

CHAPTER 5

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Life as a single person at the age of twenty two was a little different. I worked a seventy-hour week with two jobs, lived with two cats in a flat in Bedford, England and I eventually started to make ends meet. I was learning to stand on my own two feet and make steady progress, day by day. It was great to flex the 'I can do this' muscle. So what next? I worked with a great team of people at The Body Shop and had a fabulous boss. One of the highlights of this time was going to Brighton, to the head office, and getting to meet Anita Roddick in person. Wow, was she an inspiration! I loved her heart for people blended with her creative capacity and her desire to make the world a better place. She wasted nothing, literally. She sowed so many good seeds into me in this season.

Anita taught me to Reuse, Refill, Recycle. To make use of all that is in your hand. I chuckle now as my grandparents would keep and reuse or repurpose anything and everything. Living through wartime restrictions taught them to utilise everything and to steward what they had well. And here was Anita doing that at a whole new level. Anita owned the first company to refill their bottles in store, reuse and recycle them and the first to sell reusable cotton shopping bags for £1. I still have them as my shopping bags thirty years on!

She taught me to have faith and to keep going. She never gave up. She reminded me of Winston Churchill and his most famous misquoted speech: "Never, never, never give up." She had many business learnings, where ideas or enterprises fell over, she would get back up, dust herself off and carry on. I highly recommend her book *Body and Soul*.

She taught me to work collaboratively for good. This beautiful fiery, passionate lady was always brimming with ideas, and she loved her travel into the outbacks. Her heart for indigenous people was massive. Her burning desire to use what she had and to pioneer 'fair trade' was outstanding. She worked tirelessly to make things happen. However, she did not do it alone. Her husband was her anchor and shield. He was the accountant for the business and kept her grounded, saying 'no' when needed. He was often the voice of reason, and together they made a great team.

I continue to use body shop products to this day, because I know they are all sourced directly from the producers, where they are paid well and looked after. No testing on animals. That was another massive campaign during our time. Anita used the platform of her shops to campaign and get the word out. The shop fronts would become massive billboards for human rights, for animal protection, and for the environment to open people's eyes and ears to what was going on in the big wide world. This was a powerful time for me as I loved the message, the product, the people and the culture. I was truly blessed.

Then I was head-hunted for the first time.

A recruiter for an international clothing company saw me in the store. He approached me to have a chat with them. I had grown immensely in my three years with Body Shop International. I was so grateful for my time there. I was ready for a new chapter and season. A healthy pay rise and room for growth. I was off. I rented my flat out and rented another property in Cambridge. Job done.

Working for this company was an interesting experience. I met some super cool people. I wore some great clothes, and I was physically fit. I was happy in my own skin and with the life I was creating. My debt to

Dad was paid off, the mortgage was now covered and I was managing my finances well, saving as well as investing.

Single But Unavailable

During this time, my brother Richard phoned me to tell me he was going to go skiing in Courchevel in France for a week with some mates. I asked if I could join them. Richard had always been the life and soul of the party, and I had always been the worker. This was a great opportunity for me to have some fun. Little did I know that being the only single female out of sixty four guests, I would be hit on by different ski guides every night at dinner. They had to sit with the guests at night, and apparently, the seat next to me was hot. I learnt a new phrase: "Yes, I am single but unavailable."

I learnt to ski and had fun. On the bus home, I told Richard I liked Alexander. He said, "That's just typical of you, Sal. You have had all week to get it together! Now you are on your way home and will never see him again."

I got back to work, and it was coming up to Valentine's Day, so I sent him a Valentine's card, without my name and thanked him for sorting out the ski-dooing for me, and extra activity on top of the ski-ing. (Alexander had gone over and above to organise a ride on the back of the instructor's bike, I hoped this would help him remember who I was). Alexander then went through all the questionnaires that each person completed at the end of their holiday to match the hand writing, found mine, along with my contact details, and gave me a call. We chatted a few times, and he invited me back out to join the team at the end of the ski season for a week. It was great—there were no customers; it was purely the staff wrapping up the season, getting everything cleaned up, skiing every day with a few drinks and social times, before heading off in their separate directions. At the end of the week, he decided to come to Cambridge and be a "river guide" for the summer, turning down his work at Gleneagles in Scotland. (He had been alternating between golf in the summer and skiing in the winter.)

Freely Given, Freely Receive

I really enjoyed the summer. I saved my annual leave to do three separate trips to Courchevel the following season. I sent Alexander off with new bedding, clothes, and food supplies, then sent parcels and letters weekly. (Those boarding school days set me up for success here!). Funny, as I write this, I remember again the experience of the joy of giving. How much fun it was finding things to send, wrapping them up and sending them with love. "Blessed to be a blessing." This beautiful thread has run all through my life. Freely given to freely give. I really enjoyed blessing him at this time. Giving him everything he needed to have a really comfortable and special season.

My life was great. A good friend of mine in London and I were the only combo-managers in the country, running two stores and two teams. The company had decided that where the Adults and Kids stores were next to each other, they would have one store manager across the two sites and teams. We were it. I had an amazing winter working four to five weeks at a time, and then having a week's holiday to go skiing and repeating the pattern three times, once with a two week stint in the middle. It was gold. My skiing improved no end. I loved the local people in Courchevel, the food, the stunning scenery, and the lifestyle.

I had a new female regional manager at work. I remember being warned, "You won't last long. She won't like you. She always gets rid of the pretty ones." I thought this was quite odd—the story in my head was, "I am not pretty. She's the one with it all together and in charge." Looking back, I realise that she had open wounds. Power was her security, and anything threatening her security would be taken out. Being the prettiest, the wisest, and the one in charge who everyone looked up to was key for her. So this Yorkshire lass, who says it how it is, pioneering the combo-manager setup and off skiing every month was not her favourite manager. It took her a further six months to find my faults and have me out of the company on a technicality. You will always find what you are looking for, and she did.

Back to My Roots

I was called for a meeting in London at the head office to be told I had not followed policies and procedures. I wasn't dotting the 'i's' and crossing the 't's." That was high risk for an international business and the leader of the team. This was a dismissable offense; I was not allowed to go back into the store. I had absolutely no idea this was going to be the tone or outcome of the meeting; I was expecting at most a warning. It was a technicality, and this was the first time I had stepped out of line in any way.

I got home in shock and I rang my dad. I was in tears. "Dad, I've lost my job, I can't pay my rent. Can I come home?" Bless him. I had not lived with him since I was ten years old, and I hadn't spent much time with my stepmum, Christine. They welcomed me with open arms. Within twenty four hours, my belongings were packed, and my dad and my brother arrived like an army with a hired van, picking all my gear up. I cleaned the house and popped the key and a note in my landlord's letterbox, explaining the situation, leaving him my contact details and instructing him to use my deposit to cover my last month's rent. I got in my car with the cats and said goodbye to my time down south.

While not being able to say goodbye to the team or collect my personal belongings from the office was personally devastating, it was the birth of a new chapter. And it began some incredible restoration. It was time to go "home", which I had been yearning for. I felt I had done my time in London and down south and had been feeling a real need to go back to my roots.

I left devastated. I found out later that this particular regional manager was asked to leave the company within twelve months after "losing" three more of her managers. What goes around comes around.

What the Enemy Meant for Evil, God Will Always Turn into Good.

In Chapter One, we looked at flipping negatives into positives, switching lies for Truth. In Chapter Two, we looked at how to release

and let go, and to ask for The Great Exchange. Chapter Three is about being your future self now by dreaming BIG and starting with the end in mind. Chapter Four is one of my biggest table-flippers and keys to the Kingdom. Perfect L.O.V.E. casts out all F.E.A.R. L.I.F.E. is another step to freedom. Now is the time to look and see how teamwork makes the dream work.

I was so busy "people pleasing." I took my eye off the ball. Systems and processes are essential to keeping things running smoothly; just like the principles in the Kingdom, there is an order to everything. When things are out of alignment or out of order, it skews things and can take us down a destructive path. I was once again looking for love in all the wrong places. My identity was external at this stage in my life, not internal. It felt good when I connected with others, and that is what fed me. Sadly, it is also what led to my downfall. Because my need to be liked, to feel connected, overrode my responsibilities. So I avoided all the policies and procedures as they didn't give me the dopamine hit. My time in the office would always be trumped by time on the floor with the team and the customers. I still had a lot to learn, in life as well as in business.

I was only thinking of myself, how amazing I was to be head-hunted. I was pioneering a new role as the combo-manager, running the two stores as one and saving my holidays up and saving 'in lieu' days so I could spend five weeks skiing in Courchevel. I really did think I was quite special. I was making good money and was so much better off than all those who had gone to University. I was self-centred, ignorant and naive, living in my own invincible world. *Pride comes before a fall.*

And here was the fall. Everything I had worked so hard for, which my identity at the time had been dependent on, had been stripped away in that one meeting in London, and I hadn't seen it coming. It's funny—I knew in my gut that things weren't right. However, I didn't listen to my own intuition. It wasn't until I coached with Lynette Breen in 2017 that I learnt that this was a gift, something to listen to rather than ignore.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

Dear Reader

We don't do life alone. In this chapter, I had people ahead of me, like Anita, to inspire me. I had my dad and my brother to pick me up in my time of need. I had a collaborator in my buddy combo-manager, and I had the crew who were all enjoying a season skiing in Courchevel.

Writing this book and doing the work I do has allowed me to see things in a different light. I always felt alone, like no one cared, that I was just another number, lacking real value in myself, and therefore, lacking value in those around me.

The reality is I was never alone.

God was always with me, even if I didn't see it or acknowledge it at the time. I always had the right people around me at the right time and things always worked out for good, even when it didn't look like it or feel like it.

I thought if it was meant to be, it was up to me. I thought I should know what to do and how to do it. However, we are better together. I remember an amazing lady and dear friend of mine talking to me about lanes. We all have a lane that we are uniquely designed to win in.

My lane is to get people going in their lane, to set them up for their own personal success, so that they can make a real difference in the world around them, being exceptionally valuable, adding value, winning the race with others, and leaving a legacy. I thought I could, and was meant to do everything. I was trying to be all things to everyone. Instead of running with others in my lane and them in theirs, I was tripping them up and holding them back.

I see us all running a race together. Being in the same race, yet in our own lanes, all looking ahead to win the prize. I am reminded of the men's 400m hurdles at the Tokyo Olympics, where five out of the six lanes broke Olympic, world or country records, all in the same race. When we run with good people, we achieve far more than we could ever imagine.

I encourage you to look back over your life to date, and write down all the people who have sown into you, who have been there for you, who have run with you, supported you or inspired you.

Call to Adventure

T.E.A.M. Together Everyone Achieves More. Or as an African proverb says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others." Thank you, Theresa Cooke, for sharing this wisdom and insight.

Time is not linear. We get one life here. So many start, however it is how we finish that counts. Another beautiful saying is: "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years". This was attributed to Abraham Lincoln.

I really encourage you to do as I have done in these first few chapters, and reflect on who has brought you joy in your life. Many may well no longer be with us; however, the smile they put on our faces as we remember their warmth, love or encouragement is not bound by their physical presence. It is held in your heart by their love.

Take a moment or two this week, to pause and think about those who have poured into you. I have such happy memories of Frances, a good friend at primary school who I have lost contact with. It may bring you a few tears, especially if they are no longer here, like my dad. Maybe there was a teacher at school who always looked out for you, encouraged you and saw the best in you. I still have fond memories of Mrs B, my textiles and dress teacher and Duke of Edinburgh Award leader. By reflecting and seeing them for who they were and what they blessed me with, it allows me to see more and trains my mind to look for these blessings in the future.

Like we did in Chapter Three with the "High Five", I have a "Super Seven" that helps focus my mind on the people who have supported me past, present and future:

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

Super Seven

Faith (spiritual)

Family (can be extended family and super close friends, as they are the family we choose)

Friends (from all times in your life, whether you are in touch now or not)

School/Education (teachers, mentors)

Work (business mentors or colleagues)

Fun (sports, leisure, hobbies, interests)

Other (for those people who don't fit into any of the above areas)

I passionately believe that God places the right people around us in every season of our lives, at the right time, just when we need them. Some are for a reason, some are for a season, some are for life. All of them are a blessing and a joy, to be cherished, yesterday, today and tomorrow. This is also another key. Remembering those who have poured love, encouragement, wisdom and invested time and energy into my life brings the same feelings back now into the present. Having hope for a future of who is going to be walking with me in the next season of my life, brings a peace, rest, excitement and joy into the present. Enjoy.

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4, NIV)