

Finding Joy in Time is a collection of original stories, essays, poetry and nearly a hundred colored photographs that will inspire you to live joyously. Why not indulge in joy? According to neuroscientists, it takes 90 seconds for an emotion to traverse the brain and dissipate. If you imagine your life as an hourglass, the sand represents your past, present and future. There's no better time than now to spend your sand feeling joyous.

### **Finding Joy in Time**

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*Finding*  
JOY IN TIME



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Sand Matters® [www.sandmatters.com](http://www.sandmatters.com)

Email: [IreneB@sandmatters.com](mailto:IreneB@sandmatters.com)

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[www.lionfishcreative.com](http://www.lionfishcreative.com)

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[www.beapurplepenguin.com](http://www.beapurplepenguin.com)

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*Finding*  
JOY IN TIME

by

Irene Banks

Debbie Dunn

Greg Banks

David Banks



# *Dedication*

to all our relations  
who help us find joy in ordinary moments  
and especially to our mother  
who continues to show us how to  
gracefully walk through adversity.





## *Preface*

Secretly I watched her, learning bits of this and that,  
she planned, figured, sorted; wearing many different hats.  
She juggled dozens of different projects in a normal, active day.  
No matter how busy she usually was, there was always time to play.  
Then in a flash of clarity, an image was displayed.  
She saw a simple hourglass; sand flowed downward undelayed.  
She told me of her vision and what it meant to her.  
I understood the concept and agreed absolutely sure.

**If you live by this simple concept:  
~ your time ~ your life ~ your sand ~  
each moment will be conscious,  
mindfully living on the land.**

I listened when someone asked about the way she seemed to be,  
How could she do so many things, so effortlessly free?  
Do you always live your life in a happy frame of mind?  
How can you be so compassionate, so thoughtful and so kind?  
I paid attention when she answered that sunny afternoon.  
If I don't enjoy the life I have, it'll be over all too soon.  
So I put my life in motion and let joy live in my heart;  
With the peace I have discovered, I'll not let joy depart.  
Her philosophy's as simple as the hourglass she was shown,  
In one grain of sand, one moment, her love of life's her own.  
What started off as a concept has grown with little strife.  
With fun, creative expression, Sand Matters came to life.



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# Chapter 1

## You Were Born for This Moment



It is not the length of life, but the depth of life.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson ~





*You have only now.*

**W**hether as kitchen tool, a game piece, a computer icon, a pressed marshmallow in a box of cereal, or as a centerpiece on the mantle, an hourglass is a vessel that measures time. With respect to the forces of gravity, the hourglass regulates the flow of sand as the minutes of our lives.

If you imagine your life, how you spend your time, contained in an hourglass, the grains of sand are personal and proprietary. They belong only to you; only you can spend your sand.

**Your reality exists only in your hourglass.**



**Don't wait. The time will never be just right.**

*~ Napoleon Hill ~*



## *Are you fishing or cutting bait?*

**W**hat are you doing with your life? Fishing or pretending to fish? When you realize why you're here, get on with it. You don't need swimming lessons, a new swimming suit or a new hairstyle. You don't even need to struggle to get out of the boat, just take the first step toward the best of the rest of your life.

Don't put off living joyfully for another moment. Your life is here now. Step out of being stuck and into the tides of life. Time and tides wait for no one.

Some of us aren't meant to row little boats or swim deep channels. Some of us are destined to climb every mountain, soar with hawks, swim with sharks and some of us are better suited to indoor pursuits.

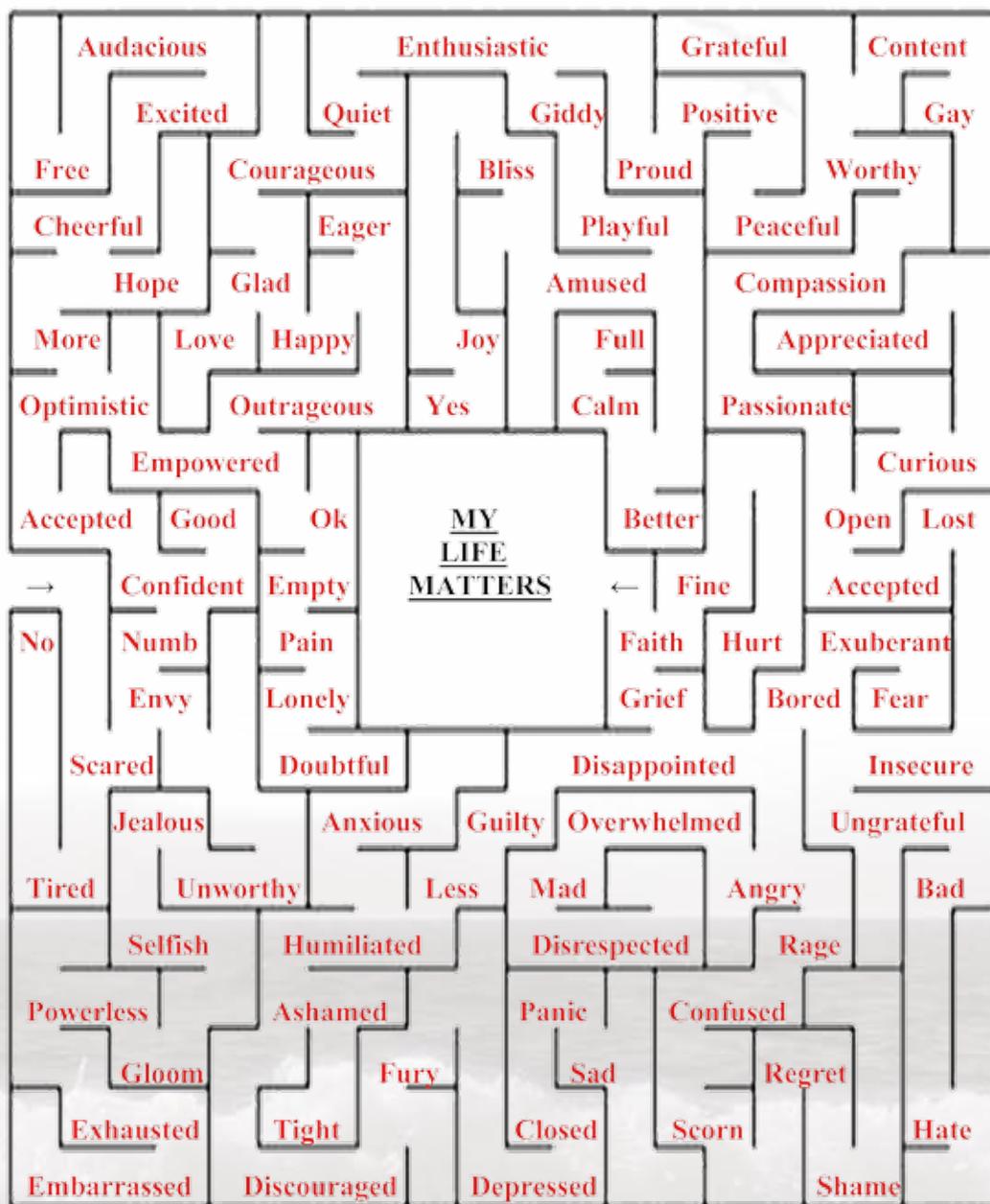
**Your hourglass continues to function as your timekeeper whether you are awake, asleep, chemically or naturally high, tired, energized, vibrant, alone, successful, vacant or engaged in your life.** Whether you observe your life or participate completely, it's your choice.



We tend to get what we expect.

*~Norman Vincent Peal ~*

*A maze of ways to feel.*



Following your feelings will lead you to their source.  
Only through emotions can you encounter  
the force field of your own soul.

~ Gary Zukav ~

Feelings and emotions are the ingredients  
with which you season your existence.

You might consider the middle-of-the-road feelings of adequacy and mediocrity as bland and tasteless and you may feel the need to add some dicey, unstable spices such as depression, anger, frustration or irritation.

At the same crossroads of neutral emotions needing flavor, you might choose the bursting unlimited sensations of glee, enthusiasm, gratefulness and compassion.

It may be inconceivable to you to spend every moment of every day of every year for the rest of your life living in joy. On the other hand, it might be totally within reason depending on how you currently spend your sand.

Wherever you find yourself lost in a labyrinth of moods, you can potentially step your way into a more enjoyable attitude. **There is no wrong way through the maze.** Given that you are a brilliant human being with a phenomenal capacity to change your mind and that your mind is your emotional warehouse, are you capable of affecting your own emotional status? Of course you are!

Identify your emotion and think of a feeling slightly less painful, something slightly above where you are. Look around and find something to appreciate, anything. You may even feel a sense of relief when you give up a harsh negative emotion for one a little less self-abusive. Take one courageous step at a time, being gentle with yourself.



At the center of your being you have the answer;  
You know who you are and you know what you want.

~ Lao Tzu ~

*Your sand doesn't care  
if you're a victim or a victor;  
if you're the caller or the listener.*

**R**ing, ring ... ring, ring ...  
Don't answer it! If you do, everything will be your fault.  
"Hello ..."

"I lost my job and my car because of you. I was evicted because of you. You ruined my reputation. The divorce was your fault. I'm bankrupt because of you. I'll never be able to get a credit card again. I'll never be able to work in this city again. My parents abused me; you abused me; none of my teachers ever liked me." Etcetera!

Hurry, hang up.

Sound like your phone calls? Are you the caller or the listener? How many times have you repeated or heard the same sad story? Before you answer that, think about how much irretrievable sand shifts through while you either complained bitterly or listened compassionately.

Quick, before the phone rings again: *What's the difference between a victim and a victor?*

*ANSWER: A victim whines and a victor wins. A victim puts more value in their wounds than in their healing. A victor triumphs despite adversity and is victorious over their victimization. When asked how they shifted from victim to victor, many survivors describe a pivotal moment when they took the risk to let go of being a victim and claimed their role in the event.*

Ownership defies blame. **Owning your actions liberates you from your personal pity party and catapults you into the wonderful, completely capable, amazing person you are.** What if we lived in a world where no one was to blame?

Your sand doesn't care if you're a victim or a victor; if you're the caller or the listener. Your sand is yours to spend.

Ring, ring ... ring, ring.



*If your sand is your birthright,  
your choices are your legacy.*

During my counseling stint, my counselor asked what I thought the purpose of life was. I'd spent hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars contemplating the serious issues of my life, meditated daily, attended spiritual retreats, healing workshops, and taken self-empowerment courses.

I wasn't young and invincible anymore. I wasn't at the bottom of my personal cesspool anymore. I'd learned to trust my wisdom rather than my ideals to guide me.

"Choices," I answered simply. She nodded. She didn't need to tell me to continue to think out loud.

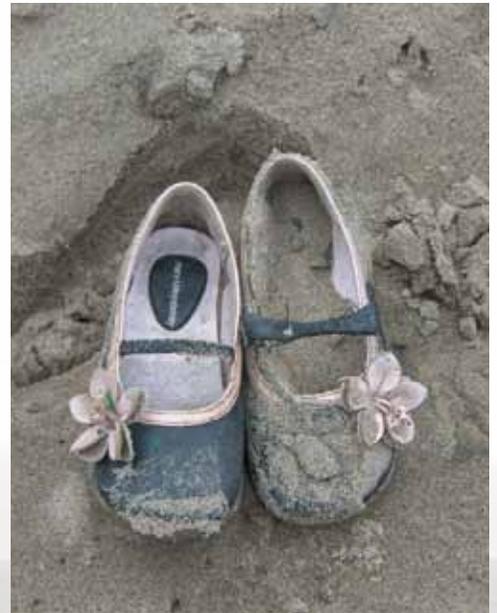
I continued, "Every choice I make affects my next choice and the next. The choices I make today impact tomorrow. My choice becomes an action. Even as I'm acting on the choice, I'm choosing again. The only thing I can do with time is choose.

"When I choose to live fully, living consciously, moment to moment with joy, the signal light turns green faster, the check-out lines are shorter, and the city seems friendlier. When I choose to fade into self-doubt or anxiety, the sun is too bright, the alarm clock too loud and the laundry intimidates me.

"Sometimes it's daunting to own my choices every moment of every day. I think, just for a short time, I'd like someone else to decide; which I realize then is also a choice I'm making. There is no escape from choosing but I can make choices that are in my best interest."

Her smile suggested I'd uncovered a secret treasure.

"What I know for sure, it's all in my head," I finished. We laughed and I knew our time was over.



**We design our lives through the power of choices.**

*~ Richard Bach ~*

# One Voice Makes a Difference



A letter came addressed to me just the other day,  
Asking folks to come together, at a certain time to pray.  
The earth and all her children were in need, the letter said.  
Your prayer is important, even if you're sick in bed.  
Many minds, a single prayer, health and help for all.  
Please won't you join us, we're sending out this call.  
It is possible to create a change, if everyone believes.  
It's doubt that crumbles up the prayer, from those who disbelieve.

*All it takes is one voice to sing a happy song.*

*All it takes is one voice for the heart to carry on.*

*One voice to inspire, to encourage and to heal.*

*All we have is one voice to speak the truth we feel.*

In my mind I saw people gathered all around,  
Their willingness to be there upon the sacred ground.  
The people came together to lend a helping hand.  
Their voices joined in harmony, all praying for the land.  
One mind, one heart, one voice was heard upon a distant shore  
It echoed back across the land with the prayers of thousands more.



*All it takes is one voice to sing a happy song.*

*All it takes is one voice for the heart to carry on.*

*One voice to inspire, to encourage and to heal.*

*All we have is one voice to speak the truth we feel.*

One single voice can right a wrong, bring peace and heal the earth.  
One voice to send a blessing for a baby at its birth.  
One voice can make a difference, to say "I have a Dream."  
The strength that lies in that one voice can motivate a team.  
It's not simply the voice of a leader or a person on the street,  
It is the heart behind the words they speak which help us feel complete.

*All it takes is one voice to sing a happy song.*

*All it takes is one voice for the heart to carry on.*

*One voice to inspire, to encourage and to heal.*

*All we have is one voice to speak the truth we feel.*

**Seek your dreams like you've lived them before.**

*~ Mary Youngblood ~*

*A few words,  
a few grains of sand,  
a lifetime of learning.*

I've spent a lot of years with children, explaining the nuances of words, reasons, and behaviors. I've learned a lot about life from their frame of reference, experienced playtime from a 2-foot-high perspective and am usually on guard for their superior negotiating skills.

I also believe the adage that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear; I just didn't expect the teacher to be four years old.

I was admittedly stuck in a rut, probably more accurately a trench or a foxhole. I was limping along in my life, bumping into my beliefs and propping myself up with my hopes for a better tomorrow.

I was sitting on the floor with four-year-old Kelsey, surrounded by plastic dolls with their arms and legs askew, pink ponies, blocks, cars, card games, and crayons. I was more ready for an afternoon nap than Kelsey was.

She must have seen me eyeing the couch because she dug deep into the toy basket and came out with a black doctor's kit. It popped open easily and she dumped the contents out. She scooped up the stethoscope and held it toward me.

Knowing the procedure, I leaned forward. She carefully stuck the nubby plastic ends into my ears, the other end she held against my chest. I tried to correct her, placing the disc on her chest. She shook her head and replaced it on my chest.

"Listen to your heart," she instructed.

I was dumbstruck. She was absolutely right. I needed to listen to my own heart, to hear my internal direction and guidance.

To this day, whenever I see a stethoscope, I think of Kelsey and her wisdom and I stop what I'm doing and listen.



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