

Discover the transformative power of resilience, diversity, and unconditional love. Join the central character on a quest for authenticity and belonging, as she navigates the complexities of identity and forges her own path to greatness.

Connecting With Your Truth

A Path to Transformation

by Renaya Furtick Wheelan, Ph.D.

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13377.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

CONNECTING WITH YOUR TRUTH

A PATH TO TRANSFORMATION



DR. RENAYA FURTICK WHEELAN

Connecting With Your Truth
A Path to Transformation

Copyright © 2024 Renaya Furtick Wheelan, Ph.D.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any mechanical, photographic, or electronic process, or in the form of a transmitted or otherwise copied for public or private use, other than for “fair use” as brief quotations embodied in articles and reviews, without the author’s written permission.

The author of this book does not dispense medical advice or prescribe the use of any techniques as a form of treatment for physical, emotional, or medical problems without the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The intent of the author is to provide general information to individuals who are taking positive steps in their lives for emotional and spiritual wellbeing. If you use any of the information in this book for yourself, which is your constitutional right, the author and the publisher assume no responsibility for your actions.

Cover Design and Illustrations by Nathan Rosado
Editor: Cheri Avery Black, M.A.

Published by: Booklocker

www.booklocker.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023923444

Author: Renaya Furtick Wheelan, Ph.D.

Print ISBN: 978-1-958891-81-0

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-659-0

Motivational/Memoir

www.DrRenaya.com

Table of Contents

ENDORSEMENTS	ix
FORWARD	xiii
INTRODUCTION	1
PART 1: MY JOURNEY.....	11
Chapter 1: Lost and Hurting	13
Chapter 2: Fighting Back From Anxiety.....	25
Chapter 3: Social Injustices	37
Chapter 4: Death Lies: Tell Or Not Tell	53
Chapter 5: Lack Of A Father’s Love	71
Chapter 6: Pushed from Home to Home	83
Chapter 7: The Spirit of Sex and Sexuality	95
Chapter 8: Paranoia.....	113
Chapter 9: Embracing My Dark Skin	127
Chapter 10: Dyslexia	139
Chapter 11: Educating Renaya	151
Chapter 12: Creating Everlasting Change The Final Destination, The Turning Point	167
PART 2: LIFE LESSONS	171
Lesson 1: Learning To Love	173
Lesson 2: Healing The Pain	179
Lesson 3: Dare To Become Who You Dream You Are.....	183
Lesson 4: Find Ways To Believe In You.....	189
Lesson 5: Manners Will Get You Far In Life	191
Lesson 6: Don’t Harden Your Heart; Feelings Are Real	193
Lesson 7: Acknowledge Your Fears.....	195
Lesson 8: You Must Take Action	199
Lesson 9: Find People, Coaches, Or Mentors	203

Lesson 10: You Must Be Bold (Don't Quit)	205
Lesson 11: Take One Step At A Time.....	207
Lesson 12: Words Are Powerful.....	209

ENDORSEMENTS

“This writing is direct, honest, timely, and unique. This book will be important to girls who were brought up with a similar background but will also touch a much broader audience, certainly including many teenagers, sociologists, therapists, and anyone else interested in human challenges, struggles, and character development.”

Marion Rudin Frank, EdD, Licensed Psychologist.

“As a woman of color, I found the book both validating and uplifting! As a trauma focused therapist, I found the author exhibiting courage and transparency during the sections of the book where she shared exchanges with her therapist.”

Gabriele D. Newman-Freeman, MSW, LCSW, Licensed
Psychotherapist.

“Hard truths, raw, sobering yet liberating; painful truths that only those with similar life histories can utterly understand. My guess is that such an individual, perhaps for the first time, will feel validated, like someone finally understands where they’ve been and that they are not alone. Hmm!”

Valerie M. Newman-Freeman, Ph.D.

“A must read for women who have experienced trauma and don't see a way to the other side. Dr. Renaya shares her honest truth of triumph after despair. She gives the reader

Renaya Furtick Wheelan, Ph.D.

a step-by-step guide for overcoming the hurts in their lives. You will laugh, cry, and cheer her on the whole time.”

Petrena Young, MS.

“An inspirational story of transformation and redemption, Dr. Renaya takes us on her journey of healing, from self-rejection to self-acceptance to self-love. As she discovers and lets her strengths and brilliance shine, she brings us along and invites us to travel our own path of healing. You may not have the same, or even similar, life circumstances or hurdles, and yet she tells a very relatable story where we can all learn the lessons of overcoming.”

Rosalind Spigel, MSOD.

“This book is a moving and uplifting story of love and hope in the face of adversity. This body of work from a challenged young woman packs a swift, head-clearing emotional punch!”

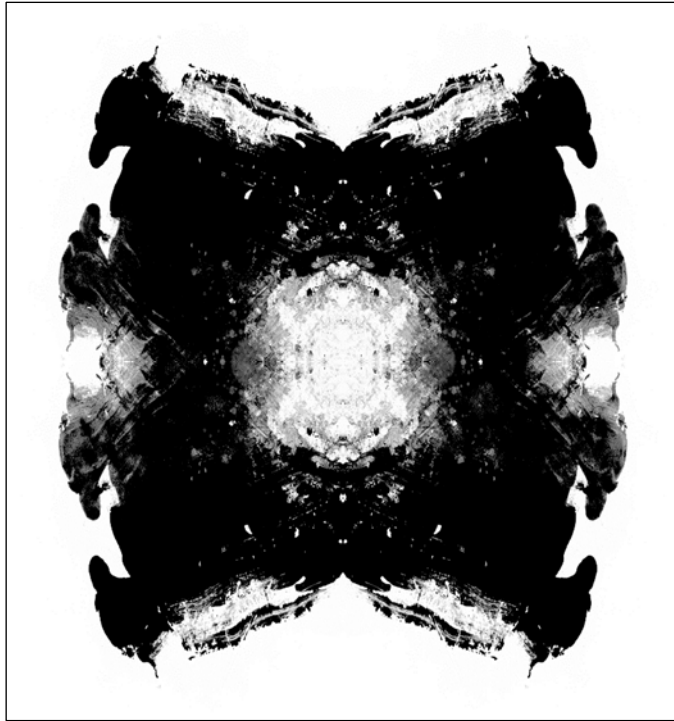
Priscilla Furtick-Walker.

“Dr. Renaya vividly divulges a childhood fraught with life-deadening trauma. She delights us in the light that brightened her dormant dreams and strengthened her resolve to redefine herself. She offers a cup overflowing with inspiration and insights, enough to quench the thirst of anyone, whether struggling to survive, or seeking the mysterious confirmation that each of us is a miracle.”

Cheri Avery Black, M.A., Best Novelist 2023, Jamaica Cultural Development Commission; former Philadelphia Deputy Director Mental Health; Director, Multicultural

Connecting With Your Truth: A Path to Transformation

Training Institute, Temple & Drexel University; Editor,
FunTimes Magazine Celebrating African Diaspora.



Chapter 1: Lost and Hurting

I found myself always daydreaming, getting so caught up in my head that, at times, it started to feel real. Imagine, needing to escape from the trauma of your life, but not being able to get away because you are attached to you. And, in that attachment, you realize that the world you created for your safety in your conscious mind was an illusion, one that you started believing in and accepting as real. This false manifestation of the reality that I created became my defense mechanism, my safety net, my

freedom. I hid there for a long time, I was “cloaked” in darkness and sadness, and no one noticed it, but me.

When I escaped to the places deep in the recesses of my thoughts, I felt I could do or become anything. Fantasy is an amazing defense mechanism. If I were feeling lonely, I would create people that were interested in me and what I was doing. If I needed to feel I belonged, I would create friends I did not have, parents that I wished I had, and family members doing things they weren’t really doing. For example, I had an Uncle TC who lived in an expensive part of Allentown; he had a lot of money and was doing well. The truth was, he did live in Allentown, but the money part was a lie. I made it up to feel important.

I made up a world just for me where no one could hurt me, lie to me, or neglect me. I was so lost that I did not know the truth from the lies. That type of pain is indescribable.

Struggling within yourself, to try to make sense of what is real or made up is an extraordinarily complex thing to do. You are so disconnected from what should be real.

I wanted to know and act in my truth, but I was too confused. I was not going to let anybody hurt me anymore. That was the perfect way to escape. But in escaping, I lost my way. I went down some dark, winding, foggy tunnels that felt so real to me. I was scared that I would never return to a true reality; that the lies I created were going to always be my truths. And I couldn’t tell the difference anymore. The lies became more and more real. People would ask me questions and I would swear that the answer I gave them was the truth. I was very committed to my lies.

One of my older cousins talked to me about my needing to lie all the time. She made it clear that if I kept lying, no one would ever believe anything I would say, ever again. I would become invisible to people. I knew that word “invisible,” because I was already feeling it. I was so lost and out of place that nothing made sense to me anymore.

Can you imagine wandering around in a room that you are familiar with, full of people that you know well, and feeling lost?

I had to fix it. I had to stop the lies. I did not want to be known as the little girl who cried wolf. It felt impossible to fix. I had too much pain to have people doubt what was coming out of my mouth. I made a deliberate and conscious effort to speak the truth, even if it hurt me. I had to break the pattern I had created around words, feelings, and fear.

My words had to be authentic. I could no longer just say and believe anything that came out of my mouth. If I lied, I had to recognize it in myself, right away. You see, in order to fix it, I had to own it. I would whisper, “You just lied, why did you have to lie?”

I was in pain. I started to make myself realize how silly it was to lie for no reason. No one was going to hurt me if I told the truth (maybe). When I began to tell a lie, I would instantly interrupt that pattern with the truth. Sometimes, I would make myself say the truth out loud. I said to people, “I just lied.” The most embarrassing thing to say to others is, “I just lied.” People don’t know how to take it when you say something like that to them.

I felt I was risking everything to correct this one thing that could potentially hinder me for the rest of my life. I

didn't want to be a chronic liar. I knew by telling people I lied, I could be setting myself up for them never to believe anything I said. So, then I'd have to follow up with "I never want to feel like I have to lie to you."

I had felt that I had to deny everything that was real and lie. I was afraid to speak the truth. Finally, I no longer wanted to be that person. But lies had power. They had command over all I did; they possessed me, controlled me, and had authority over my mind. When I made that conscious decision to no longer be lost in the web of lies I had trapped myself in, it took courage and dedication to be real. Today, I refuse to be a person who lies, just to lie. That's not to say I never lie. I learned during this journey that some people just cannot handle truths. If you tell a little lie, like "Yes, that looks good on you" to boost someone's ego, you are lying. Sometimes, you just can't escape telling a lie.

People Who Are Hurting Hurt Other People

It is no wonder that I was an angry young female; my family was far from being what I thought of as normal. In fact, I felt they were a bit unbalanced. They had a philosophy that if someone hits you, you better hit them back. They also believed that you should never run from a fight. If you did, you better not run home.

One day, I was being bullied by a girl who was a real fighter. I was so scared; there was no way in hell I was going to stand up to her by myself. So, I ran home, hoping that no one would see me being chased by her. That was not the case. One of my cousins was outside and she told my family that I ran home from a fight. The girl chasing

me then stood outside the door yelling my name. Why would I fight someone like that? She was crazy! Someone pushed me back out the door, and I told the crazy girl that if I didn't fight her, I was going to have to fight my way back into my house. I was so scared, I tried to hurt her so I wouldn't get hurt later by my family.

She beat me up. I lost that fight, but I gave it my all. In the hood, where people watched you fight like animals, we lovingly termed it, "a fair-one." If you bled from a busted nose or lip, that was a good fight. No one jumped into the fight, and once it was over, it was over. No one came back with a gun to shoot you.

I learned to fight and care less for myself or others. I dared not allow anyone to get close to me. I became a gamer; I would play with people's heads. I learned to disconnect my feelings from the act, to disassociate from the moment.

I was in a class picture when I was around 12 years old. I had on a white shirt, my hair was permed and full of hair grease, slicked down, and pulled back. Years later, I looked at the picture and pondered, "Why do I look so sad?" Nothing mattered then. I felt I had lost everything. I hurt and I wanted others to feel my pain. It took me some time to understand why I was acting that way.

I Am Who I Am

Surprisingly, I turned out simply quite fine! Looking back, if someone had predicted I would become successful, I sure wouldn't have believed them. "Hell, how do you suppose I'm going to get successful and comfortable?"

I am the child who was afraid of everything, and created lies to sustain her safety. I am who I am because of neglect, abandonment, abuse...and love. I am who I am because of what I have gone through. I wouldn't change any of it. I have many complex moving parts that make up the total me. I am the child who lost her mother when she was almost three, had an alcoholic father who neglected her, an aunt who stepped in when others wouldn't, and a sister who cared for her with unconditional love. For years, I thought my sister was my biological mother.

The greatest thing about going through all I have, is realizing that these trials and tribulations led me to people who saw more in me than my circumstances. Many of them became avenues of change for me. I believe they each were strategically placed in my life...the good, the bad, and the ugly...to help me to create the best me I could be.

There was a time when I didn't like myself. I was angry, irritable, hostile, unfriendly, unreceptive, resentful, bitter, and cold. I was in a lot of pain and didn't know how to release it. "This is who I am. Take it or leave it."

Today, I would never say that. I present myself as much less threatening, less afraid, and less detached. I am trouble-free and uncomplicated, harmless and nontoxic, courageous and heroic, connected and together.

Who am I today? I am Love.

"The way you treat yourself sets the standard for others."

Sonya Friedman

Therapy Session: Looking Back At My Life, It Makes Sense Now

Therapist: Hi Renaya, how are things this week?

R: All is well. No need to complain. Something interesting happened recently. You know how I am always thinking. Well, I found myself thinking about my biological mother. I wondered what my life would be like if she hadn't died.

Therapist: Say more.

R: When I take the time to look back over my life, it is not the loss of my mother that pained me, after all, I was just two, what did I know? The pain came from the people that entered my life after her death. As I scanned through my memories, I realized that the pain I endured has created a more directed, focused, spiritual, and caring woman in me.

These walks through my childhood mainly started at age seven. I have little recollection of anything before then. At that age, some people in my life were cruel. I did not have a choice as to where I was going to live. I had to go wherever my relatives took me and where there was space.

At age seven, I was living in the projects with one of my older sisters. She had taken in some of her younger siblings after our mother died. In the house with her were her husband, their three little children, and four or five of us siblings. We were living in a four-bedroom house. My sister's husband disliked me and was always angry with me.

I often thought, "What did I do to cause such feelings?" I just wanted to fix it. I wanted to be liked, to fit in. I did everything my little seven-year-old self could do to make things better.

He treated me like I was his own private Cinderella. When he wanted something, he would holler at me like I was hard of hearing. He would harass me for no reason. "Pick up that stuff," he would yell. "I didn't do it," I would say. "I didn't ask you if you did it. I don't care who the f--- did it, just pick it the f--- up." So, I wouldn't get into any more trouble, and hoped to please him, I would clean up the mess. Now, I realize that I can trace the tracks of my fear back to my stay with them. I was afraid of him. I was always getting into trouble for nothing. It felt like his children were angels and could do no wrong. And I was the worst thing that could have happened to him and his family.

Therapist: How did that make you feel?

R: Like I was an inferior sub-human being, and that I did not matter. One evening, it was bedtime and he bathed two of his daughters and me in the tub together. After sitting in the water for some time, I had to go to the bathroom. "Please I have to go to the bathroom; I can't hold it anymore." I heard in response, "You better hold it, and you better not pee in this f---ing tub."

I sat, holding my pee in, until he got his girls out of the tub. Of course, I was the last to get out of the tub. Do you know how difficult it is for a child to hold their bladder while sitting in a tub full of water? I waited until the last one was out of the tub before I peed in the tub. I just couldn't hold it anymore. Why is it that pee comes out yellow, it didn't go in that color?

He came back into the room, just as I finished, and yelled, "Did you pee in that tub? I told you to hold it." "I

tried,” I cried, “I couldn’t hold it anymore. There was no one else in here, but me.”

“That is so nasty. I am going to whip your Black ass. Get out of the f---ing tub with your stupid self.” As he snatched my wet body from the tub, I looked at him with eyes that I am sure screamed in fear, “Please don’t hurt me.”

“Go into the bedroom and wait for me. I am going to tear your ass up,” he yelled. He was right, he did exactly that. I don’t know if you ever have been beaten after sitting in a tub full of water. Do you know what that is like?

It feels like your skin is burning and coming off with every hit. When he was through, I had welts all over my back, butt, and my legs. I asked myself often why I didn’t get help from my mom/sister or anyone, for that matter. As I look back over my life, I realized she was as helpless as I was. She was in a wheelchair and could not get up the steps to help me, even if she wanted to.

It had to have been a weekend, or maybe they kept me home from school, because it was hard for me to sit down. I was probably in the first or second grade, and someone would have noticed, right?

Therapist: I don’t know, really. Yes, someone should have. What eventually happened?

R: I assume that nothing else happened. I continued to live with them. Can I tell you a secret?

Therapist: Yes.

R: To this day, there are times that if I don’t go to the bathroom before stepping into the tub, I will have an uncontrollable reaction to the water and pee in the tub. I know it is a psychological wound that I must heal.

Therapist: It is good to know that you are willing to work on issues that still cause you emotional stress. Also, I want you to know that it is a natural reaction to have your body react to water that way. I don't want you to beat yourself up for still having that reaction every time you get into the tub.

R: Do you mean that others have the same reaction when they step into the shower or bathtub? I don't have to feel like some kind of freak or someone who can't control their bladder? Or...

Therapist: No, you don't, Renaya. I need you to release yourself from that belief.

R: Ok, how do I do that?

Therapist: See and understand that while the situation happened to you, you no longer must own it as only your truth. Change your relationship with water in a tub or shower. Let it go, get rid of allowing it to be attached to fear. Acknowledge it is a natural phenomenon that when water hits your body, regardless of where you are, it is likely going to cause that reaction.

Understand that you are not alone in this situation. I would bet that the tub or shower is not the only time you have to go to the bathroom, when you hear water running. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever started to wash dishes and as soon as you turn on the water you have to go to the bathroom? Or you get caught in the rain without an umbrella and it is pouring, what happens to your body?

R: Okay, you are right. It is not the only time I have that reaction. Yes, there are times when I am washing dishes I have to stop and run to the bathroom. Yes, I've been caught in the rain, and as soon as I get to my front door

fumbling with my keys, I have to go to the bathroom so badly I feel like I'm going to wet myself.

So, you're saying I should recognize that it happens in other situations and to others. Being willing to acknowledge this will help me stop having an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of my stomach when I have to pee in the tub?

Therapist: Try it and see if it works for you. You may have to do it a few times for it to stick. But I believe that you will be able to work through that. Do you have anything you need to go over before you leave?

R: No, thank you.

Therapist: Ok, time is up; here is your assignment. See you next week.

Assignment

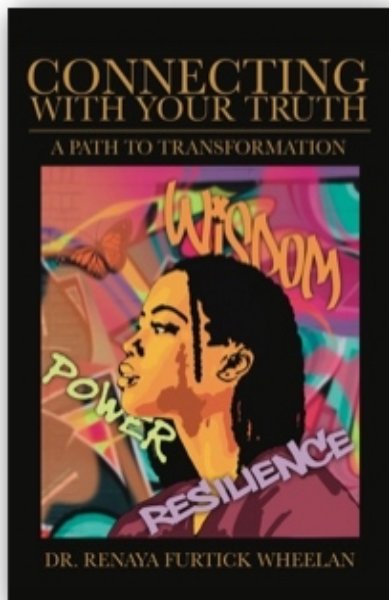
I want you to do a self-evaluation and examine your feelings around people from your past who have hurt you, and figure out if you have forgiven them. If you have forgiven them, why have you, and if not, why not? Then, allow yourself to look at how you feel about them today. Write it down. It will help you to understand and heal.

My Takeaway

Forgiveness was hard for me, I am not Mother Teresa, Gandhi, or Jesus. It took years for me to forgive those who hurt me. After years in therapy, I realized that I was holding on to a lot of the hurt and pain, while those who committed the offenses were probably not even thinking about me.

I had to develop the courage to step outside of my comfort zone, look at what they had gone through, and realize they were hurting, probably just as bad as me. Therefore, their brokenness and pain were unleashed on me. It was a classic “transference.”

Once I was able to accept that, it was possible to work through my pain and forgive them. I understood that it wasn't my fault, nor was it even about me. When I was able to grasp that concept, I was able to break free.



Discover the transformative power of resilience, diversity, and unconditional love. Join the central character on a quest for authenticity and belonging, as she navigates the complexities of identity and forges her own path to greatness.

Connecting With Your Truth

A Path to Transformation

by Renaya Furtick Wheelan, Ph.D.

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13377.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**