

P A R T 8

The Rhythm of Life



*In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.*

-T.S. Elliot

Hi-ho, Hi-ho,
It's Off to Work
We Go



*It is good to have an end to journey toward,
but it is the journey that matters in the end.*

-Ursula LeGuin

We will need a way of maintaining our bearings as we undertake the transformation explored in this book. The means is simple. We only need to understand and come to trust *The Rhythm of Life*.

I hope by now you have a better appreciation for what goes into stepping out of the shadows, but do you understand that it's a process that unfolds over a lifetime? As you discover what each passageway in this book looks like for you, you'll next discover that life is nothing more than a process of experimentation. Simply put, there's an ebb and flow to whatever you do. You will not do even a majority of this work *right*.

But that's not the point. The only *right* thing to do is to keep on trying. Don't approach this work like it's one more thing you need to excel at, because I promise you, you won't. You'll struggle because it's part of the human condition to struggle.

But there are ways to be with your struggle that will inch you closer and closer to your destiny. A destiny in which you'll be free to be who you want to be. A destiny full of purpose and well-being. A destiny that leaves you healed from within, connected on the outside with the people who matter most, and aligned from above with a higher power.

The tools of such a destiny? Take these two with you. Choice and risk-taking. Throw perfectionism out the window. Open yourself up to what's possible. Transform your life with these two trustworthy means: your freedom to make choices and the courage to take risks. These are the pick and shovel for the work we must all do in order to step out of the shadows.

Pathfinder's Compass



Stepping out of the shadows begins with our willingness to "let go."

The process of stepping out of the shadows needs to be sprinkled with *a little bit of this* and *a little bit of that*. The little bit of this is flexibility and joy. These are the two ingredients that we'll use to replace rigidity and idealism. Although I have presented you with my slant of how our journey will unfold, please leave this experience knowing that there's no *one* right way. I've only attempted to provide you with the chalklines that outline the playing field. It'll be up to you to create the rules of the game and what position you want to play.

I only hope that we can agree on the general outcome. Joy. Wonder. Renewal. Exultation. Transformation.

Now the *little bit of that* is letting go. I have the following quote by Andre Gide taped on my desk as a never-ending reminder of the importance of letting go. "One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time."

We can't transcend where we are in our lives without the willingness to live the spirit of this quote. Think about it for a moment. What new lands do you wish to visit?

Pathfinder's Compass



[Re]connecting to our life's journey requires that we give more to the journey than the journey gives back to us.

"I've tried everything, believe me, none of this works. I've been in and out of therapy for over ten years. I meditated for two years."

"Every day, twice a day?" I asked.

"Well no, not exactly. It didn't seem to be working the way I thought it should, so I just did it here and there.

"I've tried three different twelve step programs. None, I mean none of that stuff helped. All of those people bitching and complaining. All that God stuff."

"Did you try to find a meeting with people who you liked?" I asked.

"Not exactly. But..."

"Did you get anybody's phone number so you could get some support from them?" I asked.

"Not exactly. But..."

"Did you go to any one meeting long enough so that you could get a sponsor?"

"Not exactly. But..."

"Did you learn how to work the steps?"

"Not exactly. But, I did buy three books on how to do the steps," he said somewhat defensively.

"Did you read the books?"

"Not exactly. I could see those programs weren't for

me. I tried group therapy, but that didn't work either."

"Did you try and connect with the people in the group?"

"Not exactly. But..."

"Did you go to the group every week?"

"Not exactly. But..."

"Did you ask the group leaders for help?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, just what exactly is it that you're waiting for, some sort of guarantee that all of this stuff works before you try to do what you're supposed to do?"

How many times have we built up a big head of steam about something, new yet never move beyond square one? A new exercise program, a new food plan, checking out a few classes at the local college. What about the musical instrument we promised ourselves we were going to learn how to play?

No matter what process of transformation we become involved with, bear in mind this very simple formula: what we receive from any person or thing will be in direct proportion to what we invest in that person or thing. Makes sense. Nothing terribly profound about it. But?

How many of us can honestly say that we give more to an experience than what we expect to receive from it? Yet, it's this very principle we need to embrace in order to gain the very benefits we hope to derive.

So often, I see people quit in discouragement. Their discouragement given birth by their belief that someone or something has failed them. They walk away in discouragement, ignoring the simple law that can assure them an abundance of whatever it is that they're seeking.

Fess up now, is any of this true for you? Looking for resources, wanting to know what those resources will do for you, but not willing to invest yourself in what the process requires of you. Does that ring true for you? Placing all of your hopes and dreams in the next book, the next workshop, the next quick-fix remedy, but never taking the time to understand what's required of you.

What does it mean to *invest yourself*? In its most simplistic terms, show up, be present, participate. Know that any means of transforming your life is not a passive process. It's a process that requires you to give of yourself in a consistent fashion. Don't just give when you're hurting and scared. Don't just give when you're feeling particularly inspired. Don't just give when you're feeling particularly rewarded for your efforts.

Every day, take the next small step. Do the next thing that you know you need to do. Don't wait for what you want to present itself to you. If you keep looking for the immediate reward, for some sense of why you should keep-on-keeping-on, even when there's no immediate justification for doing so, then you have only set yourself up to fail.

Be prepared to feel frustrated from time to time. Know that it'll be more tempting to hold others responsible for your well-being rather than take responsibility for your well-being. But that shall pass as you find new ways to get around old obstacles.

Remember, pain is what gets most of us involved in this kind of work, but it's not what will keep us involved.

Pathfinder's Compass



[Re]connecting to our life's journey is built upon the efforts of honestly exploring who we are in the context of ourselves, our friends and family, and our place in the universe.

Our unfinished business lives within the above quote. Until we honestly seek to bring understanding and acceptance where all is now denial and pain, we'll be doomed to live a life stuck in a web of our yesterdays.

Does that make sense to you? We can't grow beyond the experiences of our past until we put to bed the ghosts of the past. It's a simple rule of thumb about the rhythm of life. The work that lies before us is going nowhere until we meet it head on and work *through* it, otherwise it will reappear in our lives over and over again.

This is the most fundamental premise of my Relationship Bridge-Builders groups. It's a safe environment where the group members get to explore in an honest fashion who they are, how who they are impacts the other people in the group, and finally how they fit into the world at large.

It's in the safety of these groups that we explore how our unfinished business seeps into our adult lives. Seeing is believing. The group provides the context for a place to heal the wounds that continue to fester in our day-to-day lives.

How about you? Can you think of events that

Pathfinder's Compass



Stepping out of the shadows is a process in which we focus on the nail we are hammering, rather than day-dreaming about the house we are going to build.

We were finishing up the first session. He asked a question that most clients of mine wonder about.

“How long is all of this going to take?”

“I don’t know. Just what is it that you want for yourself?” I asked.

“I want to be healthy. I want to be able to stay in a relationship without messing it up the way I always do. I can’t keep on losing job after job. I have to find a way to not be involved so much with my family.

“You mean to tell me you can’t tell me how long that is going to take?”

“Well, no. You see you’ve told me how you want the last page of your book to read, but you haven’t told me what the chapters of the book are, you haven’t told me how you intend to live the words of each chapter.

“Let me ask you, Irvin, can you tell me how long it’ll take you to act in a loving way towards yourself in the moment? Can you tell me how long it’ll take you to stop going to war with every driver who doesn’t drive the way you would have them drive? Can you tell me how long it’ll take for you to surrender your way of being in the world for a new and different way? Can you tell me how

long it’ll take you to heal the wounds that live within you? Can you...”

“All right, all right, I get your point, but you must be able to give me some idea.”

“No, you don’t get my point. What you want for yourself is a finished product, what I want for you is a way of life that you live and breathe each and every moment. That can happen for you right now.”

Don’t lose sight of this point. Take your eye off the outcome. The outcome will happen for you if, and only if, you stay focused on the steps of the journey.

Free yourself from the expectations of being perfect—doing it perfectly. Free yourself from the unobtainable standards that you set for yourself. Free yourself from the dualities of good and bad, right and wrong, kind and cruel.

Don’t get lost in the completion of the project, because the point of our journey is to become more comfortable with *being* rather than living in the trap of always *doing*.

We need to embrace the magic of the moment. We need to measure those moments not by how well we’re rewarded by them, but by how each moment offers one more kernel of Truth, one more morsel of experience, an experience that enables us to become who we genuinely are.

How best to benefit from the path we’re creating for ourselves? Start with this: our growth, our transformation is built upon a foundation. Discover *who we are* rather than pursue the *ideal* that we are not.

Pathfinder's Compass



Stepping out of the shadows is a process of reclaiming all of who we are.

“Now tell me again why it’s so damn important for me to feel my feelings. What’s the big deal? Why would I want to go through all of that suffering all over again?”

“You don’t see the value of being whole?” I asked.

“Listen, don’t start using that stuff on me. I asked about my feelings. That stuff’s in my past. Why can’t I just forget about it?”

“You don’t see the value in taking ownership of all your life experiences, even the painful ones?”

“Not particularly. Why stir everything up again? I manage to cope. Now, you gotta give me that much. A person my age, the things I’ve been through, the way I’ve managed to glue my life back together. What more is there to all of this?”

“You don’t see the value in feeling a sense of integration, that all of the pieces inside fit, that they somehow come together in a way that makes sense?”

“No, not really, I’ve gotten use to the noise. I’ve gotten used to the push-and-pull, starting-and-stopping, going off in one direction, then coming back from another direction. I’ve gotten used to all of the commotion on the inside, the resultant confusion on the outside.”

“You don’t see the value in silencing the noise, the

fear, the mistrust, the hunger for love and acceptance? You don’t see the value in quenching the thirst you have for a purposeful life?”

“Yea, I guess I do but not if it’s going to hurt this much.”

All of this work, all of this growth through healing and expanding, all of this transformation through letting go and starting anew. Why should we? What for?

What we’re really trying to do is create a wonderful mosaic. A mosaic constructed from all the various parts of who we are. A mosaic that includes all of our rough edges. All of those edges that we’ve believed for so long we had to either smooth or hide altogether.

But here’s the means by which we set ourselves free. Set ourselves free from the energy we’ve invested in disowning the many parts of who we are. Now’s the time to create a wondrous tapestry out of all of who we are, as well as all that we’ve experienced.

No longer do we need to rely on baling wire to hold ourselves together. Walking through life feeling fragmented, have we really understood the inherent paradox of healing? Healing occurs by walking through the painful act of reclaiming all of the bits and pieces of who we are.

The act of stepping out of the shadows, the act of reclaiming begins by extending ourselves permission. Permission to *just be*. Let that roll over you for a couple of minutes. How does that sit with you?

Permission to surrender the vigilance we maintain over ourselves. Do you understand how many of us live our lives in a panic? A panic fanned by the inherent fear of *just being*. Being careful not to let anything leak out.

We have so carefully compartmentalized ourselves. Now, I’m suggesting that we stop doing that—that we

take the brakes off. Oh, don't worry, even if you're open to my suggestion, it won't happen all at once.

But picture it for a moment. All the edges, all of them out in the open, maybe even in a playful way. Discovering other people who've given their edges permission to come out and play.

What I'm suggesting is that fun should be waiting for anyone who's decided to step out of the shadows. Oh sure, it's scary. It has its moments of loneliness, even regrets. But the simple act of permission can give birth to an avalanche.

An avalanche of joy. A time in your life when you no longer have to be on guard. You no longer have to be so controlled in what you do. No longer having to hold your breath every moment, always vigilant to how others are reacting to you. All the guesswork in trying to figure out what others want you to be.

No, freedom affords its own way of life—a lightness towards yourself, a carefree, playful attitude with others.

These are the rewards that await you. And it's true what I said earlier. We deserve to bring all of who we are to the table. We're deserving of a life where discouragement is a moment in time, not a way of life. We deserve the benefits from a life of knowing our place in this world affords us. And the path is a simple one. We merely need to reclaim *all* of who we are.

Pathfinder's Compass



Do not despair about the setbacks you encounter on your path: for it is from these very errors that we can discover the Truth about our journey.

This one is very counter-intuitive to everything that we believe to be true. “We have to get it right,” “We have to do it better,” “We have to work harder so that we can be the best.” Yet, I'm suggesting that you give up the myth that your journey is about *being better at it*.

More than that, I am suggesting that wisdom is born out of the lessons that our setbacks teach us. Embrace our stumblings as necessary encounters with our life lessons. Celebrate the fact that we chose to get into the game rather than safely sit on the sidelines. There're no gifts to be had from not trying. There's no growth to be experienced from playing it safe.

Stumbles are the only guarantees I have for you if you choose to inch your way out of the shadows. Don't get me wrong, I trust that a better way of life awaits you, as well. But the only sure thing is that when we're moving around in the dark, we're all going to trip over ourselves.

Expect it. Celebrate it. Embrace the stumbles, each and every one of them. Discouragement is inevitable. Let's acknowledge that from the outset. But any life experience that doesn't test you, will never bear the fruit you're hoping for.

You can see it quite clearly, I hope. The rhythm of

life's nothing more than the ebb and flow we experience from the series of tests that the universe serves us. Avoid, at all costs, an overabundance of caution. Sure, it leaves you unprotected. But come on now, raise your hand if this is true for you, hasn't self-protection grown into insulation? Haven't we crossed the line between the appropriate need to protect ourselves and completely insulating ourselves from who we are as well as the people in our lives?

That's where we all have the most opportunity for movement. Unwrapping ourselves. Discovering new pieces of ourselves that can support us as we try new experiences, and inevitably, fall down and pick ourselves back up again. These are the pieces of ourselves that'll lead us to a life of fun and experimentation. *Embrace those pieces* and give them permission to come out and play.

Let me end this section by sharing with you the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson who I think has captured the essence of the *Rhythm of Life*, "Do not be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experiment."

Ending on a High Note



*Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart
and try to love the questions themselves
like locked rooms and like books
that are written in a very foreign tongue.*

-Rainer Maria Rilke

Some people go to book stores to find an old folk tale. I go to furniture stores. You see, when I first moved to Chicago, I discovered an old furniture store on Clark Street. I needed furniture and this place looked interesting. There were display windows in front of the building that looked like Lincoln was in office the last time they were cleaned.

Inside, I met Al, the store's owner. Al wore a cap that was much like a sea captain's hat. He walked around the store entertaining everyone that walked in.

I loved his stories, so I would visit Al's store as often as I could. Every piece of old furniture I pointed to, Al had a story to tell me. If I pointed to a table, Al would say, "That table was once owned by Marcel Saint duPont, one of Chicago's most noted shoemakers."

If I pointed to a chair, he would say, "Mary Astor loved that piece. You know, I think they named Astor Street for her."

One afternoon I saw an old wooden chair up against the far back wall of the store. The arm had fallen off and the back had spindles that shook when the chair stood still, but I loved it. I asked Al if I could buy that chair.

"Steve, that chair was once owned by one of the most interesting dancers in the history of our city. It was commissioned in Europe for a birthday celebration. Every evening following her performance, she'd sit and relax in this chair. It was known for its unique ability to fit the contours of the human body, even though it was made of wood, not fabric."

"So how much?" I asked.

"It's hard to put a price on such a valuable piece," Al

said, "but for you, I'll charge one dollar."

"One dollar?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, only a dollar. And the promise that you treat it with respect."

"How can you sell such a treasure so cheaply?" I asked.

"The chair will not be so cheap," he corrected. "You will end up paying more for it than you would for a new piece of furniture. Because in order to use the chair correctly, you must enlist the help of someone who can show you how to put it back together properly. Take it to a woodworker and ask them to show you where to find the tools and material so that you may restore the chair.

"Then you must find someone willing to show you how proper chairs function. A designer of good chairs is who you need for that. Then you must take your time and do the job right. You can work here on the fourth floor if you like. There's lots of extra space up there."

"Couldn't I just take it to a repairman?" I asked.

"No, then you'll not receive anything except a chair. It's better that you learn for yourself instead of having someone go through the motions for you."

I'm happy to tell you that the chair turned out beautifully, but I would never have been able to imagine just how much work was involved in owning that chair.

But I have Al to thank not only for the chair, but what that chair taught me about myself. Really, what Al taught me that day is no different than the lesson I hope you're taking from this book. I know the message he left with me has been a point of inspiration for me throughout the years. "Steve," he said, "it's not so important how well-off something is when you begin to work on it, it only

matters how well-off it is when you finish with it.”

If you’ve stayed with me throughout this book, I hope that you’ve begun to discover that same lesson for yourself. There’s nothing simple about the act of stepping out of the shadows. But there’s a simple formula to follow to create the kind of life that we all are longing for.

Don’t be waiting for moments of profound clarity about what to do next. I hope you’ve embraced the idea that the next small, simple act is the most empowering act in our arsenal. Stepping out of the shadows is like unraveling a knot. You have to keep tugging at the knot, you won’t unravel it with just one yank.

Think integration. Think being whole. Think about reclaiming. That’s what all of this work’s geared towards. North meeting south. East meeting west. The thread that we use to weave this tapestry is the song in our soul. The song that sings our life’s story. The words of the song belts out the Truth about ourselves and our destiny.

The needle that pulls the thread is our spirit. Our spirit is this incredible well of energy. Sadly, this energy oftentimes lies dormant within ourselves. But, that can so easily change. We can liberate the energy of our spirit. And it can be done with one subtle shift in how we live our lives.

All we need do to harvest the wealth that awaits us by awakening our soul and liberating our spirit is follow one simple law. I call it the *Law of What’s Possible*. All we need do is open ourselves to what’s possible. When we’re open to the possibilities of what the universe has to offer us, then we’ll be open to discovering what our lives can be.

But, don’t forget the importance of our mindset. We have to see the world through a different set of lenses. Unless we transform how we think about the things in our lives, it’ll

be difficult to see what possibilities exist in our lives.

Let me toss in one last element in this formula. Healing. Healing from within. Healing how we think about ourselves, act towards ourselves, and feel towards ourselves. Healing the way we relate to the world, the people in our lives. The salve to those tender wounds won’t go on easily. It won’t feel natural to the touch, but give it time, let it soak in. Let this magical salve turn old scar tissue into new tender skin. The salve I’m talking about is two magical words, *I deserve*.

That’s the thought I want to leave you with. This book is nothing more than a testimony to what can happen for you when you begin to live those two words. Don’t be put off by such simplicity. You needn’t search for more complex solutions, although I assure you they exist.

As I say good-bye to you, do me one last honor. Look at where you are. Look to where the light is shining brightest. Take one small step towards that light, step away from the darkness of the shadows, begin your journey, and know that you deserve to be wherever that journey takes you.

G.B.U.

Steve