

GOD DOESN'T CARE WHAT YOU WEAR™

THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR BELIEFS

BY BEVERLY LUTZ



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“The author shares her fascinating life experiences with clarity, personal truth and translucency. In reading, we access our own reality, being gently persuaded to peel away the distorting layers of an inauthentic existence in order to achieve a life of harmony coming from our own personal truths. Beverly’s journey is one we all need to take.”

Joanne Ford, designer, entrepreneur.

“Beverly cuts through our illusions with precision, insight and freshness to uncover the truth that has always been shining through to our lives. This book shares we are in perfect form, regardless of our histories and life stories. Nothing needs to change except our illusions and beliefs.”

Denise McTighe, writer, artist.

“Beverly’s provocative insights provide a framework for examining the binding chains of illusory beliefs, freeing our hearts for joyful participation in our own life’s journey. As with all the great teachers, her example and call for self honest reflection is equally an acknowledgement and an eye with which to view the perfect imperfections of All That Is in comprising the mosaic of the divine beauty of life.”

Majella O’Gaillín, Student/Client.

CHAPTER ONE:

Just Begin

We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

Joseph Campbell

This tale of insights, grace, and astonishment has been an exceedingly vulnerable thing for me to do, unlike anything I have ever done before. By virtue of the fact that you are reading this, I have released these writings into the ethers. I have no defense against my own act, because I now cannot take these words back. I have written an exposé of my life and I feel exposed. I wrote a poem years back, the first part of which poignantly describes how I feel in writing these opening lines:

Cut open wide

like a salmon,

the red raw vibrating flesh

splayed, pinned to the earth

while eagle plucks

vision from her wounds

to feed the food of growth

into its namesake.

Writing this book has also been an affirmation of my inner knowing that life truly unfolds in spite of me. And with that knowing has come an enormous freedom. So even though I feel vulnerable, I also trust the forces that set me at my computer and wrote these words that came pouring out of my fingers.

In this book I use the stories of my life to lead you, the reader, into a provocative, introspective space. The stories tell of certain significant people and experiences along my journey. How these people came into my life and how my life events unfolded with them are—for me—sheer magic, leaving me ever astonished. It is through such encounters, such stories, that I have gained insight and learned to dig deeper within myself.

Although the stories serve to illustrate life's unfoldings, they are nevertheless only stories. And within the field of the collective consciousness, there is no tale that has been left untold. For example, a lack of self-worth or a tragic death has been played out many times, in many ways. What is important and unique *to you* lies in the underbelly of the story, the place where gems are waiting to be discovered. My characters will be different from yours, my buttons that get pushed by events will be different from yours, and yet in my experiences the opportunity for insight is there for you, too. Notice which pieces of my stories land on you—stir your inner pot, as I like to say—and perhaps point you in the direction of unfinished business in your life.

No names are used in this journal of my life. Although some of you may be able to identify yourselves and thus perhaps others, my intent is to keep everyone

unidentifiable to the general reader. None of the stories are about the person *per se*, rather they are used to illustrate a point from which I gained insight.

Although my own family has been and is most significant in my life, out of respect for the privacy of my children and theirs, I have not spoken about any events personally concerning them.

I have felt compelled to write, for myself, as part of my journey before it is over. It has been a difficult process, at times; I have felt raw and utterly exposed in my public vulnerability. Yet, at the same time, I remain astonished at the perfection of the unfolding, of the magic, of the *mystery* that is all *life*.

I often see, in working with people, how the magic is lost on them through the “don’t likes,” “why me?” and “don’t wanna’ haves” in their lives. Perhaps through my sharing you will experience a shift in your perception and see the perfection of your own journey, without the need to change any of it. If this happens, my vulnerability will have been of service. Experiencing life as it is without the desire to change it is not to say you have acquiesced or given up—on the contrary. In simply releasing resistance to life as it is, there comes a shift in perspective that opens us into exhilarating freedom.

Although I wasn’t initially aware that my writing would turn into the personal story that it has, it became clear after a long conversation with a close friend that it would take this form. As we discussed our lives in intimate detail, we came to a depth of realization—more profound than ever before—of how each event in our lives has led us magically into the next. The interconnection of the unfolding is often only visible when we look back. When we do, we see also how our lives truly do unfold in spite of us.

I wrote this book not simply as storytelling (much as I enjoy that) but rather as inspiration for you to look back on your life and learn for yourself how your life has unfolded, with Grace present at all times and with little actual participation from you.

I kept asking the question: “Where do I begin?” And the answer always came back: “Just begin.”

“What day is today?” asked Pooh.

“It’s today,” squeaked Piglet.

“My favorite day!” said Pooh.

A. A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh

CHAPTER TWO:

Expiration Date

Live today as though it is your last, and one day it will be.

Anonymous

For me, the above quotation is like a mantra, serving to remind me of my own mortality. I repeat it often, to myself and to others, in my own attempt to stay aware. In the literal reality of this physical life, I could be dead tomorrow. Although we may all be aware of such simple, profound statements about life, we tend not to live our lives accordingly. For example, what is true for me, true for you, and true for everyone living in a physical body is that there will come a time when our own unique expiration date will have been reached, and we will die. We will be no more—*we will cease to exist*. Will our clock stop ticking in the next five minutes? Or tomorrow? Will the end come with a bang or a whimper? Or will it be a drawn-out protest that ends in inevitable acceptance and surrender? Beyond a doubt, we know that we do not know how it might occur, or when, for ourselves or others, but we *know* it will. I am grateful that my expiration date has not yet been reached nor, obviously, has yours, given that you're still reading...

Although I do try to be aware each day, living life as fully as I can with what is in front of me, I am equally aware of how I often slip out of that awareness to where I am simply not fully present. A simple example is how I often catch myself driving like a robot while my thoughts are elsewhere.

A major area in which we lose our focus on the present comes from the stories we make up around fear—fear of what could happen; fear of all of the what-ifs we create. They immediately take us out of the here and now. I love the profound statement read by Franklin D. Roosevelt in his inaugural address: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” If the tiger is not in front of us, how can we fear the tiger? It is only because, in our minds, we have created the story that the tiger is coming, even though there is nothing in our reality at that moment to indicate anything about a tiger or indeed the future.

Nevertheless, we allow fear to run our lives. What if the market collapses? What if my partner falls in love with someone else? What if I lose my job? What if I make the wrong choice? The list is endless. We give away our energy to something that has not happened—that we don’t even know will ever happen—rather than being focused on what *is* happening. Only the mind can create the story that brings forward the illusion of fear. Even though I know this well, and no longer get so pulled in by fear, I can still find myself caught up in my self-created story about what could happen tomorrow. Yet *the future never comes*.

Along with getting caught up in the future, we avoid being fully available to this day by holding on to energies from the past. How many stories in your life will you not let go of? What resentments have you not cleared up? Using the analogy of the 86,400 seconds that accompany each day, a young man from Harlem made a video about how to live life. How do you spend each second of your life? Another useful analogy: we wake up with \$100 worth of energy every morning. How are we going to spend our gift today? The past is the past, whether it be a fraction of a second ago or ten years ago—it is all the same. The minute our minds dredge up a story from the past, we are using some of that valuable \$100 worth of energy that was our gift upon waking this morning. Anything other than this present moment uses some of the energy money, so

of course we have less energy for today. This could translate out to our physical bodies in the form of tiredness, muscle ache, or depression.

My brother hung on for over twenty years to a resentment about a comment I had made regarding an event with our father. He felt I had lied about what had happened whereas my point of view was not that. He changed our family dynamics through his resentment, and caused stress for my mother, who was always trying to resolve the issue. More importantly, his holding on as he did cost him energy every time he went back into his story about what I had done to him. Our two perceptions of the incident were clearly different, and he would not consider shifting his. Through self-exploration, I reached the place where I could sincerely appreciate his perspective, which, in turn, gave me empathy and compassion along with understanding for his reactivity. I would occasionally call him, just to let him know I was thinking of him, and eventually when he was nearing his death (although he was not conscious of just how close it was) he began to soften toward me. A few weeks prior to him dying instantly—as in drop-dead instant—he even cried on the phone as he shared with me how current changes in his life were affecting and disturbing him. From my end, I was so very glad I had made that last call to him. And I wonder now if he had softened because he had an unconscious knowing he was going to die.

Some friends of mine have a similar kind of situation. The whole family loved each other's company, and you would call them a close family. One day, however, one sister made a comment to another sister regarding an event in her immediate family. Many years later, the sister who continues to feel "harmed," (whom we will call the "victim" for ease of identification) still refuses to forgive her sister (the "offender") who made the comment. As a consequence, the offender sister has not only been ostracized from the family, but it is also understood that no one else in the family will have any form of contact with her. The close relationships she had had with the rest of the family have been destroyed. Though the others had nothing to do with the incident, because the victim sister refuses to forgive unless there is an apology from the offender, there can be no contact between them. A simple apology won't do; instead it must be a "taking back of all the words" that the offender uttered. Looking deeper, one could say that the victim, through refusing to forgive, is holding the rest of the

family hostage through control. “If so-and-so comes to the party, I will not,” she said. Choices then have to be made, even though the others are not involved in the conflict. Both offender and victim are equally pained by this cutting-off and the splintering of the family dynamics. In my experience, suffering is stored in the body and may well manifest in some physical form, such as an illness. Imagine the tremendous waste of life-giving energy expended in holding on to such a story.

When we hold on to such a story, we are saying someone harmed us. The “how” doesn’t matter, it is all the same. The story can be recreated only through memory—the thoughts are all from the past and have emotions attached to them. Forgiveness in the Judeo-Christian paradigm is based on: “You did something to me, but I’m now going to forgive you for having harmed me.” True forgiveness, on the other hand, has absolutely nothing to do with the other person. Consider this powerful quote by Lewis B. Smedes: “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

As with anything in life that pushes our buttons and causes a reaction (“I will not speak to you again until you apologize!”), the underbelly is ours and *ours alone*. Our suffering is self-imposed, because no one can harm us or make us feel any way, about anything. Our mind creates the story, and as long as the story gets repeated and held on to, there can be no resolution.

For some of you, your mind is going into over-drive defending against what I’ve just said. “Of course it was her fault!” you might say. “She *did* hurt me when she lied, and made me look incapable and stupid.”

Although I am no longer coming from any religious paradigm, I do like the parable of Christ in which he says: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” (John 8:7) In other words, have you always been perfect? Have you never done or said something that you wish you hadn’t? Have you never had a “bad” thought that you would dread anyone finding out about? Are you so perfect that you can stone others to death in self-righteous indignation? This is exactly what we are doing when we are in the place of judging someone, whether it’s something they said or something they did.

The reality is that no matter who says or does what, not until there is recognition of our own humanness and, through that, our acceptance of another's humanness, can there be resolution. Simply put, dropping the story and being in the present clears the slate. The spiritually mature person can do that, the spiritually immature child cannot. Earlier in this chapter I shared how I remind myself that I could be dead tomorrow. From that, the question we have to ask ourselves whenever we are in conflict with someone is: "If this were the last day of my life, would I want to die holding on to this resentment?"

A friend had just come back from an extended trip, arriving only the day before an event she had planned prior to leaving. The event included tickets—for herself, her husband, her brother, and his wife—to a concert. Each of them had loved the musical group's performances for years, so it was a particularly special evening. They had a lively dinner, talking about the trip and other events, before heading for the concert.

The brother of my friend dropped the three of them at the door and went to park the car. When the concert was about to start, the brother still hadn't come to the seats. His wife got up to look for him, only to find paramedics trying to save him after he had collapsed at the top of the stairs coming into the theatre. In his mid-50s, he had died instantly.

Although this is a particularly poignant and tragic story, it is also a variant of one we hear time and again. We might allow ourselves to experience our feelings on hearing of such instant death, yet we quickly lose our moment of awareness of our own mortality. The mind plays its games and in some odd, perverse way manages to make the mortality everyone else's except ours. I am often aware of this with myself, and I also quickly forget. More than the fear of our own mortality, what is it? What happens that makes us want to shut out the rising emotions, those unpleasant feelings, and shove them deep inside ourselves? Is it our own vulnerability, our feeling that if we allow ourselves to fully feel what something could mean in our lives, that we will be overcome with emotion? I often see, in working with people, that there can be an unconscious fear of allowing an emotion to take over. No emotion will kill you, although I know it can certainly feel as though it will. That fear of the power of the emotion

is enough to stop us. Yet the stuffing away tends to raise its demanding head in another way, another time, and, if unaddressed, can lead to the person becoming emotionally shut down.

So now you may understand why I do my best to live today as though it could be my last. The mantra at the head of this chapter propels me to be vulnerable: to let you read these experiences of my life. Perhaps in reading, you will deepen your willingness to live today rather than yesterday or tomorrow. Remember, life is not a dress rehearsal.

As Eleanor Roosevelt famously said: “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift; that’s why they call it the present.”