

How Life Happens FOR Me, Not TO Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL provides helpful tools for shifting back into balance with clarity, peace of mind and the freedom one feels after shifting ones perspective on some life experiences.

How Life Happens For Me, Not To Me.....When I STOP Playing SMALL

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**How Life Happens *For Me,*
Not *To Me...*
When I **STOP** Playing
SMALL**

Leotha Douglas

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 - Becoming Aware: Your First Steps to Enlightenment.....	7
Chapter 2 - Making Others Wrong, So I Can Be Right ...	27
Chapter 3 - Training Others How to Be With Us	34
Chapter 4 - Staying Grounded and Centered	50
Chapter 5 - How to Relieve Chronic Pain, Anxiety or Discomfort.....	53
Chapter 6 - Reclaim Your Power: From Past Relationships and Incidents!	56
Chapter 7 - Calling Back Your Life-Force or Chi.....	62
Chapter 8 - I Discovered I Am Empathic....Now What Do I Do?.....	68
Chapter 9 - Hibernation and/or Self-Care	78
Chapter 10 - Meditation for Clearing Energy From the Body.....	83
Chapter 11 - New Moon and Full Moon Ritual.....	90
Bibliography.....	95
About the Author.....	97

Chapter 1

Becoming Aware: Your First Steps to Enlightenment

"The first peace...is that which comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its Powers."

-- Quote from Black Elk (Lakota Sioux medicine man)

I had heard about people coming into our lives to be a mirror and reflect what we can't see or refuse to see that which we might choose to change about ourselves. It took a number of years before I finally got what that meant. One day during a meeting with a lady, who wanted to be a youth program volunteer, I was gifted with a rude awakening. At the time I was not aware that life was happening *for* me, not *to* me. This lady, Ileana Kane, was a licensed life and marketing coach. During our conversation, Ileana gave me a compliment about what she had heard about my work with children and parents. Suddenly I noticed a frown come across her face. Ileana leaned forward in her chair and compassionately said, "Officer Douglas, please do not go small on me. I wish you could be sitting where I am, so you can see what I saw as I was complimenting you." Ileana asked me if I mind if she demonstrated how I reacted to her compliment. I gave her permission to demonstrate what I

Leatha Douglas

did. Ileana repeated the compliment, then dropped her head, slumped her shoulders and the rest of her body, while looking away. Feeling embarrassed, I nervously shuffled in my seat as I said, "Wow, did I do that?" She looked directly at me and said, "I request you learn to accept compliments graciously. Please do not go small, instead, look directly at the person and say thank you. Be in your true personal power, which is how everyone sees you when you interact with the public you serve in this city."

Being six feet, two inches tall and weighing two hundred and twenty pounds, I was aware how I stood out in a crowd, but having someone tell me they could see me try to appear insignificant was shocking to my system. My mind flashed back to times I had been complimented and remembering how embarrassed and uncomfortable I felt after hearing kind words. None of those hints made me realize that I felt more comfortable playing small, rather than being in my true personal power; this hadn't registered in my consciousness before. This divine interaction shifted my awareness about a lifelong pattern I carried of not feeling deserving or worthy of being good at anything. I was aware of where my programmed "lack of belief in self" came from: hearing invalidating words used many times by my father when I was given chores to do while growing up on our farm. After my meeting with Ileana, I wondered why I was still carrying this belief after speaking to my dad about the effects of his words and hearing him say, "Son, I was just trying to build you up and make you strong and able when you became an adult and left home." I knew Dad meant no harm, he was doing the best he could to instill strength that would serve me as

How Life Happens For Me, Not To Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL

an adult. At some point I was able to gain the courage to forgive my Dad for the effects I felt from his putdowns and ask him to forgive me for anything he needed forgiveness for from me. I would later be able to forgive myself for taking on the belief of being inadequate.

Life happening *for* me, not *to* me was evident when I was with my father when he died in 1995 at the age of 77. My mother and father had been married for 56 years. My mother died in 2001 at age 81. During the year after my father's death and since, I have had a sense of peace and completeness with my father. This awareness of placing completeness to a relationship was gifted to me many years ago. I began consciously putting closure on relationships, by allowing the other person to say what they needed to say to be complete and my saying what I needed to say to be complete. I would wish the person well and let them know I was in gratitude for the lessons I had learned during our relationship. The completion can be done if the person has passed on, or if you can't or prefer to not do the completion face to face. You can write whatever you wish you could have said, but didn't, or what you want to say now. You get to choose whether to write about the pain the person caused you. This gives you an opportunity to release pent up anger, resentment, fear, guilt, judgment, etc. Writing whatever comes up for you allows the energy attached to the feeling to be released from your energy body. You still want to come from your heart space and place of power by being in gratitude for the experience. This process also allows one to practice detachment as well.

Leatha Douglas

My definition of "playing small" is an unconscious fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of succeeding, lack of self-worth and a lack of love of self. Ileana's description that I looked down, slumped my shoulders, slid down in my seat and contracted my body as if trying to become as small as possible, resonated with me. This way of being occurred in intimate relationships, which I would unconsciously sabotage when the lady I was dating began saying what a nice guy I was and that she wanted to spend more time with me. I unconsciously did not feel I was deserving of her love. To continue my pattern of playing small, I would sabotage the relationship to avoid being loved, as I unconsciously felt undeserving of that love. As a teen and adult, I would also shy away from exploring new ventures, taking exams for supervisory positions, volunteering for leadership roles, etc., because I didn't feel I was capable.

Even though I became aware of many of my self-defeating issues in my late twenties, I still carried the energy (programming) when Ileana assisted me in becoming aware on a deeper level when I was over forty years old. I began to consciously watch my behavior when I got complimented. I admit I am still working on my playing small issues. The difference is I take responsibility for my behavior, rather than blaming it on how my parents treated me while I was growing up or the environment I grew up in.

On an unconscious level, I wanted to prove my father wrong about me not being able to do anything right and the best way to do that was to become a workaholic.

How Life Happens For Me, Not To Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL

Circumstances in my life have forced me to ask for help, which broke a learned pattern of coming from ego in thinking I had to do it all by myself. The payoff for playing small is "I don't have to do any more than is necessary to get by, I get to hide out and if I try to do more I might fail."

Another reason I held onto fear energy of "playing small" is it validates "my story" of not being worthy, good enough, a failure, etc. If I let go of "my story" I would be forced to admit I am a fraud. It reinforces the power I give the fear energy of "playing small" to be superior to the compliments of others who are constantly telling me how gifted and capable I am.

The first time I became aware I was being told and taught what I was supposed to believe as fact, I was around the age of ten. I soon discovered that questioning family and adults within my immediate environment about religious beliefs was not a good idea. After being suppressed through fear and damnation, I stopped seeking. Over time, I would have experiences and meet people who led me to finding a deeper meaning of who I am and what I felt was my purpose in life. For me, growing up on a farm in Mississippi during the 1950's and '60's, it took many years of uncovering the layers of fear energy, i.e., cultural programming of beliefs and/or norms, and old relationship patterns, that sat on top of my true authentic self.

On a subconscious level, our authentic **self** knows who we are! On a conscious level, we try to be who people (family, friends, cultural beliefs, and environmental norms) insinuate who we are supposed to be. I am in no way attempting to invalidate the best intentions of family

Leatha Douglas

beliefs, cultural and environmental norms, and religion within society. Growing up in a large, Baptist family with parents who strongly instilled solid core values from birth, I am forever in gratitude. At some point though, many of us, due to our inquisitive nature, began to question whether these beliefs or norms are based on facts. At the time we began to question these norms, the more rigid the family and/or cultural beliefs are, the harsher the objections are to our questioning.

From my experiences, I feel called to share about the importance of being aware that, "Life happens *for* us, not *to* us." This may change a perception about one's personal power. Feeling like a victim does not allow you to be in your personal power. Learning the value of detachment from what others choose to say, do and/or think, saves lots of energy. Being attached to what others think about you, say about you or feel about you is part of what I choose to call "being addicted to others drama". This attachment drains us of vital life-force or energy. If one views events or life experiences as painful or unwanted, a pattern of "playing small" may develop. Some may unconsciously become fearful of experiencing something new because they think they are supposed to be able to control all their life experiences. Yes, there are some things we can control: obvious daily tasks we have to perform, being kind to others, knowing when something does not feel right, etc. As we age and become more educated/trained/aware and mature, we are able to manage more complex tasks. At some point we become aware that our personal definition of, "I control my life and what happens to me", is an illusion. If we choose to play it safe, we succumb to what we learn from environmental

programming as who we are. This way of being may cause us to ignore our feelings, which are screaming to have our needs met. This “playing small” causes one to lose connection with Source and the feeling of knowing there is more to what is being modeled as cultural norms. The payoff for playing small is that one does not have to play to one’s full potential in this game of life. Playing small also allows the energetic cover over our heart to remain, which may prevent us from going deeper within to discover our authentic **self**.

Everyone has unique gifts to share and assist others who come into their life. Circumstances in our lives determine whether we are willing or able to allow these unique gifts to unfold. How many times do we hear adults speak of an infant as being so intelligent and alert? The adult(s) is usually unconscious of all infants being born “in balance with the universal laws of nature.” I choose to refer to The Universal Laws of Nature as being Source, i.e., earth, the heavens, the moon, the sun, stars, space, the seasons, cycles and infinity. Based on one’s core beliefs, Source may also be called God, Goddess, Buddha, Christ Consciousness, Higher Self, Divinity or whatever one chooses. For some, none of these applies.

As an infant, it is natural to be in the flow of the universal laws of nature. The meridians or energy channels within the body are completely open. The body breathes in and out; opens and closes; releases and absorbs, which causes transformation. Depending on the child’s environment, they may stay open to unlimited possibilities. On the other hand, if the child’s environment is

Leatha Douglas

suppressive and/or oppressive, they soon begin to shut down to the natural flow of the laws of nature.

If you are not currently aware that you are a body of energy or light, then I suggest you take a deep breath and absorb this awareness now! Since everything is matter, whether alive, or whether solid or liquid, it contains energy. The air we breathe may be called “life-force,” “chi,” “prana” or other terms. You may recall being taught in preschool or kindergarten about our five senses: touch, sight, smell, taste and sound. Obviously this does not apply to those who were born without, or later lost one or more of their five senses. In regards to being conscious of energy, we use our five senses to determine what feels right to us. Spending quality time in nature allows one to consciously or unconsciously be in tune with the universal laws of nature. This naturally opens us up to feeling at peace, in harmony and balanced.

There are many roads to take on your journey to becoming more aware. Reading as much as possible about subjects that interest you from various sources is one way. Taking classes and workshops that are experiential and watching videos in private provides a safe place to discover what’s available for your personal growth. Some possible modalities are:

- Meditation (as well as movement or walking)
- Yoga (there are many modalities)
- Dream analysis
- Angel Card reading
- Intuitive or psychic training
- Therapeutic Massage / energy work / Reiki, etc.

How Life Happens For Me, Not To Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL

- Flower essences and oils
- Qigong (there are many modalities)
- Tai Chi
- Acupuncture/Acupressure
- Sound healing (singing, toning, drumming circle, Tibetan Bowls, crystal bowls, etc.)
- Ritual/ceremony for New Moon and/or Full Moon
- Light and color therapy
- Medicinal herbal foods, supplements, etc.

Experiencing various modalities will give you an opportunity to sharpen your intuitive skills by noticing what feels right for you energetically. One simple thing to remember is; “there are many roads and modalities you can take to find inner peace or a deeper meaning to life. Whatever roads you choose, in the long run you will begin to see why you traveled those roads and had those experiences”.

You will meet people who will tell you they know what road you should take. Many may be right, but some will be projecting their will upon you. It's not so much about whether they are right or wrong as it is about you being tested to use your inner compass or intuition to find your way to uncovering your authentic self. This way of seeking others' guidance is very normal in the beginning of your search for a deeper meaning to your life. That's why we have “mentors,” “coaches,” “role models,” etc. who can help with this search. But, after some time (how long it takes is really up to you), you will begin to follow your own inner compass (intuition) to finding inner peace. I trust you understand YOU are responsible for your happiness!

Leatha Douglas

Others, including mates or partners, can greatly enhance your happiness. Society teaches us to believe the myth that someone else can be the responsible party to another's happiness. I feel if a person depends on someone else for the foundation of their happiness, they may always feel let down and may find lasting peace within impossible to obtain.

One example I choose to use is that since we are made up of energy, we vibrate at different frequencies. Imagine that those who are considered teachers, coaches, sages, wise ones, etc., vibrate at various frequencies and send out a vibration like a signal from a radio transmitting station. Since you are seeking answers to your questions about what life means for you, your body's vibration goes out to seek the vibration of the nearest station antenna that matches your frequency. In the beginning you are not sure which station feels right for you, therefore you will tune in to many. Usually through trial and error, you soon learn which stations you like best. Over time, you begin to listen to fewer stations as you become clearer about what feels right for your needs. Avoid becoming judgmental about some stations you eventually wish you had not tuned into or stayed tuned to for too long. This is part of the testing process through life's experiences, which happens *for* you, not *to* you.

As you continue to go deeper within yourself, you will begin to notice people coming to *you* for advice or assistance. At this point you may be conscious that you (your frequency vibration) have become so clear that *you* are now a transmitting station! Congratulations.....you have now shifted to being labeled a "Teacher."

Naturally, it's up to you to accept the label "Teacher." When the realization happened to me, I went into denial and resisted the Teacher label. Luckily, I had teachers, friends and associates who would call me out when they noticed I wanted to continue playing small, by not standing in my power and being my true authentic self. In other words, people noticed my light (high frequency vibration) and unconsciously or consciously wanted to know who I really was and hear what I had to say.

For many, the first inkling of awareness comes through dreams. Many have dreams they describe as nightmares. If the dreams were analyzed by someone who understands their meaning, the dreams could be used for problem solving and personal growth. Dreams may reveal insights about you, your environment and future events on the Planet. We are programmed to think a dream described as a nightmare is bad. Many tend to think anything that happens to us that we don't understand is of no value. Some even take medication to suppress their dreams, because they identify their dreams as weird and/or scary. The writer, Alice Walker, put it best by stating, "What the mind does not understand, it worships or fears." For instance, as a child I came to believe having nightmares meant there was something I was doing wrong and I should be good so as not to have nightmares. So, whenever I had a nightmare, I was afraid to discuss it with anyone out of fear I would be judged as having done something wrong. Over time, I stopped remembering my dreams.

In my early forties, I became aware of the benefits of dream analysis. I began to fully understand that dreams,

Leatha Douglas

whether pleasant or scary, carried insights for me. To retrain myself to remember my dreams, I was told to set an intention to remember them before I went to sleep. I also allowed myself to let go of the resentment I had for those who could not assist me with this need during childhood. I became aware of cultural and environmental norms that blocked awareness for those I looked up to for answers. I would later meet someone who shared how he experienced nightmares almost nightly. He shared how he would be afraid to go to sleep. During sleep time, he would find himself in strange dimensions where large strange looking beings would be warring all the time. He said it later dawned on him, the beings never tried to harm him. He realized he was just an observer in his violent dreams he knew to be nightmares. He began to consciously ask what insights these warring beings had for him. He began to get insights from the dreams that assisted him in his daily life and those he associated with.

I recommend taking your time when deciding who to choose as a Teacher. I prefer to look at everyone and everything in the universe as my Teacher. I trust whatever my experience, good or indifferent, as being valuable to my personal growth. Spend time in metaphysical bookstores or the spirituality section of chain bookstores and get to know the people who work there. Tell them what your interests are and they may give you suggestions on what to explore and with whom. Check bulletin boards at health food stores for spiritual events in your area. If you live in a small town where there are no metaphysical bookstores, go online to see what's nearest you. Churches and spiritual centers (Unity, The Church of Religious Science and Science of The Mind) are good

places to visit to see what kind of educational/personal growth classes or events are presented.

In conversation with co-workers or acquaintances, ask about stress reduction and/or personal growth modalities to find out what others are aware of. Sometimes, finding another like-minded person is much closer than you think. If the person(s) does not have a clue about what you bring to the conversation, just change the subject. When I began to ask like-minded people about possible teachers, I was told, "Their teacher may not be my teacher. But not to worry, when I was ready, my teacher would appear." I did not believe that statement at first, but once I met my first shaman teacher, I soon began to understand the meaning of the statement. I became aware of my need to shift from being ego-based, to being heart-centered. Once I began to make the shift to higher consciousness, from my heart, teachers started showing up all the time. The problem for me was learning to discern which teacher was best for my truth at that time. Be wary of anyone who teaches that their way is the only way or the right way and invalidates everyone else's modality. Also be cautious of those who may be talked about as being a guru. Find out as soon as possible if they really allow their students to find their own way (truth). Some simple words of wisdom I was given during my early awareness was when asked, offered or invited, there's no need to rush to say yes. Tell the person making the proposal that you will get back to them or that you wish to think about it. Sleeping on a question or problem usually brings clarity by the next morning. Also, if something feels light energetically, it's probably right for you. If something feels heavy, it's a red

Leatha Douglas

flag and is probably a lie or is not in your best interest at this time.

A teacher who says, "I am a student as well," is someone who is probably not coming from ego. A teacher who understands that their students find them, so they (the student) can be a mirror for expanding their (the teacher's) own transformation process, truly accepts the dual role of student versus teacher. One of the quotes I learned early on during my awareness process was, "I teach what I am here to learn." In other words, you will notice I repeat throughout this book about many who come before us becoming a mirror to reflect something that brings up emotions within us. We can consciously choose to use this opportunity to take a deeper look at what comes up for us during these incidents or relationships. Some may call it doing shadow work, embracing our fears, or other terms. Another way of looking at it is people come into our lives to unconsciously give us an opportunity to learn a lesson or clear deep-seated energy (usually fear, pain, anxiety, guilt, etc.).

When I began to consciously observe individual emotional reactions when healing from trauma, abuse, separation and/or divorce, I gradually changed my perception from judgment to non-judgment about why some take longer to go through the healing process than others. Naturally individuals go through various stages of healing, with anger being one stage. Some stay in various stages longer than others and have varying reactions. Some may go through emotional and grief counseling and attend support groups as part of their healing process. Some may choose to use their faith to work through their grief.

I became intrigued by some men and women who insinuate they have completed their energetic healing process from an abusive childhood or long intimate relationship(s) with the opposite sex. Yet they appear to be unaware they unconsciously continue holding onto the lack of trust of the opposite sex. Another way of saying it is, "some men judge all women by their past failed relationships, or some women judge all men by their past failed relationships." This unconscious mistrust may not allow for vulnerability and complete openness in future relationships.

Instead of focusing on blaming the other party in the relationship, why not ask the question, "What were the gifts and lessons learned from the relationship?" From experience and a change in perceptions, I became aware that incidents and/or relationships provided many lessons that expand my consciousness, so I could move to the next level of awareness. Hence, "Life happens *for* me, not *to* me".

I believe in order for healing to occur on a deeper level energetically, one must be open to including a person or persons of the same sex of the perpetrator they are healing from. This vulnerability allows for awareness of individual energy vibrations. In other words, by experiencing the energy vibration of a person of the same sex as the person from whom you are healing allows you to fully let go of the mistrust and doubt; then your energy space can expand to accept deeper intimacy.

As an example: let's take a woman who is consciously going through the energetic healing process from

Leatha Douglas

childhood trauma or abusive relationships that were perpetrated by her father or other males. Her healing usually begins with therapy or counseling from a female. As the healing process proceeds, it is important for the woman to interact and began to build trust within, by being in the energy field of a strong unbiased male that is aware of how to provide a strong male vibration to allow the woman to readjust to and become reacquainted with neutral male energy.

The same process applies to men wishing to heal from abusive or traumatic relationships with their mother or other women. This period of readjustment to feeling fully comfortable in the presence of the opposite sex is beneficial when confronted by poor or non-existent energetic boundaries from the opposite sex. This practice of developing energetic boundaries allows one to stay centered and grounded with energy that may feel uncomfortable and/or intrusive.

For men and women, it is important to learn about setting sexual energy boundaries, by not running your sexual energy through someone you may be physically attracted to, but they are unknown to you. Some women tell me about how violated they feel when a strange man runs his sexual energy through them when they are in close proximity, like a class room or social gathering.

Practicing being centered and grounded is being able to be in one's true personal power energetically. Without consciously or unconsciously developing the skill of centering and grounding during stressful or uncomfortable situations, a person may continue to do what they

developed as a child: escape from the anxiety, by going further outside of their physical body. This continuous moving outside of one's physical body only delays the opportunity to begin to reconnect with one's true physical self and gaining access to the energy of the Divine Mother Earth. Once the re-acclamation process begins, a feeling of wholeness may be recognized.

One way to tell if a person is energetically clear or neutral in their healing from the opposite sex is when confronted; they do not react by becoming verbally defensive, or exhibit uncomfortable body language. If a person is not energetically neutral or clear, they may tend to make the confronting person wrong by giving their version of what is right. I choose to speak from experience in understanding that there are many ways to attain the same results. Everyone vibrates at various frequencies energetically and what works for me may not work for you or someone else, but I know some of what I say may feel right for someone else. For me, this test of having others' energy field be a mirror for me in which to see my own issues is a reminder that I "teach what I am here to learn".

One way to sense if something may be right for you is to use how you feel about it as a guide. If you feel light when presented with a solution, question or offer, the suggested solution may be right for you. If the solution, question or offer presented to you causes your body to feel heavy, consider that the suggested solution or offer may not be good for you at this time. That does not mean at some point in the future, you will not change the way you feel about the suggested solution or offer. A good rule for deciding if something feels right for you is to not decide

Leatha Douglas

right away to accept the suggested solution or offer. Instead, give yourself permission to wait a day or more to decide. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, sleeping on the offer or suggestion usually allows one to be very clear the next day as to whether to choose to accept or reject the suggestion or offer.

Sometimes the “yes” feeling may have a heavy feeling attached to it. In that case, focus your feelings on the heavy feeling and you may find there is an attachment connected to the solution, offer and/or suggestion that was presented to you. You may choose to ask yourself, “Will this attachment feeling allow me to have the freedom to be myself and not change to suit the person who made the offer and/or suggestion?” If your body feels light, you can take that feeling as a yes, to having the freedom to be. If your body feels heavy, consider asking more questions about what’s causing your body to feel heavy about the issue. Sometimes the energy of the person, who made the offer and/or made the suggested solution, may not be in alignment with your energetic vibration. There’s no right or wrong here, it’s just an opportunity for you to use your feelings or intuitive sense to make a decision about deciding what feels right for you.

The window of opportunity to address one or more issues does not close with the end of a relationship, or your refusal to look deeper at your issue(s). There is no right or wrong as far as whether you choose to look at the issue(s) or not. Just know that if we do not work at allowing an issue to be cleared, sooner or later, someone or an incident will occur to give us another chance to deal with the same issue(s).

How Life Happens For Me, Not To Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL

An example of closing a relationship with personal power is taking time to reflect on the gifts the relationship brought. What did you learn from the relationship that may assist you in growing as a person? You may choose to write down the positive experiences of the relationship or event. Consider writing a letter to the person(s) with whom you are closing the relationship. If you do not feel it's appropriate to send or give the letter to the person(s), burn the letter with the intention of allowing the energy of the closed relationship to be released. Another powerful close to a relationship is having a friend or confidante facilitate a completion and new beginning ritual on the New Moon. (See Chapter 11 for how to perform a New or Full Moon Ritual). This type of closure allows you to be in your power, rather than coming from a place of feeling like a victim, which carries no personal power. Usually there will be a feeling of expansion and lightness within, which creates more space within your being-ness.

You may receive clarity as to what the issue(s) is about, which allows the issue to be cleared and released. Usually a sense of emotional relief, serenity and peace fills you as your body feels expanded. At this point you may be assured the issue will not present itself again. The more you embrace and work through what is being mirrored during relationships and incidents, the more you become neutral to the energy flow within your space as you continue on your journey to deepening your relationship with your authentic self.

I will always be in gratitude for Isa Gucciardi, Ph.D., my first Shaman Teacher, who told me when I asked her what was I supposed to learn and what was I supposed to do

Leatha Douglas

with what I learned. I felt as if Isa was looking and speaking into my soul as she said, "I can't teach you anything you don't already know. All I can do is assist you in **re-membering** what you have forgotten."

Chapter 2

Making Others Wrong, So I Can Be Right

“There is very little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it's positive or negative.”

---Napoleon Hill

I have memories from childhood of wondering why some people were so adamant about why their beliefs were right and others who had different beliefs were wrong. While attending church services, I would feel confused as to why others of different faiths could be wrong and what I was being taught to believe was right even though the others were much better off than we were economically. When I asked my parents and other adults questions that suggested we look at others' beliefs, I was soundly suppressed and ridiculed for even thinking such thoughts. I would be looked upon as being unfaithful to what I was being taught to believe. This suppression through fear and damnation programmed me to become judgmental and fear others I did not know or understand. I would become unconscious of being programmed to think the same way: “my way is the best way” or “why do those people do things the way they do?” or “their way makes no sense”. I was unaware of the gifts available in exploring differences of opinions, beliefs, cultural, etc.

Leatha Douglas

As a deputy sheriff/police officer for twenty-two years, I continued to be programmed to see most things in black and white. In other words, I viewed people's actions as being either right or being wrong, with little or no grey area in between. Granted, I am not minimizing my experience in law enforcement at all. The "everything is seen in black and white" as a policeman served my safety needs. I am in gratitude for the experiences it brought me in learning to develop my communication skills and see people from many perspectives. The experiences I had during my law enforcement career was part of my journey to what I am providing in service to Humanity now.

I "made others wrong, so I could be right" by viewing parents who felt it was okay for their teens to drink or smoke as being irresponsible. I would also view fellow employees as being hypocrites by drinking to excess at times and getting in their vehicles and driving home. The next day they would be arresting people for doing the same thing they did the day before. When I began teaching youth about drug and violence prevention, I stopped drinking on the premise that if I was going to talk the talk, I should walk the walk. It did not matter that everyone has freedom of choice; just like me, I resented those who continued to smoke or drink and were teaching youth it was healthier to not start either of those habits.

What I would later discover is that I placed a lot of energy into "making others wrong, so I could be right." An example of "making someone wrong so I can be right" may be my going into verbal resistance or judgment of the person(s) who shares a different view or opinion than my own. "Making wrong" can be as simple as disagreeing

with someone's religion or non-religion, or cultural beliefs. It did not matter to me, though there may be a difference in beliefs, life for both goes on with there being many paths that can be taken to obtain similar goals. Another example of looking at how we make others wrong so we can be right: imagine five people going into an ice cream parlor that sells twenty different flavors. Even though everyone chooses a different flavor of ice cream and states why theirs tastes better than any other flavor, they are all eating ice cream. One reason we have problems having someone disagree with us is we innately want to believe that what we believe in is indeed a fact. I have made someone else wrong just by the way they look, speak or act. All my righteousness came from fear of accepting something that I do not know or understand. I was unconscious of what gifts await when I decide to open my heart and mind to change. I would discover so much peace within, freedom and expansion of my being when I allowed myself to be vulnerable, which allowed transformation within me. This new way of being was me having "life happen *for* me, not *to* me, when I stopped playing small, due to my fear and insecurity."

Many years ago I did not understand the statement by a wise person who said, "I only seek to be at peace with myself. If that means I am wrong in someone else's eyes, I do not want to be right." I would come to understand and embrace the statement and take it one step further. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "You must be the change you want to see in the world, and the more one changes, the more the world changes around you."

Leatha Douglas

I know from experience, when I decided to change who I was being by going inside myself (heart-centered) and looking at what was being reflected or mirrored by the person I was in judgment of, I would get some “aha’s” about what was going on within me on a deeper and unconscious level. Fear would always be the underlying factor.

I used to feel the breakup of a relationship was just part of life. I ignored friends and family who would try to get me to see where I might wish to look at doing things differently. I was blind to my being self-centered and egotistical. I was all about going into a relationship with the intent of seeing what I could get out of it, rather than looking at what I could bring to the relationship. When the relationship was ended by the other person (I was too afraid to end a relationship due to fear of rejection, not knowing how to ask that my needs be met and wanting to please.), I was oblivious to how I had sabotaged the relationship from the beginning by not being authentic.

My friend Ronnie provided a mirror or reflected for me when he would say in his always friendly, yet concerned way, “Who is the new lady in your life? Since I have not heard from you in a month, I know you have been busy with a new girlfriend. Let me guess, she is divorced with children, she is ___ years old, she looks ___, she has ___ issues and you think you can fix her.” I would look at my friend and say, “She is not like all the rest. This lady is different.”

I was clueless that Ronnie was really saying that I may wish to look at the pattern I kept repeating of women I’m

attracted to and notice that I'm unconsciously following a pattern of dating women with whom I know I won't stay in a relationship with very long. Ronnie would laugh and say, "How long have I known you and how many times have we had this conversation?"

I was in total denial about my pattern of being interested in women with whom I would unlikely stay with in a long term relationship. Unconsciously, I was attracted to women whom I would soon find a reason to disconnect from because I was not emotionally connected to myself. I did not feel called to connect with another on a deeper level, since I was not able to connect on a deeper level with myself due to my fear of being vulnerable. I avoided being accessible emotionally by being committed to my work. I lived the illusion of spending most of my time helping others while ignoring my emotional needs. Many people would ask me what they could do to help me with my job, yet I would find excuses for saying I had everything under control. What I was unaware of was how out of balance I was in many phases of my life, especially my emotions.

Luckily I would be introduced to Melanie Flores who taught me meditation and how to consciously run energy, chi or prana through my body. One day during one of Mrs. Flores's classes, she spoke about how some people unconsciously follow a pattern with being in relationships with people who do not allow them to move through or break their patterns. Mrs. Flores spoke about some being blind to their continuing patterns, yet wonder why they have unfulfilling relationships. She noted that these patterns may stem from our self-worth that was

Leatha Douglas

determined at an early age. As an example, Mrs. Flores said, “A child may energetically absorb words stated in anger by adults or authority figures that were not nourishing to their well-being. They may grow up and unconsciously have relationship issues as adults, if some type of intervention does not occur to allow the energy that is still held onto, which was attached to the put-down words, to be released. It could be as simple as someone said there was something wrong with the child and the child believed it to be true, while in truth, the adult may have been speaking out of frustration or not being authentic.”

Mrs. Flores’s words took me back to my childhood when I heard words that caused me to feel unworthy, shameful, guilty, confused, neglected and/or abandoned. Though these words that caused these feelings of insecurity came from loving and well-meaning parents and adults, I took on the energy behind the words and locked the energy into my mind as being factual.

My mind flashed back to conversations with my buddy Ronnie about the personality and lifestyle of women I was attracted to. It was then that I became aware that I would have to change if I wanted longer lasting and more fulfilling relationships. In other words, I must stop making others wrong so I could be right. This was my continuing to “play small.” I had been playing small by not seeking more fulfilling relationships, which allowed life to happen *to* me, and not *for* me. This awareness of my not being authentic allowed me to be open to deeper personal growth through various modalities. I wrote forgiveness letters to family or made calls to as many people as

How Life Happens For Me, Not To Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL

possible with whom I'd had relationships. I was surprised when many of the responses were that of relief that I had become more aware of how to be in a relationship. I then began to change my perception by looking at what I could bring to a relationship, rather than focusing on what I could get out of it.

Chapter 4

Staying Grounded and Centered

"You cannot teach people anything. You can only help them discover it within themselves."

---Galileo

Being present in the moment, grounded and centered is continually mirrored to me during my work with clients in private sessions or in "circle". Many of us who have experienced childhood physical, verbal, and/or sexual abuse, neglect, rage and anger, learned to leave our bodies to escape the pain. Over time, this way of escaping the pain of abuse becomes the "normal way of being" when we sense or feel a stressful situation coming on. To put it another way, to cope by escaping impending fear, trauma/pain, we learned to block whatever was happening out of our minds. Or the mind would act as a protection mechanism by shutting down altogether, hence blocking out the memory of some traumatic events.

As we age, we move into more stressful situations with family, career, relationships, etc. Unless one learns techniques that allow them to "stay present in the moment" while confronting a stressful situation head-on, they will continue to feel overwhelmed by those who may accuse them of not being able to handle stress well. At some point this person may feel insecure, inadequate and angry at self, have lower self-esteem and quite frankly

wonder what is wrong with them. We may wonder why we end up in relationships that have the same theme: drama, suffering, pain, and more drama. This feeling of hopelessness may lead to risky behavior, self-medication or worse, in an attempt to feel less pain. This behavior causes even more separation from being in-body. What we feel as being normal is to mostly live outside of one's body (self).

I have worked with clients who found it very scary to feel what it's like to be fully "in their body." When some clients feel the vibration of earth's energy flowing up through their feet and spine, they have no reference for this energy; therefore they feel it is not normal. With practice, patience and time, the client began to adjust to what is really the normal place to be (grounded) when confronted with the stress of everyday life.

One of the first things I notice when someone consults me is whether they are grounded and centered (in their body). When someone is stressed and anxious, I ask them to do 4 simple things:

1. Stop talking and take a couple deep breaths.
2. Close your eyes and bring your attention to your heart as you continue to breathe normally.
3. Imagine you are connected to the center core of the earth by an anchor or cord attached from the base of your spine. Better yet, imagine you are your favorite tree or flower, with roots extending into the center of the earth and outward. You are so tall that your branches extend high into the sky to receive the nourishment of the outer reaches of the sky or Heaven.

Leatha Douglas

4. Continue to breathe normally as you focus your attention on the heart. Imagine your heart is the meeting point for the feminine energy coming up from Mother Earth and the masculine cosmic energy flowing down from Heaven or the sky.

Unless the person has a severe emotional issue or is on medication, s/he usually notices right away that they are literally out of their body. Being grounded and centered allows one to be in balance, or at-one with the Universe. This way when something stressful comes up, it can automatically be dealt with it in a calmer manner. Being centered and grounded requires practice, practice, practice. Just like prayer and meditation is suggested as a daily ritual, centering and grounding should be done prior to either. After some time you may not notice how much you have shifted, but others will certainly notice your “new way of being.”

How Life Happens FOR Me, Not TO Me...When I STOP Playing SMALL provides helpful tools for shifting back into balance with clarity, peace of mind and the freedom one feels after shifting ones perspective on some life experiences.

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