

BARRY WILLIAME MAGLIARDITI

**SEX, DRUGS,
AND RADICAL
SELF-EXPRESSION**

**THE UNEXPECTED PATH
TO FULFILLMENT**

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Sex, Drugs, and Radical Self-Expression

The Unexpected Path to Fulfillment

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*This book is dedicated to anyone who
grew up feeling like they didn't belong or weren't enough.
Know that you are unique, beautiful, and powerful beyond
measure and yet only a speck of dust in this existence.
Take this book as your permission slip to become your
most authentic self and all of who you're here to be.
Realise that you are enough and have nothing to prove to
anyone or anything outside yourself. The validation, belonging,
and love you seek will only come from the connection
to your heart and your heart's connection
to the Divine Source.*

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD, I WAS AN ABSOLUTE MESS. MY entire life was circling the drain. Drug use, petty crime, depression. I felt completely worthless and alone.

But this book is not a pity party. Far from it.

I start here because I want you to know that no matter how bad you're hurting right now, how much you think you've fucked things up in your life . . . you can turn it around and start being, feeling, and having everything you need.

If I can go from an eighteen-year-old disaster waiting to happen to where I am now—living my dream lifestyle in Bali, owning multiple multimillion-dollar companies that afford me time to spend my days surfing and enjoying life, working when I want, and feeling pretty fucking amazing and blessed every day—then you can, too.

The truth is that a fulfilling and rich life (in every sense of the word) begins with the relationship you have with yourself.

Years ago, I began healing that relationship, connecting with my heart, and learning to be guided by my intuition. And with each step, my happiness and success grew.

In this book, I share what I learned along the way. I invite you to come along for the journey and find your own path to fulfilment.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

I was a little apprehensive about writing this book. Perhaps you've read my last book, *The Path to Freedom*, and you're expecting something like that. (By the way, if you're an entrepreneur or business owner, you should definitely read it. It's a step-by-step guide to systematising your business to work without you. You can get a free copy at: www.pathtofreedom.com.au/free-book.)

Let me tell you now. This book is quite different.

This book is for anyone wanting to regain authentic control of their life by releasing themselves from the shame, guilt, and perceived judgements they feel for not being enough. Enough of a husband, father, lover, leader, sibling, and all-around human.

I share from the perspective of my eighteen-year-old self, fresh out of the structure and controls of living at home, trying to find his way through life and prove his worthiness to his father and himself.

Throughout the book, I use my own journey to show you core fundamentals I've discovered and spend every day working to master. These fundamentals have helped me to be a happy, successful, and fulfilled human in a very dehumanising world.

This book is also for anyone who knows there can be more to life but isn't sure what steps to take. At this point in my life, I'm living my dream lifestyle. I live in Bali with the time, money, and freedom to do whatever I want. I run multiple multimillion-dollar businesses but only work for a few hours a week. I have an incredible relationship with my partner, my kids, and myself.

If you're reading this now, know that you can have it all, too. Everything you need is already inside of you.

I'm not any smarter or more gifted than you. I wasn't born into privilege; I didn't get any special treatment that elevated me to this level in life. I simply practised what I outlined in this book. I went on a quest to become all of who I am and realise my full potential.

No special tricks, hacks, or connections. What got me here was doing

the work on *me*, on who I wanted to be and how I wanted to show up in the world. If you're willing to go within—to navigate and be honest with your own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs—you will find a way to your full potential as well. That's my promise.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This book is divided into three parts, which build on each other. I call the three parts “the holy trinity.” They are the heart, the head, and the hand. As you move through the book, you will see how all of these are connected. In order to experience mind, body, and spirit alignment, you can't skip past the heart or only focus on the mind. You need all three.

In Part 1, *The Heart*, we'll explore the spiritual aspects of who we are. We'll talk about the importance of emotions, heart meditations, and more. In Part 2, *The Head*, we'll consider the world of our thoughts and how the ego plays into life. Finally, in Part 3, *The Hand*, we'll learn to actually embody what we desire in the physical world.

Before we dive too far into the book, I also want to offer a couple of disclaimers up front. As you might have guessed from the subtitle of the book, I will be sharing a lot of personal stories. In particular, I will share some of my experiences with drugs.

This book is not about drugs. It's not a druggie book. But it does contain stories of drug use. At various points in my life, I've used drugs to achieve certain outcomes. And for me, a lot of those experiences were defining moments.

Don't get me wrong; I absolutely condemn irresponsible drug use. I'm not trying to glorify drugs in this book, nor am I trying to tell you that they are how *you* should begin exploring your own consciousness. Drugs are simply one of the many methods I have used personally in my own quest for spiritual answers to personal questions. I'll share more specifics about these experiences as we go.

Drugs are substances or compounds that alter the normal state of the body and mind. They are a catalyst that causes the body to behave differently. That's all.

Medicines are drugs. We are conditioned to believe that medicine is good for us and drugs are bad for us. But both alter the normal state of the body and brain in some way. Some create different enzymes and molecules, or more or less of them, to achieve different purposes. Some regulate blood pressure. Some reduce inflammation. Some kill bacteria. Some stimulate our sympathetic nervous system. And some trigger psychological responses.

Of course, the wrong dosage or misuse of *any* compound can do harm. As I share, all I ask is that you suspend judgement and remember that what's 'good' or 'bad' is often in how we use it, not in the thing itself.

Throughout the book, you will also find some ideas that might confront your own views about sex, spirituality, or masculinity and femininity. Some themes in the book might trigger you. Some of the content might seem too "woo-woo." Some of it might seem like absolute bullshit.

That's okay. Because this is *my* experience. I'm sharing it because I know the lessons within my journey so far can help you, too. I don't expect you to agree with everything I say. At the end of the book, you can decide what you choose to keep and what you choose to discard from the lessons, experiences, and ideas I share.

A FINAL NOTE

Remember: this journey starts from within.

So before you put this book down and dismiss it because you're "not a spiritual person" (or whatever your inner voice is telling you right now), remember that you picked it up for a reason. A reason beyond curiosity. I believe you were called to pick it up from the deep wisdom within your heart. So for the next few hundred pages, follow the intuition that led you to pick up this book.

Whether you want to improve your relationship with an intimate partner, experience more love and joy, or start feeling more fulfilled in every area of your life, let this book be your guide.

I'm about to share with you the tried and tested principles that helped me reshape my life—and myself—from the inside out. These fundamentals and the associated practices have worked for me and for hundreds of my coaching clients over the years.

I know they will accelerate you along your path, too.

All I ask is that you read this book with an open mind and open heart. Take off the mask and just be yourself. Remove your preconceptions of what it is to be a man, what it is to be a woman, what it is to live a good life, or what it is to be successful. Take away your perceptions around spirituality. Instead, simply show up as a receptive vessel.

I'll share my lessons and my story as openly as I can. I'll put my niggling fear of judgement (which we *all* have) to the side and show up 100 per cent for you.

When you feel resistance, all I ask is that you explore that feeling. Why are you feeling that way? What are the thoughts behind it?

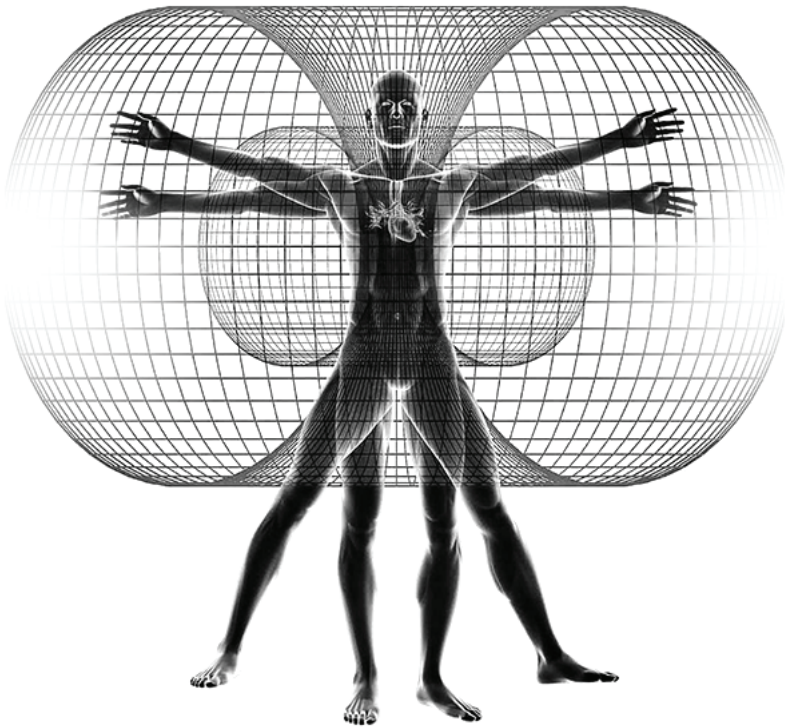
Chances are your conditioning is kicking in and telling you, *Nope, that's bullshit, it's not the way things work.*

But guess what? The way you currently see and experience the world is not the only way. By picking up this book, your intuition is trying to show you a different way.

Will you listen? I hope so.

PART 1

THE HEART



CHAPTER 1

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY

I DON'T LOVE MYSELF.

As I heard my inner voice speak those words so clearly, the impact of my realisation sucked all the breath out of me—just for a second.

Whoa. What a sucker punch to the soul.

After all the years I'd spent on my spiritual journey—practising meditation daily, training in multiple modalities such as reiki, breathwork, neuro-linguistic programming, and more.

After all the workshops. All the shaman circles. All the healing exercises. And I still hadn't landed the most important relationship a human being can have?

Instead of composing a strongly worded letter to the universe asking for my money back, I did the one thing that has always guided me in the direction I needed to go. I asked an exploratory question with an open heart and genuine curiosity.

That question was simple.

Why?

Why don't I love myself?

From there, the other questions followed.

Where did this begin? What are the beliefs and feelings I'm holding onto that have kept me from loving myself? What else do I need to uncover about myself?

Where am I still hiding from myself, deep down inside?

I opened my eyes and started coming out of my meditative state. I felt the warmth on my skin and heard the bugs skittering and birds chirping in the lush green trees surrounding the property. The Balinese humidity was making my singlet stick to my back. I could smell incense burning nearby.

My butt ached on the hard earth. How long had I been sitting here? How long had it been since I'd walked down the path dotted with sound healing bowls up to a beautiful yet weathered old wooden house, past the dragon head altar on the porch, and into this experience?

A man with kind brown eyes was looking at me. His long grey hair, Tree of Life mandala necklace, and hippie clothing made me feel awkward.

Although I had just met him, I felt like he could see a part of me that I wasn't seeing myself. And that made me uneasy.

What was that twinkle in his eye? Was he laughing at me? Was he judging me?

He sat on the ground next to me and smiled a little—a real Mona Lisa type of smile.

“You need to go back in,” he gently said.

So I lay back down and closed my eyes.

It was time to let the drugs take me again.

■ ■ ■

THE CURSE OF MODERNITY

Why is it that in these modern times, where we have access to more opportunity, luxury, and freedom of choice than ever before, so many people feel so fucking broken?

Depression and anxiety stats are through the roof. Marriage failure rates are rising every year. Substance abuse and alcoholism are everywhere.

Despite having even more access to each other . . . we feel more alone than ever.

So, we seek comfort. From anywhere and everywhere.

We try to make a million bucks to make our dads proud. We trawl Tinder trying to fuck the pain away. We screw up our relationships. We buy mountains of shit we do not need.

We are constantly striving to fulfil ourselves in the most unresourceful ways. It feels like there's an emptiness inside, so we keep jamming stuff in there to satiate our hunger to feel good.

But no number of sexual partners, career achievements, bottles of Jack Daniels, or fancy bags from Louis Vuitton can fill us up. The buzz fades. And we go seeking the next gratification.

I know what you might be thinking right now. *Geez, why the buzzkill, Barry?*

Look, I don't want you to feel like things are hopeless.

Because they're *not*.

If you're feeling any recognition in my words so far, I've got good news for you.

You're *not* empty. You're *not* broken. You are whole and everything you need to be. You're just looking for fulfilment in the wrong places.

Like a tree that gets watered with Gatorade, you're not able to operate at your best, most fulfilled self because you're getting the wrong nourishment.

It's not your fault. You were taught to value the wrong things by society. By your family. By your friends. And it's not their fault either, because they

were taught by the people who influenced *them* growing up. The cycle repeats itself until we each make the conscious effort to break the cycle and experience our lives a different way.

I'd like to show you how to start breaking down the conditioning and biases you've inherited, so you can start to rebuild your relationship with yourself, the people around you, and life itself.

START WITH THE HEART

What I share in this book can help you shift your lens and learn to listen to your heart and soul, instead of the blaring noise from society and the world in general shouting at you about who you should be and what you should want. It can help you change the internal soundtrack that dictates how you show up in life.

And when you shift into this new way of being, the world truly does open up. Success comes easier and greater than you ever imagined. Relationships go from “meh” to “wow.” Your sense of self-worth and self-love bloom.

Most importantly, if you choose to read and follow what I outline in this book, it will help strengthen your connection to your intuition and the Divine Source (whatever God is to you—Allah, Jehovah, Gaia).

When I started my journey towards ultimate fulfilment, I had no idea where to start. Then I realised I had to begin at the deepest, most central part: the heart.

As I did, I began to find what I was seeking. I'm not just talking about the material stuff. I'm talking about love of life. A sense of fulfilment that isn't tied to my bank balance. And a relationship with myself that is full of ever-expanding love.

If that sounds like something you want, I invite you to come with me as I share how I got here.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF JOURNEY

When I woke up on the ground in Bali with a kind-eyed hippie dude peering down at me, my mind shot back to a conversation I had with a friend three weeks prior.

We were sitting in a cafe in Canggu, Bali, my newly adopted home. He had just mentioned that a friend of his did DMT.

“DMT? Isn’t that the trippy stuff Homer licks off a toad’s back in that *Simpsons* episode?” I laughed.

I was mucking around, but I knew what it was. Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) is a simple compound found throughout nature that has a profound psychedelic effect on human consciousness.

DMT is found in all manner of plants, animals, and even us humans. As Joe Rogan once put it, “It’s a weird drug to be illegal because everyone’s holding.”

I’d actually heard a lot of stories about DMT. Some said it evokes a state where you exist in your purest form. Others said they found a new understanding of life and death while using it.

For some people, it unlocks the secrets of the infinite universe. Often it creates a feeling—no, a *knowing*—that you are happy, complete, and sublime.

When people come back from a near-death experience, and report seeing a white light or divine beings, some scientists and medical professionals say this is the result of a release of DMT, which gives the brain a final, all-encompassing hallucination (Bryant 2018).

Among scientists and shamans alike, DMT is fast becoming known as “the God molecule.”

I’m always open to experiences that help me understand myself more and strengthen my connection to the divine. So I was curious, though a bit apprehensive.

Flashbacks of acid trippers frantically trying to scratch imagined cockroaches off their skin at raves back in my twenties came back to me.

What if I did it and had a bad trip?

But then again... what if I did it, and it was life-changing?

I put the thought aside then. But over the next week, the possibility tickled the edges of my mind. I kept hearing references to this substance and stories about it, so I decided to listen to the signs that were around me and give it a try.

After researching through my network for a safe and experienced guide to administer the DMT and guide me through my experience, I eventually ended up on the porch of that wooden house in the lush landscape of Bali. There, I met the two people who would facilitate my journey: a forty-something Australian shaman woman, who would initially administer the drug to me, and a gentle hippy dude in his sixties, who would watch over me during my experience.

“It’s called the God molecule because it activates the gland that allows us to access ancient wisdom and divine connection with God,” the shaman woman explained. “It will give you access to forgotten universal codes that we knew in previous lifetimes but cannot remember in this human experience.”

Although in the lead-up to this experience, I was super nervous, I felt in my heart that I just had to let go and surrender to what was there. I’d done my due diligence. I was taking it in a controlled environment. I had to let go.

When I opened my eyes for the first time after taking the DMT, I found myself laying on the grass in the sun, which was above me. I mean, the sun was *directly* above me, right at my third eye. It struck me as wonderfully odd. What was the likelihood of that happening?

The sun was there for me, I thought. I had just had such a beautiful experience where I felt that life and existence and light had been created for me, to support me as a living being. And yet, I realised that I’d spent my whole life resisting. Resisting the challenges, the opportunities, the love... resisting everything that was there in abundance, being given to me. I missed it all in my pursuit to belong and be seen by my father, my mother, and my peers.

I remember sitting up and noticing that my body was covered in ants. Not in the tripped-out raver kind of way, but actual ants were wandering around on my arms, my torso, my legs. Normally, the instinct would be to brush them off, but I felt no such urge.

Instead, I felt a sense of being one with everything. Yes, even the ants. Most living things on this planet are made up of a lot of the same ingredients, after all. Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulphur. Atoms combine and form these elements in different ways, but at our core, we're all a bundle of stitched-together common elements.

It was around this time that my hippie observer told me to go back in. "You're not done," he said. "You've had a realisation. Now you have to let go of your need to control."

He was right.

Over the next forty-five minutes of meditation, I started to realise that during my entire life, I had pursued bigger experiences. I'd pursued goals, wealth, status, relationships... all these external stimuli.

And it was all to make me feel like *I belonged*.

My whole life had been made up of me bouncing from one experience to the next like a junkie, constantly seeking the next thing that would make me feel like I was worthy, accepted, and loved.

As I came back to full consciousness and looked up at my hippie observer, I realised that, in many ways, this guy represented an aspect of myself I'd kept hidden my whole life. I realised why his clothing and long hair had made me feel awkward before. It was because he was a total stereotype... yet totally cool with himself. He was into some "woo-woo" shit, and he didn't give a damn what I thought of him for it.

For a second, I envied him. Because I'd spent my life trying to be the version of myself I thought I had to be, just to avoid judgement, feel worthy, and belong in the group I was in.

Business Barry. Partner Barry. Father Barry. Friend Barry. Son Barry. Student Barry. Leader Barry.

Each version of me was different depending on who I thought I had to show up as.

But in all of those Barrys, I never showed up fully as *me*. Pieces of me, yes, but never the full deal.

And for the first time, it occurred to me that the only thing that was holding me back from being my fully authentic self was myself.

So why had I suppressed my true self for so long? Why do I still struggle with fear of judgement for being my full self?

EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION

To reach back to the centre—to who we truly are—we must go all the way back to what blocked us from our own hearts.

We are all born with one core desire that links all the primary and secondary drivers together.

That core desire is *belonging*.

We cannot recognize all our primary and secondary drivers without first recognizing our desire for belonging. Sure, we can fulfil *some* of our core needs without it. But not all. Not totally and holistically.

The need to belong is so ingrained in our human psyche through hundreds of thousands of years of evolution that we'll do anything to fulfil it. We'll deny our true selves and teach our loved ones to do it, too.

From our earliest years, we're taught to stifle our emotions. Babies learn to "self-soothe" (cry their eyes out until they realise that nobody is coming to help them and give up).

Kids are taught to repress their more rowdy or messy emotions in a million ways. The naughty corner. Time-out. Removal of freedoms. Rejection from their immediate family—their tribe. Cast out until they learn to suppress and control themselves.

Yes, children need to learn how to function in society in a productive manner, but the enormous denial we learn in our upbringing has a harmful

side effect: it teaches us to hide how we're truly feeling. To push it deep down until we forget it's there. We eventually become so good at doing this that, as adults, we often don't have any connection with our true feelings at all.

As a twenty-year-old man, I had no idea what was going on inside my head or my heart. It was just chaos. It was just urges to party, hook up with women, or achieve recognition. If you'd asked me back then why I wanted any of it, I wouldn't have had a clue. I just *did*. I didn't know why.

Maybe you can relate?

Have you ever felt that you couldn't express how you really felt? When did this begin for you? Did you get sent to your room for "acting out" as a child? Were you told to be quiet when asking to have your needs met? Did you long to just be held and soothed?

I distinctly remember getting in trouble for my emotions. I got sent to my room a lot. I was always "acting out." I wasn't deliberately trying to misbehave; I just had all these emotions and had no idea how to express them. What's more, I was firmly shut down whenever I did express them.

I was—and still am—very empathetic. I feel people's energies. I can look at them and feel their emotional state. To the point where I can feel how people are feeling from inside their houses as I walk down a road. No wonder that, as a child, I sometimes felt like crying for no specific reason.

Now I now know that my sensitive, emotional barometer is a precious gift. It has helped me build a highly successful coaching company by using my intuition to help people get amazing personal outcomes that translate to business successes.

But at six years old, I had no idea how to navigate what was going on in my head and my heart. So, I became the black sheep of the family and the classroom—the "handful." Soon I started identifying *myself* that way, too. I started acting out on purpose with my emotions bubbling away inside of me and no outlet for healthy expression.

Then came rebellion. And lots of it.

Ever wonder why so many teens rebel? So much of it stems back to emotional suppression—especially the suppression of anger.

You see, anger, in particular, gets a bad rap when we're kids. Well, at any age, for that matter. We learn early that it's considered a "bad" emotion, one that is almost universally frowned upon. When, at four years old, we're taught to shut down and repress our feelings of anger or experience the withdrawal of love from a parent or guardian, it's no wonder the effects echo within our hearts into adulthood.

Thankfully, I was able to gain a healthier understanding of anger later in life. Just as I believe drug compounds aren't inherently bad, I believe emotions aren't bad either. Anger isn't bad—it's the *unresourceful expression* of anger that has bad *consequences*.

When we start holding onto "bad" emotions, those emotions still find a way to show up. They bubble to the surface, but instead of being resolved in a healthy way, they push to find a path up through the cracks in our consciousness. Like a tree that's growing in a strange direction because of something inhibiting its natural growth, the energies of unresolved emotions warp the growth of our bodies and minds. They cause mental problems and, I believe, contribute to physical disease as well.

Think of an animal that's experienced trauma. What do they do? They shake their bodies to release it. Birds beat their wings. Dogs shake themselves from head to tail.

What do *we* do when we experience trauma? We go to the doctor and get some form of medication (that's right, a drug) to make us able to function. To make us feel "better," or at least different. But oftentimes, all the drugs do is suppress the emotion that needs to be healthily expressed.

What if, instead, we heard, "You're right to be feeling angry right now because your partner has cheated on you and left. It makes total sense to experience that feeling." Or, "Barry, you've just lost a loved one. You're right to be hurting right now."

Unfortunately, that's not often what we hear when we're angry or upset.

In fact, all most of us know how to say when someone is angry is “Calm down.” And what do we typically do when people are hurting? We say, “Don’t cry.” We try and stop the emotion from happening instead of allowing it to flow naturally through the body, be expressed, and resolved.

No wonder there are so many angry people out there going absolutely *tropo* at each other over tiny things like a parking spot dispute. We’re walking around with all these unexpressed, unresolved, and repressed emotions. And we’re boiling over.

Here’s the point: emotions *need* to be expressed. Positive emotional resolution is about expressing what you feel in a healthy way, not projecting what you feel onto someone else. In this journey, it will be key to allow yourself to sit in your feelings and let them flow through you. I’ll share more of how you can do this in the next few chapters.

When you allow a negative emotion to flow freely, you’ll be surprised at how quickly it resolves.

Just the other day, I was pissed off because I’d let someone take advantage of me. I felt angry and frustrated, both with them and myself. My partner, Kate, was in the room with me while I was radiating anger.

“I just need to be angry right now,” I told her as I picked up on her concern. “Please just allow me to be in this state right now.”

In most relationships, that expression would trigger an adverse response in the other person. They wouldn’t want you to be in that state because they’re negatively affected by it. That can have a ping pong effect that brings both parties all the way down, down . . . into a fight. Cue someone storming off in a huff, the other person slamming a door, and both parties not really knowing why they are so pissed off with each other.

Fortunately, Kate had a different response.

“Okay,” she said.

That’s it. She didn’t let my anger affect how she was experiencing life in that moment. She didn’t make it about her. She didn’t demand I calm down or she would leave the room (removal of love).

She simply acknowledged how I was feeling and acknowledged my right to feel that way if I chose. She didn't try to change my state. She allowed me to be fully *me*. What a gift!

The wonderful part was that as soon as she did this, my anger disappeared. Within seconds, I felt lighter in every way. I even started rolling around on the floor, giggling and asking for a hug.

How different do you think your relationships would be if you started approaching negative feelings in this way? If you said, "Okay, I'm just gonna let myself feel this emotion for a while. I'm not going to rant and rave at myself for feeling this way. I'm just going to acknowledge the feeling, sit with it, and let it move through me."

How different do you think the relationship with your *self* would be? Remember, this is an inside-out journey. When you experience change at the heart level, everything else follows.

MY PATH BACK TO ME

After being told to suppress my emotions for so many years, I not only started to identify myself as the troublesome kid but also started to rebel.

Rebellion was the name of the game in my teens, and by my early twenties, I was smoking a lot of pot. The drug of choice helped me suppress my huge fluctuations in emotion and bring me down to a normal level with other people.

When I was stoned, all the anxiety fell away. So did all the sharp pain of not belonging, of wanting to make my dad proud but not knowing how, and of looking at my life around me and feeling so frustrated.

Without it, I was wired. All the time. I easily could have been diagnosed with ADHD if I had been assessed. I couldn't hold a conversation. My eyes would dart off everywhere. I would be talking about six things all at once. My parasympathetic system was on overdrive. I was stuck in the fight or flight response because I had all this emotion built up inside of me that was never allowed to come out or be expressed.

No one had ever held a safe space for me to express my emotions. As a consequence, I was never able to establish really deep relationships—with women or friends. I wondered why I didn't feel anything for anyone. And with those thoughts, I felt more frustrated, more alone.

So I acted out. I did drugs. Petty crime. All that stuff. I feel some resistance admitting it even now, especially in a one-sided relationship such as this, where you're reading my book, and I have no idea how you're reacting. But as I've mentioned, I'm surrendering to the process and showing up 100 per cent.

And besides, I know I'm not the only one. Far from it. Over the years, I hear more and more stories of young men and women, confused and angry, getting caught up in unhelpful coping mechanisms just like I did. You may even be in the grip of an unhealthy habit right now.

Ironically, it was my pot smoking that eventually brought me to the first person to change my life for the better. But the process was painful.

I had been working as a bouncer at a nightclub for a while. I'm not gonna lie; I did it to get chicks. Hey, I was in my twenties, remember?

One Friday night on the job, I ended up injuring my back while breaking up a fight. By Monday, I couldn't get out of bed. I literally couldn't move my legs. Terrified, I called my mum, who proceeded to take me to all the relevant doctors for all the relevant tests.

The news was universally bad. I was told I'd never work in a physically active capacity again. I faced life in a desk job—far from the carpentry career path I had planned.

As you can imagine, hotheaded young Barry gave that news the big two-finger salute. My whole ethos at the time was, "Tell me I can't do something, and I'll show you ten ways I can." Filled with the energy of youth and determined to prove everyone wrong, I started trying every therapy I could.

Despite my predicament (or perhaps because of it), I was still smoking weed. But one night, my stash ran out. Facing the unbearable prospect of a sober weekend, I called a guy I'd been half-friendly with at the gym.

Yeah, he had weed. And yeah, he could come around.

That night was actually the start of a friendship that still exists today. My friendship with Josh is the longest I've ever had and one of the very dearest to me. Aside from the gift of a true brotherhood bond, Josh also introduced me to a path towards spiritual education and awakening.

But before that, he introduced me to ecstasy.

"Let's have a pill and go out on the town," he said one night. This was some months after our first bond over a few cones, and we'd become really close. I was actually living at his house.

I was feeling better and moving again, so, sure. Why not?

And so began my ecstasy phase.

On one of these nights, after dancing our asses off in the city, we were home and having the naturally deep and meaningful conversation that usually occurred when we started coming down. My back pain was starting to kick in again.

"Here, give me your hand," he said.

I put my hand in his, and suddenly, I felt an energy coming from him, directly to my heart. It was unlike anything I'd ever felt, better than any orgasm or the high from some great achievement. Thinking about it now, I can only describe what I felt as a heart orgasm. The energy reached my core and exploded into a feeling of beauty, happiness, and rapture.

"What was that?" I asked, staring at him.

"Reiki."

"How did you learn to do that?"

"I've always been able to do it," said Josh. "I haven't been taught; I just *remembered* how to do it."

What a trip. He remembered? From when? I had no idea about universal energies back then, so it was like my friend was speaking another language.

"I can fix your back, by the way," Josh said casually.

At this point, he could have told me he could fly, and I would have believed him.

"Go on then, give it a go."

For the next half hour, Josh used Reiki on my back. As he did, I could feel the sensation of something being energetically pulled out of me. It was like he took my sore back into himself and processed the pain and trauma for me, a piece at a time.

Over the next month, we had regular Reiki sessions. Each time, Josh took a small piece of the injury away from me and into himself. He actually developed a sore back for a while. Slowly, my own back began to heal. It was incredible.

After a few more months of weekly Reiki sessions with Josh, my back was 100 per cent better. Somehow, I had proved modern medicine wrong. And how? That was the trippiest part... by using a Japanese technique that spiritually guides unseen life force energy! No pills, no operations, no months of rehab. How the hell was that possible? I wanted to find out more.

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I'd been raised in a minimally religious house, seeing life from a single perspective and thinking there's not much else out there except for the inevitable journey to a house with a white picket fence, mortgage and kids, retirement, and then death. Tick, tick, and tick.

But over the next year, I started having different conversations and experiences, and slowly my resistance to things I couldn't see or touch in the world started to fade.

The more I started to explore these new ideas around energy, the concept of God, the mind and body connection, the more I began to see. My eyes were especially opened while on ecstasy.

I would start to remember things that I had never been taught in this life. I'd blackout in a room, and when I came to, everyone around me would be crying and asking things like, "How did you know that? How do you know what happened to me when I was three years old?" Somehow, I just knew. I could feel it. It was like I was channelling messages about their traumatic experiences and divining how to heal those traumas.

Over about an eighteen-month period, I started to get better at consciously channelling these messages that would come through me. Without fail, the people around me would have these profound healing experiences.

But it wasn't until a devastating breakup left me feeling utterly heart-broken that I truly began pursuing answers to what was going on under the surface.

I'll never forget hearing the news that my girlfriend at the time—who I thought I would end up marrying—had cheated on me with my best friend. I was sitting on a dusty old cream couch in my house in Kings Meadows back in Tasmania. It was a hand-me-down from my parents and well-used in my bachelor pad. Every time someone sat down on this dirty old couch, a faint plume of dust would puff up and out of the back cushion.

I was watching my cat play in the sunlight, batting at a leaf on the Yucca plant that had lived in that loungeroom for as long as I had when the phone rang. It was my friend's dad, Rick, a wise old hippy-type guy who had become a friend and early mentor of mine.

"Hey, Barry," he began. "I've got something to tell you. Kristy spent the night here."

She and I had fought the day before, and she had taken off. I had a feeling she would have crashed at his house.

"Is she alright?" I asked.

"Yeah," Rick replied. "But Jay came over as well, and they smoked a few joints and... well..."

"What? What happened?" I held my breath, expecting the worst. Were they in the hospital? What was going on?

"They slept together."

I couldn't speak.

"Honestly, Barry, I think it's for the best. You two were never going to work out. I just thought you should know."

I felt a sick feeling in my stomach like a hand was reaching up from deep within my gut and choking me.

I threw my phone at the wall. The old Nokia 7110 cracked the plasterboard, then bounced and hit the floor, unharmed. (Those things were unbreakable!)

My first feeling was anger and blame directed at Rick. He was supposed to be a mentor figure to me. How had he allowed this to happen?

My anger then turned to Jay. He was supposed to be my best friend. How could he have done this to me? Then to Kristy. How could *she* have done this to me?

Mixed emotions swirled around me. Rage, anger, blame... and hurt. Incredible, deep hurt.

Every time I pictured Kristy and Jay together, her shining blonde hair mixing with his dirty brown stoner hair as they writhed in bed, it made me feel sick.

After that day, Kristy totally cut me off. She didn't want to speak to me or acknowledge what she'd done. We went from having a fight to never seeing each other again.

I had never felt so lost and alone. My head was spinning with questions.

What if we hadn't had that fight before she did this unforgivable thing? What if I had tried harder to save her from her mental demons? What did it mean about my own worth that this had happened to me?

How could I ever trust anyone again, lover or friend?

I needed answers, and I had no idea how to find them.

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That weekend, I wandered around the city, trying to unravel the mess in my head. I ended up standing in front of a wooden door, observing the purple Tree of Life symbol painted above the shop's name, Berkana.

It was one of those New Age shops filled with crystals, draped velvet counters, girls in hemp clothing, and intriguing book covers with pentacles and angels on them.

I felt I should go in, although I had no idea why. This wasn't the usual kind of thing I did. I felt really out of place, but somehow, I knew to trust my instincts.

Inside, the shop was cluttered and bursting with obscure books and mystical paraphernalia. A CD of nature sounds overlaid with the faint harmonies of chanting monks playing from a small boombox on the front counter.

Despite the apparent chaotic nature of its contents, the shop had a beautiful sense of calm and peace. Somehow, it gave me an odd sense of coming home.

I followed the small path between bookshelves and makeshift tables and up a narrow wooden staircase. It creaked and slightly groaned as I ascended the stairs. At the top was another room, smaller than the one below. A makeshift altar had been set up in a cracked and dusty old fireplace in the corner.

On one of the tables against the window, many decks of divination cards were carefully arranged in a display. Tarot cards, Oracle cards, Spirit cards. The cards in each deck were tiny works of art—beautifully painted and painstakingly detailed. I had dabbled in Tarot before but never had the patience to learn all of the spreads and card meanings. Maybe Oracle cards would give me a sense of direction instead?

Fifteen minutes later, I walked out with the smell of Nag Champa incense in my nose and a pack of Archangel Oracle cards in my bag.

Doreen Virtue, who holds BA, MA, and PhD degrees in counselling psychology, designed Oracle cards to give simple answers to your most pressing questions. Unlike a Tarot reading, which requires a long and involved process, using Oracle cards is fast and easy. You just hold a question in your mind and heart and then pick a card from the forty-five-strong deck.

“They work by drawing down guidance and intuitive thoughts from your guardian angel,” the cute tattooed and dreadlocked shop assistant had told me.” Hmmm, okay. I wasn't sure about the whole archangel thing, but I did know that I believed there was something out there... a Source of energy or a divine being that we humans couldn't explain.

And besides, even if I decided that archangels weren't my thing, each card was beautifully designed with motivational and uplifting words on them. And that was certainly some "food for the soul" that I needed.

As I was exiting the shop, I noticed a sign on the window. It was for Reiki classes. I stopped and looked at it for a second. It occurred to me that recently I'd had all this trauma coming up in my life. My horrendous back injury, my girlfriend cheating on me with my best friend, losing money on a shitty investment... everything seemed to be going phenomenally wrong in my life.

I remembered someone once telling me that we attract severe physical experiences when we're not listening to our divine guidance.

Was that why I felt like my life was falling down around me? Was I somehow attracting this myself by not following the path my instincts were telling me to follow?

On a whim, I went back into the shop and signed up for the Reiki course, too. Why not? I had nothing to lose. And somehow, I just felt I needed to.

A few weeks later, I was sitting on the floor of my Level 1 Reiki workshop. I had been using my Oracle cards daily. I'd stopped being surprised at how damn accurate they were... somehow, they always told me exactly what I needed to hear (even if it wasn't necessarily what I *wanted* to hear).

Whether archangels were guiding me, or the cards were simply helping me unlock my own connection with my subconscious knowledge and universal energy... they really worked.

I'd also been diving into spirituality, devouring every book I could find from authors like Eckhart Tolle, Deepak Chopra, Paulo Coelho, Wayne Dyer, and many more.

I felt pretty confident and maybe even a little bit cocky. After all, I knew I could already channel energy. I had felt people's trauma and shown them how to heal it.

As I sat on a dusty old fake Persian rug in the centre of another room, hidden away up past those rickety stairs, I felt a bit nervous. The people

sitting around me were of all ages and types. I saw New Age trendy kids with dreadlocks and piercings right next to a couple of middle-aged women looking like they'd just come from a Pilates class. There was an older gentleman who seemed like he had done these courses many times before and an Indonesian guy who radiated an incredibly grounded energy for his age.

And then there was me. What the hell was I doing here?

The instructor went around the room, asking everyone to introduce themselves. It was already getting muggy inside the small room, and a small fan hummed from somewhere behind me. Soon it was my turn.

"Hi, I'm Barry," I said. But before I could get another word out, I started bawling. I just cried and cried. I didn't know where it came from. Something released in me, and everything else fell away. My next words came from somewhere deep within me, a place I never knew existed.

"I'm Barry," I started again. "And I'm here to remember who I am."

It was the year 2000, and on that day, I felt like I was given a piece of the puzzle I'd been unconsciously searching for. And that was the start of my spiritual journey.

YOUR TURN

Now that you know a little bit about how I got started, it's time to get *you* started. Throughout this book, we'll cover many concepts that are fundamental to finding peace, love, and fulfilment in your life.

But to begin, we'll continue to explore where all life begins: our heart. Over the next few chapters, I'm going to share with you how I developed my relationship with my heart. Not the physical muscle but the energetic Source. I'll invite you to start opening and using your own heart and connect with your intuition in a more meaningful way.

Because from the heart, everything else follows.

As we go, I'll give you some exercises to help you. They're very simple and easy to do (no tribal circle of painted ladies howling under the moon

necessary). I hope you give them a try. Because once you start opening your heart connection, you'll begin feeling the beautiful ease of allowing your heart to lead you through life. You'll start feeling a wholeness you haven't experienced before. And you'll start living your life in a more fulfilling and harmonious way.

Is it all woo-woo? Maybe. Whatever you call it, it works. It has for me. It has for hundreds of my coaching clients. And it can work for you, too, because *you are meant to be happy*.

So let's begin, shall we?