

From Coping to Thriving:

Leveraging Life's Challenges to Find
Meaning, Purpose, Connection and Joy

Learn how you can
truly live the life
you've always
longed for!



By Marti Glenn, PhD

From Coping to Thriving: Leveraging Life's Challenges to Find Meaning, Purpose, Connection and Joy

Copyright 2020 by Marti Glenn, PhD

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or properly cited quotes. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a web site, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

This publication is meant as a source of valuable information for the reader. It is not meant as a substitute for direct expert assistance. None of the information contained in this book is intended for use in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of disease or any other medical condition. In dealing with any medical or mental health condition, always consult a physician or mental health professional.

Some names and identifying details in this book have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

The author has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cover and book design: Blair O'Neil
Editing: Diana Barrett and Linda Richards

Published by Ryzio Institute 2020
2108 Westcott Street
Bellingham WA 98229, USA

www.ryzio.com

Tables Of Contents

[Acknowledgements..... V](#)
[Preface..... 1](#)
[Introduction 4](#)

Here you will:

Experience science-backed processes and tools to help you move from where you are to where you want to be

Understand yourself better

Learn to truly thrive, even in challenging times

Changing from the inside out, you will:

Feel more alive, confident and creative

Experience your relationships becoming sweeter and more meaningful

Learn to change your brain and grow your nervous system in ways that give you a new set point, a new “normal”

[1. How This Book Can Help You Change Your Life..... 8](#)

[What do we mean by experience?](#)

[We invite you to experience the processes here as fully as possible.](#)

[A clear vision: Where would you like to be in a few months?](#)

[2. Are You Thriving Or Simply Coping? 16](#)

[I Thought I Was Thriving](#)

[What is Thriving?](#)

[Thriving Versus Coping](#)

[How Are You Doing? Are You Thriving or Simply Coping?](#)

[What's Your Question?](#)

3. Resilience..... 24

- [A Journey Through Darkness to Love](#)
- [Why Do Some People Simply Survive While Others Thrive?](#)
- [What is Resilience?](#)
- [Something’s Wrong with Me; I Don’t Belong!](#)
- [Foundations of Resilience](#)
- [Resilience](#)
- [Resilience and your Program](#)

4. How Resilient Are You? 37

- [Let’s Explore your Resilience](#)
- [Internal Resilience](#)
- [Mirrors of Our Internal Resilience](#)
- [External Resiliency Anchors](#)
- [What is Your Resilience Score?](#)

5. Science Holds The Key To Thriving 48

- [Your Earliest Experiences Lay the Foundation for Everything!](#)
- [A Note to Parents](#)
- [Guilt](#)
- [Shift Guilt to Remorse](#)
- [Anger and Blame](#)
- [How Can the Science Help You?](#)
- [Behavioral Epigenetics and Resilience](#)
- [You Can Grow Your Brain](#)
- [Your Program](#)
- [Creating a New Program](#)

6. The Best Kept Secret 59

Safety

How Safe do You Feel?

The Gifts of a Culture of Safety

Window of Presence: Sometimes I Shut Down, Sometimes I Lose It

Signals That You May Be on the Verge of Leaving Your Window

Resources to Help You Stay Within Your Window

7. The Nerve You Never Heard Of Is Running Your Life!..... 74

How Your Vagus Nerve Develops Determines More Than You Might Think

It's Never Too Late!

Social Engagement System

How Strong is Your Social Engagement System?

How's Your Vagal Tone?

Here are Some Benefits of Developing a Healthy Vagus Nerve

How to Grow Your Vagus Nerve and Stay Cool, Calm and Connected

Polyvagal Theory and Neuroscience Are Telling Us We Can Actually Change the Brain and Grow Our Nervous System

8. Continue Your Journey Toward Greater Love

And Resilience 88

The Daily Workout: Practices to Help You Grow Your Resilience

Further Resources to Support the Process of Growing Your Resilience

Ryzio Programs to support your resiliency, goals and experience of more love!

Further Resources for Greater Resilience

About The Author 100

Acknowledgements

As one of six kids, I never even washed the dishes by myself. There was always someone there, usually my sister and/or my mother to sing with me as we made cornbread, hung diapers on the line or folded clothes. I am extremely blessed to have so many now to work with, to sing with, to share the joy of a job well done. I give thanks to all of you and name few of you here.

I acknowledge you, **Dear Reader**, for taking your valuable time to show up, make a promise to yourself and to step into the life you long for. It is because of you this book is written. Without you, there would be no book. Together we can take this journey to a better life, and together we will create a better world. Thank you!

My precious husband, **Ken Bruer**, the words “Thank You!” could never contain enough appreciation to express the mountains of gratitude I feel for who you are and how you continue to show up in my life. From the day I moved next door to you over 30 years ago and you wouldn’t take “No!” for an answer, through the rocky road of finding myself, to the work and the love we get to share every day, you have been there, for me and with me, every step of the way. I could not have done any of this without your love and support. And, it gives me so much pleasure that you have even learned to sing!

Diana Barrett, I feel incredibly blessed that for over a decade we have been yoked together, each happily pulling our cart down the road. You never show frustration, even when I blow it. You always come back with solutions. Your dedication to this work is unprecedented. This book could not have existed without your daily inspiration and help. I am the luckiest person on the planet to get to work beside you, to feel your support, every step of the way. Your

decades of experience, your wisdom and your love make everything we do possible.

I am very grateful to our **Ryzio coaches**, without whom there would be no Ryzio and no book. It is your dedication to changing lives, including your own, your ideas and your support that make our work together and this book possible. So much gratitude to you, **Lisa Messina, Ian Warburg, Bill Cole, Cindy Henning, Carly Joynt, David Warburg, Debra Kinninger, Gerrard Schmidt, Jane Kennedy, Jane Thibodeau, Joanne Thomsen, Natasha Becker, Regina Gleason, Rye Kennedy, Susan Faull, and Tom Eddington**. To be a part of this team with you means everything. Getting to be in this circle with you, growing together, changing the world one person, one organization at a time, touches my heart and feeds me every day. Thank you!!

Special thanks to **Linda Richards**, author and editor extraordinaire, whose family has been part of mine for many, many years, for your professional editing and valuable suggestions. You make it all look so easy, yet I know it is your incredible expertise, your dedication to selfless giving that helped me polish this work. I send special appreciation for your presence and your gifts.

To our graphic designer, **Blair O'Neil**, words pale to describe my appreciation for your silent, behind-the-scenes work that made this book what it is. I swear you have Harry Potter's magic wand, the way you take my messes and create something that draws us all in and makes us stay until the feast is all consumed. Your gifts are stellar and we are so blessed to have your silent partnership!

So very much gratitude to my dear soul sister, **Delia Horwitz**, who has been by my side for decades, has seen all the parts of me and loves me anyway. You are always there when I need a shoulder or a swift kick. You lovingly confront my unclarity and my lethargy.

You tell me the truth, support me in my tears and frustrations and you have taught me oooooles about writing! Poet, author, coach, and BFF, I am forever grateful for your encouragement and edits to this book and most of all, for your on-going love and support.

And to my Sunday night women's powerhouse group: **Christina Bethel, Donna Jackson Nakawaza, and Anat Baniel**. You know from the inside about creating resilience and being love. Through your best-selling books, training programs and high level policy influences, each of you has created movements of your own that are changing the way we think about ourselves, our relationships and our way of life. I am grateful for your unwavering support and for giving me the title for this book!

Special gratitude to my Dear Daughter, **Tanis Marble Thust**. You demonstrate resilience and love daily. Watching you parent is one of the greatest joys of my life! Working beside you as teacher, therapist, and coach, you have taught me patience, presence and a lot of the principles in this book. I am thankful every day that you chose me to be your mom. (Are you sure you knew what you were getting into?) Your love is beyond anything I deserve and for all this, I am eternally grateful.

And to my Dear Son, **Richard Glenn Marble**, so much gratitude for pushing me to write this book. When I whined, "But there are so many books like this already out there," you strongly retorted, "Mom, why do you think at any stop light there's a MacDonald's, a Burger King, a Kentucky Fried Chicken and a Sandwich shop, one on each corner? It's because everyone wants to eat, and they want something tasty and easy to get! That's your book... people are hungry and what you're offering may look like all the other fast food, but it's not!" For our long walks, deep conversations, exchanging

ideas about the world and what I need to do next, and for your loving support, I am deeply grateful.

To **Dr. Pat Korb**, the first mentor who supported me, encouraged me and believed in me before I even had a self to believe in. Although you are no longer on the planet, your love lives on and your support continues to help me understand the work we do. You taught me the most, not by your words, but by how you showed up and who you were. I carry our last meeting with me always. There were no words. We sat in silence, simply sharing the love. Thank you.

Great gratitude to **Dr. Jean Houston**. For decades you saw me, challenged me and encouraged me to do more. You encouraged me to tell the story of my childhood abuse to a group of 50 of my beloved peers. I'll never forget the healing moment when I discovered that 25 of them had experienced similar trauma. I learned I was not alone. In your Mystery School for over two decades you often called me from my front row seat, to create some spontaneous song or process for our fellow journeyers. Your encouragement gave me the chutzpah to work with Ken to start a graduate school and later, Ryzio. I am also deeply grateful to you, Jean, for pulling me aside after you met Ken, looking me straight in the eyes and emphatically saying, "He's a keeper. Don't let this one go!"

Preface

“We are in a whole-system transition, one of the greatest and most vulnerable, volatile times in human history. It is a breakdown to break through.”

— *Jean Houston*

Are you feeling as though nothing is certain anymore?

Are you experiencing increased anxiety, difficulties as a parent or partner and struggles with your work?

Many of us are. The things we used to count on are gone and new ones have not yet arrived. If it seems that we are in the midst of a vast transformation, we are. How we feel personally, the structure and needs of our families and the ways we conduct business are all changing.

Business, education, health care, government, relationships, even our own consciousness is shifting. The foundations of our society, our culture, are being shaken to their core. The old forms are breaking down. We are living through a momentous transition... economically, culturally, spiritually. Something new is emerging.

The latest science of chaos tells us there is an underlying order to the universe. The chaos we are experiencing is actually a potential gateway to quantum leaps in what is possible for us as humans.

A lot is being expressed right now about this time of fear and confusion, this transition. **What is missing from this dialog is a toolbox, specific processes and practices that are needed to navigate through these turbulent times.**

We now know the simple, yet revolutionary, tools to help you find your individual voice, your own Source, and begin to discover new

and potent personal, social, political, psychological, and spiritual forms. **The science-backed tools you find here will help you create a new life for yourself and move from coping into thriving. In this new place you will be able to make meaningful contributions to your family, business and your community.**

I invite you to pause. It is time to go within and recognize the vastness of your true gifts, your authentic power. From these moments of stillness, you will find the gold nuggets long hidden beneath the surface, now ready to emerge. Here you can begin to step beyond your personal drama and your coping mechanisms into new possibilities for thriving.

You are reading this book for a reason. You have been called here because you want more. You know more is possible. You are in the right place.

In these pages I will support you to deeply listen within, find understanding and empathy for yourself. With this and the experiences you will find here comes the capacity to recreate your world and step into the vast possibilities that await.

There is no clear operating manual for this new time. We do know, however, that this new world is based on love. Being in partnership with other seekers, we awaken the heart to express our uniqueness and our creativity. We become co-creative in finding our love, our passion, our gifts. In this you will step into and own your full power and your unique gifts. Together we will begin to move from coping to thriving.

This is how we create a new existence for ourselves, our families, our businesses and our world.

Preface

“We are ready to uncover our depths and have the courage to cleanse, purify, prepare our souls for the difficult task of becoming an instrument through which the Source may play its great music in this time and space.

These are the times. We are the people.”

– *Jean Houston*

Introduction

Thriving, finding stability, happiness and love are within your reach right now. Yet how can you leverage life's challenges to find meaning, purpose, connection and joy? How can you survive, much less thrive, in an atmosphere of uncertainty, adversity and fear?

I invite you to take this journey with me. Together we will walk through experiences to help you find answers to the following questions:

- *How can you find deeper love and connection?*
- *What is calling you now?*
- *What is possible for you?*
- *What is holding you back from stepping into greater love and your authentic power?*

WELCOME!

Here you will learn how to experience resilience, deeper relationships and more love.

For sure, nothing is certain now. Even if you've been traveling your road, mostly doing okay, seemingly overnight, things began to change. The road you thought you were on has become a small, unfamiliar path. It may be dark here and the way may seem uncertain. It can be very difficult to know where to go or how to make your life work even if it was working before. And even if it wasn't.

Because of recent circumstances, many things we took for granted are shifting. How we live, where and how we work has changed. More interactions are virtual. For many of us, our travel agenda has shifted. Much of education is now virtual. Even as children and college students return to the classroom, some classes will continue to

be online, as well as trainings for business and professional certification programs. More conferences and international meetings will be virtual in the future.

All of this change brings stress and the uncertainty brings fear. Regardless of your circumstances, you may be feeling a bit exhausted and overwhelmed.

Even the best and most predictable of times can bring out our worst fears, our negative self-talk and old behaviors that hold us back. These times of uncertainty can compound that. But these times can bring us a necessary pause. Use this opportunity to slow down, take a breath, garner support and ask some important questions.

Is it possible to thrive, to become even more resilient, in these crazy times? Actually, now is the perfect time to pause, take stock, gather some skills and tools and take advantage of this moment in time. It is quite possible that, on the other side, tomorrow will look very different than yesterday. Seize this moment to take steps toward having the life you ultimately want.

We are going to walk you through some stories to touch your heart and some resources to quench your thirst for a better life. **In the accompanying Travel Guide you will find a number of simple, science-backed processes and tools to help you move from where you are to where you want to be.** You will begin to understand yourself better and learn what you can do to help yourself do so much more than survive. Step by step you will learn to thrive, even in challenging times.

It would be easy to simply give you some exercises that would help you be calmer and feel a bit better day to day. However, our interest is in walking you through some processes and practices that

you can incorporate into your life. They will help you do more than survive.

In order to truly thrive, to be resilient, you need to move beyond simply coping from day to day. You need to shift from the inside. Helping you change from the inside out, you will begin to feel more alive, more confident and more creative. My experience is that you will also find your relationships becoming sweeter and more meaningful. And, you will feel less stressed and more creative.

You will learn to change your brain and grow your nervous system in ways that will give you a new set point: a new “normal.” I will walk you through a brief picture of the science behind the practices and tools so that you can know that they are all practical, do-able and research-based.

To recap, in this book and the Travel Guide, you will:

- *Experience science-backed processes and tools to help you move from where you are to where you want to be*
- *Understand yourself better*
- *Learn to truly thrive, even in challenging times*

Changing from the inside out, you will:

- *Feel more alive, confident and creative*
- *Experience your relationships becoming sweeter and more meaningful*
- *Learn to change your brain and grow your nervous system in ways that give you a new set point, a new “normal”*

All the experiences in this book and in the Travel Guide emerged from science. They are proven processes my husband, Ken Bruer and I have used with individuals, work teams, families and couples world-wide for 30 years. Over a decade ago we partnered with Diana Barrett to bring this work to individuals: leaders, shapeshift-

ers, coaches, therapists, performers and parents – all those who are dedicated to thriving in their own lives, experiencing more love and making the world a better place.

Our organization is Ryzio Institute. Our programs, both virtual and in person (when possible), incorporate the principles and process you find here. Our certified coaches have decades of experience and are available for virtual consultation and support. If you have questions about anything you find here or if you would like to explore further possibilities for yourself, we are happy to help. Please reach out to us for a complimentary consultation through our website: www.ryzio.com

How This Book Can Help You Change Your Life

“The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard, but must be felt with the heart.”

–Helen Keller

Many times I have robbed myself of learning, from getting the most from an experience, by telling myself, “I know this stuff. In fact, I teach it!” I have to remind myself to slow down and simply be open and curious. I have learned that for any of us to benefit from resources we must start from the ground up, from a clean slate.

I noticed a big difference when I decided to merely pretend the subject was very new to me. In doing that I began to gain a lot more from what I was trying to learn. I invite you to do the same: adopt a beginner’s mind. Regardless of how much experience you have, how much work you have done, it is most beneficial to begin at the beginning. The invitation here is to simply be curious. Allow yourself to open to your experience in the moment.

In addition to adopting a beginner’s mind, we know that simply reading self-help books is not enough. It can be interesting, even entertaining. However, reading alone will not help you change your brain and grow your nervous system. Working through this material may give you some interesting ideas and better understandings. However, **science is telling us that in order to make real change and lasting transformation, we can’t solely think about some-**

thing. We have to do more than talk about it. We must actually experience it! Our culture tends to focus on thinking and talking. Most often, this does not include an actual experience.

What do we mean by experience?

Experience involves the whole brain, body and being. For example, you can talk about the chocolate chip cookies you had as a kid. You can even read the recipe and think about making them. How different would it be if you were to actually taste them? Or better yet, if someone who cares about you, knows how special chocolate chip cookies are to you, invites you over one afternoon. You walk into the kitchen and smell them baking. You watch them being taken out of the oven. You take one, smell it and feel the sticky chocolate between your fingers. You gradually put a bite into your mouth, slowly chewing this warm, sweet morsel, knowing there's more where that came from. Now that's an experience!

In fact, even fully imagining that story, putting yourself there... smelling, feeling, tasting the cookies, gives you an experience. Science tells us the brain does not know the difference between a multi-sensory image and the actual experience.

We invite you to experience the processes here as fully as possible.

Let's examine what you might do to actually allow yourself to move from thinking to experiencing. First, you will read about a particular topic, the science or rationale that lays the groundwork. This also helps you understand that what we are asking you to do is backed by science. Each process is a tried-and-true, valuable experience that will help you get where you want to go.

After you gain some background and understanding about the topic, we will invite you to personalize the information and apply it to your own life. It is the application that makes it come alive. **It is the experience of the processes that changes the brain and helps you grow the nervous system.**

This is the whole point of the accompanying Travel Guide.

When you fully engage in a process, you gain greater awareness. Different images and ideas emerge. Sensations in your body may shift. For example, you may notice you are breathing deeper or that your shoulders are beginning to relax. These are important elements of your experience. We encourage you to begin to track these felt experiences in your body.

We have been led to believe that the brain runs everything and that if we can just change our thinking, we can get where we want to go. Changing your thinking can help but we have to have experiences from the inside to change the unconscious program that runs us! We also need to step into experiences of feeling safe to truly show up, to bring all of who we are. That's our goal for you here.

This may sound crazy... but we encourage you to print your Travel Guide and actually take pen to paper. Remember, our aim is to experience the processes as fully as possible. Use whatever medium calls to you. Of course, pen and pencil, but also consider colored pencils, crayons, paints, etc. The purpose is curiosity and exploration. Allow whatever is inside you to bubble to the surface.

Writing, doodling, drawing, engages different parts of the brain. This can help you access things you might not think of otherwise. We encourage you to find a few of these that fit for you. You may be called to different modalities at different times.

The processes we will walk you through help you apply the principles and gain the ultimate value from them.

In addition to the processes in the Travel Guide, the following suggestions will help you deepen the material as you apply the information and stories to your own life.

1. *Have your Travel Guide or journal handy and begin to write your thoughts. This is not our usual kind of writing to record ideas or facts. This is more of a wandering down a path and being curious what you will discover. There may be stones to overturn, a lizard to chase or a butterfly to watch. Simply allow the words to find their way to the page and allow yourself to explore and be curious about what emerges.*
2. *Allow yourself to create something. Put crayon or paints on paper and see what comes. Grab some clay and see what your hands want to do with it. Try ripping photos from magazines and pasting them on paper to make a collage. This is not to produce “art.” It is to invite something from inside of you to express itself.*
3. *Try allowing your body to move in a way that expresses how you feel. Up, down, stretching, moving, being small, taking up lots of space, waving hands or feet. Let yourself “dance” if that feels right. Again, a part of you is purely watching with curiosity.*
4. *Find a piece of music that expresses your experience. Listen, sing, hum, chant.*
5. *Take out an instrument and explore it. Play something and see how you feel. Pick up a drum or anything percussive. Create a rhythm. Move with it.*
6. *Something else that can help you to “move from thinking” into your experience and feelings is to talk with a trusted friend, coach, or therapist. You may need to say, “I’m looking at some things I’d like to share with you. I just need a sounding board.” You are not needing*

or wanting advice or interpretation. You simply need an empathic, listening ear.

Granted, the processes in the Travel Guide are not the chocolate chip cookie, but they will take you much further into the experience than simply reading and thinking about it! In fact, they will lead you into a deeper understanding of how you came to be the way you are and will help you have more compassion for yourself and others. These new experiences of yourself will begin to help you create a new Program for what is possible in your life. As you go through the exercises or processes in your Travel Guide:

1. *First give yourself a few moments when you will not be disturbed. For this short time, try to turn off your phone and/or any other distractions.*
2. *Read the process or exercise and notice what medium you want to use, what colors might express your thoughts best. Of course, plain pen or pencil are just fine, too.*
3. *Pause. S-L-O-W D-O-W-N, take a breath, see what thoughts and/or images come to mind. Allow space for something to emerge.*
4. *Notice what happens in your body.*
 - a. *How's your breath?*
 - b. *Do you feel a shift in any way?*
 - c. *Are you experiencing heaviness, tightness, discomfort, tingling or other sensations?*
 - d. *As you experience sensations, ask yourself:*
 - i. *Is this familiar?*
 - ii. *When might I have noticed this before?*
 - iii. *Does this remind me of anything?*

To begin, open your Travel Guide to page 2 and consider who would wish you well on this journey.

A clear vision: Where would you like to be in a few months?

The Power of Vision

Thousands pressed shoulder to shoulder
At the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.

“I have a dream,” he chanted.

“I have a dream!”

Those words caught fire as he passed the torch.

Sometimes only embers now it seems,

But the light of that vision remains.

Those words haunt me as I ask myself,

What is my vision?

What is the one thing I feel pulled toward?

What is it that makes my heart sing?

A vision, a dream, alive with passion and purpose
Can transform a company, a culture, and the world.

Today, I will explore my dream.

I will bring it to this page and blow on its embers.

What is your dream? What is your vision?

What is the fire waiting to be ignited within you?

You have the match. It's time to light your vision.

-MG

Right now, imagine what your life might look like, be like, feel like, let's say, three months from now, if you were able to shift a few things in your current experience.

Imagine yourself waking up one morning, stretching and realizing this is a new day. You take a deep breath, look out at the shimmering light and realize something has changed. You are a bit calmer and things are easier. Perhaps you are on a clear path to your goals. Maybe your relationships are a bit sweeter.

Pick up your Travel Guide now, page 3

Allow your imagination to take you. Be with what emerges and make some notes.

This process of creating your vision will help you set your sights on the destination for your journey. Take a moment to consider the important questions there and allow them to pull you into the future you are longing for.

Chapter One Summary

I hope you will use the suggestions you find here as a compass and guide for our journey together.

Now that you have a bit more clarity on your vision, your destination, let's continue to ask some important questions. The next one to ask yourself is, "Am I coping or am I thriving?" This is not a question we usually ask, yet when you think about it, we often strive so hard to "do the right things," to achieve what we think will bring us happiness, we lose sight of the larger goal. Let's explore that now.



Invitation to Transformation

May you slow down, reflect
Let go of attachment to personal history
Harvest half-forgotten experience
Honor and release pride or regret
Welcome the unknown next step
Become still, attentive and curious
Prepare to experience heartbreak and joy

May you breathe into the new self
The one who has waited
Until now
Celebrate the shift
Celebrate the shift

— *Ken Bruer*

Are You Thriving Or Simply Coping?

I Thought I Was Thriving

An early June morning before my 49th birthday seemed like a lot of other days. The hundred-year-old oak tree outside my bedroom window didn't call to me. Nor did the hills adjoining our property. No walk today. I jumped into my Mercedes, without even opening the roof, and made my way down the hill.

As I entered the office my assistant, Alice, handed me my daily appointments. "Hold my calls," I said, without even looking at her. I remember sitting in my comfortable office chair, staring out the large windows, beyond the red tile roofs that mark Santa Barbara, seeing the ocean beyond.

Tapping my pencil on the desk I continued to stare. "I have everything," I told myself. "I've worked hard, done all the right things. I got my PhD, found a good husband. Our business is thriving. My daughter is on caravan in Europe and my son, just out of Harvard, landed a great job on Wall Street."

I remember whispering to myself, **"I feel so empty... Actually, I don't feel anything." I heard the pencil hit my desk as I said aloud, "Is this all there is?"**

What is Thriving?

I clearly didn't feel that I was thriving. I had everything, or so I thought, yet I wasn't really happy. I didn't experience much meaning in my life. Thriving moves us beyond simply "doing well."

To thrive is to experience vitality, to be intentional about your life and your purpose.

What comes to mind when you think of thriving? We know that thriving gives you energy and pushes you to the next level of health and happiness. **When we are thriving, there is a sense of excitement about life and we are able to share this with others. We are able to create, sustain and grow meaningful relationships.**

We are taught from our earliest experiences that we must "learn to cope." You should, "Buck up. Things could be worse. Just take it in stride." While coping can be beneficial, it takes a lot of energy and doesn't really give us all that is possible.

Ask yourself, ***"Am I actually thriving or am I simply coping? Am I only existing, just getting by from day to day? Or am I truly feeling energetic and alive?"***

Thriving Versus Coping

The Oxford English Dictionary defines coping as the ability to deal effectively with something difficult, perhaps maintaining balance or homeostasis in the midst of turmoil. It's interesting to note that to cope originally meant to meet in battle. And, I must say, coping sometimes does feel like an uphill battle.

We might say that coping is to deal with a situation, in the moment, in a satisfactory manner. Basically, you are keeping yourself from

feeling too overwhelmed. In the moment, you are staying within the range of what your nervous system can handle.

Dr. Daniel Siegel, professor of psychiatry at UCLA School of Medicine and Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute, calls this your Window of Tolerance. We call it your Window of Presence. We will discuss how this affects you and what you can do about it in Chapter Six.

Coping strategies allow you to stay within your range of endurance, your Window of Presence, most of the time. Having this capacity to stay regulated and present in the moment is important in your overall ability to function in the world. This is especially true in relationships.

When you are coping, you are also making it possible to get from one moment to the next intact. Coping strategies may allow you to express your immediate needs, hold a boundary, or hang on until the storm passes. These strategies can be vitally important. However, they do not mean you are happy or thriving and it does not mean that the situation won't keep happening. It means you are okay for now; you have gotten through this phase. That's a positive step, not to be minimized.

Looking more closely, however, **we see that coping may help you get from here to there but alone it may not help you increase the capacity of your nervous system to handle stress.** Coping is not generally what makes us effective leaders and certainly not effective lovers. Simply coping does not help us take healthy risks, have more satisfying experiences or ultimately feel alive, creative and connected.

Prolonged coping can create stress and take a toll on the body and the mind. This often leads to chronic feelings of burn out, anxiety and/or depression and other physical maladies.

Many of our coping mechanisms or strategies may be useful in the moment but detrimental in the long run. You may be as familiar with some of these as I have been. Things such as using food, substances, drinking alcohol or highly caffeinated beverages, drugs of any kind and/or any form of tobacco are all coping mechanisms. Some of us cope by staying busy, allowing our work to consume our lives, or we spend hours lost in screen time, social media, games or television. Or we may jump from one relationship to another trying to find meaning and satisfaction.

The effects of merely coping and not reaching a level of thriving can include a lack of energy, sleep disturbances, inability to concentrate, irritability, and of course, continued anxiety and even varying levels of depression. Some coping mechanisms may help anxiety and/or depression, for example, and that is good. They may not, however, address the underlying cause of the issue so you can eliminate it.

Coping alone can set up cycles of moving forward, feeling better for a short time, then falling back, feeling like you are at square one again which often leads to a sense that nothing will ever change.

For those of us who have experienced loss, neglect, abuse or other trauma — and that is as high as 60 percent of the population — coping is important. You are effectively putting a bandage over a wound to help get you through the moment, to help you stay present enough to do what you need to do. You are using some much-needed crutches that certainly help you feel better and accomplish the things you need to do right now.

Getting through is a good thing. That does not mean that you are erasing the effects of the earlier experiences so they will not disturb you or return later.

Many of us stay in a coping mode because we don't know there is anything else. We often feel good about what we are able to do now versus what we did in the past. Our coping mechanisms are often a step in the right direction. We just need to keep going and move from coping into thriving.

How Are You Doing Right Now? Are You Thriving or Simply Coping?

Thriving has often been associated with being successful. Having a thriving business, for example. However, any of us can be successful in our lives. You may feel like I did, having achieved all the expected things – and yet not be really happy or fulfilled. **You may be doing all the right things and have reached the top of the ladder but don't experience the satisfaction you long for.**

I hear this from extremely successful CEO's, government officials, and accomplished actors:

- *“I've reached the top of my game, yet I often feel empty.”*
- *“My relationship isn't what I'd like it to be and I'm not really happy.”*
- *“I can buy anything... except the deep fulfillment I long for.”*

That is not thriving. Thriving means you wake up in the morning, glad to be alive and ready for the challenges of the day. You feel grateful for what you have. You find meaning in what you do. And, you have relationships that nurture you.

Quiz: Are You Coping or Thriving?

It may be helpful to know to what degree you are coping and how are you thriving. Head over to pages 5-6 in the Travel Guide and take the quiz. You deserve to spend more time thriving than coping.

The processes you find here are designed to do precisely that, help you move from coping to thriving. Continue to simply be curious and make notes as you find your way through these pages and the processes in the Travel Guide. As you do, you will discover that you are coping less and thriving more!

What's Your Question?

Many of us have a burning question we hear some part of us ask ourselves from time to time. Your question, which we encourage you to explore now on page 7 of the Travel Guide, will help you clarify your needs, vision and goals.

As a young adult I kept asking myself, why do some people “make it” while others don't? **What makes some people bounce back and thrive following adversity while others sink more deeply into quicksand?** Of my five siblings, two of us are thriving while four have suffered from addictions and chronic mental and physical illnesses for decades. What's the difference?

Let's backtrack a bit here. A lot of us have difficult experiences as children. For some of us, our parents didn't know how to be emotionally available and we experienced a lack of connection. You may have experienced abuse and/or neglect. Sometimes parents are really there for us part of the time and neglectful or abusive at other times. This is often true if a parent is mentally ill or alcoholic.

Whatever your experience, it had an effect on the way your brain works and the capacity of your nervous system to stay cool and calm, as well as your capacity for close relationships and meaningful work. All of this impacts your ability now to handle this stressful time.

The work here is not about reliving the past or blaming parents (or anyone). It is about creating understanding regarding your current experience and creating more compassion for yourself and others. You will also learn, as I have, ways to change the brain, grow the nervous system and live the life you long for.

In short, this is about helping you move from coping to thriving, to experience the meaning and the love you deserve.

Chapter Two Summary

Here we have explored the difference between merely coping and actually thriving. In answering the questions and completing the processes in the Travel Guide you are moving toward a greater understanding of where you are and where you need and want to go.

Next we want to explore the state that we reach when we begin to truly thrive: RESILIENCE! Through some poignant stories we will look at how adversity can foster resilience. We will also explore your own capacity to bounce back.



Keep Climbing

If your path is steep and your days are filled with clouds,
Know that you have been called to something higher.
Your strengths, your capacity to keep climbing
Will take you to places you might have never imagined.

— MG

Resilience

“Capacities for resilience are innate in the brain, hard-wired by evolution... Whether we tend to bounce back from terrible setbacks or stay where we’ve been thrown depends on our learned patterns of response to other people and events... These patterns become... deeply encoded into our neural circuitry from an early age.”

— Linda Graham, *Bouncing Back*

A Journey Through Darkness to Love

Walk with me here for a moment as I share some of my story. See what parts seem strange and what parts all too familiar. See what it brings up for you and allow yourself to be curious as you journal your experience. As always, check in with a trusted friend as needed or reach out to us at Ryzio for support.

Some parts of my story are tough, so before I begin, I invite you to pause and take a breath with me. See what you notice.

I was an incredibly curious kid. Running barefoot in the backwoods of South Georgia, I would often look up through the bangs hanging in my eyes and ask my mom things like, “Why are those people riding in cars and those people are walking?” She would look away and shrug her shoulders. I would often point to a stranger and ask, “Mama, who’s that?” Mom would dramatically roll her eyes and say, “Somebody you don’t know!”

I don't remember my dad. I only remember seeing faded photos of him when I would sneak into mom's closet and look for her photo album buried in an old box. I knew not to ask questions about him. Over time I learned that he had PTSD from war and was addicted to pain meds from all his surgeries. I learned that when mom threatened to leave him, he cut her throat. Thank goodness she survived, but he did go to jail. I was not yet two and never saw him again. When I was 10, my uncle told me that he had recently found my dad in his garage where he had shot himself. He wanted us to know that our dad was clutching a photo of my mom with me and my brother, Dan.

When I was three, my blonde haired, blue-eyed Mom married Henry, a tall, handsome contractor. He brought with him his nine-year-old son and six-week-old daughter. His wife had just committed suicide, or so he said. We all moved to a farm in an even more rural area of South Georgia. I remember the red clay roads, cotton fields and some dairy cows not far from the old wooden farmhouse. We appeared to be a happy family.

Well, not exactly. **I recently discovered my aversion to Jeeps stemmed from the long-buried trauma of sitting in our old brown Jeep in front of our farmhouse on Christmas Eve watching the flames, terrified, as our house burned to the ground.** I was four. We later discovered that Henry had set fire to the house to get the insurance money.

When I was about six Henry began molesting me on a regular basis. I never knew when he would signal me, and I would have to appear in his bed that night. That went on for 10 years. My mom, who seemed quite oblivious, sat outside the bedroom door, reading the Bible or a church magazine.

I know I became numb during those times. I wasn't in my body much, and often cried myself to sleep.

My only safe space was spending holidays and special times in the summer with my grandparents. And music. I loved to sing. At eight I sang in my first talent show, a big deal for me. It hurt that granddaddy was the only one who came to see me. Mom was at home with a new baby brother. And another one the following year.

In addition to being Henry's mistress, my job was to cook, change diapers, meet everyone's needs. I learned to ignore my own needs. Every day I watched, horrified, as Henry yelled obscenities and beat my brothers. Being invisible was the best way to survive.

I remember standing in front of my seventh-grade teacher's desk as she told my mom, "Marti's not very bright, but she has a good personality, so she'll do all right." She confirmed what I already believed: that I wasn't smart, but somehow I kept going.

At 13, I loved having my own radio show on Saturday mornings where I dedicated songs to friends at school. I remember the day mom picked me up at the station, looked at me in her rearview mirror, and exclaimed, "Just so you know, this was your last show. It's too much trouble to get up and drive you!"

Finally, in the summer before my 16th birthday, I found the courage to say to Henry, "I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm leaving." With a deep scowl on his face, he said, "If you go live with you grandparents, I'll kill your mother."

Even though I believed he might, something in me knew I had to leave, but I knew not to go live with my grandparents, which is what I longed for.

I became a nanny in exchange for room and board while I finished my 11th grade. That summer I decided to go live with my grandparents anyway. I loved my senior year, feeling safe, singing in the choir and performing in school musicals.

During my first semester of college my grandfather died, my grandmother moved away, and I lost my support system. Thankfully, with the help of strangers and scholarships, I kept going and got my education.

Something inside me was incredibly determined (even though part of me still believed I wasn't smart). I kept going and became a teacher and a therapist. I got my PhD and became a college professor. I had a few deeply meaningful experiences with some teachers and therapists. They believed in me before I believed in myself. I felt respected by them.

Why Do Some People Simply Survive While Others Thrive?

I began to wonder why I was the only one in my family who “made it?” How was it that I had accomplished some things, I was feeling pretty good, yet my siblings were struggling with addictions and mental illness. **I started asking what makes some people simply survive while others thrive?** I wondered: “How is it that I survived a horrific childhood and how could I thrive? How could I help others thrive?”

I worked with business professors from three different universities on that question. We researched why some people thrive in their work environments and others don't. We read everything we could get our hands on about the brain and how it impacts our behavior and job satisfaction. I thought job satisfaction was connected to personality. After all, I have an outgoing personality and I'm "happy," so that must be the reason. I was dead wrong. Personality type was not related to job satisfaction.

I became academic dean at a college and began teaching counseling psychology to graduate students. My third husband, Ken, helped me finish raising my two kids. He joined me in pursuing answers to the question: **"Why are some people simply coping, only getting by day-to-day, while others become resilient and thrive?"** This continued to haunt me.

We delved more deeply into the emerging brain research and were so committed to this that we started and ran a graduate school to train therapists and coaches in new methods of working with people, arising from emerging research.

Through the last three decades Ken and I have been creating programs and leading intensive retreats for individuals, business teams, couples and families. **We learned the power of creating experiences of safety and authentic caring so people could move beyond their early programming, discover their inner gifts and start expressing those gifts to thrive personally, in relationships and in their careers.**

Now through Ryzio Institute, we offer those methods in several different programs to help individuals move beyond coping into thriving.

That's what I want to share with you here: **How to change your brain and move beyond early childhood experiences and programming to live the life you are called to live!** In short, we are going to explore how to find strength and resilience, even in times of adversity.

I've done it; I'm still doing it. We've helped thousands of others do it and you can, too.

I'm going to pull back the curtain now so you can integrate some of the science behind how the brain, mind, and body recovers and how you can tune into love to achieve what is yours to be and do. The goal is for you to begin to apply this knowledge in your own life – your career and relationships – at deeper and deeper levels.

What is Resilience?

Resilience is our capacity to bounce back. It is the innate spark, the drive to make it, against all odds, no matter what. It's the part of us that, even in the darkest of times, even in a poor environment, does what we have to do to survive.

Your resilience is your light. It will carry you through, even when you think all is lost, and part of you wants to surrender, to give in, give up. **Your resilience is there to whisper to the unconscious: "Just once more. Keep going. Don't give up now. You can do this!"** Your resilience helps you find a path out of the darkness even when you thought there wasn't one.

Resilience is innate. It's part of our drive to survive. From the very beginning of coming into a body, from the time your mother's DNA joins with your father's DNA, there is a you, a life force that is part of and separate from them. There is an innate intelligence from the time of being those first few cells, finding the best place to nestle, connect and be nurtured.

While resilience is innate and universal, I want to acknowledge that there are cultural differences in how resilience is expressed. Many cultures communicate differently; we express feelings differently. What may be common in one culture might be unthinkable in another.

As you go through this, see what fits for you. Try on something new, look at things in a different light, see what happens and how you feel.

Let's explore now how those early beginnings might continue to impact us throughout our lives until we are able to shift that original programming that no longer fits, no longer serves us.

Something's Wrong with Me; I Don't Belong!

Many of us received messages through our parents' anxiety, anger or fear so early we didn't have words to label or describe the experience. These messages haunt us as adults. We do our best to understand and make sense of what was happening. Because, at such a young age, we experience ourselves as the center of the universe, we imagine whatever is happening is about us, and that we are to blame. Because we don't understand the larger picture, we reach negative, false conclusions. We create beliefs such as "I'm not enough" or "I'm not lovable."

Greg enrolled in our graduate school to study pre-and perinatal psychology. He was a biologist and had been drawn to study the field of our earliest development. Greg was a good student, did all the right things, but something was off. Underneath everything he did there was a layer of anger and resentment. I was curious and concerned as we watched him continually push us all away.

Later in the semester he enrolled in a weekend retreat Ken and I were conducting. In the retreat a small group of people come together to support each other in exploring their earliest history and the belief systems or programs they had formed at that time. The goal was to use science-backed tools to begin to shift that early programming and create new, more appropriate, more loving conscious and unconscious programs.

The first thing I noticed about Greg that morning was that nothing was right. Someone took his parking place; the tea water wasn't hot enough; there were no towels in the men's room. Part of me wanted to push him and his negativity away. (That's my stuff!) **I asked myself to look behind his big gruff exterior and imagine the little boy inside.** Had he been abused? Abandoned? My attitude softened and I became curious and more open.

It didn't surprise me that Greg boldly volunteered to do his personal exploration first. In his work he pieced together the fact that his mother was trying to get out of an abusive relationship with his father when she discovered she was pregnant with him. She was terrified. She tried to abort him but failed. His father, hearing about the pregnancy, yelled obscenities at her and kicked her in the stomach. After a few days she managed to escape back to her parent's home

where she felt shamed and helpless. Toward the end of the pregnancy she became close friends with a new neighbor who was kind and caring. They eventually married and raised Greg, along with two younger brothers.

All his growing up years, Greg felt like the odd one. He didn't know his history until after he was in college. When he explored this extremely early time in our retreat, he discovered parts of his unconsciously held "Program." Everyone was touched when Greg told his story. The empathy and caring in the room were palpable. I leaned toward him and softly asked, "What did that tiny being begin to believe about himself? What did he believe about the world?"

"I'm not wanted," Greg said without hesitation. "I'm not supposed to be here. I'm no good. The world isn't safe, not safe at all!" He softened and put his hands over his face as a few tears trickled down. **In that moment, it was as though the whole room stopped, our hearts opened and surrounded this tiny being inside the tall, tough, grown man.** He allowed himself to be there briefly, then straightened up.

I asked Greg: "What did that little one unconsciously decide to do to survive and get his needs met in his family?"

"Well, I have to be big and tough. I have to demand what I want and just take it if I have to, because no one will give it to me."

I suddenly realized that all of Greg's complaining, his anger, his pushing, were part the survival mechanism he had been using his whole life.

Foundations of Resilience

Our earliest experiences lay the foundation for not only what we believe about ourselves but how we think we have to be in the world to survive. Often under an angry exterior is a tiny being who is still in survival mode and perhaps has never felt safe. Like Greg, that tiny being wants and needs to feel safe. Part of that little one is pushing for something more, something better.

Greg kept showing up. Some part of him wanted more in his life. He had never been in a relationship longer than a few months and had no close friends. Yet he knew there was more. On one hand, he desperately wanted caring people in his life and on the other, he was pushing them away because he didn't feel safe. He didn't think he deserved anything good. But he kept trying, and over the two years, we watched him become calmer and more present. He began to sustain real friendships and we heard a few years later found the love of his life. That's resilience.

As an aside, you may be curious about your earliest beginnings and how some of those early experiences may have laid the foundation for your current unconscious "Program" (the lens through which you experience the world). We know our Programs often hold us back, keep us small and prevent us from achieving our greatest desires. You may wonder If what is stopping you now may be connected to old habits and patterns that are out of conscious awareness. You can begin to tap into part of that as you continue to fully experience the processes you find here.

Resilience

Resilience is listening to the still, small voice inside of you that knows more is possible.

Many people who have participated in our programs may feel they are simply lucky to be where they are. Maybe they have worked hard. They often don't believe they are resilient.

Are you in touch with your resilience? You may merely need to learn to access it. We'll help you do that.

Resilience and your Program

Resilience is what keeps us going in the face of adversity. It is our ability to bounce back when we hit the most difficult times. Resilience also deeply relates to our internal working models of ourselves: our Program.

Our resilience is often affected by our earliest experiences, the messages we received growing up.

Most of us have been scolded by parents as they were trying to teach us a lesson and/or keep us in line. You may have also been teased by peers for being different. You may have felt shamed by teachers or coaches who were trying to keep you in line and/or help you excel.

These messages are often some version of, "You can't do it right; You're not enough:" smart enough, pretty enough, good enough or tough enough.

We internalize these messages and begin to tell ourselves some version of, "I'm not lovable, I'm not good enough and/or something's wrong with me."

These negative experiences contribute to feelings of self-doubt, poor self-esteem and stress throughout our lives. They also become our negative internal voices. “You’ll never make it. You’re crazy, not good enough, who do you think you are?”

Hearing things like that dampens the resiliency factors instead of encouraging them. Working with and shifting these messages, your Program, can have significant positive effects on growing your resilience. You will learn more about your Program and how to change it as you continue working through these materials.

We want to explore your early messages here and look at the resiliency factors that helped you get through. **Our ultimate goal is to shift your early programming and harvest the part of you that kept you going.**

Take a moment right now to make a note about any of your negative voices on page 8 of the Travel Guide. Becoming aware of the negative voices and understanding their origins gives you more compassion for yourself and others and helps you to dismantle your Program – those unconscious, automatic thoughts and beliefs that keep us revolving through experiences that do not serve us.

Chapter Three Summary

In this chapter we examined resilience and, I hope, have whetted your appetite to continue to explore your own resiliency factors. Together we will help you bring to light those gold nuggets that may be hidden in your history. This will help you get to your desired destination faster and stay there longer.

Next we continue to explore your own resilience, both your internal resilience and your external resilience. You will gain clarity about resources, positive things that happened to you and especially positive experiences with others. I hope this will help you as much as it helped me to create a foundation, to begin to stand taller and recognize in yourself what others may have been seeing in you all along.



Grandmother Love

Isolated, living in the shadow of family
You gave me a gift like no other.
Wordlessly you expressed your pride in me,
Noticed my every move,
Listened intently to every word I spoke,
Coaxed out my beautiful unique self.
On our walks you patiently watched
While I explored all that caught my attention
You shared a love too great to be ignored.

— Ken Bruer

How Resilient Are You?

“Don’t give up! Only after the hardest climb through the steep, uncharted cliffs will you see a new horizon and the green path where your heart has been leading you all along!”

– MG

As you already know, I was raised in an abusive, crazy family in rural Southern Georgia. I had a couple of meaningful resources that helped me get through. My grandparents were one set of resources. The other was music. I loved all kinds of music, but I was especially drawn to the music I’d heard coming from the Black church. So, on Sunday mornings I would sneak out of my church and run down the back alley to the Black Church.

This particular Sunday morning, as I slowly opened the door to the sanctuary, I heard the minister belting out the song, “CAN I GET A WITNESS? CAN I GET A WITNESS?” A few people had raised their hands and I got so excited, I jumped up and waived my whole arm in the air. The minister motioned to me and said, “Missy, you come right on up here!”

Without knowing what I was doing, I ran down the aisle and saw both the minister and the choir director’s long black robes open as they welcomed me into their arms. **I’ll never forget the minister looking into my eyes. Something happened inside me. I knew I was safe. I knew I would be okay.** I felt so much love as I quietly found my seat again in the last row.

This experience was deeply meaningful. Although I didn't talk about it for fear of being caught and punished for sneaking away from where I was supposed to be, that moment of being seen, welcomed and encouraged has stayed with me. That one moment of knowing I was okay helped me stretch beyond my fears and take small risks as I needed to.

Moments of encouragement help create resilience. Times of feeling safe to explore, to express our thoughts or our creativity build resilience, as well. These are moments where we are allowed to express our ideas, feel our feelings, where the person with us does not need to stop us, change us or give advice. These experiences of total acceptance build greater resilience.

Let's Explore Your Resilience

Beginning on page 9 in your Travel Guide, we invite you to explore people and experiences in your life that have contributed to your resilience. Times where someone paused and listened to you, took you seriously. Someone who was there for you, even for a moment, can contribute to our resilience. In this process we want to help you uncover the part of you that has kept going, even when things weren't ideal, perhaps against great odds.

We find that each of us has two kinds of resilience: internal and external. We think of internal resilience as those internal qualities that have served us, pushed us from the inside. External resilience factors are people, places and circumstances that supported us as we were growing up. We find that these factors continue, and we can grow them throughout our lives.

For example, my internal resilience factors included my curiosity, my ability to connect with people and my determination to keep going. The biggest demonstration of that was my holding a boundary with my stepfather, even if it meant risking my life as I knew it. My external resiliency anchors were my grandparents. I also had several teachers who encouraged me.

Gaining clarity regarding your resiliency factors can help you look at your current life in a different way. Acknowledging internal and external resources, even those you may have never given much attention, can increase your stamina now. This will make it easier to release old habits and ways of thinking and move into more love and deeper satisfaction.

Internal Resilience

What are the internal mechanisms that have supported you and perhaps continue to push you forward? Here we'll explore some of your early experiences and begin to shed light on some resources and experiences that helped you get where you are today.

I'm imagining you, there now, reading these words. Something in you drew you to do this. Some part of you can imagine and yearns for a richer, fuller life. That's your resilience.

Your resilience is supported by your “Superpowers,” those innate qualities that help you get through hard times and make you a valuable team player. Not so much an acquired skill, superpowers are innate characteristics, often a mindset or some innate wisdom.

The very thing that may be a boon now may have been the “bane of your existence” when you were young. For me, my curiosity drove my mother, and I'm sure others, crazy. I thought there must be something wrong with me that I wanted to know details about

everything. Turns out, curiosity is one of my superpowers, the very thing that has often kept me going.

The same is true about my sensitivity. I was always able to “read” what people were experiencing and either get out of the way or give them what they wanted. Now that sensitivity helps me connect with others more authentically.

What are your superpowers? I asked my husband, Ken and our Ryzio partner Diana about theirs. Ken said his superpowers are his imagination and his ability to be patient. Diana mentioned that hers include authenticity and organization.

Think about your superpowers and make a note in your Travel Guide page 9.

What helped you become resilient?

Now let’s explore your resilience factors. The awareness of these experiences from your past will help strengthen your resilience now. It will help you see the light and the strength that has been inside you all along. And, it will help you begin to grow an even greater sense of resilience now.

See if you can remember a time (or typical times) from your childhood when you felt safe to be yourself and to explore, even for a moment. Perhaps you were excited, happy, and really engaged in what you were doing. Maybe you were playing outside, or simply doing something you loved: exploring your backyard or a park, throwing a ball, reading a book or climbing a tree. Maybe you were making cookies with Grandma.

See if you can imagine that scenario now. Recall where you were and who was with you (if anyone), the sounds you were hearing and how you felt.

Take a breath now and notice how it feels to sink into your favorite place, as though you are there now, even for a moment. What are the sounds, the smells? What were you doing? Who, if anyone, is with you?

Make some notes in your Travel Guide, page 9, about that scenario and what you notice now as you recall it.

As you discover more about this, pay attention to your experience inside your body. What sensations do you discover when you check in? As I completed my own list, I was surprised at some of my responses. It was as though part of me was writing and part of me was watching me write. Things popped into my head that I hadn't thought of as part of resilience before. I noticed a sense of settling in my gut, and a sense of quiet power expanding in my chest.

Whatever you experience, make a note. Notice how this may grow and change over time as you come back to your Internal Resiliency List.

Mirrors of Our Internal Resilience

Over the last four decades, people have sat across from me in my office, in trainings, classes and workshops in a number of different countries, often telling the most horrific stories. Many times, not of only a single happening, but of a childhood filled with one adverse experience after another.

At some point when we are exploring together, I often pause and ask, “Who loved you as a child? Who saw you or supported you?” The first words are often, “Well, uh, no one.” “But you have come so far. You have overcome so much. Someone had to be there for you, even for a moment.”

I’ll never forget Elizabeth whose father was an alcoholic and her mother was quite depressed and absent. Her older sister was gone most of the time. She often tried to protect her little brother by hiding with him in the closet. She never knew what would happen when she got home from school. I was touched and amazed that she was as sane and accomplished as she was.

At first, she had the familiar response to my question, “Who was there for you as a child?”

“No one saw me and certainly no one was there for me.”

She paused, her eyes looking far away. Slowly raising her index finger, she said, “There was this one woman...” She paused again and a slight smile began to form as she looked up and leaned toward me. “I mean, there was an old woman, I never knew her name. She stood on her porch every morning and watched us kids walk to school. I began to notice that she seemed to be watching me. I thought she was following me from my front door all the way to the gate where we would go into the school playground. And, every afternoon when the bell rang and I started to walk home, I would look for her and she was always there, her smiling eyes following me all the way home.”

Elizabeth sat back and contemplated for a moment. “I remember even thinking of her sometimes at the dinner table when we were all getting yelled at.”

Amazing. **This old woman that Elizabeth didn't even know, somehow became a much-needed resource for her.** There was something inside of Elizabeth that allowed her to make that connection. It was safe. It was nurturing. She needed it and some part of her was able to receive the caring and support.

In Elizabeth's case, this was a combination of two things: Someone being there for her (at least in her imagination, which is all that's needed) and having a light inside herself that no one was able to extinguish. She created what she needed to survive in the world around her.

We find it extremely helpful if you can begin to discover exactly who those people were for you. The simple act of remembering that person, those experiences, can become a resource for you now.

In a moment it will be time to open your Travel Guide, page 10, and ask yourself the questions that will help you determine your Internal Resiliency Foundation. As you pursue these questions, allow yourself to go back in time as early as you can remember, as early as you can imagine. Sometimes these are only hunches or feelings, not verifiable facts. That's what we want. If you don't have memories right now, that's okay. Just pull out what you do remember. Things like: Where you lived, a friend, a favorite pastime, a special occasion.

If you have few memories, you may want to begin to answer the questions from your experiences as an adult and continue to go back in time. As you name the adult experiences, ask yourself: "Was this the first time I did this type of thing? Was there an earlier time I might have displayed this courage?"

This is never about re-living your early experiences, your traumas. We are simply looking for clues, as though you are putting together a big jigsaw puzzle. Also, drawing on memories, creating a timeline of our lives, helps us begin to make sense of things. It helps us create what researchers call a “coherent narrative” of our lives. When we bring this level of understanding it also helps us have more compassion for ourselves and others.

In this process, start with whatever comes to mind. Answer the questions initially, then let the questions percolate inside as you go about your day. Later return to the list and keep adding to it. It’s okay if you don’t have a response to every question. These are only meant to spur your thinking.

Continue to play with these questions and find a few of your own. Think about this during the day; allow these musings to merely percolate. Come back later and make more notes.

Know that every question will not fit for you. That’s not the point. The objective is for you to begin to get in touch with the part of you that has seen what’s possible. The part of you that helped you chart your course and go for the gold, even when another part of you may not have felt like it, had lost hope or didn’t see a way out. And, when did you persevere in the face of shame, criticism, disbelief or discouragement from others?

This awareness will help strengthen your resilience now. It will help you see the light and the strength that has been inside you all along. And, it will help you begin to grow a solid sense of resilience.

External Resiliency Anchors

If you are fortunate, one or both of your parents and perhaps family members, were there for you, saw you and encouraged you. If

you did not have a safe, stable, nurturing environment at home, you probably had to look elsewhere.

You may have had other adults who filled these roles: a teacher, coach, scout leader, neighbor, a friend's parents or a person from your church or other community group. This is an aspect of resilience: that part of you who has always been helping you to meet your needs, pushing you toward experiences of wholeness.

Let's look at people, places and situations outside of you that have helped you survive and even thrive. Explore your External Resiliency Anchors on page 11 in the Travel Guide. Remembering, imagining, beginning to re-experience some of the support you may have experienced growing up will help you increase your resilience now.

What is Your Resilience Score?

Research demonstrates that resilience is developed and supported from the beginning by safe, stable, nurturing relationships both inside and outside the family. Growing up in a nurturing atmosphere engenders trust and makes you feel loved. Feeling secure and being encouraged by good role models helps boost our self-confidence and allows us to take appropriate risks and learn from our experiences.

The Resilience Assessment, a very well-known questionnaire, was first developed in 2006, revised in 2013, at Southern Kennebec Healthy Start, Augusta, Maine by early childhood service providers, pediatricians, psychologists, and health advocates. It was developed not as a research tool, but to be used to help children and families. The content of the questions was provided by psychologists in the group, Mark Rains and Kate McCann and are based on a number of

research studies. This survey has been used by hundreds of agencies, businesses and schools to help adults begin to examine their resilience.

We encourage you to take this Resiliency Assessment found on page 12 of the Travel Guide and discover your resilience score. With this you will be able to appreciate the factors you do have and, perhaps, identify some that you can strengthen now.

After taking the Resiliency Assessment, notice what it was like for you. What happens inside as you look at your early life through the lens of resilience? How do you feel? Make some notes on page 13 of the Travel Guide about your thoughts and any feelings and sensations that arise.

Developing and enhancing your resilience is a process. Like happiness, it is a lifelong journey. If you feel that you have not been as resilient as you'd like to be, take heart. Whatever your level of resilience, whatever your resiliency score, you can make it better. In participating in these processes, you have already begun.

Chapter Four Summary

Now that you know some of your own resiliency factors, let's begin to deepen our understanding with a brief overview of the science. We highlight the science here because it gives us a way to understand, without judgement, how we got to be the way we are. And, more importantly, it gives us specific tools to move from where we are to where we want to be.

Together we will walk through the importance of our earliest experiences and begin to create deeper levels of compassion, especially for those of us who are parents. We will look at other ways this cursory overview of the science can serve us, including ways to grow the brain at any time in life. Science truly does hold the key to helping us thrive!



The New Me

How do I engage an open conversation with myself?
What might I lose if I wake to the newly emerging me?
To know myself is to recognize my flaws.
Must I accept, even love these flaws, to release them?

By compassionate acceptance of who I have been,
Loving the timid, shy me, who desires words and expression
Yet remains critical as words emerge,
Today I will greet the new me with curiosity and joy.

— Ken Bruer

Science Holds The Key To Thriving

A few years ago, I was preparing for a keynote at an international conference. I did a bit more digging into some of the latest research in several key areas of science that inform our practices in helping people move beyond a ho-hum existence and transform their lives.

As I dug more deeply, I got more and more excited. I discovered that these disparate sciences were all saying basically the same thing! They all reached similar conclusions regarding what we need to experience resilience and thrive.

I want to touch on some of these simple, yet vital, principles and show you how you can use them to create more love and resilience in your own life.

Your Earliest Experiences Lay the Foundation for Everything

Research in Polyvagal Theory, neuroscience, epigenetics and psychology all acknowledge that our earliest experiences form not only our personalities and the Programs that drive our thinking and behavior, but that these earliest experiences determine the structure and function of the brain and nervous system as well as how our DNA manifests.

Let's back up and repeat that. **What these sciences are saying is that whatever happened to us from conception through the first few years of life determine our physiology, our ways of thinking**

and being in the world. These early experiences lay the foundation for our mental and physical health.

The capacity of your parents and caregivers to be emotionally present and to provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment determine how your nervous system develops, what you think about yourself and your abilities and how you relate to the world. This also determines your experiences of safety, connection and love.

If you, like me, didn't have safe, stable, nurturing, emotionally present caregivers, you may not have been able to completely develop your nervous system. You, like me, may have learned to believe things about yourself and the world that aren't true.

The good news: We can do it NOW! Science tells us that, at any time in life, we can develop a deep internal sense of safety, the capacity to authentically connect with others and receive love. We begin now! By participating fully in the experiences in this book, you can begin to shift your brain and body and move toward greater resilience and love.

An important consideration: As we explore the science and discover how vital our earliest experiences are in shaping our brains and nervous systems as well as our personalities, feelings of guilt and/or anger and resentment often arise. Holding on to guilt for our own parenting and/or anger and resentment toward others, never makes things better.

A Note to Parents

I am a parent. I had not healed my early experiences when my kids were young. I wanted to be a good mother and I thought I was

doing all the “right things.” I had natural childbirth, I breastfed, carried my babies and made all their baby food.

The piece that was missing was me! I was simply surviving. I felt numb. I still believed that I wasn’t smart. I still believed that my survival depended on pleasing others, giving myself away to get my needs met.

I regret that I didn’t know then what I know now. As I applied and taught the science and the simple processes, many of which are in this book, I discovered unique ways to heal myself and others. As I did this, my anxiety decreased, and I found truly safe and loving relationships. I began to have meaningful, authentic connections. I was able to actually experience love.

With these experiences, I am truly a different person now, and I get to be a different parent and grandparent. And, you can, too!

Guilt

Guilt is like an invisible ten-pound weight we unconsciously carry everywhere. It is a snooze alarm that won’t go off. Guilt is a shroud placed over us by our families and our culture that keeps us from seeing what is really there and taking positive action. Guilt is a deep mud puddle we walk through that ruins our shoes and keeps us from reaching our desired destination.

Guilt is everywhere. Yet it benefits no one. Guilt is, actually, harmful. Our culture, and many cultures for eons before used guilt to control us and keep us within the tribe. Our parents used guilt to teach us and to prevent us from shaming the family.

We know now that guilt is a debilitating, negative energy that does not serve anyone. It does not make us a better person or a better parent. Guilt brings stress, lack of focus and insomnia. It interferes with authentic, calm, open communication and building close relationships. It keeps us trapped inside a dark hole where we continue to beat ourselves up.

Shift Guilt to Remorse

We can remove the weight of guilt, the shroud of darkness and the mudpuddle that messes up our lives by shifting guilt to remorse. I don't feel guilty that I was not there emotionally for my children. I know I did the best I could with where I was at the time. I do, however, feel remorse for that lack of emotional presence.

Shifting to remorse has allowed me to release the past and be more fully present now. After all, this moment is all I have. I can't go back and re-do the past. I can, however, show up for my grown daughter and son and their families today. I can deeply listen. I can make time to just hang out so we can enjoy each other's company. It touches my heart to be with them and exchange the gifts of authentic caring and love.

Some people feel that if they release the guilt, it is like saying, "what happened is okay." Quite to the contrary. Releasing guilt does not remove what happened. It simply brings light to the garden so that you can grow new plants that will nourish you and those you care about. Shifting from guilt to remorse helps us have compassion for ourselves and opens the way for more love.

Check out the process on pages 14-15 of your Travel Guide, designed to help you understand your feelings of guilt and find ways to move toward remorse, forgiveness and freedom from any guilt that binds you.

Anger and Blame

In a similar way, it does not serve anyone to stay in a place of anger and blame toward others for not giving us what we needed. Remember, if your parents didn't have that experience growing up, they couldn't give it to you! **Shifting away from blame into understanding frees us to have different relationships with ourselves and our families.**

And, if you didn't have what you needed, you couldn't give it to your children, either. We begin NOW! By experiencing the processes you find here, you can begin to build and create safe, stable and nurturing relationships with your children and all of your relationships.

This self-compassion and compassion for others frees us to use that energy for love.

How Can the Science Help You?

We know now that our earliest experiences lay the foundation for our physical and mental well-being throughout life and that it is possible to shift that foundation at any time. Here we want to explore a bit further how your brain and nervous system develop. This is important for three reasons:

1. **New View.** *This new knowledge can help you begin to look at your life differently. Getting a glimpse of the importance of your earliest beginnings, you can make sense of your life in a whole new way.*

Researchers tell us that being able to understand how you got to be the way you are helps you place your life in a new perspective.

2. **Compassion.** *Understanding that your earliest beginnings lay the foundation for who you are now can take the shame out of your current experience. For example, maybe you can now make sense of the anxiety or depression you may have experienced for years. You can stop imagining your problems are “all in your head,” that you are innately flawed or “a mental case.” You can begin to see that there may be definitive reasons, without blaming anyone, why you respond to the world in the ways that you do.*
3. **Hope.** *Understanding how the brain and the nervous system form, how your DNA is expressed, from the beginning, with experience, and that the brain and nervous system continue to develop throughout life, gives us hope. You are not stuck. You are not crazy. You do not have to live with whatever your issues are forever.*

Starting today, you can do something to move toward changing all that. Right now, you can begin to grow new brain cells, new neurons, and create new connections in your brain. You can develop a healthier nervous system. You can have the life you yearn for. Read on. Let's experience these things together.

Behavioral Epigenetics and Resilience

Epigenetics (epi means above, genetics refers to the genes) research tells us that it is not our DNA that controls our destiny. Rather it's experience that determines the expression of our genes. For example, if our experience, from the beginning, is of being wanted, safe and cared for, our DNA begins to prepare us for curiosity, connection, creativity and love.

If the environment and relationships are not perceived as consistently safe and nurturing, our nervous systems set us up to be unconsciously on guard and prepare us to be vigilant—whether that defense is pushing relationships away or giving ourselves a way to get our needs met. This lack of consistent connection also predisposes us to mental and physical illness throughout the lifespan.

Our take-away principle from epigenetics is:

- *It is experience that determines our destiny,*
- *Safety and connection help to create health and resiliency, and*
- *The good news is, it's never too late!*

Research is showing us that we can change our epigenetics and our destiny at any time through experience. In fact, a recent study conducted with experienced meditators showed that they changed their epigenetic markers in only eight hours! There are some tricks to keeping that and the practices here will help. The point is: It's never too late!

You Can Grow Your Brain

Current research in neuroscience, Polyvagal Theory, epigenetics, psychology and mindfulness are all bringing to light that it is possible to grow the brain at any stage in life. In 1949 Donald Hebb discovered that neurons that fire together, wire together.

Simply put, when we have experiences, certain neurons fire in the brain. As we continue to have those same kinds of experiences, these neurons connect. These experiences, these connections, from the very beginning, form neural nets in the brain.

Dr. Daniel Siegel tells us that inside the neural nets is, metaphorically, what we would call our Program. That is, the foundational structure of what we believe about ourselves and how we believe we have to be in the world to survive.

This is the unconscious programming that runs our lives, the lenses through which we view the world. This Program most often begins at conception and continues in utero and especially at birth. **These earliest experiences, way before we have conscious memory, set the foundation for what we believe about ourselves and how we imagine we have to be in our families and with others to be accepted and to get our needs met.**

Most of us carry at least some negative beliefs, garnered from our early experiences, where we felt “less than.” These are usually some version of, “I’m not enough” (*good enough, smart enough, pretty enough, etc.*); “I’m not lovable and/or something’s wrong with me.”

Along with this, we create beliefs about how we have to be within our families and in the world to survive. Most of us have some version of:

- *I have to play small, not stand out.*
- *I have to be the best, excel at everything.*
- *I have to take care of others, not have needs of my own.*

In addition, we create beliefs about the world. These might include something like:

- *The world is not safe,*
- *People hurt you,*
- *I can’t trust men/women,*

- *People you care about will leave you,*
- *I'm not safe.*

We each have a Program. I mentioned my Program earlier: I'm not smart, I shouldn't have needs and I have to please and take care of everyone. Those are the messages that keep us from being who we want to be, making us hypervigilant, and dissatisfied with our lives. The clues are often in what you hear yourself saying to yourself.

Your Program

In the chapter on Resilience, we explored some of your early messages. Now we want to step into this a bit further and look at the effects this may have had.

Continuing the processes, you will uncover some of your Program. I encourage you to go now to your Travel Guide, pages 15-16 where you can think about your early messages, spoken and unspoken, and the decisions you made to survive in your family. In that process you will gain a deeper understanding of your Program. With this you will naturally begin to notice how this is manifesting and effecting you today.

Creating a New Program

Daniel Siegel reminds us that **one positive experience can open the neural nets, allowing us to consciously work with our Program.** Having a caring, positive experience, in the body, in the presence of someone who cares, can help us begin a new set of neuronal connections, new neural nets and a new Program. **The new Program allows us to step into our true gifts and potential.**

Some recent research has demonstrated that following the “aha” moment, there is an uncoupling of the neurons and we literally have about five hours to create a similar, appropriate experience, in the presence of someone who feels safe, to begin to create new neural nets and a new Program.

We capitalize on this research by helping participants have meaningful experiences of themselves as authentic, lovable and capable. Plus, because we are in a retreat setting, and / or staying in touch and supporting virtually, we continue to help each participant reinforce the experience, thereby helping them to, literally, change their brains and create a new model of themselves and what is now possible for them. Individual coaching, whether virtual or in person, can support you to do the same thing.

So, the take home message from neuroscience is, again, **when we have physiological experiences of safety in the presence of someone who cares, we can begin to shift our old programming and create new experiences of who we truly are. We are good, capable and lovable. The good news is: It's never too late!**

This means that we are all capable of transforming our lives, becoming the leaders, the lovers and the life-givers we want to be. We can attain our goals and build our dreams. The principles, practices and processes found in this book give you an opportunity as well as some skills and tools to do precisely that.

Chapter Five Summary

This chapter was a feast of science! Granted, there it's a lot to digest. And, I hope you will delve even more deeply as you participate in the experiences you find in your Travel Guide. You may want to return here from time to time as you move forward to review and increase your understanding.

The next chapter may be the most important concept of the entire book as we unveil the biggest secret to thriving and resilience. That is, the three things all of the scientific research is telling us we need in order to move from where we are to where we want to be.

I hope you will find it as exciting as I do as you begin to see how super simple the principles are and specifically how you can begin to apply them in your life. **As we continue to explore, we want to highlight your experiences of safety, times of experiencing your true, powerful, lovable self and having that witnessed by someone who cares.**



“Always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think and twice as beautiful as you’ve ever imagined.”

— Dr. Seuss

The Best Kept Secret

“The roots of a child’s ability to thrive, regardless of circumstance, lie in that child’s having had at least a small, safe place in which, in the companionship of a loving person, that child could discover that he or she was lovable and capable. If a child finds this during the first years of life, he or she can grow up to be a competent, healthy and loving person.”

— Freg Rogers

When we looked at all of this research, all these piles of data, especially from neuroscience, Polyvagal Theory and epigenetics, we discovered that, basically, all of these scientists have come to similar conclusions. This new scientific data shows that in order to be personally and professionally successful, to experience love and caring, to step into our power and fulfill our life purpose, we need three things:

1. *A felt experience of safety*
2. *An experience of our True Selves, sensing and knowing the part of us that is good, capable and lovable, and*
3. *Have this witnessed by someone who cares.*

These three things are critical to our success on every level: personal and professional. We all become resilient and thrive when we repeatedly experience these. Let’s look at each of these more closely.

Safety

When we say, “a felt sense of safety,” we are not talking about being safe from the saber-toothed tiger. We mean feeling safe enough to show up. “Who I am is enough. What I bring is welcome here.”

As humans, we have a primal, unconscious need to connect with others. And, we need to feel safe to do so. This need for safety is paramount.

You may actually be safe, but if, because of prior experience, you don't perceive safety, you will naturally and unconsciously stay in a place of vigilance. You would be using your energy for protecting yourself and looking to see where the next shoe might fall. This hypervigilance prevents you from actually experiencing what is present and available for you now.

When we feel heard, valued and accepted for who we are, it creates a safe space. We are generating positive energy in an environment that is authentic, open and supportive on every level. This energy helps create a culture of safety where everyone benefits exponentially.

If you do not have these basics in your home or workplace, you are living and working in a toxic environment.

That is a bold statement, but on a mental and physical health level, the absence of a psychologically safe environment means it is harmful or dangerous!

In your Travel Guide on page 17, consider safety in your current relationships at home, with community, and in your work environment.

How Safe Do You Feel?

It can be enlightening to discover your “Safety Quotient,” how safe you feel with strangers, friends and co-workers and with family. In exploring the Safety Assessment, beginning on page 18 in your Travel Guide, you will more deeply understand the levels of safety you experience.

When we feel physically and psychologically safe, our nervous systems can relax, and we can focus on thoughts and activities that bring genuine, loving connections with others and deeper satisfaction in every area of our lives.

The Gifts of a Culture of Safety

Resiliency principles and a culture of safety involve genuine connections that produce positive hormones in the body that counteract stress. When you have an authentic conversation with a friend, family member, client or team member, you slow down and have appropriate eye contact. You’re deeply listening and learning about them as a person.

In these interchanges you release the “happy hormones:” oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine. This creates a surge of positive emotion that brings deeper levels of trust and safety and improves social skills. The experience of safety allows for vulnerability and a greater sense of trust and closeness.

Along with an unconscious sense of safety comes the ability to be more open, to try new things, to handle change and to make mistakes and learn from them. Vulnerability goes against our cultural teachings. Yet, in order to have meaningful connections, to thrive, we need to feel safe enough to be vulnerable. Both the giver and the receiver benefit from these positive hormones.

When we feel safe, it also helps us go to bat for something we believe in or that gives us the energy to stick with a task and make the extra push for the “finish line.” A big side benefit is that we tend to feel less stressed and our sleep improves.

With this you are able to step up and step out to take risks because you have the love and good energy surrounding you. And when you prove to yourself and others that you are actually doing “it” you experience your true self, sensing the part of you that is good, capable and lovable.

These practices engender increased emotional intelligence which brings greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, increased capacity for empathy and compassion, better social skills, better communication and a greater capacity to handle stress and change.

Window of Presence: Sometimes I Shut Down, Sometimes I Lose It

Imagine it’s a beautiful day and you’re standing at a window. As you look out, you feel comfortable, fairly settled, the light comes in and the world looks okay from where you’re standing. This is your comfort zone, the range within which you feel safe, at ease and present. It’s the zone in which you are able to receive, process and integrate information.

This is the window of our capacity to regulate our nervous system, engage socially or relationally, and be creative. **This window is like our safe container, the place where we are able to feel safe, relaxed, present, rational and relational.** In this place we are able to take care of ourselves, interact with others in a congenial way and be productive. This is the place that feels good, where we try to live most of the time.

From here we are able to take things as they come, allowing a flow, meeting desires, disappointments and deadlines without too much arousal or shutdown. We are able to engage in and grow meaningful, close relationships.

In his groundbreaking book, *The Developing Mind*, Daniel Siegel called this our Window of Tolerance. John and Anna Chitty later coined the term, Window of Presence. We find Window of Presence most descriptive of this state of being.

Siegel tells us that the size of our Window is determined by our capacity to regulate our nervous system, to manage stress. This includes our capacity to stay on an even keel, use resources appropriately, to be present and interact with others in a calm and connected way.

All of this is determined by the development of our brain and nervous system which depends, in large part, on our earliest experiences. If, because of your earlier experiences, you are not able to draw on current resources or effectively engage with others, your nervous system must use the backup option of fighting or running away.

As long as we experience safety within ourselves and in our environment, we stay within our Window. However, when we begin to consciously or unconsciously slip from that secure sense of safety, we will leave our Window.

There are two different places we can go when we leave our Window of Presence. One is thought of as above the Window, the other is below the Window. Here is a graphic example of someone going above his Window.

George's Shocking Surprise

George is a high-profile New York attorney and admits he has an anger problem. He's worked on his anger issues in therapy and even completed an anger management course. Both of these have helped, but not enough.

"I was under a lot of pressure at my new firm and was working long hours. One night, our 13-year-old daughter made a sarcastic remark and I lost it. I'm ashamed to say, I yelled at her, grabbed her arm and pinned her against the wall. It didn't really hurt her." He paused and looked away as though he knew his last statement was wishful thinking. "A few days later," he swallowed hard as he continued, "I came home from a business trip, unlocked the front door to discover everything was gone. The house was empty! There was a note on the kitchen counter from my wife that read, 'Brianna and I moved out. I will not allow you to terrify and hurt her or me anymore. Below is the number of my lawyer. Call her. Don't call me.'"

This is a stark example of the consequences of someone going into a fight/flight response and leaving their Window, especially where they tend to leave their Window often. It is an "expensive" option on every level: physical, mental, emotional and relational. We have all left our Window at some time. We have all been with others whom we trusted and felt the pain of them leaving their Window.

This is an example of leaving the Window of Presence by going "over the top" of the Window. There is another way you may have experienced in leaving your Window. If our attempts at staying safe and getting our needs met were not successful when we were growing up, we often learn to not even try the option of fight /

flight but go directly to the freeze or shut down state. We will dive below our Window.

You may be one who, instead of acting out by getting loud and forceful, may, instead, quietly “act in.” In this place, we go into rigidity and immobilize, disconnect, dissociate, or freeze. You might “leave,” feel foggy, space out, shut down or go numb. It’s like having a power failure and the lights go out. It is below the lower range, the bottom of your Window. This was certainly my unconsciously preferred mode of staying safe.

From this shut down place you may feel stuck, depressed, helpless or hopeless, with no way out. You may “disappear,” become silent, frozen, unable to really communicate or make good decisions. This state can be equally detrimental physiologically, emotionally and socially as going above our Window into chaos.

From either place, above or below your Window of Presence, your unconscious mind does not feel safe, you cannot connect or receive what others are offering. You feel precarious, and you might become vigilant and defensive. Your thinking is likely clouded and you don’t see a way out. You are not acting from a rational place but are reacting from a more primitive part of the brain and nervous system. This part of the brain does not know time or logic and cannot see the big picture. You are responding from the more emotional, reactive part of the brain designed to keep us safe. This happens to everyone at some point and happens quickly, outside the realm of our awareness.

If you are not able to use your resources to calm or support yourself, you “leave your Window.” Other coping mechanisms take over and you unconsciously begin to do things that in the moment may help you feel safe, but in the long run don’t serve you well.

If you experience anxiety, depression or other issues, your Window of Presence is most likely compromised. If your capacity for stress is low, your ability to handle the demands of relationships and work may be less than you would like. You may find that you have a “short fuse” and get angry and say or do things you later regret. You may become incredibly anxious over small things or simply feel a generalized anxiety much of the time. This indicates that you have a smaller-than-needed Window of Presence, a smaller capacity to stay calm, interact comfortably with others and engage in meaningful relationships and/or work.

These unconscious processes are caused by fear, shame or blame. When they arise, we need some specific awareness, skills and tools to create safety and bring us back within our Window of Presence.

It is interesting to note that many of us learned to give the appearance that we are within our Window, in that we can act calm, speak rationally and do what is appropriate. Sometimes in these cases, this is automatic learned behavior. While this can serve us, as it is certainly better – at least socially – than “flying off the handle” or merely shutting down, it also exacts a price. The cost is that we are not really present for the encounter. We are not able to receive the benefits of it. **And, perhaps most importantly, this type of response, over time, creates tremendous stress on our bodies.** The effects often show up as physical maladies or addictions and compulsions.

The process on page 19 of your Travel Guide will help you begin to understand your own Window. You can learn a lot about your Window by simply noticing times that you may feel “off;” times when you feel stressed or about to slip back into old patterns. Being in situations with people who may have, in the past, been triggering can take you out of your Window of Presence. These may bring

unconscious memories, old hurts and/or unmet needs to the surface. As you become more aware, your body will begin to express this and you can use that awareness as a signal to bring in resources, helping you to stay within your Window.

Signals that you may be on the verge of leaving your Window:

- *Your breath is shallow and/or you are sighing*
- *Your mouth is dry and/or your throat is tight*
- *You are picking at your fingers, biting fingernails, rubbing hands*
- *You are engaging in other nervous behavior such as swinging a foot, chewing gum, chattering or talking a lot*
- *You find yourself reaching for a snack, a smoke, a drink or whatever you use to soothe yourself*
- *You are holding extra tension in various parts of the body*
- *You feel more emotionally labile than usual*
- *You experience increased heart rate*
- *You feel spacey or foggy*
- *You are feeling lethargic, numb or shut-down*

Resources to help you stay within your Window

As you begin to nurture yourself and feel progressively safer in your relationships more of the time, you are literally growing new neural nets in your brain. You are also growing a healthier nervous system. All of this helps you grow a wider Window of Presence.

There are a number of simple things you can do when you notice you are about to leave your Window. We find creating a list of these resources and practicing them brings your specific resources to mind when you need them most.

Here are a few examples:

1. *Notice and “name what is:”*
 - a. *Right now, I’m a little speedy*
 - b. *I’m not paying much attention*
 - c. *I feel bored*
 - d. *Part of me just wants to leave*
 - e. *I feel trapped here*
 - f. *I’m afraid this is not going to go well*
2. *Take a deep breath: Consciously follow your breath all the way in and all the way out for a breath or two. Focus on your exhale, consciously make the exhale longer and slower than the inhale.*
3. *Change your pace. Slow down or purposefully move faster for a brief moment.*
4. *Drink cool water*
5. *Engage your senses:*
 - a. *Notice colors around you, contrasts of light and dark*
 - b. *Notice and feel textures*
 - c. *Identify a sound very near and one in the distance*
 - d. *Inhale and see if you can detect an aroma or smell some essential oil*
 - e. *Pop a small mint in your mouth and focus on the sensations*

6. *Change positions in your seat, change seating: move to the floor or a ball; stand up*
7. *Be sure the chair “fits” you; use a footstool if necessary*
8. *Get up and walk around*
9. *Do the two-minute [Vagal Nurturing practice](#) or any part of it*
10. *Have eye contact with someone, or if not possible, find a photo of someone whose eyes are engaging and present for you*
11. *Focus your eyes on something specific and notice as many details as possible*
12. *Eat some protein food, such as nuts, seeds*
13. *Change your temperature (take off or put on a sweater) cover your feet or take off your shoes*
14. *Stretch*
15. *Try a quieting yoga posture such as pose of a child, forward bend*
16. *Squeeze your hands or push something with your feet*
17. *Feel your belly, then your toes*
18. *As you breathe, tell yourself a calming statement, such as: “Right now, I’m okay.”*
19. *Think of a “calm scene” or a time you felt really right with the world.*
20. *Change the lighting around you or move to a more dimly lit place or possibly a brighter one*
21. *Gently rock yourself*

22. *“Hug” yourself, cross or uncross your legs. (Crossing the midline is usually calming.)*
23. *Be aware of any allergies you may have that may be causing irritation or drowsiness*
24. *Laugh or simply smile inwardly*
25. *Take a deep breath and blow out, as though you were blowing up a balloon.*
26. *Massage your hands*
27. *Have some manipulative toys in your bag: something stretchy, something squishy, a ball, etc.*
28. *Listen to music, play music, sing*
29. *If needed, take some Rescue Remedy, calming tea or herbs*

As time allows:

30. *Splash your face with cold water; take a cold shower*
31. *Take a walk outside*
32. *Engage in something creative*
33. *Run, jump*
34. *Watch some comedy; laugh*
35. *Stretch*
36. *Jump rope*
37. *Roll on the ball*
38. *Sit in the rocking chair*

39. *Do some yoga or tai chi*
40. *Learn something new that you enjoy*

Partner exercises:

41. *Exchange a quick back rub, ending with tapping or soothing strokes*
42. *Do the “bridge:” bending at the waist, holding wrists, slowly move backward and stretch both your backs*
43. *Touch someone, ask for safe touch; exchange a gentle hug*
44. *Ask someone to merely listen to you for a bit. “No need to fix anything, I just need to be heard.”*
45. *Engage in something fun: a game, playing music, watch a comedy*

Use the above ideas and make your own list. Place it where you can see it, perhaps near your computer, on your phone, on the refrigerator, or the bathroom mirror.

One of the best, quickest and most effective resources for calming the nervous system, is called ABC, and comes from the Heart Math Institute. **When you first notice that things are not going well, try this ten-second practice. It is very easy and extremely effective.** We have used it with all ages. Children catch on very quickly! Try it now:

- *Aware (that I need a pause)*
- *Breathe, hand over heart/ center of your chest, long exhale*
- *Connect with a resource, like, “Right now, I’m okay.”*

The pause helps us stop what’s happening and shift its trajectory. Hand on the heart and the long, slow exhale helps the heart and

nervous system settle. The best part is that this gives the brain a strong message, “It’s okay. We’ve got this one. You can settle now.” Noticing and repeating a phrase like, “Right now, I’m okay,” completes the shift. I suggest you practice it now. Teach it to your family.

Your Travel Guide, page 19 will help you explore your personal resources so that you can maintain and grow your Window of Presence.

Chapter 6 Summary

In this chapter we have explored the concepts of safety and your Window of Presence. With the information here and the processes in your Travel Guide, you have some tools and resources to help you create safety for yourself and others. As you do this you will begin to notice relationships are easier and sweeter and you feel less stressed.

Next, we dive into the exciting information about the nerve that is responsible for helping us stay calm, relate to others and even digest our food! The best part is that you can grow your nervous system now and experience more calm and better connections with others.



Finding Peace

Feeling lost, as if my world is breaking apart
I remember my mountain retreat
Trees stand tall, offering shelter
Birds brighten my day like celebrating songs
Stream bubbles over rocks adding deep comfort

Heart slowing, breath deepening
Hope, comfort and safety are restored
I give thanks for all my teachers
For both gifts and challenges
Nature brings peace now

— Ken Bruer

The Nerve You Never Heard Of Is Running Your Life!

A large part of resilience involves the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve, the longest nerve in the body, is a major component of the parasympathetic nervous system, and helps us to “rest and digest.” It is responsible for much of our physiological functions including heart rate, blood pressure, digestion and our capacity to speak. The vagus nerve helps us maintain homeostasis.

Basically, the vagus nerve is the CEO of our body’s organization, and we want to be sure our CEO is performing optimally. Being an integral part of our optimal functioning makes having a healthy vagus nerve an important facet of our overall health and wellbeing.

Polyvagal Theory paints a new picture of what we need for optimal functioning in our fast paced, ever changing world. How we handle stress, how reactive or calm we are able to be is dependent on how well developed our nervous system is. In addition, polyvagal theory supports us in learning what it takes to become truly healthy, loving and resilient now.

Dr. Steven Porges, Distinguished Scientist at Indiana University and professor of psychiatry at University of North Carolina, discovered that, as humans, we have three, not two branches of the nervous system. We were taught that we have two: fight / flight and freeze. Porges has demonstrated that we humans have a third

branch, a third way to stay safe, get our needs met and calm our nervous system.

He calls it our social engagement system: our connection with other human beings. His research shows that this third and most important branch is our first go-to strategy. It takes less energy and works quickly to help us be and do what is needed in the moment.

How Your Vagus Nerve Develops Determines More than You Might Think

The social engagement system that stems from the vagus nerve begins developing in utero and becomes myelinated (meaning it thickens and creates more connections) with our first contacts after birth. We are the only mammals who, at birth, can't crawl to our source of food and safety, so we have to signal our caregiver. It's really a good thing we're so cute!

If the caregiver is emotionally present and responsive, these tiny nerves in the inner ear become myelinated which allows the baby to recognize a calming human voice. This continues as eye contact is made, and the heart settles and makes digestion possible. The child begins to develop a well myelinated vagus nerve which is the foundation for our social engagement system.

This is the body's preferred line of defense. First our body uses an unconscious mechanism that Porges calls neuroception to discern threat or safety. It's like this unconscious part of us is always asking, "Am I safe? Am I safe?" If our bodily sense detects safety, we're able to connect with others to soothe our nervous system, digest our food and begin to trust that our needs will be met. In other words, our unconscious system of neuroception is always surveying the environment for safety, especially in relationships.

If your vagus nerve is not well developed, your social engagement system won't function optimally. If there is not a perceived sense of emotional and physical safety, we use the extremely stressful back-up systems of fight/ flight or freeze.

This is where we leave our Window of Presence. As mentioned in the last chapter, this often looks like contention, anger, sarcasm, lack of cooperation and/or withholding. It can also manifest as being withdrawn, shut down, and/or invisible. The individual, the family and the culture suffer.

If you, like me, didn't have an experience of safe, stable, nurturing caregivers — and if your parents didn't have that experience, they couldn't give it to you! — you may not have been able to completely develop the vagus nerve. When this happens, we often experience anxiety, digestive problems, inability to accurately read social cues, either missing cues of others or misinterpreting other's cues.

As you learn about the vagus nerve and think about your own life, head over to your Travel Guide, page 20 and make a few notes. We invite you to become curious about your own experiences and how they might be impacting you now, both physically and emotionally.

We know now that as we perceive a safe environment, in the presence of someone who cares, we can have experiences that develop the vagus nerve. This helps us calm the nervous system and experience ourselves and the world in healthier ways.

Many of the processes here are designed to help you grow your vagus nerve!

It's Never Too Late!

In looking at this, you may recall some of your earliest experiences as I'm remembering some of mine.

My mother was incredibly anxious and stressed. As I mentioned earlier, my parents had a volatile relationship and separated when my brother was an infant. They really loved each other; they simply couldn't make the marriage work.

On Christmas day they got back together for the afternoon and later found out I was on the way. Shortly before this, my mother's sister and her baby died in childbirth. So, you can imagine, my mother was filled with turmoil, anxiety, and a lot of grief. In some work I had done, I experienced her anxiety and thought I needed to take care of her. Since that wasn't possible, I unconsciously decided I must not be smart and dedicated myself to doing my best to take care of others, often at my own expense.

Even if you didn't get the benefit of parents who were able to be calm and emotionally present for you as an infant, we know now that in an environment of perceived safety, with people who are genuinely present and caring, you can repair and strengthen those vagal connections.

My most memorable experience of this was in the early 1990s when I was working with a therapist in a group intensive. Ray was incredibly present, as was the entire group, and I found myself quietly moving into a deep inner state. In that sweet stillness, my eyes closed, I took a deep breath and felt something shift inside my body. I paused and heard these words inside my head: "It didn't matter if

they didn't want me, I wanted to be here!" I continued to feel the moment and looking into Ray's eyes, feeling his calm, nurturing presence, I felt a surge of aliveness in my body as I smiled and exclaimed: "I wanted to be here!"

This was life changing for me. In this process I experienced each of the three things scientists tell us we need to shift our Program, our past beliefs, and step into the fullness of the True Self:

- 1. I certainly felt safe to be curious and allow whatever wanted to emerge.*
- 2. I had a bodily sense of who I really am, not what I had come to believe about myself.*
- 3. And, this experience was witnessed by a deeply present and caring group around me.*

The healing part of that experience is not about reliving a trauma or something that happened. It is never about reexperiencing what actually happened or shedding light on the event.

Knowing our early story is interesting and can help us create a coherent story of our lives, making sense of what happened, but the thing that creates lasting change is the experience of feeling safe, an experience of myself as different from what I may have unconsciously believed and having that witnessed by someone who is right there with me all the way. That is what shifts the Program and our lives.

Social Engagement System

This third method that we as humans use to create safety and get our needs met, what Porges calls our social engagement system, determines our capacity for connection, our capacity for love. As

you experience the principles and processes in this book, you will likely notice yourself becoming calmer and more present. The more experiences of safety we can have and acknowledge, the more our social engagement system (and the vagus nerve) grows.

How Strong Is Your Social Engagement System?

It's time now to check out page 20 in your Travel Guide where you will look at your social engagement system and determine, for yourself, just how strong it is. **Regardless of your score on these assessments, I hope you will learn, as I have... there is always more... more safety and more love.** We also want to help you find some ways to move the dial a bit closer to a stronger score on each of the factors. Later in this chapter we will explore some practices to help you grow your vagus nerve and develop your nervous system.

How's Your Vagal Tone?

Another bit of science that you might find as fascinating as I do relates to what Porges calls “vagal tone.” Understanding vagal tone helps us learn to regulate and grow our own nervous systems. This allows us to stay calm in the face of stress, not get triggered by others' behavior, stay curious about our environment, and take appropriate risks. This facilitates us making better decisions and creating more meaningful connections with those we care about. Best of all, as we increase our vagal tone, we can naturally experience more love.

Everyone's vagus nerve is different. We each have different capacities, depending on our earliest experiences and our experiences of safety and loving relationships as an adult. If you have a healthy,

well-developed vagus nerve, you will be able to recover quickly and relax more deeply following stressful or frightening episodes.

In fact, if you have a healthy vagus system, your body will not be on alert as much, meaning you do not have to expend a lot of energy unconsciously surveying the environment for threat or safety. You will be able to relax faster, take things in stride more easily and go with the flow, making healthier choices for yourself. The strength of your vagus nerve, how well it is developed, is known as vagal tone.

Technically, vagal tone is measured by monitoring your heart and breathing rate. Your heart rate increases slightly when you inhale and decreases slightly when you exhale. The measured difference between the two determines your vagal tone. The greater the difference between your heart rate when you inhale and your heart rate when you exhale, the higher your vagal tone will be. You want a higher vagal tone so your body can recover quickly and fully, even after a stressful event.

Signs of healthy, strong vagal tone include the ability to be in a good mood most of the time, experience little anxiety, and have healthy resilience. It also engenders good digestion as the vagal nerve helps produce healthy digestive enzymes. It is also responsible for our regulation of blood sugar, and lower blood pressure as well as reduced risk of stroke and heart disease.

On pages 20-22 in your Travel Guide you will find a self-assessment to help you explore your vagal tone. Understanding vagal tone helps us learn to regulate and grow our own nervous systems. **This allows us to stay calm in the face of stress, not get triggered by others' behavior, stay curious about our environment, and take appropriate risks.** This helps us make better decisions and create

more meaningful connections with those we care about. **Best of all, as we increase our vagal tone, we can naturally experience more love.**

Each of the items in the assessment comes from research that indicates important measures of healthy vagal tone. These will give you a general idea of how healthy your vagal tone is. For example, if you experience on-going anxiety, excess stress, and have difficulty recovering from stressful or threatening events, and/or have poor digestion, you can guess that your vagal tone is low.

Don't get discouraged if your score is not what you'd like. **The good news: you can increase your vagal tone by growing your vagus nerve now. You can help your nervous system create new connections and function optimally now.**

Using the resources here and regularly practicing a few of these processes can help you increase your vagal tone. You will begin to experience some remarkable physical, mental and emotional changes that will increase your sense of calm, your capacity to have meaningful relationships and experience more love as well as increase your resilience.

When the vagus nerve is well developed and healthy, our overall health and stamina improve. We are able to be more present, clear headed and creative. When we live and work from a place of balance we help those around us to do the same.

Here are some specific benefits of developing a healthy vagus nerve.

With the simple processes named in this chapter, you will naturally begin to:

1. *Create new brain cells and better connections in the nervous system and brain: neurogenesis.*
2. *Use your social engagement system — engaging others in a positive way — rather than moving so quickly into the fight/ flight response.*
3. *Strengthen your relaxation response so that you quickly reduce stress, avoid hyperarousal and the fight/ flight response.*
4. *Reduce cortisol (the stress hormone) levels*
5. *Reduce inflammation in the body*
6. *Maintain a normal blood pressure*
7. *Enhance memory*
8. *Create a healthy feedback loop linked to positive emotions*
9. *Increase energy and motivation*
10. *Decrease loneliness, depression and negative moods*
11. *Decrease your chances of heart attack and stroke*
12. *Maintain optimal energy levels*
13. *Help others around you feel more calm and able to focus*
14. *Develop more positive and meaningful relationships with others*
15. *Sleep better*

In short, consciously developing your vagus nerve will increase your overall ability to live a longer, healthier and more energetic life.

How to Grow Your Vagus Nerve and Stay Cool, Calm and Connected

Below are some practices that have been proven to help you grow your vagus nerve. We suggest you try as many of them as you can. See what helps you feel more calm, present and centered. Choose several of them that you will do daily. Make some notes about the ones you'll try first.

1. **Vagal Nurturing.** *This Ryzio practice takes about two minutes and will immediately help you calm your nervous system. Each of the simple components comes directly from research that has been proven to activate, nurture and help you grow your vagus nerve. See [Vagal Nurturing Exercise](#)*
2. **Breathe deeply and slowly.** *Taking slow, rhythmic, diaphragmatic breaths stimulates and tones the vagus nerve. It's best if you can make the out breath longer than the in breath.*
3. **Humming, Singing, Chanting.** *The vagus nerve is connected to the vocal cords, so humming and singing stimulates it. Hum a song, repeat the sound "OM," sing loudly and/or fast, sing with others. What it sounds like does not matter. It matters that you sing!*
4. **Cold.** *Splash your face with cold water several times a day or turn off the hot water for the last ten seconds of your shower. You might also drink ice water and/or swim in cold water. Researchers have found that regular exposure to cold lowers your "fight/ flight" response and has a calming effect on your nervous system.*

5. **Mindfulness, Meditation**, especially the [Five Minute Loving Kindness Meditation](#). This promotes feelings of goodwill towards yourself and others. Studies show that increasing positive emotions can lead to increased social connection and feelings of closeness and enhanced vagal tone.
6. **Prayer**. Reciting prayers, such as the rosary, have been shown to increase vagus activation and tone. Use whatever spiritual tradition you are called to, and/or your current practice.
7. **Yoga**. Research has shown that yoga increases vagus nerve activity, helps calm and strengthen the nervous system.
8. **Exercise**. Exercise stimulates blood flow in the gut and, therefore, the vagus nerve.
9. **Laughter**. Laughter really is the best medicine! Laughing with friends is even better.
10. **Massage**. Massaging your head, pressure massage, foot massage and general body massage all help increase vagal tone.
11. **Balance the gut microbiome**. The presence of healthy bacteria in the gut increases vagal tone as it creates a positive feedback loop through the vagus nerve. This can be accomplished by improving diet and consuming probiotics as directed.
12. **Create nurturing social relationships**. This not only stimulates the vagus nerve but is critical for health and well-being.
13. **Appropriate, safe touch**. Increasing the hormone oxytocin through touch, positive close relationships and healthy sexual activity has proven to increase vagal tone.

Note which two or three of the above practices you will try this week. Experiment with several and discover

which ones work best for you. Commit to practicing at least one each day.

Polyvagal Theory and neuroscience are telling us we can actually change the brain and grow our nervous system!

As we do these processes that change the brain and grow our nervous system, we naturally increase our capacity to:

- *Be more conscious and aware*
- *Stay cool and calm*
- *Connect with others in more satisfying and meaningful ways*
- *Experience more compassion*
- *Feel loved and cared for*
- *Be more creative*
- *Have greater focus and concentration*
- *Experience increased overall health*

Make a note about which of the above benefits are most important to you.

Every time you slow down, become present, have eye contact with someone and listen deeply, you are helping to create safety, provide happiness, increase vagal tone and insure health and longevity for that person and yourself.

When we can truly see our partners, children, co-workers and clients, help them feel valued and safe, they are able to get out of

their unconscious flight/fight or freeze states and use their social engagement system.

With this not only do their nervous systems settle, but they actually grow new connections in the brain and nervous system, increasing their on-going capacity for self-confidence, engagement with others and creativity. Relationships become deeper and more meaningful and they become advocates, team players and culture shifters.

Ryzio Certified Coaches have decades of experience in helping individuals from 18 to 80 move from where they are to where they want to be in their lives. With the felt experience of entering an extremely safe and welcoming environment, exploring areas of their lives they want to shift, we help each participant find their own path and create their own toolbox. This ultimately helps them change the expression of their DNA, change their brain, grow their nervous system and shift their lives. These principles and the experiences are in all of our programs, both in-person and virtual. They increase each participant's capacity for authentic presence, happiness, and love as well as giving them a specific sense of direction and a personal toolbox to help them continue their journey.

This is exciting stuff! As a staff, we gain so much from seeing the amazing results as our participants complete an online course or get ready to go home from a retreat and as we continue with virtual support for weeks. This integration and ongoing support is part of what makes Ryzio programs unique.

We often hear things like: "I finally have my life back." "I know what I want now and I know how I'm going to get it." "I'm a totally different person now."

We invite you to take advantage of all these resources and connect with us. “Doing my Ryzio program was more valuable than the years of coaching and therapy I’ve done in the past!”

Chapter Seven Summary

In this chapter, one of the most important in the book, we explored the concepts about the vagus nerve, why it’s important and what you can do to grow your own nervous system. I really encourage you to create some practices for yourself from the suggestions here and in your Travel Guide. They made a huge difference for me and I’m sure they will for you, as well.

Continuing the journey, the next chapter asks us to create some simple practices as well as discover some powerful resources, such as your daily processes and growing your own community. We also highlight some of the work we are doing as we apply all these principles to help you find your resiliency and thrive!



Opening to Love

All I really want is to feel seen, to be heard.
I want to settle into the warmth
Knowing I can count on you.
Smiling, catching your eyes in mine
Reaching, touching, breathing
I begin to feel safe.
Now I know I don’t have to hide.
I can bring all of me here.
I can feel the love.

— MG

Continue Your Journey Toward Greater Love And Resilience

Even though our culture would have us believe there are magic pills that will give you happiness and the life you want overnight, we know that is not true. Big goals do not happen magically. Any goal we set, anything we value and want to bring into our lives, we must learn the principles, find some tools, and practice, practice.

Here you have opened to some of the science that informs the principles. You have explored some of the tools. As you continue do the practices you find here, you will increase your vagal tone and the capacity of your nervous system to calm and connect with others. You will also begin to build new connections in your brain that will give you increased self-confidence. This feeling safe and connected to others will help you release old patterns and behaviors that no longer serve you.

As you continue practicing, you will discover that so that much more is possible. You will have more energy to keep going, try new things and take risks. With that comes more meaningful relationships, greater creativity and deeper satisfaction. And, more love. There is always room for more love: both experiencing it and expressing it.

Below are some practices that will help take you there. The steps have been divided into two categories. The Daily

Workout is a list of simple practices you can do to help build your capacity for resilience and find more meaningful relationships. The second list includes resources to support your personal transformational process.

The Daily Workout: Practices to Help You Grow Your Resilience

Below is a partial list of practices. These are not practices that consume a lot of time. They mostly take intention and awareness. And, you will notice subtle and sometimes very noticeable benefits by intentionally beginning to bring them into your daily awareness and consciously practicing them.

1. **Slow down.** *Pause. Take a breath.*
2. **Notice what you notice.** *Become more and more mindful, track your awareness, notice when you become more settled or more activated.*
3. **Ground your body; bring yourself into the present moment.** *The kids call this a “body read-out.” Feel where your body touches the chair as you are sitting. Sense your feet on the floor, or wherever they are. Notice your heartbeat. You can even place your hand on your heart and see what that is like. Follow your breath.*
4. **Breathing Practice.** *Begin a simple practice. Follow your breath all the way in and all the way out. Place a hand on your heart and make the exhale longer than the inhale. Set the clock on your phone to remind you to practice this a number of times a day.*
5. **Monitor your thoughts, watch your language.** *Notice “shoulds.” Are you spinning in negative thinking? When you notice you are about to go down that alley, take a breath and replace the*

negative, fear-based thoughts with something that brings you back into the moment. Try something like: “Right now, I’m okay!”

6. **Self-care.** Ask yourself, “What am I needing right now?”
7. **Resourcing.** See also the link to the two-minute Vagal Nurturing practice below.
8. **Invite your Wise Adult voice** to take over more of the time.
9. **Journal** your thoughts.
10. **Establish a practice of gratitude.** As you go about your day, focus on what is good, what is beautiful, what is working and small things you feel grateful for. Make a list in your journal before you go to sleep.

Head over to your Travel Guide now, page 23 and make some notes about some of the resources you will use and the processes you will begin to adopt for yourself. As you incorporate these into your daily experience you will begin to notice greater calm, more satisfaction and deeper connections with others.

Further Resources to Support the Process of Growing Your Resilience

1. **Create deeper relationships** with a partner or friend
 - a. *Consciously spend time together, simply being*
 - b. *Talk about your inner life*
 - c. *Listen deeply to them, reflect what you hear.*
2. **Find your tribe, your community.** Find group activities that feed you. Explore virtual gatherings and allow yourself to receive the contact that is there.

3. **Make it a practice**, several times a week, to engage in:
 - a. *Something active:*
 - Go for a walk with a friend or your dog.
 - Engage in a regular work out at the gym, practice of yoga, Thai Chi, or any activity that gets you moving and breathing
 - b. *Something creative:*
 - Journal
 - Art, such as drawing or collage
 - Cooking, gardening
 - c. *Something introspective:*
 - Meditation, any mindfulness practice
 - Journaling

Note: Some of these can overlap. For example, your creative activity might be to keep a journal which could also be your introspective activity.

4. **Volunteer.** Find places in your community to give back.
5. **Sing.** Make music. Singing helps grow the vagus nerve. Singing with others also brings the “happy hormones” that make us feel better in big ways!

Ryzio Programs to support your resiliency, goals and experience of more love!

Ryzio is here to support and guide you. With programs designed to fit your schedule and your individual needs, you can craft learning, guidance and support that fits for you. You might begin with a Three-Hour “Ignite with Love Experience.” If you are ready to dive in, try the Three-Day “Activate with Love, Shift Your Life” Experience. And, if you are called to deeply remodel your life, to experience more love now and to make a difference in the world, you may be ready for the premium “Transform with Love” Experience.

These programs are all offered virtually. In person events will be scheduled as possible.

3-Hour Ignite with Love Experience: Step into Your Power!

Are you ready to step into your personal power, bring forth your gifts and be the light that you are?

You can now realize what is possible for you! In this three-hour process join fellow travelers ready to align themselves with purpose and experience more love and meaningful connection.

You will learn what has held you back as well as some specific science-based tools to help you calm your nervous system and connect more fully with your True Self. This allows you to ignite your power and tap into love.

Benefits of the Three-Hour Ignite with Love Experience

Discover Possibility

- *Understand what it takes to move from coping to thriving*
- *Explore the science behind creating deeper connections and resilience*
- *Gain tools for your journey toward a more fulfilling life*

Experience Safety

- *Feel welcome, seen, and heard*
- *Deepen your mindfulness practice*
- *Have compassion for yourself and others*

3-Day Activate with Love Experience: Shift Your Life!

Are you looking for something more in your life?

Begin to free yourself from anything that prevents you from loving deeply. Develop meaningful connections and learn to live a life of compassion and purpose. You will learn simple, science-backed tools that will help you stay on course and activate the power of authentic love.

During our time together you will also have a special opportunity to explore a personal stumbling block or goal with one of our coaches. You will leave with some tools and a specific plan to continue integrating and growing your gifts.

Benefits of the Three-Day Activate with Love Experience

Learn to:

- *Understand and begin to experience what it takes to thrive*
- *Explore the science behind creating deeper connections and resilience*
- *Gain essential tools for your journey toward a more fulfilling life*

Experience:

- *Experience safety*
- *Feel welcome, seen, and heard*
- *Deepen your mindfulness practice*
- *Have a glimpse of and experience the Truth of who really you are!*

Transform Your Life with Love Experience!

Would you like to experience deeper levels of connection and love?

What would your life be like if you could live in a place of total safety to show up with your gifts and step into all of who you are?

Can you imagine what your life will be like when you find your focus and discover true happiness?

This premium program is offered both in person and virtually. Both versions include large group and small group processes as well as on-going individual coaching.

With either the virtual or in-person program, you will learn to step into the fullness of your being, live your life's calling, surrounded by love and support. Creating safety is paramount to experiencing love and here you will learn how to create safety in every way for yourself and others. Through science-backed practices you will remove old blocks, experience the power of your gifts and transform your life on every level through authentic experiences of safety and love. You will have tools that emerge from the latest science to change your life from the inside, to live your mission and make a significant difference.

Benefits You Will Receive from the Transform Your Life with Love Experience:

Your coaches support you in learning and integrating new skills and practices, including powerful insights and breakthroughs in your personal and professional life.

Set Your New Direction

- *Clarify your calling, your vision and your true nature. Illuminate what is possible for you now.*

- *Release old Programs, including unconscious beliefs, fears and behaviors that no longer serve you.*
- *Experience true safety and realize what your true destiny is now.*

Create Healthy Practices

- *Develop simple skills and processes to develop your “Window of Presence”*
- *Learn mindfulness practices and other tools that enable you to slow down and become more present, reduce stress and increase productivity and creativity.*
- *Discover what you really want, learn to hold appropriate boundaries, and engage in better self-care.*

Reap Rich Rewards

- *Experience calm and create vibrant health*
- *Increase self-confidence and your capacity to create and sustain meaningful relationships.*
- *Grow your brain, develop your nervous system, and even change the trajectory of your DNA towards health, happiness and longevity.*

Live in Inspiration

- *Reignite your passion and purpose.*
- *Realize the love that is possible in every area of your life.*
- *Gain confidence to live your vision and inspire others.*

Embrace Your New Life

- *Step fully into life from a new perspective moving beyond your current limits; and creating a new template for what is possible for you.*
- *Rediscover inspiration by taking the next step on the path to your highest destiny with an inward journey to an abundant outer life.*

In short, you will have the experiences, the confidence, the skills and tools to Live the life you want, open to deeper and more meaningful experiences of Love, and to Lead others in the expression of their gifts, so that together we will create a better world for all.

We invite you to experience the power of your authentic self within a community of like-minded truth seekers.

Call us now at Ryzio (707) 322-4626 for your free consultation. You will get a sense of safety, deep connection and what is possible for you as you receive resources and support for your journey. We will answer your questions, provide resources and help you discover which program would be best for you.

Further Resources for Greater Resilience

1. *Vagal Nurturing: The two-minute exercise that will help you calm down immediately and, long range, it will help you develop your nervous system. Check it out here: [Vagal Nurturing Exercise](#)*
2. *Find a Ryzio program for you: www.ryzio.com*
3. *Links to free transformational resources: <https://ryzio.com/resources/>*
4. *How to Practice Loving Kindness Meditation [Very Well Mind article](#)
[Bodhipksa with WildMind](#) on YouTube*
5. *[Resiliency Quiz](#) from the Al Siebert Resiliency Center.*
6. *Nicholson McBride's [Resilience Quotient Questionnaire](#) (You have to register but it's a simple process)*

Where do you see yourself headed?

You have now given yourself the gift of traveling through these processes, learning things about yourself, creating some new decisions, and discovering resources. CONGRATULATIONS!! Now, let's go to the Travel Guide, page 24, to explore a few final questions that will help you further integrate and perhaps create a new sense of what's possible for you. New images and sensations of where you'd like to be will create the energy to pull you forward.

Chapter 8 Summary

Thank you for taking this journey with us. I hope you will continue to use these practices and processes. Shifting how you look at things, changing your daily routine, even for a bit, can make huge changes in your life.

As I've mentioned, my healing process was not instant. It has taken a conscious effort to apply simple processes like these you find here. Day by day, one thought at a time, one interaction at a time, I have certainly changed my brain and grown my nervous system. I have discovered that on the other side of every gain, bit by bit, there is always more satisfaction, more joy and more love.

If I did it, you can do it, too. Here's to you moving from coping to thriving. With what you have here, you have learned to leverage life's challenges. I know with this you can find greater meaning, purpose, connection and joy.

Feel the love now. It is who you are and why you are here!



Love Now

Having found myself, I open my heart to love.

I can risk falling because now I know how to fly.

I have danced in the rain and found flowers in the snow.

With love, I am alive, feeling happiness I never thought possible.

— MG

About The Author

Marti Glenn, PhD

Marti Glenn is dedicated to helping people transform their lives! As co-founder and Chief Experience Officer of Ryzio Institute, she conducts professional trainings and intensive retreats internationally that make it possible for leaders to move beyond coping into thriving.

Marti is particularly keen on crafting experiences and practices that develop the brain and nervous system and even change the trajectory of our DNA! Integrating the latest research in epigenetics, Polyvagal Theory, neuroscience, psychology, leadership and mindfulness, she and her team offer experiences and practices to help leaders live the lives they long for! She has discovered and delights in teaching the secret sauce that underlies all of this research: LOVE!

An award winning and pioneering professor and psychotherapist, Marti has served as founder and CEO of a number of successful companies and non-profit organizations over the past four decades. She is founding president of Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, known for its graduate degrees in perinatal psychology, somatic psychology and clinical psychology.

Marti has served on the boards of a number of national organizations and has chaired numerous international professional conferences. She co-produced the broadcast quality documentary,

Trauma, Brain and Relationship featuring Daniel Siegel and Bruce Perry and has appeared in in a number of documentary films.

Marti is a frequent speaker at conferences worldwide. She lives in Santa Barbara, California and enjoys working with her husband Ken Bruer, CEO of Ryzio Institute. Outside of work, she and Ken delight in toe-tapping music festivals, being with family and exploring with their grandchildren.

From Coping to Thriving:

Leveraging Life's Challenges to Find Meaning, Purpose, Connection and Joy



This book is more than pages of intriguing information. *It is your step-by-step manual to take your life from where you are to exactly where you want to be.*

With these science-backed processes you will be able to change your brain, calm your nervous system and live the gifts of your True Self. You will begin to experience the confidence, the connections and the love you long for.

We invite you to step into these pages now and journey into the life that is calling you.

About the Author: (pictured above)

Marti Glenn, PhD, is dedicated to helping people express their gifts and experience more love. Over the past four decades she has served as CEO, therapist, coach, professor, mentor and guide to leaders (we are ALL leaders!) from around the world who long to make a difference. She delights in teaching the secrets gleaned from science that help us change the brain, grow the nervous system and even change the trajectory of our DNA!

Marti also is one of the founders of Ryzio Institute which offers virtual and in-person programs, individual coaching and team experiences to help everyone discover and operationalize their true calling and their vital gifts, remove obstacles and live a life of purpose, fulfillment and Love.

"The principles in this book have changed my life! Who knew it would be possible to experience this level of happiness in such a short time!"

- DRH, coach, Central California

"Working through the processes in From Coping to Thriving, day by day, helped me feel more confident to step into a whole new place for me. I feel like a different person. Thank you!"

- DL, musician, Michigan



Learn more at ryzio.com