

CHAPTER 2

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

I had issues with my parents, I felt rejected, hurt and unloved. I had to look back at my grandparents and their story before I could go forward.

Grandparents

My grandparents met at the age of fourteen, married and did their best to navigate what life threw at them. Coming through World War Two was the first challenge. They were everyday people trying to do their best in an unknown world, with no clear instructions. They only knew what they had been told. The sense of fear, anxiety and not having enough was rife at this time, following rations and a culture of saving for the unknown.

When my grandmother's parents died, she received nothing. Everything went to her brothers, as she was married and her husband would look after her. She never forgave her brothers for keeping everything and cut all contact, holding onto unforgiveness and grief for the rest of her life.

Both of my grandparents on my mother's side were empty, hurt and lonely. They both carried massive burdens from their past, with no

understanding of how to off load or process it. They were two broken people, trying to fill the hole in their hearts with love they didn't have. Life had happened to them and they were doing all the right things, attempting to fill the void within. They played golf, he was the MD of an international firm and when he wasn't at work, he was in the garden digging. They had a full social calendar, which became a lifeline to my grandmother, who used the bottle to fill her void in my mum's childhood years. They gave my mum everything money could buy, from ponies, to cars, to jobs. However, past hurts limited their capacity to love. In those days we were told to "keep calm and carry on." All their grief and sadness was bottled up inside, preventing them from connecting with their hearts in love.

Parents

Mum's life had always been one way, all about what she could get. Mum, like her parents, was trying to fill the hole in her heart externally. As I write this book today, this is where she remains, with a beautiful home, a zippy little sports car, the doting dog and an outstanding equestrian business with her second husband who she met when he was nineteen and she was in her forties. It all looks good, ticks all the boxes and yet the emptiness, bitterness and sadness on the inside remains. She holds onto every misdemeanour, harbours injustice and won't have anything to do with anyone who doesn't agree with her. Consequently, she has chosen to have little or no contact with either of her children or her grandchildren.

My dad had been sent off to boarding school at an early age. He was dyslexic and consistently told he was dumb. His older brother was killed in a car accident at the age of nineteen (when Dad was seventeen). He worked tirelessly to prove his value and worth to his parents and to my mum. He left the safety of employment to start his own business, so he could provide all that Mum required, but that was a never-ending pit. Subsequently, he lost his wife and children and then his business. He re-married later and found the peace, happiness, love and the real joy he had been searching for all his life. My brother

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went to live with them for a while, and I reconnected with Dad at the age of seventeen. Dad carried the weight of his world for many years. He always did what was right, noble and true. He never shared any of his burdens with us until much later, when I started to ask questions.

My dad was brought back to his faith through his marriage to my stepmum. He did a huge amount of charity work, lots of floats and fun things with kids and families, raising money for good causes... driven by the pain of missing out with his own children. Instead of being bitter, he chose to make it better, by pouring energy into the charity work, to give other children what he had been prevented from giving to his own.

Seed Sown

So much good can come from our deepest pain. I see it so often in the space I live and work in. How a person's pain becomes their promise. I heard the saying 'pain to reign' recently and this is exactly where Dad was, reigning through his pain, becoming better not bitter. What the enemy meant for evil, God always turns for good—if we let Him. What was meant to take Dad out, and to keep him trapped and miserable, became his footstool to take him higher. Pain is often the biggest "leg up" we get in life. Interesting that the relationship between my brother, myself and my dad was fully restored within seven years. And it is my dad that our children talk about and remember.

I am sharing this background information, not for anyone to feel sorry for them, or for me, or to highlight our faults. I share this part of my story and how I see it because without it, the chapters ahead won't make sense. My parents have always done their best, and I honour them both for that. Each and every one of us only knows in part, and the parts they knew had massive gaps. Understanding their history has released me from my own pain and enabled me to connect with empathy, releasing myself and them for not meeting my needs and expectations. It goes back to Chapter One, where each of us has the lead role in our lives. I needed to get onto their stage to gain some much-needed wisdom and insight. So that the gates of

heaven (love, kindness, gentleness, grace, mercy, compassion and empathy) could be opened and the gates of hell (bitterness, selfishness, unforgiveness, harbouring pain, not being good enough) could be closed.

I now walk with parents who, like myself and my parents, have pain from their past that they want to release and no longer want to pass onto the next generation. Many of us have been looking for the missing peace in our lives. We are wanting to be given the key that unlocks the power within, so we can let go of the pain, the hurt and the suffering and be free to live our best lives, unhindered by excess baggage that doesn't belong to us. My heart is to give you, the reader, some tools to put in your L.I.F.E. skills toolbox so that you can make the rest of your life the best of your life without being bound by past hurts.

Neither my parents nor I had anywhere to go for sound advice or anyone to walk with who would have their best interests at heart. It is such a joy to walk with people on their journey, to free them from their past, so they can be the most successful version of themselves, in true alignment with the desires of their heart, skills, talents, qualities, characteristics and future self. My prayer is that through this book, as I share my story and the lessons I have learnt, your heart and mind will come into alignment with what is noble, right and true for you. So you too will be released from your past and free to live your life by design, full of peace, love, joy, prosperity and abundance.

The Search for Meaning

Having covered the ruling power of good character in Chapter One, we now have something firm to stand on, to look ahead to the promise or possibilities of the future.

Victor Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* illustrates how those with hope and a future, a belief or vision for more than what is around them in that moment, rise up and make it through. When we have a true driving force in our lives, we find the how. And when the student is ready, the teacher will appear.

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I recently read Jordan B Peterson's *12 Rules for Life*. He does an incredible job explaining the cycle that occurs when the medicine for the problem becomes the problem. He specifically applied it to alcoholics. I have a dear friend who started off having a glass of wine at 5pm after a stressful day to calm her nerves and help her navigate her evenings of loneliness after a failed marriage. She was left running a business and looking after two gorgeous girls on her own. One glass became two glasses, then three glasses, then a bottle and then a couple of bottles.

What I didn't know then was how this loop works... she gets up in the morning and has to have a drink to take away the pain of the hangover. This beautiful lady has lost just about everything, her friends, her home, her business, and her girls are away carving their own path. Looking for the quick fix to her pain, rather than facing it and coming out victorious, has left her a victim.

Many of us want to hide our pain or weaknesses, for fear of being a failure or being judged and condemned. The crazy thing is, when we are open about it, the power of the pain goes, the right people and the true possibilities then come. My husband shared this comment at dinner last night, and I feel it expresses this so well: "If you knew me like I know me, you might not like me; and if you don't like me, I have nothing else I can offer, so I hide myself and show you a mask." The sadness of this statement is that the mask prevents us from being our authentic selves, preventing us from making real, genuine connections.

My friend not wanting to deal with her pain, wanting to cover it up, thinking she was broken and something was wrong with her, has taken herself down a destructive path. Nothing was, or is, wrong with her. She was and currently is still out of alignment. Like wheels on a car that are out of alignment, they wear out unevenly and lose their grip on the road, taking us off track and into unhelpful places.

Many have turned to other things to gain relief and release from the internal pain. I believe that this is because they are off-course, thinking that they are doing the best for their families by providing the finances, while dying inside. What I was not expecting was the crazy

phenomenon that when people work in their zone of genius, in line with the desires of their heart and their unique gifting, the prosperity and abundance comes into alignment too, and the financial freedom then follows. I had been pushing all my life, trying so hard. When I stopped, rested and realigned, my whole world shifted.

Reflect and Reframe

L.P. Hartley in his book *The Go Between* says, “The past is another country, they do things differently there.” (Hartley, 1953)

He may have been reflecting on England pre-WW1, However, this also applies to our thoughts and lives. From a neuro-psychological perspective, everytime we think about a memory, we change it and grow it—either making it better or making it worse. This is what happened to my grandmother; the bitterness of her brother’s and her own reactions ate her up. She couldn’t forgive her brothers for their actions, or herself for hers. And every time she thought about it, she grew it, making it worse. This is exactly what Charles Emeka refers to in his book *Build Castles, Don’t Dig Graves*. My grandmother, without knowing it, was digging her own grave in her mind and life.

Much of my work is about reframing the past (problems) while focusing on the future (possibilities). Dr Benjamin Hardy’s wisdom as one of the top psychologists of our time is gold. He shares how it is our view of the future that dictates our present, rather than our present being dictated by our past. Ultimately, when we have hope and a future, we can start to reframe our past. He has released many books on the subject, including *Willpower Doesn’t Work*, *Being Your Future Self Now*, and my personal favourite, *The Gap and the Gain*.

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)

When we come into alignment with the truth of this scripture, our thinking and understanding will change. When we change the way we see the world, the world we see changes.

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As human beings, I believe we are wired for love and connection. We need to be nurtured and held, seen and heard, honoured and respected. The work I do now is all about bringing people's lives back into alignment with how they are uniquely wired. Enabling them to reframe the past so that they can live a life of real peace, joy and love. And pay it forward into their future and the future of others. It is about living life 'future present' not 'past present'.

Dear Reader

I invite you to release, forgive and let go. Maybe, like me, you have no idea that holding onto unforgiveness is literally killing you. The person I needed to forgive the most was me. Unforgiveness takes up valuable space in the best real estate I'll ever have, me. It robs me of my joy each day. It keeps me focused on what is wrong with the world, making me feel terrible. Does injustice and 'life not being fair' go around and around in your head, sometimes making you feel hard done by, angry, sad or possibly even depressed? I recall Joyce Meyer saying, "Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die."

I had to forgive my parents for what I felt that they had done to me. I had to reframe that my life hadn't 'happened to me' (victim), and move it into 'life has happened for me and because of me' (creator). Holding onto past hurts and pain hurts ourselves. It destroys us and eats us up, preventing us from being filled with the good stuff while we are bunged up with hurt and pain. Forgiveness opens the door to making healthy choices. It connects us with the right people at the right time as they come across our path. Finding a way to let go, to release it and give it away, without hurting others, is gold. Replacing it with the truth, that we are loved, chosen and that "we are meant to fit together, not to fit in" is another gem for our treasure trove within.

I invite you to take time today to sit quietly and to reflect on who or what you are holding onto that needs releasing. I am reminded of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me." The release, relief, elevation and elation that you

will feel as you forgive and let go is next level. It is like the old has gone and the new has come. Enjoy getting rid of the baggage that wasn't yours to carry anyway.

Call to Adventure: The God Box/Tissue Box

This chapter's call to adventure is all about the "Tissue Box." It wipes away the tears and leaves you free to be who you are called to be, to have fun and make the rest of your life the best of your life. This takes Chapter One's call to adventure a little deeper, releasing you from the stuff that holds you back and ties you down. It is not and never was yours to carry. It's like a jacket that is worn out and past it's best. It's time to trade it in for a new one that is tailored to your exact measurements.

The "God Box" or "Tissue Box" is leaving the past behind and reaching forward into our future to call it into the present—"The Great Exchange."

I invite you to rewrite your own story as you read this book using the notebook you may have purchased in Chapter One. You are now going to rip the pain out of the back of the book and place it in the God/Tissue box. As you rip it out of the book, you are ripping it out of your heart (because it hurts and you no longer wish to carry that pain).

Allow yourself to feel the pain, release it and let it go. Then ask God what He wants to exchange it for. It may be a fruit of the spirit, a song, a vision or a scripture. This is what you are writing in the front of the notebook. And every time that unhelpful thought tries to come back or make you sad, take hold of "The Great Exchange" and claim it.

I have found this process has allowed me to release the pain and to replace it with love. It shifts me from "this happened to me" to "this happened for me and because of me" so I can win and learn. The key is once it has been given away, do not give any air time to the thing that has made you sad. If the thought or feeling comes back, claim your inheritance, which is the truth at the front of your book, and keep repeating it over and over to yourself until the pain has gone for good.

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I have seen hundreds of people rewrite their lives in this way. Even people who don't know God or Jesus yet. He is speaking love, kindness, hope and a future into all of us. He was doing this through all of my life and I had no idea. I don't want anyone reading this book to live a life of regrets, or to be held back by negative thoughts, self-sabotage, by hurt, trauma or pain (the enemy's plan to keep you "less than").

The "Tissue Box" has wiped away so many of my tears and has been one of the keys to the Kingdom and my treasure within. My heart is that everyone will walk in love, peace, joy and their unique brilliance every day (God's plan). To find that life could be this simple and straightforward. To remove the lie that "if it was confusing, it must be clever and that was beyond me." To be free and live now unstoppable, on the most thrilling and inspiring trajectory, having fun and living your best L.I.F.E. every day.

"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 100:5, ESV)