they become things you can live.

You do not need a temple or a teacher to begin. Sit still, close your eyes, and just watch your breath for a few minutes a day. When your mind wanders – and it will – gently come back. That is the whole practice. That is the gym where every other muscle in this book gets strong.

Why repetition is everything

Here is something the scientists taught me that changed everything. Bruce Lipton says the subconscious mind processes about **twenty million bits of information a second**, while the conscious, thinking mind – the part of you reading this – handles only about **forty** (Bruce Lipton). And about **ninety-five percent of our lives runs on that subconscious** – old habits and beliefs playing quietly in the background (Lipton, Biology of Belief). He describes it like a tape player: it just plays back whatever was recorded in it, mostly before age seven. If a child was told *you don't deserve,* that tape can run for the rest of their life.

This is the best news in the book, not the worst. It explains why willpower alone never works – you're using the tiny conscious mind to fight the giant subconscious one. And it tells you the real secret of change: **you don't think your way to a new life, you repeat your way there.** That is why the gentle practices in this book – meditation, loving-kindness, gratitude – are not soft. They are how you record a new tape.

The skill of turning fear into love

This is the central skill of the whole book, and it really is a skill – like a language or an instrument, it only grows with practice. The skill is this: **to notice, in the moment, when you are acting out of fear, and to consciously turn it into love.**

The first step to changing an emotion is being able to *name* it while it is happening, instead of just being swept along by it. The moment you can say *"this is fear,"* or *"this is jealousy,"* you have already created a little space between you and the feeling – and in that space, you get to choose. Name it, then ask: *what would love do here instead?* Do that a thousand times, and one day you will notice you are simply a more loving person. That is the skill, built one moment at a time.

Compassion and loving-kindness — love everything

Choosing love is not only for the hard moments. It is something you can practice all day, for the sheer joy of it. I do this constantly. When I see an animal, I quietly tell it *I love you.* When I see a tree, I do the

same. I try to love everything and everyone around me – yes, even a cockroach. It sounds silly, but it works on *me*: it keeps my heart open and tuned to love all day long.

This is what the Buddha called loving-kindness, and it is a real practice, not just a nice feeling – and the science is catching up to it. In one controlled trial, people who practiced loving-kindness meditation aged more slowly at the cellular level than those who did not (loving-kindness and biological aging, randomized trial). Love, it turns out, may quite literally keep you younger. And it comes back around. When you send love out to all things, all things send it back to you. That is karma in its simplest form: love the world, and the good comes home to you.

Watch how you speak — and stop judging

If there is one place this wisdom lives or dies, it is in how we treat other people through our words and actions. Two simple rules I hold:

- **Do not lie, and watch your voice.** Words have real power – the same power as the words spoken to that water. A careless sentence can wound someone for years. So I try to speak truthfully and kindly, and to remember that how I speak to people is doing something to them, for better or worse.
- **Stop judging others – let them be who they are.** The moment I decide *I am right and they are wrong* is the very moment suffering begins. As Conversations with God puts it, there is really no "right" or "wrong" – only what works and what doesn't, depending on

what you are trying to be and do. Letting people be exactly who they are is Respectful Autonomy lived out loud.

See through the ego

The ego is the part of us that performs for others, that needs to be right, that believes every one of its own thoughts. The trap is that we mistake its voice for our true voice. *That loud, defensive, always-right voice is not really me.* The only way I know to see through it is to sit quietly enough to notice it – once you can see the ego as a trap rather than as yourself, it loses its grip.

Live consciously, not compulsively

Sadhguru puts it simply: the whole art of living well is moving from *compulsive* (reacting on autopilot) to *conscious* (responding by choice). Most of our suffering is just old reactions firing automatically. Catch yourself in the moment, take a breath, and choose your response instead of letting the reaction choose for you. One warning he gives that I take seriously: so much of modern technology pulls us the other way – toward compulsive, mindless reacting. Being deliberate about that is part of the practice now.

A few small daily tricks

Here are some small, free things you can do every day to make all of this easier to live. None of them cost anything but a moment of attention:

- **Do a daily joy audit.** Before bed, ask one question: *Am I a little more joyful today than I was yesterday?* That one question keeps you pointed in the right direction.
- **Keep a gratitude journal.** A few times a week, write down a handful of things you are grateful for. It sounds almost too simple, but it is one of the most studied habits there is – linked to less depression, lower blood pressure, and better sleep (UCLA Health). Writing it down trains the eye to find the good.
- **Put everything aside before sleep.** Set down the day's worries before you close your eyes – you are programming your subconscious overnight, so plant good seeds.
- **Remember you are mortal.** Be quietly conscious that you will die one day. It is not morbid – it makes everything precious.
- **Wake up with a smile** – simply because you are still alive and get another day.
- **Take charge of your happiness.** It is entirely your own making, not anyone else's job.
- **Five minutes of love.** Spend a few minutes a day deliberately feeling the sweetness of love and gratitude in your heart.
- **Eat with gratitude.** Pause before a meal and eat with a little reverence for the life that is feeding you.
- **Try the breath and the cold.** A few rounds of slow, deep breathing to settle the mind; a burst of cold water at the end of your shower to train your calm. I took both from Wim Hof, and they work.

A word on discipline

I won't lie to you: none of this is easy. It was never meant to be. There will be days the old fear wins, days you forget every word in this book. That is normal. The trick is not to be perfect – it is to get just a little better than yesterday, and to keep showing up. Improve one percent a day and the math takes care of the rest. Don't try to change your whole life in one day – take one small step today, another tomorrow, and let them add up. And here is the part people don't want to hear: no one is coming to do it for you. Not me, not a guru, not a pill. Your life is under your own management. The only person who can truly save you is you – and the good news buried in that hard truth is that the one person you need has been here the whole time.

> *You don't change by understanding. You change by doing a few small things every day until they are simply who you are. Small, free, repeated — that's the whole secret. You still have to show up and play the hand.*

19

The Vision: One Simple Message for Everyone

In any moment of your life, you can choose love over fear.

Everything in this book — every pillar, every teacher, every practice — comes down to something a person of any age, any language, any class, any background can understand and use today:

> ***Choose love over fear. Let go of control. Forgive, be grateful, and let others be free. Heal your mind, and your life and your body will heal with it.***

The two things everyone wants

Here is what strikes me most. Strip away the languages and the cultures, and every single person on earth wants the same two things: to be healthy, and for their wishes to come true. That's it. That's what a king wants and what a beggar wants.

My own people say it best. Every Chinese New Year, we wish each other two things above all others: **身體健康** – good health – and **心想事成** – may what your heart desires come true. Two wishes, passed between millions of people every year. And it is no accident that they are the same two things this entire book is about. *Heal your mind and your body heals* – that is 身體健康. *Clear the static and tune your antenna to what you want* – that is 心想事成. The oldest blessing in my culture is, word for word, the promise of this book.

So here is the question I cannot stop asking. If this is what everyone wants – and we say it to each other out loud every year – then why do so few people actually *do* anything to get it? We wish for it, and then we go back to fear, to control, to grudges, to living in the past, the very things that block it. We pray for the harvest but never plant the seed.

This book is the seed. It is not just a nice wish – it is the actual formula for the two things you already long for. Everything in these pages, every pillar and practice, is a way to get your mind into the one state where health and your heart's wishes can finally come to you. The wish has always been there. What was missing was the how. This is the how.

So let me be straight with you about what I want. I am not trying to start a religion. I am not handing you some complicated philosophy you need a degree to follow. This is not for the rich, or the clever, or the special. It is a simple thing that a billionaire and a guy selling noodles on the street can each pick up and feel a little lighter for holding. That's the whole game. Everything I do from here – every business, every dollar I give away, everyone I team up with – is really just me trying to push this one little message a bit further out into the world: in any moment of your life, you can choose love over fear. That's it. That's the whole book.

And here is the thing I keep landing on. If we really are all one – and I believe we are – then helping you isn't me doing you a favor. It's just one part of me helping another part of me. So here's how I actually think about my own life now. I won the big tournaments. I made the money. And none of it, not one chip of it, is what I'll be thinking about at the end. What I'll be thinking about is the people I got to leave a little lighter than I found them. That's the only score that ever mattered.

I know this because I have already felt it. When I started, I just shared these ideas with the people close to me – friends, family, a few students, sometimes a stranger. And then I watched some of them change. I watched people climb out of their own private hell into something like peace. There is no trophy and no pile of money that comes close to that feeling. To watch another human being go from suffering to free, and to know you helped hand them the key – noth-

ing has ever made me feel more alive. That is why this isn't a side project for me. It's the point. Funny thing about this stuff: the only way to keep it is to give it all away.

So that's my heart, laid out plain. That's the vision. If you've read this far and something in you lit up – if you want to help me carry this thing – then you already know the path, because you just read it. Come find me. Let's play this hand together. And remember: Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.

20

A Last Word: Pass It On

Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.

Let me admit something before I let you go. Every single trap in this book – clinging, fear, control, needing to prove yourself, living in the past, judging, the whole list – I have fallen into all of them. Not once. Over and over. And if I'm telling the truth, I'm probably still sitting in one or two right now without seeing it. So don't read this and think you're broken because you recognize yourself on every page. That recognition *is* the work. We have all been caught in these. Most of us still are.

Here's what happens once you really understand this, and I can't unsee it now: you start spotting the same patterns in the people you love. You watch your father armor up out of fear and call it strength. You watch a friend clutch a grudge that is quietly poisoning them. You watch someone you adore chase one more win, sure that *this* will fi-

nally make them enough – the same hand I played for years. You see it in the people sitting right next to you, and your heart aches, because you used to be there too.

That's exactly why I can't keep this to myself, and I'm asking you not to either. If something in these pages reached you, don't let it stop with you. Pass it on – not by preaching, but in whatever language you already speak. Some of you will share it in a post or a video. Some will paint it, or write a song, or put it in a film, or a photo, or a single sentence said to the right person at the right moment. Some will just live it so quietly that people feel lighter around you and never quite know why. Use whatever you've got. The medium doesn't matter. The message does.

And share it wisely – meet people where they are, never force it, never use it as one more way to feel superior. Plant the seed and let them grow it in their own time, the same way someone once did for you.

Because here is the world I actually see when I close my eyes. Imagine if enough of us understood this at the same time. If we all stopped running on fear and started choosing love – even a little, even imperfectly. There would be nothing left to fight over. No war. No need to win, because no one would feel like they were losing. Most of the cruelty in this world isn't evil; it's just fear that never got a better option. This book is the better option. Hand it to one more person, and you've made the world that much quieter, that much kinder, that much freer.

That's the whole vision. One mind at a time, one heart at a time, until peace stops being a dream and just becomes the way we live. I've played a lot of big hands in my life. This is the only one I care about

winning – and the beautiful thing is, the only way to win it is to deal everyone else in.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for carrying it forward. Now go play your hand, and help the people around you play theirs a little lighter.

Life is just a game. Welcome to Hotel Earth.

With Gratitude

It is a gift meant to be passed from hand to hand.

IN LOVING MEMORY

曾煦華 · Ava Tsang

1976 – 2017

"We are all just guests checked into this hotel for one stay."

This book is dedicated to my sister.

I did not arrive at any of this alone, and I will not carry it forward alone either. So before I close, I want to say thank you.

First, to my sister, Ava. This whole book began with losing you. The pain of it broke me open, and somewhere inside that breaking I found everything I have tried to share in these pages. I would give all of it back to have you here. But since I cannot, I will do the next best thing: I will take what your leaving taught me and give it away to as many people as I can. This is my way of keeping you close.

Thank you to Serena Law – my teacher and my healer. You were the one who opened my doors. You sat with me in the darkest time and helped me find my way back to peace. So much of what I now understand, I understand because of your teachings. I will be grateful for the rest of my life.

Thank you to every other teacher whose words lit my path – the ones I have met, and the ones I only know through their books and talks. And thank you, most of all, to everyone who has chosen to walk beside me in spreading this wisdom – every partner, friend, collaborator, and stranger who has helped carry this message a little further into the world.

None of this wisdom is mine. I only lived my way toward it, and found it already glowing in the great teachers named in these pages – and in countless others I will never be able to name: the friends, the books, the quiet strangers who each handed me a little light. I simply gathered what was already there. Wisdom like this was never meant to be owned, only passed on – which is why this book is, and will always be, free.

This was never meant to be one man's book. It is a gift meant to be passed from hand to hand. If you are reading this, you are now part of that chain. To share this wisdom – to help even one person choose love over fear – is the whole point, and the surest way to keep it alive. From the bottom of my heart: thank you for being part of it.

With love and gratitude,

Elton

If it helped you, help it travel.

Scan to read, listen, or send it to someone.

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