



Who am I now?

SIMPLE STEPS TO INVENTING YOUR FUTURE
AFTER DIVORCE, RETIREMENT, DEATH OF A SPOUSE, EMPTY NEST, ETC.

By: Pat Mussieux

WEBSITE: www.patmussieux.com E-MAIL: pat@patmussieux.com

PRAISE FOR "WHO AM I NOW?"

As I was reading your book, I could think of so many people who would benefit from reading your book, like a friend who just ended a marriage after many years. Also, I could see that people who had been caregivers, like myself, for 30 years and then the loss of that person creates a huge void and YOU HAVE to reinvent who you are and what your purpose is going to be! That happened for me when I lost my Mom after taking care of her so long, a lot of it in good health, but she never drove. As you can see, your book has already stirred many emotions for me.....

– *Sharon Bradley (divorced), California*

You deserve so much credit for putting your life and feelings out there for all the world to see and again I am totally impressed. I have always believed that there are only two ways that a person can change, first is to be loved or lulled through it and secondly when the pain or the hurt is so bad that you have to bring about the change. Difficult for someone to be "loved" to change, and even more difficult to take your destiny into your hands and change because the way it is hurts too much. That's what you have done and your book can certainly be an inspiration to others to do the same.

– *Lorraine Guillemette (divorced), Thunder Bay, Ontario*

Well – that was 43 pages jam packed with inspiration, food for thought, direction – calling all those with self-discipline to wake up and live the only life we get to live. It should be a best seller!

– *Anne Higgins (widow), Toronto, Ontario*

It's authentic - it's refreshing to hear the truth rather than a contrived image or story that is "presentable/acceptable/marketable". It's concise - you put a lot of content in a nice little package. It's a quick read and is particularly suited to your intended use: distribution to seminar or conference participants as a guidebook.

You incorporated your favorite "tools" very well and in a way that might motivate others to try them. Your story provides context...

– *Louise Wasylenko (divorced), Calgary, Alberta*

I finished your book and I love it. I am already planning for whom I will buy the book. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I started with my yellow highlighter in hand and marked all the stuff that I needed to read and re-read again. And there were lots. This book is awesome. Kevin wants to read it, and he read the last few pages tonight and found it very interesting. He agrees that it will appeal to a broad range of persons, male and female.

– *Kevin and Louann O'Dwyer (divorced), Okotoks, Alberta*

I am reading your book for the second time. I was going to give you my feedback after my second reading. It is just great; it's so precise; makes one say "ah, I know the feeling" and right after that there is the help most of us need in some form or fashion. So often you read a self-help book and one gets confused. There is no confusion with the direction in your book, it's great!

– *Diane Goodwin (divorced), Spruce Grove, Alberta*

Pat shares her personal journey with honesty and courage, and offers a clear framework and tools for growing through change. I'd like to add.....She has a gift for telling it like it is, and offers hope and practical suggestions for crawling out of the black hole!

– *Denise Vidmar (widow), California*

Who am I now?

SIMPLE STEPS TO INVENTING YOUR FUTURE
AFTER DIVORCE, RETIREMENT, DEATH OF A SPOUSE, EMPTY NEST, ETC.

Copyright © Pat Mussieux 2007

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief reviews.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that neither the authors nor the publisher is engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional service. If legal or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

Cover design: Dana Noble

Cover photo: Lorraine Guillemette

Book layout: ZYP Creative

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Mussieux, Pat, 1951-

Who am I now? : simple steps to inventing your future after divorce, retirement, death of a spouse, empty nest, etc. / written by Pat Mussieux ; edited by Linda Fletcher.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-9783546-0-2

1. Separation (Psychology)
2. Adjustment (Psychology)
3. Self-actualization (Psychology)
- I. Fletcher, Linda II. Title.

BF637.S4M88 2007 155.9'3 C2007-903915-4

For information on ordering, visit the website
www.patmussieux.com

Twin Sisters Publishing
Printed in Canada

Who am I now?

SIMPLE STEPS TO INVENTING YOUR FUTURE
AFTER DIVORCE, RETIREMENT, DEATH OF A SPOUSE, EMPTY NEST, ETC.

By: Pat Mussieux

Twin Sisters Publishing
London, Ontario



Pat and her father-in-law, Pierre
(Edmonton City Marathon, 1999)

*With sincere thanks to
Pierre and Katie.
You are the wind beneath
my wings.*



Pat and her best friend, Katie

THANK YOU

One person can write a book, but it takes many insightful and caring people to breathe life into it, to give it meaning, and to spread its message. I've been richly blessed by these kinds of people. I'm deeply grateful for the ways in which they've contributed to the success of the book and to the enrichment of my life, especially through this particular journey.



Pat and her very dear friend Louann
(Photo taken in 1980, Pat on the right.)

***In random order, I offer each and every one of you
my heartfelt thanks!***

Kate Ashton, JoLove Beach, Pam Chiasson, Cathy Dool, Katie Emter, Art Fortin, Diane and Pastor Mark Francisco, Simone Harris, Pat Hogaboam, Pat Hoeppner, Dr. Sandra Kavanagh, Kristen Kingwell, Anne Kirkpatrick, Irene Leigh, Ron and JoAnn Mussieux, Michael and Jennifer Mussieux, Lynn and Aiden Morris, Lesley MacDonald, Marilyn Mucha, Fran Munro, Louann and Kevin O'Dwyer, Marg Petznick, Dawn Prout, Elizabeth Rowe, Arlene Schmidek, Elaine Shannon, Diane Stiles, Jeffrey Sundquist, Dorothy Wells and family, Louise and Eric Wasylenko, Diann Vail, Denise Vidmar. "Earl's Girls": Mark (Martha) Asbell, Evelyn Black, Rita Cannon, Lynne Heffel, Karen Fantin, and Elizabeth Hurley.

With special thanks to Oprah Winfrey for being the inspiration for the title of this book, "Who Am I Now?". After a number of guest interviews, she used this phrase and it spoke to me!

MY “BOARD OF DIRECTORS:”

(This is a group of people to whom I looked for guidance, learning, direction, assistance, etc. Successful companies have a Board of Directors, so I established one for my life. These people would come and go as Directors, they didn’t know they were on my “Board.” Thus, I could fire and replace them as needed! I would appoint a new Board member for each spoke on the Life Balance Wheel. Sometimes they were people I knew, and respected, and with whom I met regularly; often, they were individuals who were “experts” in certain fields. I learned from them by reading, watching them on TV, and so on. Some of these people have been on my Board since I began using the many tools referenced in this book; others have been a “coach/director” for only a very short time, as required. This is a strategy that worked for me and it can work for you too!)

Oprah Winfrey	Life Coach
Dr. Phil McGraw	Life Coach
Suze Orman	Financial Coach
Bob Greene	Fitness Coach
Dr. Robert Schuller	Spiritual Coach
Lou and Diane Tice	Life/Business Strategies
Father Bob Spitzer	Spiritual/Leadership Coach
Laurie Beth Jones	Spiritual/Life Coach
Dr. Christiane Northrup	Health/Wellness Coach
John Stanton	Fitness Coach
Katie Emter	Professional Image
Kate Ashton	Sports Coach
Loretta LaRoche	Laughter Coach
Colin Powell	Integrity/Ethics Coach
Lance Armstrong	Health/Sports Coach
David Bach	Financial Coach
JoLove Beach	Life Coach
Lynn and Aiden Morris	Family Coach
Kathy Smith	Fitness Coach
Sarah Ban Breathnach	Gratitude Coach

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEAR READERS	1
1. WHAT HAPPENED	3
2. A PERSON OF GRATITUDE	13
3. WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?	19
4. MY SIMPLE STEPS TO CHANGE	29
5. WHAT NEXT?	45
6. CONCLUSION	57
RESOURCES	59

DEAR READERS:

Thank you so much for buying this book! If it is for your own personal use, I wish you much success in the application of the information and tools I have shared. They are powerful! But they are also like a bar of soap... effective, yes, but only when used on a regular and consistent basis!

If someone gave you this book, then know that this person cares about you and wants the best for you. That's what friends and family members do. This book contains some great life lessons. It's given to you as a gift with the hope and the prayer that it will help you think about and better understand your life's journey when major changes occur. Please accept it in that spirit, and pass it on to others.

This is a book about life's process. It's about inner resources you might have, that are dormant. It's about tapping into your potential and about becoming the best person you can be when experiencing a major "life hit."

This book represents how my faith, family, and friends helped me through a very difficult time. The contents are designed to give you hope, because there is light at the end of the tunnel.

If you aren't willing to take risks, you cannot grow.

If you do not grow, you cannot become your best.

If you do not become your best, you will not be happy.

If you are not happy, then what else is there?

—Anonymous

"If it's to be, it's up to me!"

A BLESSING

*May hope be your companion
And faith your closest friend
May love lift all your burdens
With strength that has no end*

*Find joy in each new morning
Let wonder fill each day
And when you close your eyes at night
May peace be where you lay*

*Extend your hand in kindness
Encourage all you meet
Let no need go unanswered
That you can help complete*

*Secure your heart with gladness
For when the sorrows come
You'll find the path to battle back
The will to overcome*

*Keep these things in mind, dear friend
As day goes into night
For what you gain will stand you well
And lead you into light*

Lynn Morris

*(Written by Lynn, and given to me, when I bought
my first new home after my separation.)*

Lynn Morris has been a very good friend to me for years. She has a natural gift and talent for writing poems. I have often encouraged her to put them all in a book, and get them published. She has not. I believe strongly in her talents and also believe that the beautiful poems she has written and shared with me should be shared with the world. It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to include a few special ones in this book, with her permission. Lynn Morris lives in St. Albert, Alberta with her husband Aiden. —Pat Mussieux

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT HAPPENED?

“I’m the one who is dying, not you!” she declared, staring me right in the eye. It was a cloudy, fall day and I was having lunch with my dear friend, Pat. This was to be the last outing we would have together, as she was in the final stages of breast cancer. (Pat passed away in June 2002.)

We had experienced some incredible growth and development together over the five years since we met. The relationship started out as vendor and client, but quickly grew into a deep friendship. We had similar dreams, goals, styles, and attitude.

She knew the heartache I was experiencing, as I struggled with a decision regarding my 20-year marriage. I was about to head out on a trip to Ontario to visit my family, and I wanted to spend some time with Pat before I left. We talked about how short life is and how we need to live each day as though it was our last. She questioned me, shooting from the hip, all through the lunch. We spent about 2 hours together.....at the end of this time I knew what I had to do.



It was a gorgeous day, as we drove along the 401, suddenly in the course of our conversation I thought she was going to drive off the road. We were about 15 minutes outside of Toronto when my dear friend Kate, nonchalantly asked how I was doing... specifically with regard to my marriage. Kate, who had recently

moved to Toronto from Edmonton, was concerned about me. I knew I looked like hell, unlike someone who had just been on vacation for a week! I had spent the past week with several different family members and no one had asked the question... “How are you.... really?” But Kate did. She sensed something was wrong. For the first time, I actually said it out loud..... “Kate, I’m leaving my husband and my marriage, as soon as I get home.”



We went for a drive to the country. I remember that it was a gorgeous fall day. I told him that we needed to talk. We came to a beautiful spot, out in a Provincial Park, and just walked around for the longest time. “How do I tell him? What words do I use? What’s the right timing?” Those thoughts kept going through my mind. *“This is where my Uncle Gerry used to bring me when I was young,”* he said out of the blue. *“Oh great,”* I thought to myself.

I’ll never forget the moment when, sitting on a log, I looked at him and said, “it’s over – our marriage is over, and I’m moving out.” I could hear the stillness in the woods, while I just stared ahead into the sunshine. We both stayed very quiet for the longest time. We both knew it had been coming... but when it’s actually spoken aloud, it becomes real.

That was the beginning of a journey, which has been very difficult. As I have said to many of my family and friends, “If I had known then just how very difficult all of this was going to be, I don’t know that I would have had the courage to go through with it.”

Life shrinks or expands
in proportion to one's
Courage!
—Anais Nin, 1903-1977



“It’s quite expensive,” she said looking up at me as we shopped in the gift store. I had just picked out the top for my wedding cake. “Well,” I said, “you only get married once!” She smiled. We made the purchase and away we went. The year was 1982, and it had been a fun outing with my soon-to-be-stepdaughter, Kristy.

The kids were quite delighted to learn, when we first met, that neither had I been married before, nor did I, in fact, have any children of my own. I had made the decision, at his request, not to have children, as we needed (and wanted) to focus on Kristy’s and Kevin’s upbringing. They had been through a lot and we wanted to create a family atmosphere that would bring stability, happiness, and belonging. I was okay with that. It was a very difficult decision because I had always dreamed of having children and wondered what kind of a mother I would be. My twin sister, who had two little girls, was an inspiration and role model to me when the girls were young. I would visit often, sometimes every weekend. I wondered if I could be that kind of mother! My husband’s children were delightful and young, too; I quickly settled into the role of stepmother. There were no workshops, no

books, no “Dr. Phil,” etc. at that time... it was 25 years ago. I just did the best I could with what I had!



“How will we tell the kids?” I asked him. “It’s important that we do this right, using the right words, and keep a sense of dignity and respect through this whole process. They don’t suspect a thing and this will be a shock to them and the rest of the family.” (Note: by this time, the “kids” were adults – married and parents themselves. That doesn’t make it any easier believe me!)

Then it began... the series of meetings with family members, explaining that we were separating and asking for their love and support. I felt like a huge failure. I am a very high-achieving individual, always focusing on the positive... always there for everyone. How could this have happened? Why couldn’t I manage this relationship and make it better? Is this the right thing to do? So many questions...

This was absolutely THE most difficult thing I have ever done. You don’t just separate from your spouse. This impacts the whole family, and it is heart breaking.

But I knew it was unquestionably the right thing to do. ***I didn’t like who I was becoming in this relationship.*** I felt as though my heart and soul were dying; I felt empty. We both knew, for years, that there was something seriously wrong in our relationship. He had “checked out” mentally, emotionally, and physically quite a few years earlier. I couldn’t quite put my finger on what was going on... but, isn’t that always the way? Hindsight is a great thing. I was working as a motivational speaker at the time; I knew I had to make some decisions and make some changes.

And so I did. I “hung up” my mike and didn’t do any public speaking for a few years. I didn’t feel credible or authentic. ***“Nothing changes until you change,”*** I had read somewhere.

I did make one last serious effort. He never did like the motivational, positive work that I did. There were constant complaints that were dragging me down. I came up with a plan. He didn’t want to work anymore (“Freedom 55” had been his dream). I loved to work. So, I left the job that I loved and took on a contract position for a year. It was a “real” job, with steady pay cheques and regular hours (just what he wanted me to do). His “job” was to spend that year working on our relationship, maintain the acreage, and spend time with his father, who had been diagnosed with cancer. It was the perfect plan – or so I thought. Things just got worse. He became more distant. He moved out of the bedroom (*“because you snore,”* he claimed, *“and I can’t get a good night’s sleep.”*) How naïve I was! He was in his own world, and it didn’t include me. I started seeing a counselor again. *“You’re the one with the problem,”* he said. *“You go.”* And so I did. I spent quite a few weeks seeking counsel. One day, at one of the sessions, we had very little to discuss. The counselor just sat back and looked at me and said, *“You know what you need to do. You will know when the time is right.”* I knew that Christmas was coming. Perhaps I could wait until the New Year? Perhaps... perhaps... perhaps... Well, there never is a “right” time.

We had already been through some major emotional upsets. My (step) son and daughter-in-law had had a very difficult year, and the family surrounded them with love and assistance. She had to have an emergency C-section, giving birth prematurely to identical twin boys. (I am a twin. I could

relate.) Sadly, they took the one child off life support and he, Kieran, passed away (having been born with only a brain stem). The other little boy, Kalen, began a long stay in NICU – had heart surgery (at 1 lb 14 oz.), eye surgery, a hernia repair, and on and on it went. It was an emotionally charged year for everyone.

My father-in-law, with whom I was very close, had been diagnosed with cancer; my mother-in-law had been diagnosed with Alzheimer disease. I started my new job at the college, and had just received a promotion into a very difficult, but challenging and rewarding, situation for me.



“Where do I go?” I asked my best friend, Katie, as we had breakfast one weekend morning. I needed to find a place to live. (That’s often a huge challenge for women making this type of decision. Where does one go?)

One morning as I was having tea (and a good cry) at the home of my good friend, Dorothy, I spied a very tiny ad in the newspaper for a basement suite. I took it. Katie, my best friend in the whole, wide world was there to help me, every step of the painful way. We rented a U-haul and made plans on a Saturday to move me... I didn’t take much. He was gracious enough to leave home that morning, taking the dogs with him, so Katie and I could move my few things. The new apartment was small (a far cry from my dream home on the acreage). He and I will discuss the split of our “things” (or so I thought), when I manage to find a “real” place to live (and when all the other major and emotional events in our lives settle down).



More challenges. He's not working. He has become accustomed to a certain lifestyle. I am paying for 2 residences. I can't keep this up. I see the family lawyer. I am advised to sign a Legal Separation, and the "bleeding" will stop. That was my first big mistake. My second big mistake was going to the meetings with the lawyer by myself! Yet, I kept telling myself "***I can handle this; I'm a smart, independent woman!***" After 20 years together, with lots of hard work and effort on both our parts, it really should be a 50-50 split. It's not. His father, while in the final stages of his terminal illness, is generous with a financial gift out of concern for my future. This "gift" muddies the waters with respect to the division of marital assets. It becomes a long and drawn out affair. I'm tired of it.

It's only stuff; if it's that important to him, let him have it. (I was actually quite surprised and disappointed, because I felt he was a better person than that and would have acknowledged all that I contributed in those many years of marriage. I always thought he was a fair man. Obviously, this was another mistake on my part!) I must get over it and move on. Money is, and always was, very important to him. He is extremely upset that his father had given me a substantial financial gift... "You're spending my inheritance," he told me (forgetting that it was his father's money, not his!).

The changes in my life took place, in quick order:

1. I leave the marriage.
2. I leave my dream home on the acreage, also leaving my two beloved puppies!
3. I move to another city, not too far away.
4. I find a basement apartment, in which to live for a year

- very different from the incredible acreage that we owned and I loved!
- 5. My father-in-law's health deteriorates.
- 6. We move my mother-in-law to an Alzheimer Unit, separating her from her husband of 60 years! That was agonizing!
- 7. I have dental surgery on top of all of it.
- 8. My dear friend, Pat, passes away.
- 9. My father-in-law passes away.
- 10. The construction of my new home begins; we experience nothing but challenges with that!

It's too much. I can't take anymore. But I must carry on... I have serious responsibilities at work. They don't know what is going on in my personal life. My work is a huge opportunity for me, and the VP has confidence and faith in my abilities. I must keep it together and perform. And I do.

I continue to write in my Gratitude Journal, as I had been doing for at least six years at this point in time. Each day, I focus on something good. I try to write five things for which I am grateful on that day. Some days I can only manage to write, "Thank God the day is over!" I must stay focused on the positive.

What would I do without my girlfriends? They are a blessing. Katie, Kate, Louise, Louann, Diane, Fran, Pat, and Lynn; they are there for me, whenever and however I need them! Family members, who are friends, help me. My (step) son and daughter-in-law are very supportive. I am blessed. I get help from my counselor, my pastor and his wife, my doctor, and my "Board of Directors" (as previously noted).



But what kept me sane?

What kept me going?

How does one handle all this crap, keep a smile on one's face, and keep moving forward????

How do you let go of 22 years... or do you?

How do you re-position yourself with family (particularly for my situation, in which I am the stepmother)????

What new traditions do you create?

What does that look like?



That's the reason for this book. So many people have asked me how I "got through it." So many people are in the same boat... but you never know that until you walk in those shoes... then they come with their questions. I have spent hours upon hours sharing what worked for me with people. My friend Katie finally said, "for heaven's sake, put it all in a book, share your story and make some money for yourself! Your time and information have value. Also, in that way, more people will have access to your strategies for handling these challenges and succeeding in the way that you did!"

So here is what worked for me. It can work for you.

**It's not what you know,
but what you use of what
you know when under pressure!**

—Lou Tice



ANGELS AND HEARTS

*When I think on things
That nurture my soul
When I think on things
That help keep me whole
Joy wells up, inner peace starts
When I think of angels and hearts.*

*A hand stretched out
At just the right time
Is certain to be
An angel of mine
Strong and true, up for the test
An example of heaven's best.*

*Joy, love and laughter
A voice that sings
These are the pleasures
Each happy heart brings
Pure intent, forever blessed
An example of heaven's best.*

*When I think on things
Important to me
When I think on things
I can't help but see
Hope lives on, in all fresh starts
When I think of angels and hearts.*

Lynn Morris

*(Written by Lynn, and given to me, once I decided
on a "theme" for my new home and lifestyle.)*

CHAPTER TWO

A PERSON OF GRATITUDE

How does one maintain a sense of self, when going through such major life changes? Many baby boomers are now experiencing these changes. It is a difficult time.

I watched the Oprah show regularly (and still do). I have learned many things from Oprah and from all of her guests over the years. One guest, who had a particular impact on me, was Sarah Ban Breathnach. She was on the Oprah Show to discuss her book, *“The Daybook of Simple Abundance.”* The companion to that book, *“The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude,”* is a tool that Oprah described as life changing. Hmmmmm?

I’m one to recognize a good tool when I hear of it! I went out and bought the *“Simple Abundance”* book and thoroughly enjoyed reading it, a page a day. It helped bring balance and perspective to my life. I enjoyed the interviews with Sarah; they were very thought provoking. I need to get in touch with her some time, I thought to myself, and thank her for sharing her story and her books. I have since given my copy of “Simple Abundance” to a friend.

The Gratitude Journal, which I have used now for years, has become an essential tool in my life. Every day, I end the day by journaling five things for which I am grateful. Easy! Simple! Effective! Powerful! As Oprah said, it will change your life!

When my own life began to fall apart, I held on to the Gratitude Journal habit. Many, many days I found it difficult

to write about anything good... other than “Thank goodness the day is over!” Or “Thank you for the dark of winter, so I can just curl up on the couch and feel sorry for myself!” But most often I found myself writing “Thank God for all my family and very good friends!”... Each has brought something unique and special to my life.

If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is Thank You, it will be enough.

—Meister Eckhart

As the days, weeks, months, years went by, I found it very interesting on New Year’s Day (which is when I review my Journals) to reflect back on my blessings. The Gratitude Journal has become my Christmas gift to me, each year.

A lot of what I wrote became the essence for this book. While I didn’t necessarily feel like capturing the journey or process in an official journal format; I did recognize that I was capturing the journey, anyway, by way of my personal Gratitude Journal. I am thankful for that. In the Gratitude Journal, Sarah Ban Breathnach provides a few example pages of things for which she was grateful. I found that list very helpful in the beginning. I am sure that she learned, as I have, that many people get stuck when trying to think of things for their own list. I had assumed that most people thought in terms of gratitude, since we live in abundance in North America. I was wrong.

The Content Changes

The content of the Gratitude Journal began to vary.

In the beginning, I was thankful for:

- My family
- My health
- The job that I loved so dearly
- All the good people in my life
- The opportunities to learn and grow
- The fabulous home I had
- My beloved little dogs who brought much joy to my life
- My father-in-law, who always supported me and encouraged me in all the work that I did (even though he really didn't understand exactly what type of "work" I was doing)
- My mother-in-law and, particularly, the "thank you for coming to see us" after every visit
- Our family get-togethers at the acreage each August
- The Saturday lunch tradition with my father-in-law: hotdogs with lots of onions!
- All the different birds that came to our feeders
- Our church friends and family
- That we both got baptized
- Our Pastor and his wife, who had become good friends
- My long-time, very dear, best friend Katie!
- The unconditional love and support (and chicken soup) from Dorothy

- My faith
- The feeling that I got when I took my jeans out of the dryer and put them on without effort! (Ahhhhhh, there's no better feeling than that!)
- The discipline to exercise and eat properly
- The regular phone calls from my brother because they were always so uplifting
- Chocolate... it's good anytime!
- Walks in the country, enjoying the spectacular sunsets
- For e-mail, so I could communicate easily and regularly with my family and friends in the east
- For challenging work, and the rewards that came with it

As the “tough stuff” began to happen, over a five-year period the list changed. ***I was now grateful for:***

- Good friends
- My ability to cope at work and hide behind my mask, as though nothing in the world was wrong
- A secure job, with a regular pay cheque, because I wasn't always “on” when I was at work
- A VP who saw more in me than I saw in myself and had the faith and confidence to put me in a senior position
- Hot tea and Sunday afternoon naps
- My pastor, my doctor, and my counselor
- For e-mails from family and friends at times when I didn't feel like talking on the phone

- My new boss, who was a good leader, an understanding person, and who became a good friend
- That the sun came up this morning
- That the sun was setting and another day was (finally) over
- That a broken heart does heal
- That I know and understand the power of positive self-talk, affirmations, and visualizations
- For an office, so that on some days I could close the door and cry when I really needed to
- For hot baths, with fabulous bubble bath
- For cards of support that appeared in the mail “just because”
- For friends, who appeared at my home with a latte, “just because”
- For my faith
- For my integrity
- For my (step) son and daughter-in-law, who provided a “safe place to fall”
- For good books, on the days when I felt like escaping my own reality
- For the Oprah show, where I continued to be inspired and learn
- For help with the physical move from my dream acreage
- For those who stepped in and took over my volunteer duties
- For those who “went before me” and “inspired and supported me”

- For invitations to dinner, to tea, to talk
- For family, who kept me close
- For our healthcare system and the special angels, who work there
- For my new home
- For phone calls of concern and support from my brother
- For the unexpected call of support from my sister, Maureen
- For the renewed relationship with my niece, Pam!
- For a beautiful new pen, with which to write in my Journal
- For the friendship and prayers in my own personal “small group” with Lynn and Aiden

“We don’t remember days...
we only remember moments!”

—Cesare Pavese

Sarah Ban Breathnach became one of the members on my Board of Directors.

Who am I now? Where do I go from here?



CHAPTER THREE

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

One of the biggest challenges was to figure out how to move on... how to get past the identity that I had embodied for so long.

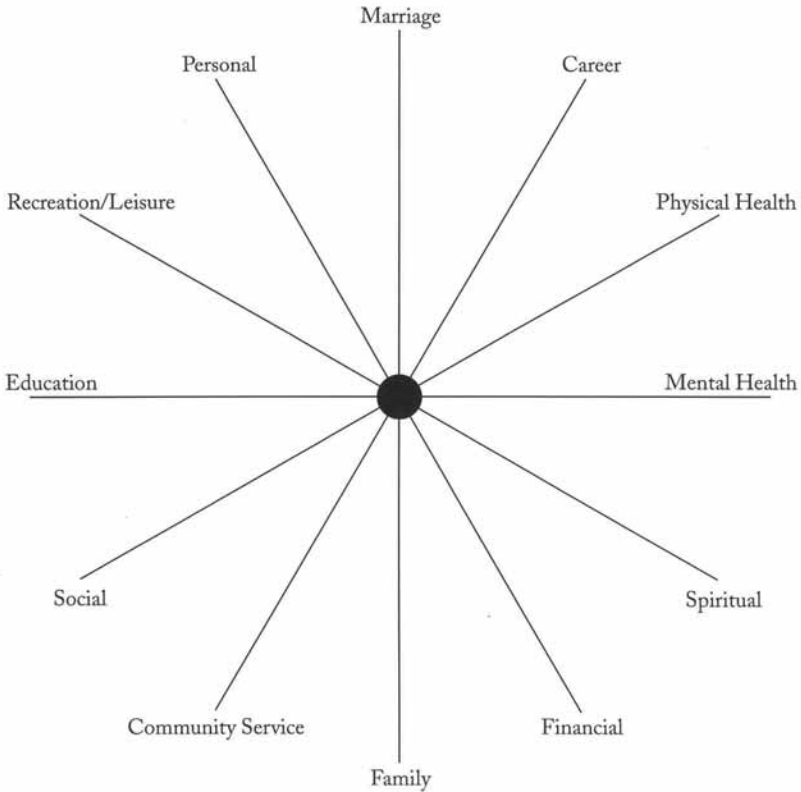
I was blessed, a number of years ago, to have worked for an international, educational organization that was based in Seattle. Through that experience, with curriculum built on the work of leading research psychologists in the field of human development, I had exposure to volumes of incredible information. In the course of my work with clients, I had the opportunity to repeat the application of these powerful tools and techniques. I share some of these with you now and in later chapters. They are simple, powerful and effective tools.

“Without a vision, they will perish!” states the Bible. I knew one of the first things I had to do was create a new vision for my life. *The Life Balance Wheel* became an extremely important tool for me.

It’s impossible to let go of your past and move forward until, and unless, you create the picture of your new life and your future. Without that picture, the tendency is to keep looking back, to hang on to the “old”... that can (and will) only lead to anger and bitterness.

Here is a copy of the tool I used:

Life Balance Wheel



Directions:

- Rate each spoke from 1-10 (10 being "perfect/happy").
- Pick the three or four most important spokes that you want to work on in your life.
 - Each spoke can also be broken down into its own mini-balance wheel to further target areas you want to work on in your life.

Refer to page 28 for an example of a completed Balance Wheel.

I quickly recognized I wanted to focus on three particular areas of my life:

- Family
- Physical Health
- Personal Growth

(There's no question that every spoke required serious attention, especially the Financial area. However, what I knew from experience is one must FOCUS fully to create major changes in a short period of time. That was my decision.)

For anyone, who has had the experience of being a stepparent, you already know how complicated and challenging (and rewarding) that can be. Well, after 20+ years, when the marriage relationship changes (no matter what the age of the children), your role as the stepparent changes dramatically. This was, without a doubt, THE biggest challenge I was facing. My former husband was already in a new relationship (that's what men seem to do!).

The question: "Who Am I Now?" rings loud and clear, for anyone, who needs to re-invent her/himself.

Fortunately for me, as I mentioned earlier, I am blessed with two of the most incredible stepchildren one could hope to have. That does not mean we don't have challenges, or that we aren't experiencing confusion in this state of change - that was our reality. I have learned, it is how you deal with life's turmoil that makes the difference. I needed to create a very strong vision for my future, and then boldly dare to make it happen.

I began my search and my research on "what would this

look like, feel like.” I searched the Internet for stories, I read books, and I spoke with friends, who had gone before me in this experience. I contemplated writing to Dr. Phil! I was not able to find much information to help me in this transition, giving me another reason to write this book!

Once I identified my three areas of focus the work began.

FAMILY

This was THE most difficult area of my life to recreate. I was struggling to figure out my role; meanwhile the rest of the family was, apparently, waiting for me to give them some guidance on this issue, too.

My father-in-law was an absolute angel! We had a very close relationship for over 20 years, and he was very hurt and discouraged by my decision to dissolve my marriage to his son. However, I was blessed with THE best father-in-law in the world! He was supportive, encouraging, positive, always there for me... all the while, handling his own battle with cancer plus having to deal with the dreaded Alzheimer disease that had taken from him his wife of 60 years. What a man!

My mother-in-law was in the middle stages of Alzheimer disease. Yet I was shocked when, as we sat at the kitchen table to tell them both of our decision to separate, she looked right at me and said, “Well, you two have faked it quite well!” That was a state of cognition that I had not seen in her for a very long time. (Note: I had been a member of the Board of Directors for the Alzheimer Society for almost five years. I had learned that you really don’t know how much the “patient” knows at any given time on any given day. That was validated for me by this incident.)

My family (parent/siblings) was shocked at the news, but not surprised that I had made the decision. They had recognized over the past several years that this was not a “match made in heaven.” My oldest brother, in particular, was a life-line for me and I am forever grateful! He offered a strong, silent shoulder whenever I needed it!

The children... my stepchildren... well, they were speechless. My husband and I always made the effort to model a positive and healthy relationship to them. I was his second wife, and the first divorce was traumatic for all parties. The children had been quite young. To complicate matters, both children had been adopted and were not biological brother and sister. This presents all kinds of issues from abandonment through to cynicism. I realized that since both children were now in their own marital relationships, I needed to live in truth. Our marriage and our life had become a farce. Things needed to change. I needed to make a decision. I could no longer live this way.

As part of the separation process, with the generous financial help from my father-in-law, I ended up buying a new home (that’s a whole other story!) right across the street from my son and daughter-in-law (with their blessing). Our relationship grew closer and, because of our close geographical presence, we saw each other quite frequently. They were both very polite and considerate of my situation and gave me “my space;” yet, I always knew that they were there for me, no matter what... no matter when. They didn’t ask a lot of questions for fear of intruding; however, we did end up having lots of great conversations about the whole situation. I knew I had their unconditional love.

Our daughter and son-in-law live on acreage near my former home. This relationship is a bit more challenging, as

Kristy is closer to her Dad. (I played an instrumental role in bringing those two together again, following the first divorce.) It was awkward now for Kristy and me to move forward; we hadn't figured out "what this was going to look like/feel like yet." (Note: during this time, Kristy also made contact with her birth mother, adding yet another layer of relationships to the whole family dynamics.) Here's a young lady with a birth mother, an adopted mother, a stepmother (me), and now the new woman in her father's life... as well as her mother-in-law. One blessing is that Kristy is much loved! But again, it begs the question for me: where do I fit?

Both Kevin and Kristy are parents. My grandchildren are very special to me, this is another relationship that has changed, mostly because of distance and busy lives.

SPECIAL HOLIDAYS

Here's one for the books! What happens now at Christmas, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, birthdays, funerals, etc.?

For certain, I was not in an emotional state to be part of "one, big, happy family" gathering on these special days. I needed time and space, to figure things out for me first before I could explain it to anyone else. These were the loneliest days for me. (And for people who say "just suck it up and go to these family events," I say... walk a mile in my shoes before you give that "advice!" It takes time to get a handle on your emotions, and get a sense of "self" again - so take your time, let the healing happen, then get on with life.) I told the kids I definitely wanted to be included in the birthdays, etc., but I needed some time first to adjust to things.

What also made this transition difficult and challenging was the fact that new traditions had to be created. Our mar-

riage's end also ended some of the traditions we had created together as a couple. But the death of our patriarch (my father-in-law) and moving my mother-in-law to an Alzheimer Unit in an extended care facility also meant the end of the larger family gatherings. We were all at odds for a while.

Having my own family live on the other side of the country didn't help my situation either. I did have, and get, lots of invitations to join friends and their families during these special times, but it wasn't the same. Much appreciated, but not the same!

It was during these times when I realized I've got to get it together. As time passed and emotions/stress began to diminish (for me anyway), I knew that we could fall into a pattern. In the beginning stages, however, there was nothing but emotional challenges and conflict. Who am I Now and where do I fit? The loneliness and uncertainty were unbearable.

Fortunately, I have strong mental skills - I knew what it would take to move on in life. Part of the adjustment is to create new traditions. No, it's not always easy, but it can (and will) be done! Create your own special family occasions and enjoy the new memories you are making. One of the new traditions became Christmas morning breakfast with my son Kevin, Angie, and Kalen. Since we lived across the street from each other, I was able to run across (in my PJ's) to deliver my gifts and have breakfast with them. I cherish that memory!

PHYSICAL HEALTH

So, if the separation and divorce weren't enough, then let's throw menopause into the equation!

Restless nights, sweats, forgetting things, irritability, swelling, and weight gain... yup, I had it all! (All this and a

new job to boot!)

In 1999, I had run a half-marathon. I knew what it took to get into good physical shape. I met with my family doctor and she gave me great advice: ***get some sleep*** (she provided a mild anti-depressant to help with that), ***eat balanced and healthy meals***, and ***exercise*** (to whatever extent that meant). I had some preconceived notions about anti-depressants. I am generally a very healthy person and I sure didn't want to be taking anything that might become addictive. I also had a "mindset" (or attitude) about people who took anti-depressants. So, I pretty much kept this one to myself! (But no more... because the benefits far outweighed the old-fashioned beliefs I had about this medication.) She told me to stop any and all volunteer activities. This was a time to focus on me and me alone. (Whew! That was a tough one... not used to doing that!) But I did. She was right!

My doctor and I met monthly, for her to monitor my mental well-being. She is another angel in my life's transition!

As for exercise, it was the easiest thing for me. Get up, strap on those running shoes, and just get out the door. Walk. Walk. Walk. That is what I did every day. The fresh air was stimulating. The movement felt good. The "think time" was exactly what I needed. The Kathy Smith Walking tapes were most helpful.

Oprah ("*Make the Connection*") and Bob Greene ("*Get with the Program*") became partners in my journey.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

At this point, I introduced another person into the journey: Dr. Phil McGraw. I used the tools and information in his books, "*Life Strategies*" and "*Self Matters*."

You can't change what
you don't acknowledge!

—Dr. Phil McGraw

I made time each day to just read a little bit. I didn't always get to it, but I made the effort whenever and wherever possible.

Two other books of great value and meaning to me were (a) the Bible and (b) Dr. Robert Schuller's *"Tough Times Don't Last; Tough People Do!"*.

I surrounded myself with positive information.

I surrounded myself with my (real and positive) friends.

I valued and cherished the alone time in my apartment as well.

"All meaningful and lasting
change starts first from within...
and then works its way out."

—Lou Tice

In the beginning, all I could manage to do was get up each day, get myself to work, then rush home to the comfort of my new home. It was a small, dark apartment, but it was home! Although I knew it was a place for transition, it was a great place to run and hide! I gave myself permission most evenings to just sit and cry. I enjoyed the fireplace and the stillness in the air. I loved the feel of my quilt and the comfort of my couch. Pots of tea were a daily ritual.

I allowed myself time for my "pity parties" – I held them as often as I needed. They were quality events too: Hagen-Daz ice cream, Rod Stewart music, bubble bath from The Body

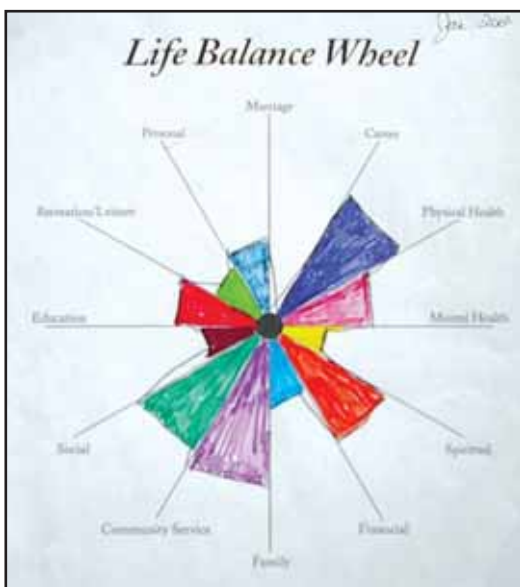
Shop, candles from the very best shops... everything it took to bring some joy to my life. (Note: If you are going to have a “pity party,” then schedule it! Plan it. Do it well! Only take a day at a time for such a party, and then get over it. They will become fewer and fewer as you go through the healing process.)

But I also knew deep in my mind and in my heart that these parties had to end.

My grief was *for the end of the dream*. I took my marriage vows seriously... but it takes two to make a relationship successful!

The time to grieve had come to an end.

It was time to pull out all the stops. I surrounded myself with all the tools and techniques, and made time to Invent My Future. Here's what I did.



Example of completed Balance Wheel

CHAPTER FOUR

MY SIMPLE STEPS TO CHANGE

The Life Balance Wheel was an important tool for me. It was the foundation for moving on.

The next steps included using:

1. My Goal-setting sheet (see below)
2. My index cards (for writing affirmations) – bright neon-colored ones from Staples
3. Bristol board (bright, neon colored also, from the Dollar Store)
4. Old magazines, scissors, tape
5. Great music
6. Glass of wine (or refreshment of choice)
7. Quiet time
8. Good quality chocolate!

Step One

It was important for me to sit down and begin writing down exactly what I wanted in my new life. After all... here I was, at the prime of my life, gainfully employed, fairly healthy, responsible for no one or nothing but ME! This was exciting! It's time to write the next Chapter in my life. I'm in control!

Set up your environment. Ensure that you pick a day and a time of day when you can begin work on this project and

spend at least one to two hours on it.

Put on the music.

Pour yourself a glass of good wine (and pick a very pretty glass).

Set up in a comfortable working space.

Have pretty colored pens and index cards to work with.

Bring out a copy of the *Life Balance Wheel* and let's get started. (Note: you may want to re-name some of the spokes if the ones on the sample Wheel aren't relevant for you. When you first complete this exercise, you may only fill in four or five spokes, and that's fine. Remember take baby steps!)

Once you have completed the Balance Wheel activity, you now have a visual sense of two to three areas that could use attention/improvement, etc. Begin work on those.

Step Two

(Tools: brightly colored bristol board which is available in any Dollar Store; scotch tape, old magazines)

Once you have identified the "vision" in at least two areas, preferably three, of your Balance Wheel, it's time to add some pictures.

Divide your bristol board into as many sections as you have identified, and start to cut out pictures that match those areas. (e.g. Family, Physical Health, Personal Growth).

Tape the pictures to the bristol board, covering the whole space with bright, lively, happy pictures that represent what you "want;" cut out some positive words that add to the

strength of the pictures. (See my example.)

Put this bristol board somewhere you can see it each day, a few times a day if possible. Start to “see” yourself into your new life.



There are additional techniques that will intensify and speed up the process of creating the life you want.

Pull out a piece of blank paper, draw a line down the middle of the page, and put a title on each side: *“What don’t I want anymore”* versus *“What I DO want.”*

Left side: What don't I want anymore? (I start with that because, as human beings, it tends to be easier for us to focus on what we don't want versus identifying what we DO want.)

Just start to list things randomly.

Examples:

1. I don't want to stay hiding in this basement apartment anymore.
2. I don't want to keep crying at the drop of a hat, or when someone looks at me cross-eyed, or when someone asks, "How are you doing?"
3. I don't want to be left out of social events any more just because I am no longer a couple.
4. I don't want to be left out of family events any longer.
5. I don't want to be stupidly generous to my former husband "because I worry about him."
6. I don't want to be seen as a victim.
7. I don't want to be gaining weight and become a couch potato.
8. I don't want to be financially deprived because I am living on my own now.
9. I don't want to be viewed as a failure. (This is a BIG one, folks. This is probably the biggest emotion of all, when going through a separation or divorce. I felt as though I had one HUGE "F" on my forehead! But remember – "failure" is an event – not a person!)

Right side: What DO I want my life to look like and feel like now? (This can be a bit of a challenge, especially if you have been married for 20+ years as I was! These techniques will help with that.)

For ease of this exercise, you simply need to take the list of items from the left hand side of the page (what you don't want anymore) and turn each into a positive statement.

Examples:

1. I want a new, fresh, happy home.
2. I want to control my emotions to be positive, happy, and forward looking.
3. I want to have a social life.
4. I want to participate in family events.
5. I want to focus on ME! And on my needs.
6. I am a survivor, and a winner. I am in control of my life.
7. I want to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.
8. I want to be financially stable.
9. I want to live my life with dignity and respect, because I did everything possible to make the marriage work. It took a lot of courage to make a change.

Keep going with all the ideas you have. Put the list away for a day or so. Keep adding to it as different things come to mind. Stay focused on two or three categories at this stage of the game.

Step Three

Once you have a clear idea of some of the things you “want” transfer these items to the Goal-Setting sheet.

CREATE A FUTURE and MAKE IT HAPPEN

V _____
(Vision/Goal)

7. _____

6. _____

5. _____

4. _____

3. _____

2. _____

1. _____

CR _____
(Current Reality)

1. Think of a vision/goal for the top right blank.
2. Fill in today's current reality on the bottom left blank.
3. List seven steps to move from the current reality to the goal.

"Baby Steps" - your 1st goals may be as basic as "to meet daily appointments" - job or class.

"Giant Steps" - each goal should be bigger, eventually including major lifetime goals.

For instance, if you chose Physical Health, it may look something like this:

Vision (at the top of the page) – to be healthy, fit, and firm!

Current Reality (at the bottom of the page) – sluggish, overweight, and unhealthy

The steps in-between become your action steps, to which you will assign a date!

7. Sign up for a 5k “charity” walk – Mother’s Day walk for CIBC May 1st
6. Plan to walk 5 days a week minimum 20 minutes each time
5. Take your measurements – the first of every month
4. Get a pedometer – by tomorrow night
3. Find a walking buddy – call Sue tonight
2. Get some good walking shoes – on Saturday
1. Get off the couch! (Today!)

Keep it simple, but keep it moving forward! Reward yourself each time you accomplish something that moves you towards a goal. It doesn’t have to be anything big. Sometimes, for me, it was buying a pretty new purple pen for writing in my Gratitude Journal. Sometimes it was the trip to see Oprah Live! You decide, based on the size of the goal and the achievement as to what is appropriate... but do it!

Repeat the process for each of the items that you selected.

Then, take a brightly colored index card and begin writing down your Successes. I call it my “Success Card.” Down the left-hand side I numbered the lines (from 1 to 12). Each time you accomplish something, write it down and date it. You will quickly accumulate a stack of these cards! On the days

when you are feeling down, or particularly challenged, pull out your Success Cards and wallow in all that you have achieved to date!

Step Four

It's time to start using the tools that will bring it all into reality: Affirmations!

The three-step process that I used here is goal setting, writing affirmations, and visualization.

What is an affirmation?

*"Affirmations are one of the most important elements of creative visualization. To affirm means 'to make firm.' An affirmation is a positive, strong statement that something is **already so**. It is a way of 'making firm' that which you are imaging.*

The practice of engaging in affirmations allows us to begin replacing some of our stale, worn out, or negative mind chatter with more positive ideas and concepts. It is a powerful technique, one which can in a short time transform many of our attitudes and expectations about life, and thereby help to change what we create for ourselves.

Affirmations can be done silently, spoken aloud, written down, or even sung or chanted. Even ten minutes a day repeating effective affirmations can counterbalance years of old mental health.

For example, if you find yourself thinking: 'Oh, what's the use, I'll never get what I want,' you might say to yourself, 'I have the ability to create what I want in my life,' or 'I deserve to be happy and fulfilled.'" ¹

I learned this technique at workshops with The Pacific Institute, and from the many books I read on the topic (including the works of Louise Hay, which are very powerful!).

Once you have completed the process of identifying:

1. Your current reality
2. The vision of the life/goals you want
3. Written the words to describe how the goal “looks”
4. Written the words to describe how the goal “feels”

It's time to begin the process of writing affirmations!



Affirmations Formats

- ▲ **I feel** _____.
- ▲ **I am** _____.
- ▲ **It's easy for me** _____.
- ▲ **I feel/am** _____ **and** _____
because _____.

Learning to write affirmations is a process and a habit. While I was in the midst of my “life crap,” at times, I found it was easier to “borrow” affirmations I found that were relevant to my own situation. Once I established a comfort level with the process of affirming and visualizing, then I began

creating my own affirmations with my words and thoughts.
Hey, you must do what works for you at the time!

Some of the sample affirmations I “borrowed” from Louise Hay (“A Year of Change” – calendar – 1994) included:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

“All meaningful and lasting change
starts first on the inside of me,
then works its way out!”

—Pat Mussieux, 2005

Everyone around me reflects the love I have for myself.

Every choice I make is a healing one.

All my relationships are based on love.

I always sleep well and awaken refreshed.

I accept all help with love and gratitude. (That was a BIG one for me!)

I am always making the right choices for me.

I am willing to do the mental work that will bring good into my life.

This is a new moment. I am free to let go.

My healing is already in process.

My body, mind, and spirit are a healthy team.

I carefully choose the people with whom I share my life. I invite only positive, loving, joyous people into my world.

I trust my future to be wonderful. My mind creates my reality, and I choose only positive thoughts.

I am on the right track!

I keep my thoughts in order and my mind at peace.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

I lovingly create perfect health in my body.

Every food choice I make is a healthy one.

I awaken each day with a burst of enthusiasm, as I get into my workout clothes.

My body is always working towards optimal health.

My body wants to be active and healthy. Exercise is fun for me.

Each and every day, when the sun is at its peak, I cherish the 30 minutes of power walking that I have scheduled just for me!

It is easy and fun for me to incorporate one new type of exercise activity each month.

I get out of my body exactly what I put in.

I stand naked in front of a full-length mirror each weekend, and wallow in the success of my weight lifting. It brings me joy and satisfaction to see my toned body emerging.

FAMILY

I carefully choose the people I share my life with.

I invite only positive, loving, joyous family members into my world.

My relationship with my kids is always growing with love and understanding.

I have love and compassion for my in-laws.

When attending family events, I stay focused on the person who is being celebrated.

All difficulties between “you know who” and me are now being healed.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER

Here are some important things to remember about affirmations:

- *Always phrase affirmations in the present tense, not in the future.*
- *Always phrase affirmations in the most positive way you can.*
- *In general, the shorter and simpler the affirmation, the more effective.*
- *Always choose affirmations that feel totally right for you.*
- *Always remember that you are creating something new and fresh.*
- *Try as much as possible to create a feeling of belief, an experience that your affirmations can be true.*
- *Affirmations can be used alone, or in combination with visualizing or imaging.*

Ask, and it shall be given to you;
Seek, and ye will find;
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
For every one that asketh, receiveth;
And he that seeketh, findeth;
And to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
—The Bible

Writing affirmations is a very dynamic technique because the written word has so much power over the mind.

Index Cards

Write each goal on a 3x5 index card and keep those cards near your bed and take them with you during the day. Each morning and each night, go through the stack of cards, one at a time: read the card, close your eyes, see the completion of that goal in its perfect desired state for about 15 seconds, open your eyes. Repeat the process with the next card.

Use Affirmations to Support Your Visualization

An affirmation is a statement that evokes a picture, as well as the experience of already having what you want. Repeating an affirmation several times a day keeps you focused on your goal, strengthens your motivation, and programs your subconscious. It sends an order to your internal crew to do whatever it takes to make that goal happen.

Expect Results

Through writing down your goals, using the power of visualization, and repeating your affirmations, you can achieve amazing results. Visualization and affirmations allow you to change your beliefs, assumptions, and opinions about the

most important person in your life – YOU! They allow you to harness the 18 billion brain cells in your brain and get them all working in a singular and purposeful direction.

Your subconscious will become engaged in a process that transforms you forever. The process is invisible and doesn't take a long time. It just happens – as long as you put in the time to visualize and affirm, surround yourself with positive people, read uplifting books, and listen to audio programs that flood your mind with positive, life-affirming messages.

Repeat your affirmations every morning and night for a month and they will become an automatic part of your thinking – they will become woven into the very fabric of your being.

Creative Visualization

This is the next step in the process.

What is Creative Visualization? It is the technique of using your imagination to create what you want in life. There is nothing at all new, strange, or unusual about creative visualization. You are already using it every day, every minute in fact. It is your natural power of imagination, the basic creative energy of the universe, which you use constantly, whether or not you are aware of it.

Don't get stuck on the term "visualize." It is not at all necessary to see an image.

Occasionally, a person has completely blocked his ability to visualize or imagine at will, and feels that he simply "can't do it." This type of block usually arises from a fear, and it can be worked through if the person who experiences the difficulty desires to solve the problem.²

A Summary of the Process

1. Complete the Life Balance Wheel exercise and date it. I typically do this twice a year.
2. Choose two or three spokes that you want to focus on (after which, you will fine tune the habit and it will be easier to expand on the spokes you have chosen. Remember: Baby Steps. Baby Steps, in the beginning!)
3. Identify the Current Reality and Vision for each area you want to work on, and identify the goals/action steps/dates accordingly.
4. Transfer these words to an affirmation card. I use bright, neon-colored, index cards and write one affirmation on each. Because I color in the spokes on the Life Balance Wheel with different colors, I chose the index card color to match (e.g. I would color Finance in green, then write my Financial affirmations on green index cards. I would choose Yellow for my Personal spoke, and then write my affirmations on bright yellow index cards.)
5. Once the affirmations are written (again, I suggest taking baby steps if this is a new process for you, and only write one to three affirmations per category, giving you up to nine in total with which to begin) – then ensure you read these affirmations to yourself a minimum of twice daily (morning and night).
6. Create strong pictures around what you want. Do the bristol board activity – include pictures of yourself, and pictures that match what you’ve identified as goals/affirmations.
7. Visualize, twice daily, as you read your affirmations or view your bristol board.

THE CHALLENGE

Let others lead small lives,
But not you.

Let others argue over small things,
But not you.

Let others cry over small hurts,
But not you.

Let others leave their future in
Someone else's hands,
But not you.

—Jim Rohn



CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT NEXT?

So, what's happening now?

What is going on in my life?

I heard on "The View" (*so it must be true!*) that it takes one year per every five years of marriage to "get over it and get on with it!" I am inclined to agree.

Over the five-year period since my separation, and subsequent divorce, I have experienced many changes in my life. All of these changes are a direct result of the tools and techniques I have shared with you in this book.

I dreamed new dreams.

I left the "secure" position I held at the College.

I resigned from all volunteer commitments.

I revived my consulting business.

I spent a summer visiting and playing with my kids and grandkids.

I put my new home up for sale.

I sold most of my belongings.

I made the decision to move to eastern Canada (to be closer to my mother and siblings).

I've been working on this book!

What was the biggest and most exciting decision of all? While I made a fairly decent profit on the beautiful home that I sold, I still felt that I had a lot of living to do. It's a big and beautiful world out there!

I made a decision when I moved to Ontario not to buy a new home immediately; instead I rented a room in a condo with another woman (who normally rented rooms to international students). I lived there for a period of five months, enabling me to take care of myself (emotionally, physically, and spiritually) and to save money.

All the changes and decisions of the past five years had taken their toll on me. I was exhausted. The move away from my children, grandchildren, relatives, and friends was very upsetting. I had lived in Edmonton for 33 years! That was the longest period of time that I have lived anywhere in my whole life. It was my “home.”

But now, I wanted time to play! I wanted time to think! I wanted time to be with me and to figure out the answer to the question: ***“Who Am I Now?”***

There was something else I wanted to do. I had seen a one-page flyer in a magazine during the summer I had been trying to sell my house. It had big, bold words on the top of the page: ***“WORLD TOUR BY PRIVATE JET.”***

I remember thinking to myself, *“Hmmmmmm, what kind of rich people take a trip like this?”* (Remember, I had been married to a man, who rarely, if ever, wanted to travel anywhere!) I had a lot of living to catch up on.

I put the flyer on my desk for a few days and then decided to add it to my Vision Board for 2005. I set the goal, wrote the affirmations (because my self talk and belief system was such that I didn’t deserve a trip like this, that I should be “sensible” and put the money towards a new home, etc. etc. etc.). I figured that my house would sell quickly, I would move east, then hop on the private plane, and enjoy the trip! Well, life doesn’t always happen the way we plan it! ***(Life lesson:***

learn to be flexible and resilient... but NEVER give up on your goals and dreams!)

My house did not sell as expected. I was able to grow my business and live comfortably because my consulting business was doing well. So, my plans to move east were actually delayed by a period of nine months. Unbelievable. I had no idea it would take so long! It was another period of waiting, waiting, waiting. I was ready to get on with my life! I was getting depressed because this is one thing totally out of my control.

Each day I receive an e-newsletter from “The Hour of Power” (www.hourofpower.org). One day, when I was feeling particularly frustrated and unhappy, I opened the e-mail to find this message sitting there:

Are your plans delayed?

The timing may be delayed. And we must be emotionally prepared to put a positive spin on that!

So stop and pray. Time out! Check your connections with God. Is this new venture why you were born? Is this daring dream God’s purpose for your life? Yes, the price in success will include expenditures of time and effort as well as money. But don’t be surprised to look back and see that the toughest problem was “waiting for the moment.”

Dealing with delays? You did it! You didn’t quit, walk away, or throw in the towel. Timing... it’s everything!

So plan to stay. Hang in there!

Just never, never, never quit! If you quit, you’ll be abandoning the base you’ve built, and then what! You’ll never be satisfied, pleased, or content if you

quit doing and being what started out as real pleasure. Welcome delays. They may be God's gifts of grace, increasing your chances of eventual success with a smile.

Look back! See how many good things have happened to you since you were born. Add up all your accomplishments from all your yesterdays, and you'll be surprised to see you've come from nowhere to somewhere.

Look around! See how many good things are happening to you today.

Look ahead! Imagine how many good things can happen in all of your tomorrows... if you'll only keep the faith!

I kept the faith. The house sold shortly thereafter, and my plans to move east (and to get on with my new life) came together.

I was on my way, but it wasn't easy to say good-bye to the life I had known in Alberta for 33 years, to my children and grand-children, relatives, friends, neighbors. I thought I could feel my heart break, literally, when I hugged my best friend as we said good-bye at the airport!



CHAPTER SIX

LESSONS LEARNED

I've heard, over and over again, as you may have as well: "Life sometimes hands you crap. Tough stuff happens. Just don't lose the lesson!"

What are the lessons I've learned in these past five years?

1. Tough times don't last; tough people do! (Dr. Robert Schuller; www.hourofpower.org)
2. Before marriage, during marriage, after marriage: keep your girlfriends close!
3. Only share your goals with people who can and will help you.
4. It's ok to have chocolate once a day! (dark chocolate is actually good for you)
5. Pray.
6. Feel the fear and do it anyway.
7. It's important, and essential, to love yourself.
8. You don't need lots of "stuff" to be happy.
9. If the guy was a jerk, say he was a jerk! (Stop trying to be the nice girl!)
10. The law doesn't recognize "nice!"
11. Do not (I repeat: DO NOT) go to any meetings with your lawyer alone.
12. It does help to cry.
13. Don't "lose" yourself in any relationship.

14. It helps to journal.
15. Eat a balanced diet, sleep at least 8 hours a night, and walk at least 30 minutes a day.
16. It's ok to go to a movie alone.
17. Separated/divorced women do not get invited to dinner with married friends. It's a "couples" world. (I'm speaking in "generalities" here.)
18. There are a ton of travel adventure tours for singles!
19. Life IS short; this is not a dress rehearsal.
20. Dream BIG.
21. You need to create your own fun.
22. It's scary being on your own after 20+ years.
23. It's incredibly exciting to be on your own after 20+ years.
24. There is no big "F" (failure) on your forehead; it's all in your mind, so change your thinking!
25. Create your own vision/experience of what your divorce will look like and feel like. Don't "buy in" to the trashy experiences of others.
26. Identify the purpose of your former marriage and wallow in your contribution.
27. Hold your head high, no matter what.
28. When he "shows you who he is, believe him!" Leopards don't change their spots.
29. You teach people how to treat you.
30. You can have chocolate cake for breakfast and still fit in all the other food groups.
31. Count your blessings (Kevin, Angie, Kristy, Barry,

Heather, Kalen, Brian, Pierre, Florence, Ron, JoAnn, Jennifer, Michael, Simone, Gizmo and Swinger) from the marriage.

32. Make sure the people you love know that you love them. Tell them!
33. Don't underestimate what your children see and hear and understand, especially when they become adults and in their own relationships.
34. That marriage isn't supposed to be hard work.
35. That I was lonelier in the marriage than when living alone.
36. As Dr. Phil says, "I'd rather live alone and be healthy, than to live with someone and be unhappy and unhealthy."
37. That time does heal some wounds.
38. That I can go to bed at night with a clear and peaceful mind.
39. That I am a better person for having made the tough decisions.
40. Choose a good attitude, no matter what the circumstances. Keep a positive outlook on life and always be thankful.
41. Build your life on the foundation of respect. Love God, your family, and friends, and be kind to others. Bring out the best in everyone, including you.
42. Make integrity the cornerstone of your life.
43. Accept the difficulties and challenges of life.
44. Have a passion to learn! The more you discover about life and the world, the more complete and

fulfilled you will become. Make it a lifelong process.

45. Enjoy life! Remember that you need to play and have fun. And most of all, you need to laugh!
46. Forgive! When you forgive, it is for you... not for anyone else.
47. Remember that you did the best you could with what you had at the time. There is no need to blame and there is no room for guilt!
48. Never give away your personal power.....ever..... to anyone!

Some Things To Do as a Single Person

OK - after that many years, what does one do for fun? How do you get back up, brush yourself off, and get back in the game of life?

Here are some of the things I did for fun. They can be done alone and most of them are free!

1. Go to movies. No one cares if you are sitting there by yourself.
2. Go cross-country skiing. Great for the mind and great for the body too.
3. Go to the gym. Also great for the mind, body and soul.
4. Go to the library. Sit back in a sunny spot and enjoy some free magazines.
5. Take a ride on the city bus and explore your neighborhood. It's also fun to watch people.

6. Go to Starbucks, enjoy a latte and read a book for a while. Makes you feel part of the social crowd.
7. Go to the beach (which I can do now, based on where I am living) and watch the children play. The laughter is contagious!
8. Volunteer at a soup kitchen. There are always people worse off than you!
9. Visit a senior's center. There are many lonely people living there!
10. Volunteer at a hospital in NICU and become a baby-cuddler. There are many infants there whose parents are from out of town; the new mom could use a helping hand! And you get some unconditional love in return.
11. Go to a health spa and pamper yourself for a change.
12. Take a cooking class and meet some new people, while you learn how to cook a new meal.
13. Try a new sport. I bought some roller blades and am having fun trying that.
14. Go to church. You can meet some wonderful, caring, and supportive people there! Join a small group.
15. Do "girly" things with your friends: spa, dinner, breakfast dates, etc.

Some of the "bigger" things I did:

1. Attended the "Possibility Living" seminar in California, hosted by Dr. R. Anthony Schuller, and his wife, Donna. Visited the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County.

2. Attended the full-day workshop (in Seattle) with Oprah: "Living your Best Life." Amazing experience!
3. Attended the "Women of Faith" conference in Vancouver, B.C., with my friend, Diane.
4. Took my world tour on a private plane! (That's the subject of my next book: "Where Am I Now?")
5. Took a trip to Europe (England, to visit family friends; France, to visit distant relatives; Italy... to cycle Tuscany!)
6. Wrote this book! (A very cathartic process.)

I make an effort to do one very special thing, once a year, just for me! I've spent many years putting everyone else's expectations ahead of my own. And that was okay; it was my choice.

I know what you're thinking! It isn't always that easy to get up each day and plan some fun things to do. I know that. Honestly, I know that. But consider the alternative! Are you going to stay in a dark, isolated corner the rest of your life? NO. Life goes on. You need to get back in the race. I do know how hard it is, each day to get up and get on with your new life. Sometimes all I did, on any given morning, was to goal-set to sit up in bed. Then I would goal-set to swing my legs around and actually get out of bed. Then I would goal-set to get washed and dressed. Baby steps. Baby steps. You don't need to rush things. Lou Tice once said to me: "It's ok to be intimidated, but it's not ok to stay intimidated!" That was some of the best advice I have ever received! So it's okay to feel sad, alone, depressed, hurt, and so on. But it's not okay to stay in that emotional state. It's important for you to get on with your life.

God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into the nest!

Now I think - it's a new day and I have a new life. I want to continue to grow, to learn, to develop, and to become the best person I can be!

Are you troubled today? Do you feel that life is closing in on you and there is no way to escape? Don't let your mind dwell on negative thoughts. Choose life! Believe in God's ability to overcome the troubles and give you a great and exciting today and tomorrow. God's message to you is, "I know the plans I have for you... plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11).



THANKFULLY LORD

*A new morning dawns, new courses to chart,
New races to run, new seas to part.
Some tasks I relish, some not much
But thankfully Lord, I feel Your touch.*

*The strength of the lion, the peace of the dove,
The courage gained from the truth of Your love.
These are the things that will see me through
And thankfully Lord, I have found them in You.*

*A heart filled with promise, a mind quick to learn
That's what I desire and why I yearn
To spend time in Your presence, and rest in Your care
So thankfully Lord, I have found them in prayer.*

*As nighttime enfolds me and darkness abides,
I know I have spent my day at Your side
My constant companion, my life You share
Yes thankfully Lord, You'll always be there.*

Lynn Morris

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

You've developed your life and you're ready to live it! You've defined it, positioned it, packaged it, envisioned it, and championed it! Now it's up to you to follow through and be the best you that you can be!

The life you've created is a reflection of your authentic self. One of my favorite affirmations is "I am a progressive, effective, authentic human being!"

If you've completed the exercises in this book and given them a chance to work their magic, you should now be feeling as though your outer and inner selves are well aligned.

I suggest that you read through this book a few more times before you hop right in and follow all the steps. Take your time. Give yourself time, and permission, to take it one step at a time! Baby steps, baby steps, baby steps. Get a yellow highlighter, read through the book, highlight what you feel will work for you and begin with that. New habits take time! But more importantly, new habits take commitment! And passion...

There will be times when people around you will be critical of the new you. Recognize that people with low self-esteem will not allow people with high self-esteem to rise above them. People often like "the old you!" It takes courage of your convictions to create a new life and follow through with what YOU really want. Find some new friends, if need be. As it says in the Bible, "for everything there is a season, a time and a reason." I can't promise you that any of this is

going to be easy. But I can promise you that nothing will change until you change, and take charge of your life. If you don't invent your future, someone else will.

There will be voices, whether in the form of the inner critic or the people who surround you, telling you which parts of your life are best left in the scrap heap.

Stay focused on your vision! It will provide you with direction and keep you on the right path, leading you closer to the life you want to live.

As Oprah said at the workshop I attended...

"Live your best life. It's the only one you've got!"



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

During this process/journey, there were a number of valuable resources I found to be extremely helpful to me. I want to share some of them with you!

BOOKS

“Simple Abundance: A Day Journal” – Sarah Ban Breathnach

“The Gratitude Journal” – Sarah Ban Breathnach

“Get with the Program” – Bob Greene

The Oprah Magazine

“Life Strategies” – Dr. Phil MacGraw

“Self Matters” – Dr. Phil MacGraw

“9 Steps to Financial Freedom” – Suze Orman

The Bible

“The Power of Focus” – Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Les Hewitt

“Creative Visualization” – Shakti Gawain

“The Aladdin Factor” – Jack Canfield

SEMINARS/CONFERENCES

“Possibility Living Seminar” – Rancho Capistrano
(www.hourofpower.org)

“Live your Best Life” – Oprah Winfrey (live!)
(www.oprah.com)

“Investment in Excellence” – Lou Tice (www.loutice.com)

Women of Faith conference – www.womenoffaith.org

OTHER

Bernard Callebaut chocolate (dark, no nuts or creams)

Hagen-Daz ice cream (dark chocolate)

The Body Shop group of bath products

A Journal

Funny movies

“Lean Walk” – Kathy Smith (audio tapes for power walking)

A comfy quilt

My fireplace

My grand-dog, Gizmo (who I “borrowed” on numerous occasions for my mental well-being)

Purple pens

Happy face stickers

Girlfriends

“The time to be happy is NOW!”

For more information on the products and services that Pat Mussieux has to offer, visit her website at www.steps2happiness.com

Free CD - “The 10 Steps to Happiness”

Free Report - “The 10 Steps to Happiness”

Free Subscription to “Pat’s Power Points” e-zine

Pat’s ***“Steps2Happiness”*** Home Study Program

Coaching Services with Pat Mussieux include:

THE VIP TOTAL ACCESS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

THE FAST TRACK PROGRAM

THE BASIC PROGRAM (MasterMind)

Motivational Speaker

Pat Mussieux’s signature keynote address:

“If it’s to be, it’s up to me! – 10 Steps to Happiness”

***If you want to play more, have less stress,
love deeper.....contact Pat today and
discuss the options that fit for you!***

PAT MUSSIEUX ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Mussieux is a happy baby-boomer, well on her way to charting the next chapter in her life.

After 20+ years of marriage, separated and now divorced, Pat has weathered "the storm" and is now "riding the wave" to a full and adventuresome life! She is a step-mother to two, a grandmother to 3, a daughter, a sister, a niece, an aunt, and a friend to many.

This book is the result of many queries from friends (and strangers) asking how she managed to get through all the challenges of the past 5 years. What worked? What didn't? What next? Pat has a reputation for "telling it like it is"! Now you, the readers, can share in the journey, learn the lessons, adopt some of her techniques and take the steps to create the life you want as well!

This book outlines what Pat has shared with many of her friends, going through many of the same things. It's a book for girlfriends! It might be just the book you are looking for!

Pat is currently writing her second book, "Where Am I Now?" (The Story of her Around-The-World Tour in a Private Plane), and is a contributor to a book to be released in the fall called "Leadership Gurus Speak Out!".

Pat is a dynamic speaker, author, coach, facilitator and consultant. To contact Pat, go to her website at www.patmussieux.com

Well - that was 43 pages jam packed with inspiration, food for thought, direction - calling all those with self-discipline to wake up and live the only life we get to live. It should be a best seller! —Anne Higgins (widow), Toronto, Ontario

Pat shares her personal journey with honesty and courage, and offers a clear framework and tools for growing through change. I'd like to add.....She has a gift for telling it like it is, and offers hope and practical suggestions for crawling out of the black hole! —Denise Vidmar (widow), California



CANADA \$20.00



www.patmussieux.com