



START
YOUR
JOURNEY
TO HEALING
NOW

*The 5 essential must dos
for anyone struggling with a
life-changing event.*

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Hello dear one and welcome.

I feel so strongly for you, and what you are going through.

As difficult as your hardship is, it is also a part of life. Though your experience is unique, the trauma you feel from the loss of your dreams and imagined future is similar to everyone who has faced a life-changing event.

It takes time to process a reality different to the one you have held in your mind, but finding peace, wisdom and new strength is not only possible, it is *essential* for your future health and wellbeing.

What is most important right now is to make the decision to **not allow this to defeat you.**

You have a choice as to how to live through your experience.

You can choose to stumble through feeling powerless, or you can choose to consciously grow through your trauma to reach healing.

As you are here reading these words at this very moment, you have already taken a vital step along a path of conscious growth.

The following pages are my five essential tools for everyone struggling through a life-changing event. Think of them as your emergency starter kit, here to guide you through the first months of recovery. They will provide hope in your darkest hour and ready you for a path towards greater wellbeing.

These tools are not in any particular order and are all equally valuable. You may use all at the same time or find some to be more beneficial in the first days after your traumatic event, and others later on.

You are stronger than you know, more amazing than you realise. The journey you are about to embark upon will reveal this to you.

With love,

Ellen

*Bad things do happen; how I respond to them
defines my character and the quality of my life.*

*I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness;
immobilised by the gravity of my loss,
or I can choose to rise from the pain
and treasure the most precious gift I have
- life itself.*

Walter Anderson

1. Gratitude

When there is much to be grateful for: when our health is good, our relationships are solid and our finances secure, gratitude is often sidelined.

But take one of those away and suddenly appreciation for what remains becomes paramount.

Gratitude is the very thing we need most when we realise we have less.

Gratitude

When you are faced with the unexpected it can feel like your whole world has been torn apart. Yet the truth is, no matter *how* overwhelming and devastating your challenge is, no matter how all-encompassing it feels, it is one part of your life, not your whole life.

Gratitude creates perspective.

By taking the time to acknowledge the good that surrounds you, you will start to put your challenge into perspective. Your focus will broaden and your mind will slowly begin to process the trauma as well as the positive aspects of your life and bring them together to conceptualise a new *now* and a new future.

Take time every morning to mentally say thank you for every positive in your life; those who love you, the roof over your head, the beautiful clouds in the sky...write them down to reinforce these thoughts in your mind. They will help you through each day.

As you follow your daily gratitude practice you will discover empathy and compassion for others will also grow. You will begin to have greater awareness of those who are struggling in similar (and worse) situations.

The compassionate mindfulness that arises serves to open your mind to a shared connection with your fellow human beings and their struggles. This mindfulness transcends borders and cultures and will further enhance your ability to bring your own hardship into perspective.

2. Seek information

Knowledge is power.

Sought knowledge is empowerment.

Don't wait for the answers to come to you. Go to them.

Seek information

Part of the difficulty with an unexpected life-changing event is that we enter the unknown. Our own coping ability has been untested, the reactions of those around us have not revealed themselves and the repercussions of the event itself are unfamiliar - until now.

Arming yourself with knowledge during this turbulent time is very empowering. It will help you regain a feeling of control in your life. Knowledge gives you the ability to make better decisions.

It is possible you have already commenced researching information on your challenge and have begun to gather a database of facts. If so, good. Keep going.

If it is a physical or mental health issue - Google it.

If it is a relationship breakdown - Google it.

If it is personal or financial loss - Google it.

Whatever you are struggling with right now, gather data. You might be amazed at what you find and it will help you label your challenge.

I know many people shun labels, but in this journey to recovery I believe it is essential. Later, when you have progressed to a greater state of healing labels may cease to be relevant but, for now, it is critical.

It creates a framework around the challenge you are facing, puts it in a box so to speak and, just as with the practice of gratitude, helps you gain a healthier perspective.

3. Allow yourself to Feel

*You can try to stand in the ocean,
and be bowled over by each oncoming wave,
or you can float to ride the swell.*

*You won't stop the wave,
but one path leads to exhaustion
and the other to rejuvenation.*

Allow yourself to Feel

The intensity of emotion we experience when faced with a sudden traumatic event is sometimes so overwhelming it can bring us to our knees and make us behave in ways we had previously never thought possible.

Between the pain and sadness you feel, you may also swing through periods of numbness; feeling disconnected from the world around you. These emotions, along with any and every other feeling you have, is normal.

Processing a life-changing event is a roller-coaster ride, not a neat, linear path. In your journey to recovery expect to have better days and worse, moments of numbness and moments of anguish.

Emotions: always embrace, then release - vital in your journey to healing.

But rather than beating yourself up about being upset, give yourself permission to feel. Honour your feelings for they play a critical role in recovery. Each surge of emotion is a sign you are letting go of the past. Accept it as such and breathe through the wave. This increases mindful awareness of our feelings during the time it takes for your mind and body to adjust to a new reality.

Our feelings are also essential to growth. The more we feel, the more we learn. Feelings allow us to connect with others in a meaningful way and facilitate empathy and understanding.

Mindful engagement with our emotions is fundamental in our progression towards healing and, ultimately, to a higher state of wellbeing.

4. Talk

When I share my story I not only heal myself,

I also inspire change.

*I remove the stigma and isolation that breeds in silence and I
become an advocate for connection, compassion and understanding.*

Talk

Along with giving yourself permission to feel, verbal expression of your thoughts is integral to healing.

I passionately believe in sharing our challenges. Societal pressures and phrases like 'put on a brave face' and 'don't air your dirty laundry' only encourage stigma and isolation, making us feel as though we need to work through our hardships alone, behind closed doors.

This is wrong. Silence only hinders the healing process.

Talking is incredibly cathartic and studies have shown talking about our experiences helps healing, whereas thinking about them does not.

There is something about speaking words out loud that helps us process our own story. When we hear the words we speak, our story re-enters our mind and helps us comprehend the experience in a new way, which helps us find a new perspective.

tip: Reach out to a few close friends and family members. Tell them what you are going through and ask them to be an on-call support person throughout your journey to healing.

Often friends and family want to help but don't know what to do. Stating that you seek their non-judgemental, compassionate support gives them guidance on how to be a source of strength and comfort for you in your healing.

There may be times when you may not feel like talking about what you are going through, and that's perfectly fine too. However retaining connection with loved ones by sharing a conversation (even if it's just about the weather!) is essential.

5. Self Care

When you feel you have nothing left, go within.

There you will find everything.

Self Care

During this period of dramatic upheaval, you may find simple tasks that once required little effort to now be mentally and physically exhausting.

This is because your mind is preoccupied with processing the momentous change in your life. Much of the brain's capacity is absorbed with this task, leaving very little room for anything else.

Therefore it is very important to allow yourself time to rest and recuperate. As you would clean and care for a physical wound, the emotional injury you have sustained also needs looking after to promote new growth and optimal healing.

By engaging in activities to reconnect you with your mind and body, you will heighten your awareness of yourself in the here and now.

Recommended activities:

- **yoga:** improves immunity, reduces stress.
- **walking through nature:** calms and elevates mood.
- **massage:** brings attention back to yourself through physical touch. Creates feelings of comfort and connection.
- **meditation:** though may initially be difficult when the mind is in turmoil, is a powerful tool. Reduces stress, improves awareness and acceptance.
- **Journaling & painting:** have a similar effect to talking, by allowing expression of pent up thoughts, thereby creating space for new thoughts.

All the above activities have a myriad of additional benefits not listed here. Choose those best suited to you, or explore other healing activities and give yourself the gift of care. Your future self will thank you.

My gift to you...

Express **G**ratitude
Seek **I**nformation
Allow yourself to **F**eel
Talk
Engage in **S**elf-care

These are the five tools essential to help you progress through your initial months of recovery.

Together these form the basis of my GIFTS program and it is my gift to you, in supporting you on your journey to healing. Please refer to them and use them whenever you need support and guidance.

I know from my research and first hand experience, it works.

A final note as you start your journey:

There is a reason this life-changing event has occurred in your life. Its purpose is probably not clear now, but will become evident in time.

*Faith is the bridge between a life-changing event
and the discovery of its purpose.*

Between now and then have faith everything will work out for the best, because it will. And in those moments when you feel lost or without hope, use this simple mantra:

*Today I let go of fear. I trust what I am going through is
supposed to happen and as I travel through this process
I will begin to heal and find new light.
Today I start my journey to empowerment.*

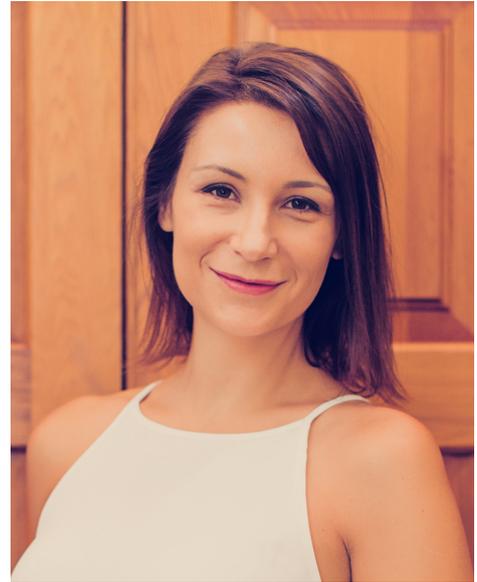
Your path is ready, and though the road will be rugged, it is one worth travelling. Peace, wisdom and clarity await.

About the Author

Ellen Perkins is a motivational coach, empowerment expert and speaker.

She has a Bachelor of Psychology and co-founded Lightmakers.org: an online collection of real triumph over adversity stories.

Through her research and in speaking to many individual Lightmakers, she became aware of the common thread of turmoil each Lightmaker experienced. She was also intrigued as to how people successfully navigated through their darkest times to find hope, inspiration and a new sense of purpose.



When her own life plunged into chaos in 2015, Ellen experienced the trauma of loss and betrayal first hand. Through her pain she recognized a unique opportunity to study her personal journey to healing and documented every step she made: the emotions she felt; the actions she took; and all the ‘aha’ moments along the way.

In examining her own challenge and the experiences of others, Ellen discovered all those who reached a higher level of functioning after their traumatic experience had used remarkably similar tools and strategies.

To address the need for guidance throughout our most traumatic times, Ellen wrote *Start Your Journey to Healing Now*. It is an essential road-map to recovery for all those experiencing a traumatic life-changing event.

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