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# INTRODUCTION

*Something big is coming.*

*It's still secret, but arriving everywhere.*

—RUMI

For many of us, heaven meets earth through creative inspiration. We may not all be working artists, yet each of us was born with a creative soul. Along the way, part of it may have become shrouded, squelched, devalued, injured or ignored altogether. Too often, we're forced to choose between our creative longings and everyday practicality. So we deny that part of ourselves, linger through our days obliquely, and wonder why we feel bitter. The current flows around us and we slowly drown in our own life.

How do we save our creative spirit? As a lifelong writer and student of consciousness, I have stumbled upon a workable, practical truth: real creative power is actualized from being clear, pure and wholly connected to Creation itself. When we embrace the sacred, we free our creative genius. Once free and open to the infinite, we can become as prolific as we choose to be—in our art, in our heart and in our daily life.

Because I'm a self-prescribed specimen on life's Petri dish, I sometimes want to be grabbed and shaken from my familiar, microscopic existence...levitated to a higher, fertile ground that contains the seeds of all my unrealized potential, awaiting germination. What takes me there again and again is faith

in the Unmanifest, the genesis of all that is. To be creative and conscious are synonymous in this way: both require that we acknowledge the presence of a transcendent energy that can take us to unimaginable places (yes, beyond the imagination). And yet, neither the spiritual nor the creative are known paths. Each must be sickled blade by blade through dedication and devotion.

Today's spiritual enthusiasts aren't necessarily seeking enlightenment or some fresh dose of woo-woo. We're more interested in being present now. We understand that a full-out integration of our physical and higher selves is simply part of our larger evolutionary process—the missing link between chaos and order. We appreciate that we can't "get there from here" by following a straight line towards some end point, because accessing our highest potential is an immeasurable, continual process—maybe even happening on multiple levels of reality at the same time. And when far-out things happen in our meditations and other daily practices (which they will), we immediately seek to make sense of their meaning and value. We do this to ultimately learn something new about ourselves, and reflect it back to the world through our chosen mode of creativity so that others, too, may learn about themselves.

First, let's define consciousness, the consciousness that is yours in this instant. In simplest terms, it's your state of awareness. No one has set the limits of your awareness; they are set by you alone—and the degree to which you are aware greatly determines your capacities within your human experience. Many of us come to certain moments in our lives when we realize that our self-imposed limits no longer serve us, that it's more appropriate to look beyond ourselves at a broader vision of reality. And when we have elevated our awareness to the highest degree, we reach a state that the ancient masters and modern-day mystics describe—where we can see through

all conditions and circumstances, and the veil is completely removed between our mortal selves and Spirit.

\* \* \*

While I may be accused by some of having a fantastic imagination—and, as a writer, I wouldn't necessarily take umbrage at this—I give you my best word that the stories on these pages are real. I am not so unlike you—a working-class American, married with children, focused daily on what needs to be done for my family. I was raised by hard-working, Italian-immigrant parents who passed down a rich ancestry of Catholic-based traditions and virtues of respect, humility and self-reliance. Parallel to this ordinary life, I nurtured within me a growing magnetic attraction to subjects related to metaphysics, parapsychology and human potential. From a young age, I had an impulse to ask epic questions: who am I? why am I? what am I here to do? As a journalist, I now write about consciousness studies, and after years of doing so have come to realize that the more we know, the more we don't know. "To live is so startling," Emily Dickinson wrote, "it leaves little time for anything else."

During my childhood years in the 70s, mainstream society hadn't yet embraced the exploration of realities beyond our five senses. The 80s eked its way through full-blown affluenza and by the arrival of the 90s, more of us seemed eager to abandon materialism for a simpler lifestyle. Around this time, I and many others had a (sixth?) sense that within a decade, the notion of higher consciousness would hit the mainstream and I wanted to be on the front lines, researching and hopefully reporting about it. So it happened. Just as I self-published a book on health intuition in 2000, topics related to integrative medicine (then a newly coined phrase), spiritual intelligence and the practical use of intuition were finally eliciting hoo-ha

in conventional media outlets.

Meanwhile, the information I was reporting on began to seep into my own awareness, to the point that I started to experience the opening of my third eye, the entry gate of intuition, and it's been nothing but upward momentum ever since—a continual expansion of consciousness. I document my findings on these pages, an amalgam of what I've discovered to be the seven essential, overarching concepts to consider when we finally decide to take that leap of faith into the great unknown (and how the unknown can be extremely fruitful, creatively). It's a read that I wish I'd had when I set out, basically on my own, to blaze my personal trail towards finding meaningful answers to inquiries that haunted the recesses of my psyche—and that I knew had been waiting there for me all along.

This book is my offering to your own quest. It guides you through the seven incremental steps of Intention, Daily Practice, Paying Attention, Turning Within, Working with a Mentor, Witnessing—and finally, Integration. Integration is no small word, because in this context it means you will have succeeded in creating for yourself a gift beyond price:

**You will know who you are,  
with the freedom to be it.  
You will know what you want,  
with the daring to go for it.**

\* \* \*

So what exactly does “expansion of consciousness” mean, beyond sounding like so much physics department cocktail chatter? While these pages attempt to dissect the process, language seems inadequate to describe the concept of coming fully awake and aware. It must be experienced to be understood.

## INTRODUCTION

With this in mind, my intent is for this book to be a template upon which you may overlay your personal, subjective experiences. At best, you will find your own truth in these stories and take them as confirmation that, no, you're not crazy—unexplained phenomena happen every day, if we “stay tuned” and routinely “pause for station identification.” In due course, the messages in these seven chapters will lead you to a creative encounter with your life's higher story. (To facilitate this, I've included action items at the end of the book, keyed to each chapter's themes. The Contemplations will serve to clear your creative channel; the Self-Creations will provide access to realms of higher creativity.)

I will do my best to articulate my own internal process of moving from what I call a sepia-tone version of life to a more vivid, multicolored, creative existence through the expansion of awareness. I will go deep, get quite intimate and may even surprise myself with what I choose to share—but I vow to reveal straight up as much as I can recollect because I believe that what's being communicated on these pages are matters of extreme relevance to each of us personally, as well as to the whole of humanity.

Our respective spiritual development goes through phases and everybody is in a different place along the road, so your experiences will be different from mine and anyone else's. Hopefully, we're at least on the same “interstate”—or cruising towards the same inner state. To guide your road trip, these chapters are about how awakening to both Creator and our own creative capacity helps us live more purposefully, and how expanding our intuitive and artistic abilities serves to ameliorate ALL of our life experiences—be it play, work, family, health, happiness, death, joy, sorrow, you name it. Being well connected to the Divine enriches every one of these things, and plenty more.

\* \* \*

What is the meaning behind the book's title? As we ascend to higher levels of awareness, we reach a place where we realize that everything is for a purpose, that our time here is one of learning, and all situations that arise are specifically chosen by us for the purpose of mastery in some aspect of our humanity. While Everything Matters because everything is a perfect creation—every dewdrop, every triumph and tragedy, every emotion—it is equally so that Nothing Matters. Said another way, the more we're able to remove our ego/personality from situations, the clearer that perfection in everything becomes; we are, therefore, increasingly in a space of gratitude for whatever situations come our way. There really is no good or bad, right or wrong. Everything is a blessing. The beauty of this concept gives us a simple blueprint for how to approach each day: revere all life experiences and deny yourself nothing.

The Everything Matters, Nothing Matters life mantra relates directly to our innate link with the Divine, which is given voice through our intuition. As we take time to simply become aware of the characteristics and behaviors of people and things through our intuition, our higher self unfolds—much like the alchemical process that burns away the dross to reveal the gold beneath. What we are aiming to achieve with our own alchemical purification is not full enlightenment but a refined state of unconditional love, altruism, inner joy, creative abundance, and a sense of wisdom in our lives. Trust me, though—purification in itself is a life-changing, transformational process. By the time you've assimilated the seven concepts in this book, your life will not look, feel or be the same.

To help you on your way, I will speak candidly here about how my increasing awareness of other dimensions impacted my view—sometimes painfully so—of ordinary, 3-dimensional

reality and my place in it. At times, spiritual development has sent me into the throes of an existential quandary. With vast internal shifts occurring inside me—everything from my personal identity to my fundamental understanding of what reality really is—questions about how to live my life have become, at times, simultaneously complex and peacefully simple. Add in the fact that others around me may not be privy to this internal process and you've got more quiet anxiety than a mother coming home from the hospital with her firstborn.

So far it's been an incredible journey, vertical in nature, tending towards transcendence. And how did I arrive at this point-of-know-return—by mistake? self-delusion? special privilege? No, no and no. I simply intended to get here. That's how I began. With inquisitiveness and a gut instinct that there was something larger TO life that was larger THAN life. These simple words from Spanish poet Antonio Machado express precisely what I felt:

**Beyond living and dreaming  
There is something more important:  
Waking up.**

I've worked and played at waking up. As a reward, greater mysteries have rained down on my life—this exquisite, sacred, euphoric, fierce, mysterious, crazy-juicy, treacherous, blessed, self-willed life. You, too, can savor the experience of awakening more fully into your own life. It's a matter of choice. So we begin at the beginning, with the first of the seven incremental steps: Intention.

one

## INTENTION

*Nothing is too wonderful to be true.*

– CANDACE PERT, PHD, NEUROSCIENTIST

From the outside, it appears to be an average day. It's 7 a. m. and my kids are off to school, my husband is on his way to the office, and multiple to-do lists are beckoning. My own commute is a dozen steps into my home office. But first, before the day's craziness begins, I settle into the meditation space in my living room. Nothing fancy about this space I've created for myself, nothing mysterious—just a comfy sofa where I'm surrounded by things that have special meaning for me. Behind me on the wall is a Roman stone sculpture of two horses at full gallop, suggesting power and grace. To the left of the sofa I've made an altar—mostly Catholic with an eclectic mix of relics, coins and talismans from India, Asia and Latin America. I light a candle on the coffee table before me, which burns next to a blessing bowl filled with gifts from nature: polished stones, sage and lavender from my garden, hawk and swan feathers, tree bark, sea shells, all resting on a bed of exotic-scented Jasmine loose tea. From the candle's flame, I light a stick of Satya Sai Baba Nag Champa and prop

it on an incense holder. Surrounded by hundreds of books and many framed pictures of family and friends around the room, I scooch back in my seat, contented, take a few deep breaths, and prepare for lift-off.

For the next 15 minutes or so, the ordinary and extraordinary intersect. From the inside, serenity and a sense of timelessness prevail. I open my mind and officially greet the day, expecting to be amazed and amused by how the splendorous intelligence of the universe will reveal itself to me in the coming 24 hours. Now, I ease into a state of heightened intuitive flow. In these moments, concepts like inadequacy, anxiety and struggle seem unfathomable; in their place rest compassion, acceptance, trust and a hint of invincibility. I let go of could-have-been's. I play with perhaps-ness. I toy with of-course-it-can's. I send love, love and more love to everyone and everything. All is peaceful on Planet Earth and in my heart.

One final prayer of gratitude (for life, for health, for all things) and I'm up from the sofa, eager to dive into the freshly born day. If there's writing to be done, I flip open my laptop, unabashedly commune with the muses-on-standby and allow their insights to fill my waiting being. As a creative person, it's a provocative place to be, a port of call like none other. I always cherish my arrival there. Regardless of the tasks ahead of me that day, my hours unfurl like a whimsical sonata, leaving in their wake a prism of superfluid ideas and inspiration.

Life can be like this, a gift re-presented each dawn with great flourish. It can be voluptuous, no matter what is occurring around us. Indeed, our moment-to-moment existence can be ecstasy, even when things happen that really suck big time. How is this possible? Because, truth be told, we don't just exist, we are *conscious beings*. As such, we are free to choose how to be: we can live, or...we can be Alive with a capital A.