

Be Happy No Matter What

5 Steps to Inner Freedom



Ellen Seigel

WELCOME

By picking up this book, you are taking the initiative to become truly free of inner upset.

There are many ways you may be feeling that inner upset. You may be in the midst of turmoil or at a cross-roads in your life or have lost yourself along the way. You may be seeking better relationships and wish to communicate more clearly. Or you may desire to improve your home or business life, or need to hold others accountable. Or you may want to feel better emotionally and physically. Whether it is for one of these reasons or one that is entirely your own, you are ready for something that works for you and leads to being happy, no matter what.

As you read, you will find new thoughts and new perspectives just for your needs. Each of you reading the words unfolding here will be touched in ways that are designed specifically and perfectly for your unique growth and goals.

The mere reading of the words in this book is designed to take you along soothing paths of insight (also known as your *sight within*), through feelings of awakened accomplishment, into a rejuvenated and progressing sense of self-mastery, and on into the spaciousness of Inner Freedom.

In Part I, there is practical guidance on the concepts of ***relaxing first*** and ***opening to allow*** Inner Freedom to ***unfold***, as well as setting the intention to *move at an* ***easy pace***.

Then, in Part II, there are five self-valuing steps:

- Step 1 Centering in My Self
- Step 2 Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art
- Step 3 Hearing My Inner Wisdom
- Step 4 Honoring My Self
- Step 5 Caring for My Self

Through these five steps, or pathways, you can relax and then discover and access inner strengths and inner resources. By doing so, you will be poised to recognize and consistently access your own inner guidance. Having

Welcome

traveled through the five steps to Inner Freedom, you will then be ready to see how the free you interacts in relationships and to see how differently the *free you* faces life's challenging situations.

So now sit back, prepare to relax, and allow yourself to proceed. This path has been made for your comfort and ease.



CHAPTER TWO

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Portrait and Landscape

The world provides lots of triggers for us to feel unhappy. It's easy to have our minds be marauded by the troubles we experience in our lives and what we witness going on for others too. We are bombarded daily with news of misery, violence, and economic downturn. Every seven minutes, television commercials repeat, either subliminally or outright entraining our minds—and those of our children—with intense, visual images of depression. (Well, that and the desirability for men to improve their sexual functioning with the use of drugs!) Much of what's

on television is a wellspring of tension and anxiety: businesses relentlessly press us to purchase their products, and the shows and movies are overwhelmingly crime-laden and dark, with violent images that bombard our brains—our mental computers.

Many of us have been trained to see life and ourselves through the lenses given to us by society: the news-reporting and communications industries, the Food and Drug Administration, food-related councils, the pharmaceutical industry, exclusionary religious groups, political groups, business monopolies, the companies and professions we work for, narrow-minded parents...the list goes on.

Wow, that reality is pretty heavy. It weighs on us daily, and without us consciously registering its effects on our psyches.

But there *is* a way for you to counteract the negative effects of our environment and to *totally shift your energy to*—to infuse yourself with—health, happiness, and joy.

Even in the midst of the chaos we experience around

us, many people still set the intention to Be Happy No Matter What. Self-appreciation and finding what there is to love about life are direct approaches with constructive, productive, and permanent outcomes.

Set the intention to see what else is out there.

An extreme, dramatic, and effective way to counteract the magnetic pull of the doldrums is to set the intention to see what else exists in each moment besides the destructive messages of limitations and the emotional-bummer energies. Once that intention is set, what follows next is truly amazing. Constructive (i.e., the antithesis of what we were experiencing) ideas begin to reveal themselves. And then the energy of these new, productive ideas supplants the stale, limiting, downing, and depressing understanding of life that society has had us operating under. The result is breathing sighs of relief while looking at yourself and realizing that the “inside you” is okay and safe in the midst of your challenging and daily situations. These new thoughts now position you to view yourself and others in the highest possible light.

Yes, changing one's thinking—one's orientation to life—to self-appreciation is a radical approach, and you might think that it's very hard work. No worries. You've already accomplished hard work in your life. Actually, living under the negative bombardment of institutions and people is the hardest work of all. So deciding to choose a lighter path is easy by comparison.

And there's something else. Something of a very helpful nature is going on, energetically speaking, these days.

Let's look at it this way: Adopting a self-appreciative view means you're clearing away what's been in the way—negativity. It won't be the hard work that it's been in the past. Now, it's as if you are getting helpful boosts of clearing energy from the cosmos. You're open to receiving that energy now because you have a sincere intention, a willing heart, and a developing faith in your progress with each step forward. These are the ingredients that forge your way out of the negativity of this world and into your Inner Freedom, and, ultimately, to Being Happy No Matter What.

The art of appreciating me.

Take a moment now and relax your body.

Call the energy of calm and relaxation into the room you're in. Let the air become infused with calm.

Now, breathe in this relaxation and calm, allowing them to fill your lungs, travel out into your blood, and nourish every cell, molecule, and atom of every part and particle of your being.

Calm, calm throughout.

a h h h h !

Rest a moment here in your
calm and feel your relaxing openness...

Take as much time as you need.

Now, in your openness, allow
the following two ideas to wash
through you:

**1. Appreciating Me and
My Life as a Work of Art**

Have you ever thought of your life
as a work of art?

Take a moment and let this first idea
settle in. And when you are ready, go
on and add the second idea.

2. Appreciating Me, All Aspects of Me

Think about when you look at a
work of art. A painting, let's say.
What do you notice about it?

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Let's start with the colors

The tone of the colors?

The hue of the colors?

How are the colors used?

The medium

Oils?

Watercolors?

Chalk?

Pencil?

Multi-media?

The depth in the portrayal

The foreground?

The background?

Is movement implied or portrayed?

The types and textures of stroke marks

Pallet knife strokes, brushstrokes?

Smooth or textured?

The artist's style?

Your sense of what the artist is communicating?

**What you get and experience as you
view the work of art?**

The expanse of the portrayal?

Are there discrete segments in the portrayal?

Is it abstract?

Is it concrete?

What about interpretation?

Are the lines clear or vague, firm or soft?

Can you detect

Contrast?

Brightness?

Dullness?

Expansiveness?

Narrowness?

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

What are the relative sizes portrayed?

Do you see people and/or animals?

What are they doing?

What are their facial expressions?

What do they seem to be saying?
(use your imagination here, make
believe you can hear them speaking)

Are there shadows?

How is shadow used?

Are there plants?

Is there a sense of movement in the painting?

How does what you see affect you?

What feelings are evoked?

If the artwork happens to be music, are you able to notice and appreciate some of these traits:

Speed or tempo: fast, slow, or a combination?

Tone?

Pitch?

Softness and/or loudness?

Jaggedness and/or smoothness?

Erratic feelings or those of calmness?

Mellowness and/or brashness?

Expansiveness?

Pointedness?

Echoes?

Reverberations and/or vibrations?

Are there pauses and silence mixed into the music?

Is it familiar or strange to your ear?

How does this piece of music affect you?

What feelings does it evoke?

Masterpieces defy comparison.

It's generally easy to remember that appreciating art is subjective. Each person appreciating a single piece of artwork will have his or her own way of viewing it and valuing it. And, actually, each piece of art has so many aspects that artwork defies comparison.

Keep this in mind whenever you compare yourself to someone else. You, yourself, or people you know may have been plagued with or have had bouts of negative self-judgment. It can be detected in negative self-talk, in negative thoughts repeated in your head, or any downing or demeaning conclusions about yourself.

Allowing yourself to see yourself and your life as an artistic masterpiece *instantly dispels* negative self-judgment.

Adopting this approach permanently will cure negative self-judgment and the habit of comparing yourself and your life to others. Consider adopting this way of viewing yourself and your life. You'll feel better right away.

Sit quietly and try this thought on for size:

"I am a unique, artistic masterpiece."

You don't have to buy into this thought; it's not for sale. Just try it on. If it feels uncomfortable, no worries. You can try it on later and see how it fits then. If you like something about how it feels, stay with it and allow it to grow within you.

Okay, let's go on.

My life is a live portrayal of all the scenes of my life.

Here's another lens through which to gain discerning appreciation:

There is a philosophy that suggests that you are the author, actor, director—even the casting director—and the viewer of your life. If you take this on as “all my upset is all my fault,” then you are viewing this idea with negative self-judgment, and that can be unsettling. If that's what comes up for you, I ask you to put that thought on a nice, safe cushion and set it aside for now. We will deal with it later. (Take whatever time you need to see, sense, or feel yourself laying that negative thought aside for the time being. If you need to, return to breathing. Take a moment to calm and relax yourself.)

Let's imagine that your life is a really great film with lots of human-interest aspects. It has or has had high drama, plenty of emotional scenes, booms and busts, and perhaps some gut wrenching scenes. You may have loved and lost or never loved at all. There's probably

been some high adventure, even life and death struggles, and certainly intense grief and loss, high hopes and disappointed expectations, achievements, struggles, low points, and hard won-high points.

The approach that you are the writer, director, actor, etc., of your epic film has some great benefits. It means that you have the authority (as the author) to alter and improve your script, to choose different players, and to view the scenes from different angles. Basically, the changes needed for you to experience joy in place of upset.

***Thus, the joy or upset you experience is
100 percent under your jurisdiction.***

A h h h h . Now you see there's no need to believe that your relief, happiness, or joy relies on other people changing. Looking for, waiting for, and insisting that others change their behavior, beliefs, and feelings is not necessary. Looking for others to change is really like going to a dry well for water; it drains your precious energy. It's true, of course, that one can get temporary relief when others change. And occasionally people do change, and

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

that's a nice bonus. But its effect cannot be anchored or rooted into your self. It's not one of your tools in your inner toolbox, so you cannot count on it.

In this respect, the effect is from outside of you and therefore not yours to own. On the other hand, you can really make something of your own of lasting usefulness, by working from the inside of you outward, rather than from the outside of you inward.

I'm not saying to turn away from the benefits of the changes others bring about in themselves. What I'm saying is that an efficient and effective application of your energy (in the service of your emotional health) is to ***embrace ownership of your own experience***. It brings fuller, lasting, and permanent relief to realize that you have what you need within yourself to remedy your upsets. You don't need to wait or rely on the actions of others for your upset to be remedied. Even if you don't know exactly how to access what is within yourself, your intention to discover and your expanding self-awareness will reveal exactly what you need from within yourself.

I'm all about encouraging you to enjoy what is, and at the same time capitalizing on the effectiveness of certain thoughts and understandings that are available for you to discover and use *in the future* to facilitate and comfortably accelerate your own growth. Whatever is within your purview, is yours to make the most of and capitalize upon.

This is a good place for some relaxed breathing.

Think of bringing the energy of relaxation and calm into the room. As you do so, close your fists as tightly as you can and hold that tightness for a few seconds.

Now, open both your hands and feel the letting go of the tightness.

Do it a second time. Tighten both fists
and this time when you open them,
breathe a big sigh of relief. Pretend
that this feeling of relief and ease is an
easy chair. Nestle in and get cozy.

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

From this coziness, and with a really light approach, let these words, just float into your consciousness.

"My life is a really great film,"

Imagine what this film looks like. Allow yourself to see its beginning, how it has unfolded, and what purview is yours to leverage and use. Gather the information you have learned thus far, such as the concept of My Life is a Work of Art, and visualize the scenes with new eyes.

As you view these scenes, be aware that you can slow things down to get a better look. Imagine that somewhere inside of you is a speed-control dial that you can access to slow things down to get a better appreciation of the details in each moment.

We live in a very fast paced environment. Have you ever felt that time is going by too rapidly? Have you ever taken pride in multi-tasking and making the most use of fleeting time? As a passenger in a car, have you ever noticed that it's very difficult to see much detail as the scenery whizzes by? If you've experienced any of this, take note! This is

good information. It says, “slow things down so that you can appreciate the details and nuances of your life.” It’s the same for your really great film. You don’t have to miss a minute of your life.

In fact, each moment is a precious gift. Sometimes it’s hidden and takes appreciation to reveal it. You can open these gifts at any time. Even moments past, that have gone unexperienced or unappreciated, can be reviewed and re-covered.

Try This:

In your mind, bring up one of your favorite episodes in your life.

Now, play with the speed-control dial.

Slowly review one of your favorite parts of that episode. Now, fast forward to another part later on.

See how this works?

To gain appreciation of yourself, your life, and of others, do this with your life situations while they are happening. (It might take you several times to get the hang of this.)

Here's how: As quickly as something needs to take place right now, you can play with the speed-control dial and slow the action down in your perception (which is 100 percent in your control) to take a closer look at what's actually happening. It's like looking closely at a work of art. You can even say out loud, "Whoa, let's all slow down here," to the people around you, which will change the speed of the concrete experience as well. Of course, if you are in an emergency situation, you may just want to slow down your experiencing and not your physical actions.

Can you see how your experience of a situation can be treated separately from the other things going on in the situation?

Play with the dial adjusting the speed at which you experience what's happening around you; the speed with which you enjoy things; the speed with which you react or respond to your own feelings, the behavior of others, and of what's asked of you; the speed of your eating; the speed of your hearing or listening to others; the speed at

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

which you accomplish tasks. All of these speeds can be adjusted consciously with intention, i.e., with your speed-control dial.

You now know about the speed-control dial. It is available in your inner toolbox anytime you want it.

You have probably heard the expressions “Stop and smell the roses” or “Wake up and smell the coffee.” That’s what you are learning how to do here.

It is part of your birthright to experience all the beauty there is to experience in this life. In fact, it is present now and you only need to adjust the speed to focus on the beauty.

For those of you who'd like to see
beauty in each moment of your life...

Try This:

Relax your body and take a few
calming breaths. Allow your whole
body to relax. If you'd like to tighten
and open your fists two times to
remind your body of that wonderful
relief of tension, do that now.

When you're ready, think this:
"I automatically set an aspect of my
focus on the beauty that is in each
moment of my life."

Now, let go of that thought, which
will give it maximum opportunity to
develop without any interference.

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

You have now set your intention to experience beauty in each moment. This is your new default setting.

With the new understanding of yourself and your life as a work of art and the beauty inherent in each moment, let's appreciate even more of you.

Viewing the scenes of my life from varying angles.

Read the following words, and sit with them for a moment:

***“I wonder about seeing the
scenes of my life in new ways, and
the benefits I will feel as a result.”***

The thoughts that follow are designed to support you in expanding your ways of experiencing life, situations, people, yourself, and your understanding of it all. This will ultimately inspire you to let go of the tightness and tension caused by narrow, confined thinking. Be on the lookout for other insights that can pop up: you notice that your life is really interesting, for example, or that upsets can be decoded to reveal treasures, or that words have sound vibrations that land upon you in various ways, or that you

are choosing words that more exactly represent what you mean to communicate. Keep a record of these. You will be amazed at what there is to appreciate that you did not see before.

As you consider what I'm saying, you are allowing the energy of these words to soften and actually heal whatever is within you that needs this kind of attention. In these days of cosmic support for emotional growth, it seems unnecessary to dig up all the relics of life that are hardening, limiting, destructive, and obsolete thoughts and beliefs that have been wrecking havoc in your mind and life for years. If you feel called to explore some specifics from the past, then there is benefit in your doing so; however, it is not necessary to unearth it all.

Consider this angle:

The way I experience myself, situations, other people, thoughts, and feelings is seen through the eyes of my lifetime of understandings, and is colored by my original conclusions and decisions made when I was a child.

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Those conclusions and decisions were made through childhood naivety and immaturity. This child-produced thinking has been repeating over and over in your conscious and subconscious mind for decades. It has become habituated, and it's running amok on automatic as the background of your adult life. As you seek to problem solve and discover better ways of living, these outmoded conclusions and decisions take you down self-sabotaging paths of untruths.

As children, we look to connect the dots of things in order to make some sense out of what we see, sense, and feel. The truth is that these dots have little to do with each other, and our connecting them has lead us to erroneous conclusions and totally irrelevant and counter-productive decisions.

An example is that many of us grew up associating anger with violence as we witnessed them both at the same time. We understandably connected them and went on automatically assuming that they always go together. This is a common yet erroneous conclusion we made in

childhood. Believing that anger and violence always go together prevents people from recognizing anger as a separate and acceptable human emotion. Believing that anger and violence go together also induces fear, which can inhibit even thinking about anger. And this can be the basis of suppression and stuffed feelings. Stuffed, denied, and avoided feelings are a huge component of depression, which is prevalent in our society.

Here's the adult angle on that:

***“It is possible for me to feel safe
experiencing anger and expressing anger
in respectful ways.”***

No need to think about this. Just sit with the energy of this idea.

(However, if you are a survivor of childhood physical sexual/emotional abuse, it is important to absorb the concept that you are free to bring the feeling of safety into this moment. You are the sole author of your experience and it falls to you to choose safety at this

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

time. If you are in an abusive situation at this time, it is wise to remove yourself from the situation and get help to do so if need be).

Now that you have allowed this idea to sit upon and take root in the fertile ground of your mind, new and associated thoughts will emerge. I wonder what they will be. Watch for them. Allow them to come to you.

Just the awareness that the lines between the dots can be erased brings fresh air and lots of space into the jumble of erroneous connections that you made as a child.

And here's great news: There is no need to think up what those misconnections are. It's enough to breathe in that the misconnecting lines are already starting to dissolve. You'll likely notice a new appreciation of aspects of yourself, your life, and of others as a result of this.

Take time now to sit with this thought:

There are strengths, beauty, talents, abilities, nuances, meaning, value, choices, clarity, skills, and newness for

you to appreciate about yourself and your life. These form *the wealth of you*.

All the work you've done to date is enabling you to look with finer discernment on all aspects of yourself and your life.

Relax your body and pretend that this thought
is an easy chair. Take a seat and snuggle in.
Dwell for a little while in this thought.

RELAX

When you are ready, go on.

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Here's another example of how childhood conclusions and decisions can set up attitudes a person lives by. As you read this next thought, allow it to wash over you. You can invite your consciousness to expand in many healing ways.

When you were a little baby in a crib, you were undoubtedly crying at some point because you were hungry. Your mom, who was a very loving person, had stomach problems and was stuck in the bathroom. She was feeling so sick that she didn't hear you. Some time passes and you think, "She's not coming." Maybe you cry louder and harder and get very worked up. As you become physically exhausted, you think, "Nobody's coming; no one hears me." As little children, we make it all about us, and so you concluded, "I'm invisible, I have no value, I'm worthless" (or something along those lines.) Based on this conclusion, comes a decision about how you are going to conduct yourself going forward. You decide any of the following, or something else that's still along these lines:

"I'm going to cry louder and louder until I get someone's attention."

“What’s the use? No one’s going to hear me. I’ll just be quiet. In fact, I’ll never express a need ever again—not to anyone.”

“I’ll go out of my way to do everything right and perfectly so that I get noticed, and for sure my needs will get met then.”

“I’m going to take care of everyone else, and I will never let anyone take care of me.”

You can see how these made-in-childhood conclusions and decisions form the basis for attitudes and behaviors in adult life. This is how they set the style of your relating to yourself and to others.

Your attitudes and approaches to problem solving and to life were developed by you as a child who was rightly seeking to make the best of things and feel safe. And whatever those behavioral decisions were, they were great at the time because they protected you, ensuring you would make it through to adulthood. And they worked because, here you are.

Children are lightweights in life, as they are seen as having

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

no personal authority. You were vulnerable to that attitude from adults and the effects of all that was going on around. You (as are all children) were extremely sensitive and impressionable to the direct impact of the words and actions of the adults who were physically so much larger than you. And if you had parents or caretakers who threw their weight around in a bullying manner, you took the effect of that as well. You were also impacted by the uncontrolled behavior and blurted words of other children.

You have been jarred in many ways during childhood. Perhaps your whole body clenched up when your first-grade teacher reprimanded the child next to you. Maybe your parents yelled at your brother a lot and you witnessed it without being the target. Maybe you took direct hits physically or verbally from others. The point is that you've—innocently, with no self-blame—made many, many destructive conclusions about yourself and created what were ultimately self-sabotaging decisions as a result. You have carried these on into adulthood.

It has been said that our aware conscious living is from

only 7 percent of our total consciousness. The other 93 percent of all we know and all that we've lived through—which includes early conclusions and decisions—are in and operating from our subconscious. This means that your automatic attitudes and knee-jerk reactions (and for our purpose here I'm referring to those attitudes that limit the full expression of your creative energy) are acting out, uncontrolled, from under your surface (from your subconscious) and, until now, have been out of your reach. So this explains how, no matter how much you want to stop eating sugar, you may not be successful while you are working at cross currents with perhaps a decision in your subconscious from childhood that says, "if they don't take care of me, I'll do it myself." That little person inside you may be taking care of herself by eating candy, i.e., sugar. She's just a little girl, after all.

Let's relax again into calm
before we move on.

Healing for the little one.

Take a moment now to call calm into the room and to breathe it in through your nose, taking it into your lungs and witnessing the calm flowing into your bloodstream, and then easily and gently flowing out into the cells nourishing every part of you.

Feel the calm within you and feel surrounded by the calm in the air around you.

Allow the little child in you to relax and BREATHE in and absorb the calm.

She's waited a very long time for this. All the bad experiences in her life are really past. Let her glance behind her and let her know that all those upsets of childhood are really way back there in her childhood. They're in another time and another place; that was then and this is now.

She's here now with you and she's safe, because even when you don't know how to handle something as an adult, you will get help for you both. She really is safe

now because there really is a grown-up who is taking care of her.

Let her know that her only responsibility is creativity and playfulness, and that you will take care of all the adult responsibilities.

Take a deep relaxing breath and settle into the newness of your relationship with your little girl.

Continue to allow healing as you keep reading.

Take a moment now and notice the warm, healing feeling in the center of your chest. Your heart center.

Notice the yellow glow of that warmth and feel it getting stronger and stronger.

B R E A T H E

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Now send that warm, healing glow from your heart center to the heart center of the little girl, and notice her taking that in.

Notice the look on her face as she takes in these healing, soothing, resolving energies, allowing her to relax and let go.

If she needs additional reassurance, give it to her.

You yourself are healing and you are the healing parent for her and are in her heart; she knows this.

It's time to give her what she's always needed to hear. Tell her all the things she's needed to hear and was never told.

Take plenty of time to do this.

When this feels complete to you, take her into your heart and let her know that this is her new home where she is free to love and be loved.

Relax with her into this feeling. Take as long as you both need.

Be Happy No Matter What

This is a good place to take a break from reading and go about some of your daily activities. Be aware of subtle and even major changes in the way things look to you. No need to search for these changes, just allow them to come into your awareness.

Now that you've reached this point, if you feel the need to write down your thoughts and feelings as an adult or as the little girl in you, now would be a good time.



You are doing great. You're seeing a great deal more to appreciate about yourself and things and people you're involved with.

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Here's another angle through which to appreciate yourself and your life:

“Today I can choose my attitude about my experience. I choose my attitude.”

Now that attitudes developed in childhood have been understood, you can read what follows, knowing that this understanding serves your self-appreciation, you, and your life as the most beautiful work of art ever!

“But I feel awful,” you say. So why would you choose this awfulness?

Take a moment now and let your body relax.

Call the energy of calm into the room.

Start to breathe the energy of calm in through your nose, into your lungs.

Allow that energy to move out into your blood, nourishing all the cells, molecules, and atoms of your body and full self.

Remember, your feelings are definitely to be appreciated.

All your feelings, even feeling awful.

You can, with your imagination or by setting the thought intention, soften the edges around your feelings, especially around the ones you haven't liked. It is not required that you like or dislike people, traits, or situations.

Actually, a liking vs. disliking approach is one of the most limiting approaches.

If you looked at a painting or other work of art through only like or dislike, and dismissed that which you disliked, that action would gravely limit what you could get out of the experience. Some people are aware that they are interested in “getting the most out of life” or “having the fullest experience of life.” Liking and disliking draws your attention away from all the zoom-in details and all the zoom-out overview that's available in each experience. You've heard of people who see things in black or white, well, liking and disliking falls into the black-and-white category.

As you allow liking and disliking to move over to the side,

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

making room for more self-appreciation, you can take in this idea: As birds are meant to fly and fish are meant to swim, humans are meant to feel, and that means the full range of all feelings.

It's a good opportunity now to breathe and take a relieving sigh. a h h h h .

All feelings are natural, and I'm supposed to have them.

Let's look at how liking and disliking occurred in your life. We'll also see how the negative effects of liking and disliking are being undone with your new knowledge.

When you were little, you got the idea that some feelings or expressions of feelings were not okay, and so they were squashed—suppressed, inhibited, feared, pressed down, kept from, avoided. It's possible that childhood feelings went underground because they were too much for you to deal with.

As an adult, you continue to spend a great deal of time and energy to keep these feelings down in the

subconscious in favor of dealing with everyday life. But these suppressed feelings can't stay inside forever. As these suppressed feelings push their way out, you over-react to situations. Like when you've felt your crying is way more than seems fitting, or you burst out in anger more than is appropriate for particular situations. Other people's assessments of your behavior are irrelevant here since those people are not inside of you, knowing what measures of feelings have or have not been adequately expressed in your life. Only your inner sense gives the accurate information about you. This burst of emotion is due to triggered, pent-up feelings from unexpressed episodes of the past, which reside in your subconscious.

Feeling overwhelmed? Let's reframe that thought. Instead, how about thinking, "Look how much there is to appreciate!"

In case you are wondering how to deal with being triggered, we will deal with that topic in the chapter titled "Honoring Myself."

With feelings emerging, as if out of nowhere, and thoughts

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

coming into your thinking, as if out of your control, choosing your attitude or approach could be a real mystery.

There is a philosophy that says that all pain, confusion, and fatigue results from pressing feelings down and away (avoiding, keeping from, denying,) from expression.

Reversing this is very doable.

You've experienced this already in your reading here.

Tightening your fists was the same energy as pressing the feelings down and away. The opening of your palms transformed that tightening and tensing. It actually changed the tightening, tensing energy into the energy of allowing and openness. You felt the change take place.

Sit in this experience for a few minutes and allow it to anchor into your being.

Take a few relaxing breaths.

Be Happy No Matter What

Let the muscles in your body relax and let go.

Let go and open to receive.

Call calming energy into the room and allow it to waft all around you.

Tighten your fists and then open your palms to receive calming, clearing energy.

As you take it in through your breathing, also take it into through your skin.

Let it wash lightly through you.

As you continue to relax and bathe in the calm, feel yourself open to allow the next ideas to wash over and through you.

Decisions based on benefit to you.

There's another angle through which to appreciate yourself and those around you. Take a look at this statement:

All the decisions you've made were made based on a bottom-line benefit for you. Even the decisions you haven't liked.

The truth is—and no one can really dispute this—you are the main star and no one can upstage you. They can try and probably have. Others in your life can only be candidates for the Best Supporting Actor Award. Only you can receive the Best Actor Award.

And here's another undeniable truth:

You are the sole authority in your life, which means you are the only one who chooses your attitude toward your experiences.

Others can have their opinions but those opinions, in truth, are theirs alone. Unless you *want* to adopt their ideas as yours, they have nothing to do with you. If their idea can enhance your view of yourself in a productive

way, then you might want to think twice about how adopting that idea could be useful.

Here's more good news!

Thoughts that you've adopted from others that are untrue, no longer serve you, and are obsolete, can be UN-adopted.

Use this now.

First, relax your body.

Call calm into the room.

Breathe in the calm, and then set the intention to un-adopt thoughts you have adopted from others that are untrue, that no longer serve you, and that are obsolete.

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

You may have misgivings about some decisions you've made or actions you've taken in your life. You may feel, "If I had only chosen that *other* way," or "My whole life would be different had I only done..." or "I knew I should have..." or "How could I have thought...?" Misgivings, guilt, self-criticism, putting yourself down, and wishing otherwise are often accompanied by anxiety and distress.

The way to *dissolve* the adverse effects of this negativity is to consider this very neutralizing idea:

"All decisions I've made, I made based on a benefit for my growth. Even the decisions I haven't liked."

You can probably identify several decisions that you haven't liked but that you learned great lessons from. Even behaviors that you've chosen that seemed counter-productive are likely to have been helpfully defensive. You were defending your safety or trying to stay safe from a real danger or from a triggered feeling of fear. It is time to realize that not only is there is no blame, but blaming yourself or others is self-sabotaging. Let the blaming go!

Be Happy No Matter What

Set the intention to let any remaining blame leave with your every exhale.

What's left after the blame is gone is your natural inner problem-solving ability—your intuition and inner self.

OKAY, TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

B R E A T H E

Step 2: Appreciating Me and My Life as a Work of Art

Take a moment to explore the new options and feelings that you suddenly have room for because that old blame is now gone. Without the blame, it is easier to picture yourself as the work of art that you truly are.

Now that you have room for new thoughts and feelings, allow the idea that there are benefits—at times hidden—for all your inclinations and actions. Invite the benefits into your awareness so that you can make conscious choices based on great additional information. Once the benefits are brought to light, they are no longer empowering behavior and choices propelled by old conclusions and decisions. You can now say, “I’ll keep this one and let that one go.” The choices will be yours.