

CHAPTER 7

FORGING AHEAD

Moving into a little cottage with Alexander made me feel like I was finally getting somewhere. I was now twenty seven years old, in a serious relationship, and had a place to call home. This little cottage was like a real home, and being in Yorkshire was good for my heart and soul. Life was good. Here we were both earning good salaries and enjoying rural life.

Then one day I found him curled up in the corner of the sitting room sobbing, saying he didn't want to live anymore. I recall him wanting me to speak to his sister, so she could explain. He had an imbalance in his thyroid, following an accident and chemical poisoning when working in Australia. He needed to be on medication permanently. He was feeling so good, he had taken himself off the medication, and his world had imploded.

I was in unknown territory. The one thing boarding school had taught me was how to stand on my own two feet. However bad things got, "if it was meant to be, it was down to me." I felt that no one else cared or was there when I needed them. I had to carve my own path and comfort had never been on the agenda. I remember Dad saying he'd graduated from the School of Hard Knocks. I had built a wall around

myself on the stones others had thrown at me. I had absolutely no idea what to do or how to respond in this situation. I could not love Alexander at this moment; I had no idea how. This was a pivotal moment, where the darkness snuck in without me knowing or understanding.

I was in shock. This was not a space I had ever encountered. I did as I was asked by his sister. I got him to take his medicine and to see a doctor. All the practical things. However, I couldn't hold him while he sobbed; no one had ever held me or comforted me. I didn't have it in me to give. I had past hurt in this space that I was completely unaware of. Alexander was amazing; he took his pills and bounced back quickly. He was back to life as normal within a few days. And that was the end of it. There were never any repercussions in our eighteen years together.

It was one of those moments in time when I just got on with it. I realise now that I have always got on with it. I believed that when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade, take it for what it is and move on. I remember being unable to connect with him at this time; I felt he had not been open and honest with me. It was almost as if he'd been hiding a dirty secret, which was not the case. I believe that for him, the guilt and shame he may have been carrying got in the way. For me, the hurt and rejection from my past prevented me from being able to support him. So easy to see now, looking back. We were two young adults without the right keys, trying to unlock doors that couldn't be opened.

It wasn't until much later that I started to put the pieces of the puzzle together. I saw a couple, his parents, whose whole life was built on image and performance. I understand that his father had lost his parents when he was young, and that his mum was brought up by a top lawyer who was not to be crossed—a very strict Victorian upbringing. Their whole identity was in what they did, what they looked like and how they performed. Anything that didn't fit the standards was brushed under the carpet and hidden.

To this day, I still do not know why his family approved of me. I was far too open, high-risk, rough-and-ready for them. I was never going to

conform or fit their mould. I had an opinion, wore my heart on my sleeve and said things how I saw them. My roots were firmly in Yorkshire soil, not afraid to stand for what we believe in. Many of my role models, the key people in my life, had warm and generous hearts. They gave and they served. They shared what they had with others in love. They were inside-out people. Their lives were far from perfect.

Alexander and some of his family were quite the opposite; they were outside-in. Everything needed to be in its place, and whatever you do, don't rock the boat. The writing was on-the-wall, even though I could not see it. I was never going to fit their rules and regulations. I couldn't keep my trap shut for more than thirty seconds. If I felt something wasn't right, I wanted to discuss it and have it out in the open, understand it, get it sorted and move on. That was not going to be an option here. However, I didn't see any of this at twenty seven. I had tunnel vision. I was on a mission, looking to tick my "right man" boxes:

1. Find a well-brought-up man, who had been privately educated, like me, to settle down with. Alexander ticked this box.
2. Someone who enjoyed the rural lifestyle, like me. Alexander's family owned a farm, and his sister and brother-in-law also farmed. Another box ticked.
3. Horses had been part of his time growing up, like me. His best friend was a polo player. Things were all stacking up well for Alexander and me.
4. I love people, generosity, community, connection and hospitality was key. Alexander was in the hospitality industry and was outstanding in this space.
5. I was looking for someone who had an appreciation for quality and craftsmanship and a drive to build a life for himself. Alexander liked antiques and was great at design work. He was a winner.
6. It was great to have someone pumping in their career, going from strength to strength, as I was. Alexander was all over this too.

He was enjoying his cricket, and I was loving the rural lifestyle. He was out and about with his work, and found an amazing little cottage, "Rosegarth," for us to buy. Things were looking up for us both.

We planned a trip to New Zealand for me to meet Alexander's parents and to see where he came from. And I had a blast. I fell in love with the people who were so welcoming and wanted to talk to you. They wrapped your gifts for you in the shops and took time to be present and engage with you. The countryside was stunning and the climate warm and sunny. Alexander's mum had a strict itinerary planned out for the whole three weeks, where we were going, who we were going to see etc. I loved every moment. The views from Te Mata Peak on our first day were stunning. Visiting Alexander's brother and sister and their families on their farms fed my heart and soul. This is the life I wanted to live and the place I wanted to be. Staying in a hotel in Wellington that had been moved from one side of the railway line to the other blew my mind. It inspired the creative in me and the sense that all things are possible here.

And then we came home. Within three weeks, Alexander had asked my dad if he could marry me. On that day, he took me to a beautiful restaurant, pretending we were going to Dad's for dinner. When he turned off the main road to go up the Country Manor drive, I got super-cross as I was not dressed to go out. He told me we were going to Dad and Christine's for dinner, so I had thrown on my comfy jeans and jersey with no make-up or brushing my hair and got in the car. When he turned off to go up the driveway to the restaurant, I remember scrambling to find some lipstick and check the state of my hair! I was worrying about what I looked like in this posh restaurant. I allowed this to rob me of the moment. I recall focusing on how unprepared I was rather than the joy of the commitment Alexander was prepared to make to me.

Reflect and Reframe

Looking back, I thought, with all these external commonalities, our hearts and minds would be on the same page and all would be well. I

had no idea how much past hurts and trauma would plague us and prevent us from connecting deeply. These things, little by little, although hidden, would in time grow and take us in different directions.

I was looking for someone like me. I was looking for someone who wanted the same things. I was looking for connection. It never occurred to me that it was within me all the time. I was looking to fill the hole in my heart. The story/lie I was believing about myself at the time was that my parents didn't want me (Mum sent us off to boarding school and Dad was out of the equation). I had to do everything myself (no one there to help me or have my back). I wasn't good enough. So Alexander was gold—a well to do man who wanted to marry me.

Here we were, two people with open wounds trying to cover them up, believing that this marriage would fix it. I see this over and over again in my office now, where we accuse the other person of not doing whatever it is we expect them to. That if somehow the other person changed, we would be happy.

The keys to your happiness belong in your hands, not in someone else's pocket. No one is broken. We are often just out of alignment. The more I learn, the more I understand myself and others perspectives, the deeper I can connect and at a truer and more authentic level. Having this insight would have saved me from so many 'missing' pieces, from miss-takes, misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It would have kept me from feeding the open wounds of my heart and creating a huge divide that I was completely unaware of.

L.I.F.E. has opened my eyes to the Truth. Each one of us is uniquely designed to be brilliant and different. We are meant to work together in unity and one accord, taking our diversity and adding value to the whole. Life is not just about me, having it my way or having all the right answers. What a wake up call that has been for me. It has opened so many doors and freed me from the past, so I and all those I work with can be free to live their lives by design not by default.

Until recently, I didn't understand that not one of us sees life through the same lens. Not one of us has the same filtering system. So no

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matter what we have in common, we are going to come from a different perspective. It's not all about me. It's about being part of something much bigger. Life and time are not linear. I have learnt to honour others along the way. I have learnt to ask questions that connect rather than shoot accusations that disconnect.

Values are key to our core. They are what guide us and keep us on the right track. It is so important to know what we stand for and against. What is important to us and what is not. Lynette Breen kindly took me through this training at this time so I could understand myself more. So that I could stay in my lane and run the race that I was uniquely designed to win. It is from this work that Lynette did with me that this chapter's learning comes.

We think we know our values, but actually it's not until we come to write them down that they become clear. This is more inside out stuff. And the values you think are important are sometimes not at the top of your list. The real gold, once you are clear on them, is the increased self-confidence, sense of wellbeing and integrity you get that reduces the anxiety, worry and second guessing.

I am truly grateful to this amazing lady and her husband for all the time they have invested in me to help me grow and to become the person I am today. Lynette was pivotal at this time in helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel and opening my eyes and ears, heart and mind as to what was really going on.

Dear Reader

Have you ever asked yourself what the most important values for you personally to have in your life are? Here are another couple of keys to the treasure within.

When we are in alignment with our values, we feel peace, joy, increased self-confidence while reducing stress, anxiety and worry.

The Pareto Principle specifies that eighty percent of consequences come from twenty percent of the causes, asserting an unequal

relationship between inputs and outputs. I use the Pareto principle to focus my attention on the top twenty percent of our values, which in this case is my top five. The good ones, which I actively grow, and the bottom five, the ugly ones, which I “spray and walk away”, as they say in the ‘Wet and Forget’ advertisements here in New Zealand.

Many of us think we know our top five and bottom five values.

I encourage you to consider the values that really speak to you, that you love and hold to; and see if you can get them down to five. My top five were mentioned earlier in Chapter Four. Faith, family, finance, fun and friends.

I encourage you to do the same for the ones you really don’t like. My current ones are lying, deceit, conflict, stress and waste.

Call to Adventure: The True Value in You

An amazing lady, a dear friend, and Life Coach Lynette Breen gave me the L.O.V.E. and F.E.A.R rules sentence starters to help grow the L.O.V.E. values and cut off the F.E.A.R values. The rules allow us to build new neural pathways in our brains.

Neural pathways are rules we have in our heads that lead to us behaving or taking action the way we do.

For example, when I cook, the rule or neural pathway that I follow is “time is short; so I need to cook the quickest healthy meal possible.” I behave accordingly cooking meat and three vegetables, with all the washing up done and the benches cleared, while I am cooking. Everyone is fed and the clean-up is done in super fast time.

Others may have a rule to “chef and create delicious food with love and flavour,” where taste and variety are the keys. They will then behave accordingly, using spices and herbs, creating sauces and gadgets to achieve their masterpiece. There may be clean up to do at the end that may take a while, however it was all worth it for the culinary delight that was produced.

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The end result is actually the same at the end of the night. Everyone is fed and watered, and the kitchen is clean and tidy for the next day. How we go about it may be different.

These rules need to be practiced until permanent. Dr Caroline Leaf shares that it can take 3 cycles of 21 days for the new neural pathway to be carved out and become the highway. In that time the old pathway will grow over and be restored, so it is no longer an option. James Clear supports the repetition in his book *Atomic Habits*. The reality is that the more we declare and walk the path in our heads by repeating the words out loud, the stronger that path becomes and the quicker our response becomes. While the 700 neuron's in the hippocampus grow this good stuff, the glial cells are like vacuum cleaners taking it all away.

The double portion of awesomeness is when we are creating a new rule and focus on that, using that thought pattern each day, the neural pathway gets built. Meantime, the glial cells come at night and take away the old unhelpful thought that you are no longer using. So as long as you focus on the good and helpful rules and ways, the unhelpful naturally dies, when you don't give it air time in your head.

From my perspective, when we apply the L.O.V.E. rules to our good values, we end up being on that three lane highway more and more. And when we apply the F.E.A.R. rules to our ugly ones, the old values die without us looking at them, thanks to the glial cells, and we get to exchange them for the three lane highway we are creating! I love this stuff.

L.O.V.E. Rules

I encourage you to create a sentence for each of the good, uplifting values starting with: *"Anytime I..."*, *"Everytime I"*, or *"Whenever I..."* and then make the rule as easy as possible to achieve. For example, add in "if one of my values was connection, the sentence might read: *"Anytime I think of my husband, I feel connection."*

F.E.A.R. Rules

And for the ugly ones that can make you almost feel sick, start the sentences with: *"The only time I..."* or *"Only when..."* and then have fun with them; make them as virtually impossible as you can think of, so that they are really difficult to achieve. The key to this is that it cannot relate or go anywhere near your current thought/neural pathway. For example: "Only if I choose not to contact any other person for two months will I feel rejected." Rejection is often related to other people's responses or lack of response. In this example, it puts the keys to happiness back into the person's hands, because they have full control over whether they contact someone or not, and it is not connected to the response. It builds confidence and engages connection, allowing a healthy pathway to grow and the old one to die off without paying attention to it.

This new rule will carve a whole new neural pathway, completely disconnected with the old one. The old one will naturally die away as this new rule is embedded.

I then encourage you to read both sets of these rules for sixty three days and see the changes this makes in your life. Many of my clients have been blown away at how this one thing completely obliterates their anxiety and stress levels, helping them to think more clearly and be a kinder, more compassionate and connected person. Enjoy.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2, NIV)