HOW TO UPLIFT THE WORLD

a guide for inspired visionaries

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Are you a visionary or longing to be one?

Take this little pop quiz to find out.

- Do you sense that something’s wrong with the world and you want to be part of the solution?
- Have you experienced a life-altering event that changed everything for you, and now you want to use that experience to help others?
- Do you have an innovative idea that might make the world a better place? Do you feel called—the way a priest is called to the priesthood or a doctor is called to medicine—to help others heal, transform, connect, love, create, succeed, and thrive?

If you answered at least one of these questions with a rousing “Hell yeah,” consider yourself a visionary.

Welcome to what Martha Beck calls "The Team!"

In her book *Finding Your Way In A Wild New World*, Martha Beck calls visionaries in service to Source "way-finders, "menders," and "The Team."
 Traits of Team members:

• A sense of having a specific mission or purpose involving a major transformation in human experience, but being unable to articulate what this change might be.

• A strong sense that the mission, whatever it is, is getting closer in time.

• A compulsion to master certain fields, skills, or professions, not only for career advancement, but in preparation for this half-understood personal mission.

• High levels of empathy; a sense of feeling what others feel.

• An urgent desire to lessen or prevent suffering for humans, animals, or even plants.

• Loneliness stemming from a sense of difference, despite generally high levels of social activity. One woman summed up this feeling perfectly when she said, “Everybody likes me, but nobody’s like me.”

 Martha Beck noticed other traits The Team exhibited (usually not all in the same person but present to some degree.)

• High creativity; passion for music, poetry, performance, or visual arts.
• An intense love of animals, sometimes a desire to communicate with them. Difficult early life, often with a history of abuse or childhood trauma.

• Intense connection to certain types of natural environment, such as the ocean, mountains, or forest.

• Resistance to orthodox religiosity, paradoxically accompanied by a strong sense of either spiritual purpose or spiritual yearning.

• Love of plants and gardening, to the point of feeling empty or depressed without the chance to be among green things and/or help them grow.

• Very high emotional sensitivity, often leading to predilections for anxiety, addictions, or eating disorders.

• Sense of intense connection with certain cultures, languages, or geographic regions.

• Disability, often brain-centered (dyslexia, retardation, autism) in oneself or a loved one. Fascination with people who have intellectual disabilities or mental illness.

• Apparently gregarious personality contrasting with deep need for periods of solitude; a sense of being drained by social contact and withdrawing to “power up” again.
• Persistent or recurring physical illness, often severe, with symptoms that fluctuate inexplicably.

• Daydreams (or night dreams) about healing damaged people, creatures, or places.

**You! You! You!**

If you read that list (like I did) thinking “Check, check, check,” you’re definitely one of us visionary healer mender way-finders on The Team. And the world needs you to fulfill your sacred purpose pronto As Martha wrote, “If enough people start mending their true nature in the incredibly interconnected world we’re creating, the cumulative effect really could begin healing the true nature of, well, everything.”

If this doesn’t sound like you but you wish it did, don’t worry. Sometimes the call to be a visionary comes gently in the quiet of the night, and we don’t hear it at first. But it always comes, sooner or later.

Let me start by sharing with you a mythic story about what it might mean to be on The Team. Don’t feel obliged to interpret it literally (but feel free if you wish!). This following story called "The Gathering of the Tribe" is
written by Charles Eisenstein and published in his marvelous book *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*.

**The Gathering of the Tribe, by Charles Eisenstein**

Once upon a time a great tribe of people lived in a world far away from ours. Whether far away in space, or in time, or even outside of time, we do not know. They lived in a state of enchantment and joy that few of us today dare to believe could exist, except in those exceptional peak experiences when we glimpse the true potential of life and mind.

One day the shaman of the tribe called a meeting. They gathered around him, and he spoke very solemnly. "My friends," he said, "there is a world that needs our help. It is called earth, and its fate hangs in the balance. Its humans have reached a critical point in their collective birthing, and they will be stillborn without our help. Who would like to volunteer for a mission to this time and place, and render service to humanity?"

"Tell us more about his mission," they asked.

"I am glad you asked, because it is no small thing. I will put you into a deep, deep trance, so complete that you
will forget who you are. You will live a human life, and in the beginning you will completely forget your origins. You will forget even our language and your own true name. You will be separated from the wonder and beauty of our world, and from the love that bathes us all. You will miss it deeply, yet you will not know what it is you are missing. You will only remember the love and beauty that we know to be normal as a longing in your heart. Your memory will take the form of an intuitive knowledge, as you plunge into the painfully marred earth, that a more beautiful world is possible.

"As you grow up in that world, your knowledge will be under constant assault. You will be told in a million ways that a world of destruction, violence, drudgery, anxiety, and degradation is normal. You may go through a time when you are completely alone, with no allies to affirm your knowledge of a more beautiful world. You may plunge into a depth of despair that we, in our world of light, cannot imagine. But no matter what, a spark of knowledge will never leave you. A memory of your true origin will be encoded in your DNA. That spark will lie within you, inextinguishable, until one day it is awakened.

"You see, even though you will feel, for a time, utterly alone, you will not be alone. I will send you assistance,
help that you will experience as miraculous, experiences that you will describe as transcendent. For a few moments or hours or days, you will reawaken to the beauty and the joy that is meant to be. You will see it on earth, for even though the planet and its people are deeply wounded, there is beauty there still, projected from past and future onto the present as a promise of what is possible and a reminder of what is real.

"You will also receive help from each other. As you begin to awaken to your mission you will meet others of our tribe. You will recognize them by your common purpose, values, and intuitions, and by the similarity of the paths you have walked. As the condition of the planet earth reaches crisis proportions, your paths will cross more and more. The time of loneliness, the time of thinking you might be crazy, will be over.

"You will find the people of your tribe all over the earth, and become aware of them through the long-distance communication technologies used on that planet. But the real shift, the real quickening, will happen in face-to-face gatherings in special places on earth.

When many of you gather together you will launch a new stage on your journey, a journey which, I assure you, will end where it began. Then, the mission that lay
unconscious within you will flower into consciousness. Your intuitive rebellion against the world presented you as normal will become an explicit quest to create a more beautiful one.

"In the time of loneliness, you will always be seeking to reassure yourself that you are not crazy. You will do that by telling people all about what is wrong with the world, and you will feel a sense of betrayal when they don't listen to you. You will be hungry for stories of wrongness, atrocity, and ecological destruction, all of which confirm the validity of your intuition that a more beautiful world exists. But after you have fully received the help I will send you, and the quickening of your gatherings, you will no longer need to do that. Because, you will Know. Your energy will thereafter turn toward actively creating that more beautiful world."

A tribeswoman asked the shaman, "How do you know this will work? Are you sure your shamanic powers are great enough to send us on such a journey?"

The shaman replied, "I know it will work because I have done it many times before. Many have already been sent to earth, to live human lives, and to lay the groundwork for the mission you will undertake now."
I've been practicing! The only difference now is that many of you will venture there at once. What is new in the time you will live in, is that the Gatherings are beginning to happen."

A tribesman asked, "Is there a danger we will become lost in that world, and never wake up from the shamanic trance? Is there a danger that the despair, the cynicism, the pain of separation will be so great that it will extinguish the spark of hope, the spark of our true selves and origin, and that we will separated from our beloved ones forever?"

The shaman replied, "That is impossible. The more deeply you get lost, the more powerful the help I will send you. You might experience it at the time as a collapse of your personal world, the loss of everything important to you. Later you will recognize the gift within it. We will never abandon you."

Another man asked, "Is it possible that our mission will fail, and that this planet, earth, will perish?"

The shaman replied, "I will answer your question with a paradox. It is impossible that your mission will fail. Yet, its success hangs on your own actions. The fate of the world is in your hands. The key to this paradox lies within you,
in the feeling you carry that each of your actions, even your personal, secret struggles within, has cosmic significance. You will know then, as you do now, that everything you do matters. God sees everything."

There were no more questions. The volunteers gathered in a circle, and the shaman went to each one. The last thing each was aware of was the shaman blowing smoke in his face. They entered a deep trance and dreamed themselves into the world where we find ourselves today.

We’re All in Service to the Same Thing

Can’t you feel the resonance of that story about the gathering of the tribe? Doesn’t it feel like we’re all waking up together, like the help we need is showing up just when we need it, that we are finding each other and coming together in service to this shared mission? What if we really did come here as motes of consciousness to participate in a planetary rescue, stemming from our shared love of humanity and the Earth and our recognition of that which unites us all? I believe . . .

After years of coaching visionaries in my Visionary Mentoring Program, I grew curious about how we all interconnect. I recognized similar traits, overlapping dreams, a unifying vibration that weaved us all together into a quilt of Oneness,
in service to the same thing. I’m an artist, so I’m very visual, and as I was trying to sort out how we all fit together, I sat down with my sketch pad and I drew this:

As visionaries, we may feel like we’re out on a bicycle spoke in our own little category. We may think that a visionary spiritual leader and a visionary financial advisor empowering women have nothing in common, that a visionary sexuality teacher and a visionary career coach couldn’t be related, that a visionary doctor and a visionary creativity teacher or visionary lawyer couldn’t possibly be in service to the same thing.

But we’d be dead wrong.
At the center of our service lies something universal that unites us all. All of us are in service to this thing in the middle.

**But What Is IT?**

I was sitting on the floor of my friend’s office drawing this “Circle of Love” visual with my finger on the floor while fumbling through explaining this concept to my dear friend SARK. I kept drawing the circle in the center, saying “We’re all in service to this thing . . . you know, this thing in the middle, this . . .” (I kept drawing the circle.)

Then, as I drew the circle one more time, SARK’s roommate piped up, “It’s Oprah! We’re all in service to Oprah.”

We busted out laughing, and I thought, “Yup. We’re getting close. Whatever Oprah is in service to, it’s that.”

Over time, I have asked more people. I sat around a table and described this idea to a group of female visionary leaders (who are also in service to this thingie in the middle, whatever we want to call it). As I drew my visual on a sheet of scrap paper, they began passing it around, transforming it from a clunky bicycle wheel with spokes into a web, in which we are all interconnected with each other.
ARE YOU A VISIONARY?

We brainstormed what to call the thingie in the middle. The self-actualized human? Personal liberation? Empowerment?

Someone said, “We’re all in service to Source.” Bingo. That’s the closest answer yet.

The Karass

In my new book *The Anatomy of a Calling*, I wrote about the concept of the karass. Here’s an excerpt from my book.

In *Cat’s Cradle*, Kurt Vonnegut writes about how God organizes the world into units which he calls a karass. A karass is a unit of incarnated beings whose job it is to bring into being one of God’s holy ideas. Members of a karass all
all further the collective purpose seamlessly, though many never even know they are part of this karass. Even if they never meet, they work together in harmony, in impeccable service to God's holy idea. Everything about their lives furthers the purpose perfectly, even though they may be furthering the purpose unconsciously. When you meet someone who is a member of your karass, even though it may make no sense to you on a human level, you will recognize them as a family member instantly. Your souls will resonate, even if you appear to have nothing in common on the human level. This is how the Divine gets important things done in the world. Your karass is like a peaceful army that activates to bring light into the world.

Vonnegut compares the karass to its polar opposite, which he calls The Granfalloon. The Granfalloon is a group of people who think they are connected to each other in some way, but they have no spiritual connection whatsoever. For example, the Harvard class of 1986—or the Republican party—or Mets fans. They are completely unrelated to each other when it comes to their soul purpose. They may think they belong to the same tribe, but the bond is shallow, whereas the bond between members of a karass runs deep and pure. Members of the same karass are held to their purpose like electrons around a nucleus. Some live very close to the purpose.
Some are further out. But all are held to the purpose by a spiritual magnetism. They may have never met each other, or they may be married to each other. They may work in the same field or they may have very different careers. But their lives fit together in service to this shared spiritual purpose.

We are all here for an unknown purpose. Serving this purpose makes us feel fulfilled and enriched. But if we get seduced off purpose by ambition, fame, money, or the ego's grasping at comfort our vitality gets stolen from us. When we commit to this purpose we're here to serve, when we give ourselves to serving it with great impeccability, everything begins to fall into place.

**The Hero’s Journey**

As I describe in detail in *The Anatomy of a Calling*, every single one of us visionaries is invited to embark upon what Joseph Campbell calls “the hero’s journey.” In *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, Campbell writes, “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”
Such is the life of the inspired visionary.

Campbell describes the hero’s journey in a series of steps. The hero is going about her business, living her ordinary life, unaware that her life is about to change, when suddenly, the metaphorical phone rings. It’s her calling, ringing in. She picks up. On the other end of the phone line, she receives the message the calling, what Campbell calls “the call to adventure.”

In his *Philosopher’s Notes* on Joseph Campbell’s work, Brian Johnson describes Campbell in this way:

*(Soul) Phone rings.*

*It’s God on the other line.*

*You just let it ring... and ring... and ring... Not good.*

*You stagnate.*

*All that potential positive energy you would have unleashed on your hero’s journey? It comes back against you. And destroys you.*

*Eek.*
Jesus said the same thing, btw: “If you bring forth what is inside you, what you bring forth will save you. If you don’t bring forth what is inside you, what you don’t bring forth will destroy you.”

Campbell boils it down. “To refuse the call means stagnation. What you don’t experience positively you will experience negatively.”

When the hero accepts the call to adventure, the hero must then leave the ordinary world and venture out into a strange new world, leaving behind the safety and comfort of the known world to experience something new. In this strange new world, the hero faces tasks and trials, a series of obstacles to master, dragons to slay, paths to forge.

In this process, the hero faces great challenges. The challenges may even threaten the hero’s life. But the hero overcomes the challenges and, in the process, the hero is granted a precious gift the proverbial holy grail of wisdom, riches, love, and other gifts which the hero must now bring back to the community, often at the risk of facing even more challenges and when she does, the community benefits. The world is saved. She proves her mettle and is deemed the hero.
In other words, she becomes the inspired visionary, the one brave enough to answer the call, embark upon the adventure, face and overcome the challenges, and transform what she learned into the service of others.

What is calling you to adventure? Will you pick up the phone and, once you do, do you have the guts to embark upon the adventure?

**Finding Your Calling**

Do you want to be an inspired visionary but feel unclear about your calling? Don’t worry. Your time will come. To guide you along, I asked my friend Gregg Levoy, author of the life-changing book *Callings: Finding Following An Authentic Life*, to help me help you. Here’s what he had to say.

**What You Can Do: How to Find Your Calling**

*by Gregg Levoy*

In stone sculpting, an artist taps on a stone lightly with a hammer to see if it’s “true.” If it emits a dull tone, there are faults running through it that will crack it apart when you work on it. But a clear ring, one that hangs in the air for a
moment, means it’s true, has integrity, and, most importantly, will hold up under repeated blows.

This is precisely the information we need to know about our callings—that they ring true and will hold up under repeated blows, the kind the world specializes in. And the best way to find this information is to continually ‘tap in’ and listen with what St. Benedict called “the ear of the heart.” It’s the core of what spiritual traditions refer to as the work of discernment, of clarifying a calling, and it sometimes requires not just pick-and-shovel work, but patience on the order of years.

About the best discernment tool I know is talking to yourself. Having a self-reflective practice of some kind, an ongoing dialogue with the deep self, and thus a working familiarity with who you really are at any given moment.

When I was interviewing people for my book Callings, I was impressed by how many of them talked about having a practice of some kind, the whole purpose of which was to strike up a conversation with the part of themselves that knows what it knows, knows where other people leave off and they begin, knows the feel of integrity in their lives and the feel of its absence, and knows precisely what it’s going to take to make their lives literally “come true.”
The practice could be daily journaling, meditation, therapy, artwork done in the service of self-discovery, or contemplative reading. It could be dream interpretation, regular short retreats, regular intimate conversation, or participation in any kind of group whose members get together for the primary purpose of waking up in some fashion—a women’s or men’s group, a 12-step group, a spiritual group, a personal Board of Advisors.

Once you turn the receiver on, though, you first have to be willing to hear what you hear and not clamp your hands over your ears to try and drown out your marching orders because they’re scary or inconvenient. And then you have to figure out what the signs and signals emanating from your listening practice are trying to tell you.

One of the questions I asked everybody I interviewed for Callings was, “How did you know this was the right path?” “How did you know if the call was true or false, whether it came from soul and God and passion or whether it came from ego and wishful thinking and the desire for financial security and to show the bums?”

People’s responses were remarkably consistent. Some of the signs that a calling is true:
• It keeps coming back, no matter how much you ignore it.

• It comes to you from several different directions, like passions and talents and dreams and body symptoms and things people say to you and the books that mysteriously make their way onto your night table and the way events and opportunities unfold in your life. There’s a clustering effect and you’ve got to connect the dots.

• There’s a feeling of just sheer rightness about it. It just feels right. You can’t quite explain it, but you can’t deny it either.

• Your enthusiasm for it tends to sustain itself over time, and doesn’t just peter out after a few weeks or months. You feel a kind of affinity, even affection, for the mundane work involved in bringing the call to fruition, and they all have it. No matter how exalted they seem, every one of them has its version of licking stamps and stuffing envelopes. If you’ve ever been in a play or a band, you know that the percentage of time you spend rehearsing compared to performing is something like 90/10. But when you’re doing what you love, you don’t mind that equation, because it’s all part of getting to do what you love to do.

• It unnerves you a little, or a lot. One woman I interviewed said that if a call feels safe and easy, it’s probably not the
right path, but if it scares her, it probably is, and suggests that she’s close to something vital.

• The truth or falseness of a calling is ultimately in the results. In other words, you’ve got to be willing to try them out, to experiment, to walk down the road a little ways even if you’re not sure it’s the road—and take field notes. Take a step at a time and look at the feedback your life gives you. Does your energy expand or contract? Do you feel more awake or more asleep? What does your body tell you? Your dreams? Your friends?

So what’s calling YOU?
It's Hip to Dream of Changing the World

According to a recent survey, 97% of Gen Y people seeking employment are looking for work that allows them “to have an impact on the world.” The 1980’s are over. No longer are people satisfied with the achievement of material wealth and consumerism as primary life goals. The flower children of the 1960’s have made their indelible mark on the world, and the next generation wants to make a difference.

Will most of those people choose revolutionary lives, carry picket signs, buck the status quo, and make a stand for what they believe? Nope. Even among those who feel a yearning to make their life matter, most will still wind up punching time cards, having 2.5 kids because they’re “supposed to,” building white picket fences to separate themselves from the neighbors, watching mindless television, eating Cheetos and drinking wine, gaining weight, and slowly, sadly letting go of the idea of ever making a real difference in the world.

But not you. You’re different. That’s why you’re reading this, because something in you knows there’s got to be a better way to live.
Your Calling Doesn’t Have to Be Grand

What if you’re loaded with courage but you still haven’t found your calling? This creates a deep pain for those who long to contribute their gifts. But it can also feed the part of the Small Self that has a long held story that it’s never enough. See if any of these limiting beliefs sound familiar.

*My calling isn’t helping as many people as his calling.*

*I’m not doing enough to find and fulfill my calling.*

*I haven’t met enough people in my karass.*

*My influence isn’t big enough / important enough / valuable enough / world-changing enough.*

Can’t you hear the quiet despair underlying these “not enough” feelings?

Let me reassure you with one Universal Truth.

*Every revolutionary act of love, even the smallest, most private action, raises the vibration of the planet and changes the world.*
If you practice acts of love every day, you have found your calling. It need not be any “bigger” than that.

**Become a Beacon of Love**

Your courage to do your own inner work, to end the cycle of judgment and blame, to take personal responsibility for what you wish was different in your life and in the world—that is an act of love and healing, and it feeds your calling. Every loving action that stems from that healed place could affect history in ways you don’t even realize. The unconditional love you bask upon your children could raise the next Gandhi or Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King, Jr. The forgiveness you offer that person who violated you could lead to that person’s enlightenment, and he or she could change the world because of your forgiveness. Every time you forgive the unforgivable, every time you give a voice to the voiceless, every time you open your heart when it’s tempted to close, every time you find compassion in your heart when you’re inclined to judge—you raise the vibration of the planet. Every time you let love lead, you are smack dab in the center of your purpose. It can be that simple.
The Saint Disguised as a Janitor

When I was a resident at Northwestern, Oscar was a janitor who seemed to have made his mission to be a beacon of love, affection, humor, and support for every exhausted, humiliated, trodden-down medical student and resident in the hospital. Every day when Oscar saw me racing around, he made me stop (he called me “Speedy Gonzalez”) and he hugged me. I could feel my whole body relax into his big, warm bear hugs. Sometimes that was the only moment I felt loved and safe all day long. I wasn’t the only one. This undercover saint in janitor clothes practiced revolutionary acts of love all day long while cleaning blood off floors and wiping urine off potty seats. I sure hope this guy never entertained thoughts like “I’m not doing enough” or “I must find my calling some day.” The Divine used him every day to touch and comfort hearts, and those medical students and residents who were uplifted by him went on to touch hundreds of patients every day. Who knows? Perhaps Oscar saved lives . . . not just those of the patients in that hospital, but those of the students and residents who have some of the highest suicide rates in the country. Sometimes one hug is all it takes to make a real difference.
The Collective Vibration

In Australia, I met Ami, an Israeli jeweler who had a near-death experience and came back channeling the teachings of gold. One of the teachings he shared with me is the notion that the planet is one big energetic bowl with a constantly changing vibration. Every act of love, he told me, raises the collective vibration of the planetary bowl, thereby changing outcomes all over the planet. For example, because one man quits his job to stay home and take care of his aging grandmother, perhaps the vibration is raised just high enough to keep an oil-driller from plowing down a plot of trees in the rain forest. Perhaps because one child risks her reputation and stands up for another child who is getting bullied on the schoolyard, one less human gets beheaded by ISIS. Perhaps love affects the world in ways that are different than the typical cause and effect we think we understand.

If this is the case, then anyone—including you—can find and fulfill his or her calling simply by doing whatever it is that you do with great love, from the heart, infused with meaning and kindness. This is what I wish I had said at World Domination Summit.

Your calling need not be some grand thing. The person who starts the nonprofit to feed hungry children in Africa is no more
important to the collective vibration of the planet than Oscar the janitor saint. The author who writes books and gets up on stage to speak about global peace is no more valuable than the stay home parent committed to raising compassionate children who are beacons of love and forgiveness. It takes a village to create global peace. Your loving influence on just one person could affect history in ways you don’t even realize.

Perhaps when we hit a threshold vibration, global miracles become possible. You can help. We all can. Every small act of love can cause miraculous changes globally.

Make Me an Instrument

So please, do pick up when the phone rings with instructions for your calling. But don’t be surprised if the little voice on the other side of the call instructs you to do something seemingly simple. I’m convinced that some of the most enlightened people on the planet are performing some of the most humble tasks, far from the spotlight and often in thankless positions. Just watch any of the angels who work or volunteer for Hospice.

So take the pressure off. Relax into your calling, one baby step at a time. Let go of the “not enough” thoughts or the pressure
to be grand. Nothing describes this better than the prayer of St. Francis. May we all make this our daily prayers as we commit to being vessels of love in our own unique way.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness; joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

Why Being a Visionary Fulfills You

The majority of people live lives of quiet desperation, never having a clue what their life purpose might be. When you ask them if they have a calling, they stare at you blankly, grab another drink, and change the subject. If you ask whether they love their job, they either roll their eyes in a way that lets you
know they don’t, or they start talking about their six figure salary or their pension or their 401K or last year’s bonus in a way that suggests that at least the money is good, even if the work doesn’t exactly light their fire. If they’re lucky, their job taps into their natural gifts, lets them express themselves creatively, and rewards them financially, even if they’re not exactly changing the world. And that’s okay. Everyone is entitled to their own journey. No judgment here. But there’s another way to live, and it nourishes the soul and acts as medicine for the body, mind, and spirit.

**Visionaries Have Purpose**

When you ask visionaries what sacred mission we’re here on this earth to serve, our eyes light up. We know what we’re here to do—and we’re raring to make it happen—not as some manic, rushed, “I have to do it now” thing, but in Divine Timing, as directed by our inner guidance, which we learn to interpret and trust.

Many became visionaries the hard way and learned our life lessons through the school of hard knocks. Often, we endured traumas, suffered indignities, made big fat mistakes, and experienced loss. In the process of learning what we’re here on this earth to do, many of us felt alone, misunderstood, and victimized before our experiences launched us (often against our will) onto a path of awakening to a better way, a way that...
revolutionized our lives. These “hell and back” experiences grew our resilience and offered gifts that serve our missions, and these gifts help us serve others who are struggling so they can have their own resilience-building “hell and back” experience.

The Challenges of Visionary Living

The visionary life isn’t for everyone. Some genuinely aren’t interested in uplifting the world, and others who long to simply can’t stomach the risk visionary work requires—and that’s okay. Because there is a shadow side to being a visionary that few people talk about.

Most of us don’t exactly choose to become visionaries. Our visions choose us, and once they do, we may feel beholden to them if we haven’t developed a healthy relationship with our inclination to serve. Being a visionary often commands big change and big risk. We’re more likely to quit stable jobs, leave unhappy marriages, move across the country or travel the world, and avoid having children or leave the kids at home while we doggedly pursue our visions. Our visionary ideas may lead us to sell the house, liquidate the retirement account, borrow money, and still wind up broke. We may also be rejected, discriminated against, cast out, or burned at the stake because of our visions.
The road to realizing a vision is not always golden. Once we get clear on our vision, many years may elapse before our vision begins to bear fruit and manifest in the real world as cold, hard results. It may not even happen in our lifetimes. During that “waiting and becoming” time between vision and creation in form, visionaries may get exceedingly frustrated, depressed, and disillusioned. Once you know what you’re here on this earth to do, you may want it to happen yesterday. Impatience tends to run rampant among frustrated visionaries whose visions are taking too long to come true while you watch your bank account dry up and find yourself face to face with those in your life who are losing faith in you.

While you’re waiting to effectively deliver your messages to those you might ultimately serve, you may encounter resistance that shows up with many faces. You might have a hard time accessing the people you want to help. Your tribe might not show up. You might bump up against resistance or even aggression from those who are dead set on maintaining the status quo. Those you seek to serve might have absolutely no awareness about the problem you hope to help them solve. Or they may be so resistant to making the changes you might suggest that they turn on their heels and walk away, leaving you wondering where you went wrong.

Being a visionary requires boatloads of courage, stamina, and
“stick-tuitiveness.” But it also requires a willingness to surrender your attachment to any certain outcome and be willing to go with the flow of ease, joy, and the spiritual guidance that helps direct every visionary. While some visions may easily find widespread support, others may face roadblock after roadblock. Just think about the early abolitionists or suffragettes or civil rights activists. Look at all the struggles the gay marriage advocates have faced recently. Being a visionary may mean picket signs and assassinations and hate mail. You might be cut off by your family, alienated from your friends, and fired from your job when you put your neck on the line for a cause you believe in. Plus, there’s the whole issue of money. You may start out all gung ho about your vision, only to discover that you’ve used up all your money, your spouse is breathing down your neck, you’ve never actually written a business plan, and you have no idea how to replenish your funds.

As Joseph Campbell says, every hero endures challenges on what he calls the “Road of Trials.” Some people just aren’t cut out for putting themselves in the line of fire in this way, and that’s okay too. As I said before, some people’s callings are much quieter and may not require this kind of front line risk. It doesn’t make your calling “better” to be risking everything. Again, we’re all entitled to our own journeys. But whatever vision you’re called to serve, your life will tend to be happier if you do what you must to fulfill your purpose. Your calling tends to keep needling at you, even if you try to walk away.
The Greatest Benefit of Finding and Fulfiling Your Purpose

Discussing the challenges of visionary living isn’t meant to discourage you! Trust me, it’s worth the struggles you may face. Committing yourself to a life of service may have surface level benefits, such as financial success, fame, the approval of those who opinions you value, flexible hours, mobility, and the ability to be your own boss. You may also notice improvements in your health, since there are anecdotes, as well as scientific evidence, that doing meaningful work you love protects you from burnout, reduces stress responses in the body, and as I described in my book *Mind Over Medicine*, this improves your body’s capacity to self-heal. But these are not the greatest benefits.

As long as your ego doesn’t grab hold of some goal and feel “not enough” if you fail to achieve it, finding and serving your sacred purpose leads to unprecedented levels of deep soul fulfillment. As someone who has achieved many of the ego-based desires that are easy to attach to, I can tell you that nothing feels better than knowing that you are being used as an instrument of Divine service in the world. You will not find this kind of fulfillment by having your book hit the New York Times bestseller’s list, being granted a career award or promotion, cashing in a big, fat paycheck, or having your TED
talk go viral. This kind of fulfillment resonates at a deeper level and it feels like a miracle to know that you’ve been training for this service your whole life, that even your greatest struggles were your soul curriculum, teaching you how to serve in just this way. It’s yummy. And it’s worth the struggles.
Lissa's Story

I tell the whole story in my book *The Anatomy of a Calling*, but I’ll summarize what inspired me to write this manifesto here. At 7 years old, I felt called to become a healer. I spent my young life rescuing, and nurturing back to health, injured baby squirrels (22 in total) until I was old enough to go to medical school and learn the skills I needed to start using my healing gift on humans. In service to my calling, I went to school for twelve years and spent eight years as a full partner in an OB/GYN practice only to realize that the health care system was so out of alignment with my vision and integrity that I didn’t feel capable of practicing the kind of medicine I dreamed of practicing back when I was an idealistic child. I became so frustrated and disillusioned that I did something really radical. With no back-up plan, no safety net, an unemployed spouse, and a newborn daughter, I left medicine, thinking I would never go back.

After selling my ocean-view house in San Diego to pay the six-figure malpractice tail that would fund my freedom (long story), I moved to the country with my husband and daughter to lick the wounds of my shattered idealism and heal my heart. Not until nine months later did I realize that you can quit your job, but you can’t quit your calling.

It took me two more years to get clear on what I felt called to
to do and another two years to get up the nerve to actually start doing it. My vision has morphed over time, but it became clear to me that it’s my life purpose to serve the karass of healing health care from the inside out, one healer-patient relationship at a time. I feel called to help others expand the definition of health to include, not just physical and mental health, but also interpersonal, professional, spiritual, creative, sexual, environmental, and financial health. This model for what I call “whole health” is largely missing from medicine, along with the best medicine of all—love. I serve the mission of feminizing the outdated, patriarchal health care system, reclaiming love as a healing practice, bringing spirituality back to medicine, encouraging patient-healer collaboration, empowering patients to heal themselves, and changing how we deliver and receive health care.

When I first heard the whispers of my life purpose, I resisted. After all, I left medicine because I was done. I mean, ALL DONE. I wanted to have nothing to do with medicine—ever. I wanted to be an artist and a writer and retreat to a safe haven somewhere in the woods where I’d never have to face another physician ever again. I was so wounded by the trauma of working within the health care system that I wanted OUT. I was stuck in my victim story and was happy to stay stuck, as long as I never had to enter another hospital.
But the calling wouldn’t go away. In fact, it only crystallized over time.

I became very clear that promoting health without encouraging others to seek wholeness is an exercise in futility. Not until we realize that our bodies are mirrors of our interpersonal, spiritual, professional, sexual, creative, financial, environmental, mental, and emotional health will we truly heal. But in this realization, I was faced with a dilemma. As an OB/GYN physician, I consider myself an expert in health and sexuality. And as a professional artist and author, I’m pretty hip on helping people with their creativity, as well. But I’m not an expert in spirituality or business or personal finances or relationships, all of which are key to whole health.

So very early on, I learned that collaboration would be the key to helping me realize my vision. Why should I try to become an expert in all these various niches of whole health when so many others are called to rock it in these other aspects of whole health?

As my vision crystallized, the path to bringing my vision to life appeared before me, one baby step at a time. Along the way, I learned the key steps to being a happy, fulfilled, peaceful, successful, financially-viable visionary. And, though I’ve learned many valuable lessons in my life, I tend to learn them
the hard way, and like so many visionaries who learn lessons
the hard way, I’m passionate about helping other visionaries
avoid the mistakes I made and facilitating the success of others
who share similar visions.

Now that I am finally on the path to realizing one vision, I am
discovering that callings are not static. They flux and flow like
a river, and if you trust the spiritual guidance that shows you
where you’re needed, you will be directed to the areas where
you can best serve. I’m currently drawn to the callings of
helping other inspired visionaries realize their visions,
facilitating humanity in its collective birthing process during
the shift in transformation currently underway, and offering
my gifts in service to several sacred activism causes that
support care-taking, nurturing and serving Mother Earth.
Lord knows how else I will be called to serve, but I’m all in. If
the phone rings, this time, I hope I’ll pick up on the first ring.
As Martha Beck says, “Cave early.”

Abraham Maslow said, “Musicians must make music, artists
must paint, poets must write if they are to be ultimately at
peace with themselves. What human beings can be, they must
be. They must be true to their own nature. This need we may
call self-actualization . . . It refers to man’s desire for self-
fulfillment, namely to the tendency for him to become actually
what he is potentially: to become everything one is capable of
becoming.”
10 Attributes of the Successful Visionary

{Attribute #1 COURAGE}

If you let the inevitable fears that accompany the visionary life run the show, your ability to serve your mission will be impaired. You will never completely silence the voice of your fear. But you can learn to differentiate between what I describe in my book The Fear Cure (link) as “true fear” and “false fear.” It helps to realize that fear originates from your primordial brainstem (the lizard brain). Fear is an evolutionary construct whose singular goal is to keep you safe. When you’re being chased by a cave bear, this voice says, “GET THE HELL OUTTA DODGE!” When a tornado is racing your way, Fear yells, “RUN! Get inside!” When the clan is down to its last berry and eating its last piece of moose meat, Fear whines, “There’s not enough! Go hunt for more!” When this voice in your brainstem starts prattling on, the body releases cortisol and adrenaline, assisting you in running from that cave bear, finding shelter from that tornado, and hunting for more moose meat. Such fear is what I term “true fear,” meaning that it’s directly tied to your immediate survival.
But when you think about answering the call of your vision and accepting the challenge of bringing your vision to life, I’d venture to guess there is no cave bear, no tornado, and plenty of moose meat and berries to get you through today. In other words, no need to sound the alarm. Right here, right now, you are safe.

When your fears threaten to hold you back, they probably take the form of worry about the future. Maybe there won’t be enough money. Maybe someone else is better suited than you. Maybe you’re not [strong enough talented enough young enough whatever enough] to pull this off. Maybe someone will criticize or reject you for standing for what you believe. Maybe you’ll lose the security of your comfort zone. Maybe . . . [fill in your blank.] But are these fears true? Or are they limiting, self-sabotaging beliefs aimed at keeping you safe, beliefs that will only hold you back?

The voices in your head that say things like “You can’t afford it,” “Everyone will think you’ve gone crazy and reject you” and “You’ll never succeed at anything you do” are all voices of “false fear.” They’re just your beautiful imagination run amok. The same part of your mind that can create art, write a book, and imagine the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible is also capable of dress rehearsing tragedy
and imagining the worst case scenario, triggering that same lizard brain to spit out a litany of false fears that may interrupt your capacity to serve your vision in a way that is aligned with the highest good for all.

Effective visionaries don’t stop feeling afraid. They simply learn to discern between true fears that protect you and false fears that hold you back. Gandhi said, “I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet.” Does Fear traipse through your mind with his dirty feet? Here are some tips for how to recognize when fear is interfering with your sacred purpose.

1. **Worst case scenario thoughts.** Something in your visionary journey doesn’t go as planned, and the voice of false fear spews “See! You’re a total failure. Who are you to think you can do this? You might as well give up before this gets any uglier.” Ouch! Remember, this is only your precious imagination run amok. If you tend to play out the worst case scenario in your mind, use it to your advantage if you can’t stop your imagination from sabotaging things! Go ahead and analyze the worst case scenario. Usually, when you think it all the way through, you realize that the worst case really isn’t so bad. For example, when I was considering quitting my job as a doctor, I realized that the worst thing that would probably happen is that I would wind up broke, living in the basement of my mother’s house with my daughter.
2. **Always or nothing thoughts.** You’ve heard it before. “I always miss deadlines.” “I can never sell anything.” “I always choke when the pressure’s on.” “I never follow through when I say I will.” If you slip up even once, your false fear voice is likely to pounce on you. “I promised to blog three times a week and I didn’t this week, so I should just scrap the whole thing because I can’t follow through on anything.” “I got rejected by that first agent, so I might as well throw in the towel.” Nonsense! You can do this!

3. **Victim thoughts.** These thoughts blame everybody else for whatever isn’t going your way. “The world doesn’t appreciate what I have to offer.” “I’d be more successful if only the competition wasn’t dising me.” “This [insert bad thing] wouldn’t be happening if only my mother hadn’t screwed me up.” You co-create your own reality. Let go of the victim thoughts and accept responsibility for your part in the life you create.

4. **Payback thoughts.** As much as you might be inclined to blame other people, fear loves to blame you for what isn’t working. Neither are helpful. “It’s all my fault that I’m broke because I’m a bad person for divorcing my husband and this is my payback.” The Universe is generous and loving and doesn’t enact revenge.
5. **Glass half empty thoughts.** Fear is no Pollyanna and will focus on the negative, even when all signs are pointing towards the positive. “Even though I got ten new clients this month, it was just a fluke and it won’t last.” “Sure, I got a lucky break this time, but it was just an accident and next time, I’ll fall flat on my face.” Ick! Glass half full, baby!

6. **Name calling thoughts.** Fear is like those kids in the schoolyard who love to call you dirty names. “You should have a big ‘L’ on your forehead, because you’re such a loser.” “You’re a stupid, fat, worthless narcissist and nobody loves you.” Ouch. Tell yourself hopeful stories instead.

When you notice Fear prattling on, recognize that this is merely false fear’s dirty feet rather than the real truth. The first step to changing your mind is identifying the thoughts that can sabotage your visionary path. Finding and fulfilling your calling requires courage. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “God will not have his work made manifest by cowards.”
20 Ideas for Cultivating Courage
(excerpted from my book *The Fear Cure*).

- See a therapist, hire a life coach, or develop a relationship with a spiritual teacher.
- Sign up for a transformational growth workshop or program (such as Hoffman Institute, Landmark Forum, or a men’s or women’s workshop).
- Start a meditation practice.
- Train for a race.
- Embark upon a travel quest.
- Volunteer.
- Go on a retreat (try Esalen Institute, Omega Institute, or Kripalu).
- Pursue a pilgrimage (walking the Camino de Santiago or the Pacific Crest Trail).
- Commit to a movement practice (yoga, Zumba, Nia, Journey Dance, Soul Motion, 5Rhythms).
• Pick up a new hobby.

• Take a self-defense class (martial arts, kickboxing, domestic violence protection classes).

• Learn a new skill (a foreign language, an art form, playing an instrument, interior decorating, writing).

• Push the limits of your sexuality (S Factor, Tantra, reading erotica, experimenting with sex toys).

• Treat yourself to radical self-care (indulge in baths, read a book just for fun, go to a spa, get a massage, paint your nails, take a whole day to yourself).

• Radically change your diet (vegan diet, raw foods, green juice cleansing, superfoods). Or if you’re already a health food nut, try cheating!

• Adopt a rescue pet.

• Initiate inspiring conversations with strangers.

• Change your appearance (dye or cut your hair, get a makeover or a tattoo, hire a stylist to help you find your updated look).
• Commit to recovery (admit to an addiction, sign up for rehab, join a 12-step program).

• Become One with nature (visit national parks, start gardening, start hiking daily).
{Attribute #2 OPTIMISM}

Inspired visionaries have an inexplicable faith that they will always land butter side up, even when the chips are down. They view every twist and turn of the visionary journey as divinely guided and perfectly timed, even when they make “mistakes” or “fail.” If, deep down, you don’t believe with 100% certainty that you will achieve your goals, you won’t. If you trust that everything is one giant experiment and you will always be guided to that which is in the highest good, you will have more peace in your heart as you journey you’re hero’s path.

Words of Wisdom from the Masters

“The most important decision we make is whether we believe we live in a friendly or hostile universe.” – Albert Einstein

“Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think.”
– The Buddha

“All that is required to become an optimist is to have the goal and to practice it. The more you rehearse optimistic thoughts, the more ‘natural’ and ‘ingrained’ they become. With time, they will be part of you, and you will have made yourself into an altogether different person.” – Sonja Lyubormirsky
Inspired visionaries refuse to see themselves as victims. They know they create their own reality, so they consciously choose to believe that they will succeed as long as they are aligned with their integrity, that anything is possible, and that the Universe is a friendly place, conspiring to help them help others.

How to Be More Optimistic

1. **Avoid activities that drain your energy.** If you engage in activities that make you feel pessimistic (like reading the news), it’s no wonder you see the world in a glass-half-empty way.

2. **Uplift yourself.** Fill yourself with positive affirmations, cheerful songs, breathing exercises, yoga, hikes outdoors, beauty baths in nature, healthy foods, time in silence, and other nourishment for your soul.

3. **Question your thoughts.** Try Byron Katie’s "The Work" as a tool for questioning your pessimistic thoughts. Learn more at TheWork.com.

4. **Surround yourself with optimists.** If you surround yourself with negative, low vibration complainers, their tendency to see the world from a pessimistic point of view is likely to rub off on you, if you don’t know how to energetically boundary yourself. If you’re susceptible to pessimism, be discerning about who you hang out with. Choose to surround yourself with those who help you see the glass as half (or even all the way) full.
5. **Be yourself.** When you feel like you have to be something you’re not, you’ll start to feel like the world is conspiring against you. But when you’re being unapologetically YOU—and feeling affirmed for doing so—the world suddenly becomes safer and more positive.

6. **Get your giggle on.** It’s hard to feel pessimistic when you’re laughing. Find your sense of humor. Let it lift you up.

7. **Practice gratitude.** Wake up every morning and before you even get out of bed, remind yourself of three things for which you’re grateful. Or try Angeles Arrian’s 3 Question Journal. At the end of each day, ask yourself 3 questions. What surprised me today? What touched my heart? What inspired me today?

8. **Be generous.** Give of yourself. Express your gifts. Watch people light up when you give. Check out 29Gifts.org to practice generosity in small ways. It’ll remind you how beautiful the world is.

9. **Move your body.** One word—endorphins.

10. **Avoid the tendency to give until you’re depleted.** Fill yourself first. When you’re running on empty, it’s no wonder the glass looks empty too. Nourish yourself, and you’ll see the world differently.
Learned Optimism
(Excerpted from my book *Mind Over Medicine*)

In Learned Optimism, Martin Seligman teaches an exercise he calls the ABCs—an acronym for Adversity, Belief, and Consequences. When we encounter adversity, we think about the adverse event, and our thoughts are quickly translated into beliefs, which become habitual if we’re not mindful of them. These beliefs have consequences that can affect the way we feel and the actions we choose to take. By learning to modulate how we translate adversity into belief and how we act on those beliefs, you can convert your negative thoughts into hopeful ones.

For example, say someone zips into the parking space you were eyeing (Adversity). You get upset and think, that driver stole my place. That was a rude and selfish thing to do (Belief). You get angry, roll down your window, and shout at the other driver (Consequences). Or your best friend hasn’t returned your phone calls (Adversity). You explain this by thinking, I’m always selfish and inconsiderate. No wonder (Belief). You feel depressed all day (Consequences).

Seligman recommends keeping an ABC diary for a few days to assess how you respond to adverse events. To do this, you have to tap into your internal dialogue and identify the beliefs that
arise in the face of adversity. (Remember that beliefs are thoughts, not feelings. Feelings are actually consequences of your thoughts.) Then record the consequences—how you felt or how you acted in response to the beliefs that arose out of the adverse event. After reviewing the beliefs that arise in the face of adversity, pessimists may notice how the beliefs that arise trigger negative emotional states or behaviors, whereas optimists may notice that their beliefs help them overcome adversity quickly.

Here’s the kicker. If you naturally tend towards pessimism, you can learn to change the beliefs that arise in the face of adversity, and by changing these beliefs, you can change the consequences and improve your health. Once you are aware of your knee-jerk pessimistic beliefs, Seligman recommends two ways to deal with them: distracting yourself and thinking about something else or disputing them.

To distract yourself from a pessimistic belief, try what researchers call a “thought-stopping technique” meant to interrupt habitual thought patterns, such as slamming the palm of your hand against a wall and yelling “STOP!” You can also ring a loud bell, carry around a three-by-five card with the word STOP in large red letters, or wear a rubber band around your wrist and snap it hard to stop the ruminations. Combining such techniques with attention shifting can produce longer-
lasting results. When you shout “STOP!” or snap the rubber band, consciously concentrate on something else. If that doesn’t cut it, schedule time later in the day to ruminate on your pessimistic beliefs. Tell yourself, “Stop. I’ll think this over later.” Or write your thoughts down. Doing so breaks the rumination cycle and lessens the strength of the negative thoughts.

Even more effective than distracting yourself from your negative ruminations is disputing them. To do this, you have to learn how to argue with yourself. Review your pessimistic belief, tap into the wisdom of your wiser, loving, compassionate self, and make a case to prove yourself wrong. For example, if your best friend doesn’t return your calls and your first thought is, She hates me because I’m a terrible friend, dispute the thought. Argue that she might be busy, that someone else might not have relayed the messages you left on her machine, that she probably meant to call but got distracted, that really she loves you and you’re a good friend. In other words, the problem isn’t permanent, pervasive, and personal; it’s temporary, specific, and external. Based on this new optimistic belief, you can choose new consequences and abort the downward spiral that pessimistic beliefs trigger.

The keys to successfully disputing your negative beliefs include trying to find evidence that your negative belief is false (if it is), considering alternative interpretations of the adverse event other than the pessimistic explanations you’ve imagined,
determining what payoff you may be gaining from such a negative belief, and if the belief really is true, thinking through the implications of such a belief. For example, if your best friend doesn’t call you back, and you’ve tried thinking of alternative explanations for why she didn’t call, examine why your mind might race straight to negative assumptions. Perhaps you’re getting something out of feeling like a neglected victim. Perhaps you cling to your righteous anger when she doesn’t call you back, and your payoff is that you get to feel superior.

If your best friend doesn’t call you back and the reason really is that she hates you because you’re a terrible friend, what can you learn from this belief? How can you use this belief to learn to be a better friend? You’ll ultimately realize that, if this friendship isn’t destined to last, you can probably learn something about yourself from the relationship, and chances are good that there’s someone else out there just itching for the title of your new BFF. In other words, try to talk yourself out of your negative belief, and if you can’t, let yourself think things through to the worst possible scenario so you realize that, even if it’s true, the implications probably aren’t the end of the world. Seligman also recommends distancing yourself from your pessimistic beliefs, realizing that they are just that—beliefs, not facts—and concluding your inner dialogue with an energizing thought, one that lifts you up rather than dragging you down.
{Attribute #3 SELF-CARE}

Inspired visionaries fill themselves first so they can fulfill their sacred purpose in the world without running on empty and becoming sick or resentful. Although it’s tempting to deplete ourselves in the process of serving the world, doing so serves no one.

I know this intimately. I grew up in a family where the greatest virtue was to give until you were sucked dry. If you gave until you were depleted, you were a good person.

But visionaries with big missions can’t sustain such giving. It’s not scalable. You can only give so much without filling your own cup. If you give to the point of depletion, you limit your power to change the world.

To be a successful visionary, you must be healthy in your body, mind, relationships, professional life, sex life, environment, spiritual life, and creative life. In other words, you must heal yourself so you can heal the world.

Boundaries are key when you’re an inspired visionary. When you’re a change agent, you may have a tendency to attract needy people like a magnet, and because you’re a good person who wants to change the world, you’ll be jonesing to help
every single one of them. Because giving can feel so nourishing, you may be tempted to help people without pay, serve them without sleep, and sacrifice until you have nothing left.

Don’t. Resist the urge.

I know it sounds noble to give until you’re depleted, but you’ll never serve your mission if you’re broke, sick, exhausted, and miserable. You can, however, help millions when you’re so overflowing with life force, joy, money and compassion that your extra abundance flows over and serves the world.

How do you fill yourself with life force?

20 Tips for Filling Yourself First

1. **Cleanse your body.** Regularly do a detox cleanse like the one I practice every three months and teach here with Tricia Barrett. In between cleanses, feed your body living, green nutrition.

2. **Get bodywork.**

3. **Meditate** at least twenty minutes per day.
10 ATTRIBUTES OF THE SUCCESSFUL VISIONARY

4. **Spend time with high vibration people** and fellow visionaries who lift you up.

5. **Practice pleasure.** Do what you love.

6. **Move your body.**

7. **Enjoy regular orgasms,** whether in partnership or by yourself.

8. **Go on solo retreats** to recharge yourself.

9. **Practice Gratitude.** Angeles Arrien recommends asking these three questions every day. “What surprised me today? What touched my heart? What inspired me?” Making this a daily practice grows your ability to be surprised, touched, and inspired not just at the end of the day when you reflect back, but in the present moment.

10. **Invest in personal growth.** Spend time with a life coach, therapist, spiritual counselor, creativity coach, business consultant, sexuality teacher, or whatever else you need to help you feel balanced, full, and whole.

11. **Take a beauty bath every day.** Go out in nature. Visit art museums. Go window shopping. Drink in as much beauty as you can and notice how it expands your heart.
12. **Read or watch** uplifting, soul-fulfilling books and movies.

13. **Cuddle an animal.** Visit puppies at your local rescue or curl up with Fifi.

14. **Pick yourself** a bouquet of flowers.

15. **Pray.** Anne Lamott says there are 3 essentials prayers. “Help. Thanks. Wow.” Start there.


17. **Treat yourself to aromatherapy.** Make your own special blend and keep it with for a self care pick-me-up.

18. **Treat yourself** to laughter.

19. **Indulge in a sacred ritual,** like a tea ceremony, playing a singing bowl, lighting candles and incense or lighting a candle on your home altar.

20. **Give yourself the gift of YOU time.** Don’t let anyone interrupt you when you’re having YOU time.
A KEY DISCLAIMER: From interviewing many healers as part of the research for my upcoming book *Sacred Medicine*, there seems to be one caveat to this mandate for self care when you are giving a lot in your work. If you are skilled enough to have the tools for tapping into Source energy in your work rather than giving of your own *chi, prana*, or personal life force, Source energy may allow you to give more than seems superhumanly possible, and the giving itself energizes, clears, and sustains you. If you can do this without depleting yourself, GO FOR IT. But few besides the real masters have learned to practice this skill impeccably.
{Attribute #4 COMPASSION}

It should be obvious that anyone who is trying to make the world a better place must be brimming with compassion, but you’d be surprised how many visionaries grow resentful of the very people they’re intending to serve. The minute you start resenting those you’re here to serve, it’s your red flag that you’re not engaging in enough self-care. You’ve let yourself get depleted and you’ve slid down the dangerous path of feeling like a victim. From this victim place, we wind up unintentionally becoming the villain. We lash out. We stop listening. We lose compassion. We get rude. We treat our team members poorly. We treat ourselves poorly. We hurt when we seek to heal.

Please don’t let this happen. Keep your cup full. Keep your heart open. Never forget that at the heart of service lies compassion.
How to Be More Compassionate

1. **Be compassionate with yourself.** If you notice yourself getting resentful, slow down, take a breath, come into the present moment, and start by having compassion for yourself. Notice how you feel. Give yourself permission to feel what you feel. Do you feel overwhelmed? Be with yourself. Acknowledge the overwhelm. Do you feel frustrated? Let it be okay that you’re frustrated. Have compassion for the part of yourself that’s not perfect. Then remember the Divine part of you that is. Let your Larger Self offer comfort to your Smaller Self.

2. **Do a loving kindness meditation every morning.** Choose who you want to feel more compassionate towards—your clients, your mother, your partner, your child, your best friend—and practice sending them love and kindness. Close your eyes and imagine a Divine, white light streaming into the top of your head and flowing down to your heart. Next, visualize a pink light streaming out of your heart and flowing into the person you are blessing with your loving kindness. Let that love flow through your heart and into the other person. Feel the Divine love flowing through you. Be the vessel.
3. **Practice forgiveness.** If someone hurts your feelings or upsets you, practice letting it go. Refuse to hold resentments. Feel your hurt feelings and then let them flow through you like water. Write letters to those who hurt you. Express your pain. Then burn them. Bury them. Let them go. Open your heart. Choose to forgive.

4. **Make a home altar.** Write the names of people for whom you want to foster compassion on slips of paper. Place them on your altar where you’ll see them every day. Say a prayer for those people whenever you see their names.

5. **See with magical eyes.** We all have a tendency to wear masks to protect ourselves, but underneath those masks lies your pure, radiant essence. Practice taking off your masks and looking past the masks of others. Feel the common thread that unites us all. Sense into the Oneness. Let love flow.

6. **Take a moment.** When we’re tired, frustrated, hurt, overwhelmed, or depleted, we have a tendency to make snap judgments and react in snippy ways. When you feel that tendency, take a deep breath. Pause. Open your heart. Remember that we’re all just doing the best we can. Breathe in light, breathe out love. Let it radiate from within you.
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7. **Do unto others.** If you’re tempted to lash out, think about how you wish others would treat you. Tap into that genuine need for connection. We all feel it. Be the change you wish to see in the world.

8. **Love the inner child.** When you’re tempted to withhold compassion, imagine the person as your own child. Yes, maybe they screwed up. Maybe they did something despicable, even. Maybe they broke your heart or hurt you deeply. But what if that person was your own child. How would you treat him or her? See the hurt child in the person you need to forgive and act from that loving place.

9. **Listen generously.** Practice just listening. Don’t judge. Don’t offer advice. Just hold sacred space. That’s all most of us want. Just open up your heart. Be present. You’ll be amazed how magical such a simple act can be.

10. **Watch this heart-opening Cleveland Clinic video about empathy here.**
{Attribute #5 VULNERABILITY}

The world has enough pseudo-gurus, pretending to know it all when they’re still trying to figure it out for themselves. We don’t need yet another talking head pretending to have it all together when deep inside, there’s still personal growth work to be done, shadows to be illuminated, and truth to be revealed. People are attracted to authenticity. It’s refreshing and causes us to exhale. “Ah . . . the TRUTH.” We feel it as a vibration in our bodies and sense it as something that we trust. When you’re first starting out on the process of trying to realize your vision, it’s okay to say so. You don’t need to pretend to be something you’re not. In fact, there’s even more power in being WHO YOU ARE rather than WHO YOU THINK YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO BE. If you want to change the world, be unapologetically YOU.

In her book *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brene Brown writes, “Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.”
So own it baby. Don’t make excuses for yourself. Don’t exaggerate or make things up so others will think you’ve got it more together than you do. Ditch the masks. Be your beautiful, uplifting, imperfect, fully human self.

Remember, you have been training for this inspired visionary role your whole life. Every little thing that makes you YOU—the good, the bad, the ugly, the powerful, the weak, the courageous, the fearful, the awesome—all of it makes you perfectly suited to serve your mission. Not only is your truth not something to hide, it’s actually the secret sauce that will skyrocket you to the stratosphere. If you’re blissed out and happy, say so! If you’re struggling through a growth spurt, no need to hide it. Authenticity is sexy and encourages those you seek to serve to be authentic as well.

When Louise Hay, Cheryl Richardson, and Reid Tracy led a speaker training for Hay House authors who were speaking at the Hay House “I Can Do It!” conference, they said, “Touch first. Then teach.” In other words, tell your story. Share with us your hero’s journey. Be vulnerable, transparent, and authentic. Tell us how you learned your lessons. Help us trust you. Touch our hearts first, then impart the wisdom and gifts you learned on your hero’s journey.
How to Be More Vulnerable

1. **Own your imperfections.** Embrace every piece of your journey as a learning experience that is helping you grow.

2. **Banish shame.** Guilt may fuel positive change, but shame has nothing but pain to offer you. Brené Brown describes the difference between guilt and shame as this: Guilt = I did something bad. Shame = I am bad. You are never bad. You are Divine. Learn from guilt but heal shame. I highly recommend everything Brené Brown has written about shame and vulnerability. Or watch her TEDx talk here.

3. **Practice self-compassion.** Give yourself permission to make mistakes. If you’re not making mistakes, you’re not risking enough, and if you’re not taking risks, I guarantee you’ll never realize the vision you’ve been granted. Be kind to yourself when you’re imperfect.

4. **Ditch perfectionism.** Strive for excellence, not perfection.

5. **Quit caring what “everybody” thinks.** Who is “everybody” after all? In her book *Finding Your Own North Star*, Martha Beck has an exercise where she challenges readers to list who is part of their “everybody.” Is it Great Aunt Gertrude?
Your fifth grade teacher? Your mother? Your best friend? Your preacher? Usually, “everybody” is just a few people you may not even like. Even if they’re not conscious of it, most of your “everybody” wants to hold you back, because if you shine as brightly as you can, they’re forced to look at why they’re dimming their own light. Be very selective about whose opinion you let shape you.

6. Release fear of rejection. Yes, your vulnerability will trigger some people’s judgments, jealousy, and criticism. Learn to love yourself enough that you bench press your resilience muscles.

7. Take baby steps. If vulnerability is a stretch for you, start by sharing your deepest self with someone you know is safe. Let your nervous system adjust before you leap into the public eye.

8. Be discerning. You don’t have to express your deepest, most sensitive vulnerabilities to every single human on the planet. Trust your intuition to guide you to what is in the highest good to share publicly and what might be best reserved for your inner circle.
9. **Laugh at yourself.** When you’re baring your heart, especially when exposing something that feels particularly raw, don’t forget to laugh. Don’t take yourself too seriously. If you can poke fun at yourself while exposing a vulnerability, it gives others permission to laugh with you, and in that laughter lies belonging, connection, love, and understanding.

10. **Speak your truth.** The more you allow yourself to be vulnerable, the more you’ll discover the voice of your truth, raring to be heard. Once you get over the fear of rejection that accompanies being vulnerable, you’ll find you have much more to say—and you’ll find a whole boatload of people who can relate to exactly how you feel.
10 Attributes of the Successful Visionary

{Attribute #6 PATIENCE}

Being an inspired visionary is not for the faint of heart. When you get clear on your calling, you’re likely to want to realize your vision NOW. But if you’re attached to realizing your vision on a particular time schedule, you may grow disappointed and frustrated when you set goals and find yourself meandering around a lazy river when you were hoping to fire into the rapids and shoot out like a cannonball.

When I’ve interviewed high-achieving visionaries, I was struck by the fact that few of them got an instant “lucky break.” Instead, most of them spent many dark nights of the soul in what my mentor Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen calls “the narrow place.”

The Narrow Place

When you’re trying to bring a vision to life, you may feel very, very uncomfortable. You’re likely to find yourself feeling very constricted at some point in your hero’s journey. Remember, the hero, once she answers the call to adventure, has to navigate what Joseph Campbell calls “the road of trials.” When you’re in the narrow place, your gut may feel tight. Your heart may hurt. You may doubt yourself. Your faith may be tested. You may
curl into a ball or find yourself shrinking. It can feel like death—and often, it is. Your ego is dying, but your soul is blossoming.

In the words of Yusuf Islam, the former Cat Stevens, “To be what you must, you must give up what you are.”

Joseph Campbell says, “We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”

Mourning the loss of your former self can be almost unbearably uncomfortable. You must say goodbye to a part of yourself that will never be the same again. In the process of answering the call, you are irrevocably changed—whether you like it or not. And even if that change is a positive one, every cell in your body may resist it.

When heading out on the hero’s journey of our visionary path, most of us start out in our usual state—which may be simultaneously comfortable and miserable. No matter how unhappy you may be, at least your ordinary world is a known quantity. So often, we choose to stay unhappy, preferring the uncomfortable known world to the scary mystery of the unknown. So when does the visionary take a leap of faith? *When the pain of staying put exceeds the fear of the unknown.* Or as often happens because the Universe has got your back, you get pushed off the cliff.
When the crisis happens and you find yourself tumbling in midair, transmutation begins. Like the caterpillar becoming the butterfly, we must cocoon into a small place before expanding into whatever is next. We must squeeze through the narrow place in order to get to the other side, and being squished into someplace that small can hurt. It’s kind of like giving birth. When you’re a fetus, you swim happily around the womb until you’re close to your due date, when you start feeling tight and uncomfortable. There’s not much room for you anymore, so it’s time to leave your mother and enter the great big world—perhaps life’s biggest transition.

Labor begins, probably against your will, and suddenly you are squished down into the birth canal. The entry into the pelvis isn’t so bad. You can still move your head from side to side and kick your legs around during labor—until a certain point. And suddenly you find yourself in the narrowest part, the part that you must get beyond if you’re going to make it to the other side and begin your new life, the part where the walls around you are so tight you can barely move.

When faced with this narrow, squished place, you may be tempted to retreat in the opposite direction, back into the tight, uncomfortable place of the womb. But doing so would be counterproductive. Babies who go too far past their due date outgrow the life expectancy of the placenta, and the blood
vessels that feed them shrivel up. Ultimately, if the baby isn’t born, it dies.

Going backwards isn’t the answer, no matter how tempting it is. At some point, the inevitability of the forward movement is obvious. There is a point of no return, and you simply can’t go backwards, no matter how much you want to. So you have two choices: you can surrender into the narrow place and transition into what’s next, or you can get forever stuck in the small part, thwarting your destiny and ultimately, dying.

This happens to some people in transition. They hear the call and never complete the adventure. Or they answer the call, but get stuck. Getting through the narrow place takes patience, persistence, resilience, and courage. You have to knowingly go someplace that hurts. You must face the great unknown with no promises of what lies on the other side.

But a gift lies in the process, a gift we may not recognize when we’re in the narrows. When you’re stuck in the narrow place, everything gets boiled down to its essence, and if you pay close attention, this is where you discover the thread of who you really are and what really matters.

When people face death, they talk about having their life flash before their eyes, and in that moment, many see the thread.
They suddenly realize exactly what matters and why they’re here on earth. If they make it through the narrow place and avert death in that moment, they emerge reborn. Only now they hold a precious gift—the thread.

When you’re in the narrow place, you have the opportunity to find your thread.

If you’re brave enough to make it through the narrow place, you’re certain to be rewarded, for on the other side lies a whole new life. You will be reborn, but you will now hold a great gift. In your hands will lie the thread you discovered in the narrow place. You will know what matters. You will have boiled things down to their essence.

And the next time you find yourself in the narrow place, you will be able to hold that thread like a lifeline and pull yourself out more quickly. Even when your world grows to be more expansive, such that you can spin and dance and cartwheel, you will still hold that thread.

So be patient, oh inspired visionary. You will survive the narrow place.

10 ATTRIBUTES OF THE SUCCESSFUL VISIONARY
How to Cultivate Patience When You’re in the Narrow Place

1. **Meditate daily.** If you’ve never meditated before, start with 5 minutes. Then increase it to 10. Aim for at least 20 minutes per day. Focus on your breathing and try to calm the monkey in your mind.

2. **Find patience in your body.** When we’re feeling impatient, we tend to clench up, tense our muscles, and get a nauseous feeling in our belly. We breathe shallowly. We fidget. Notice these physical sensations, and choose to let them go. Practicing patience means unclenching, dropping in, surrendering to gravity, relaxing the belly, and finding the stillness within.

3. **Breathe deeply.** Practice patience in everyday life. When you’re stuck in traffic, breathe and find your inner peace. When the kids are acting up, breathe and find your inner peace. When the agent rejects you/ the clients don’t call/ your website crashes, breathe and find your inner peace.
4. **Recite the Serenity Prayer.** “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

5. **Count to ten.** It buys you time before you react. By the time you get to ten, you’ll notice your breathing slows down, your body begins to relax, and you’re less likely to snap.

6. **Give yourself space.** If you’re feeling impatient, take a time out. Go out for a run. Read a book for a few minutes. If impatience is really getting in the way, go on a personal retreat. Patience requires space.

7. **Act out.** Impatience leads to frustration, and sometimes, you just need to let it out. Punch a pillow. Scream at the top of your lungs. Stomp up and down. Hit a punching bag. Lie on your back and kick your legs up in the air like a child having a temper tantrum. Have a good cry. Get pissed. Get sad. Let it go.

8. **Pray for patience.** Ask for Divine help.
9. **Know that realizing a vision takes time.** Every visionary goes through what I call the “waiting and becoming” time. It’s the gestation that fuels everything that will come in good time.

10. **Trust the process.** Let go of time-lines and release attachment to outcomes. Know that everything is happening Divine Timing.
The world is full of people who say they want to change the world, but really, they’re motivated by the desire to get out of a cubicle, get rich quick, and prey upon the pain of scared, hurting people who will pay anything to alleviate what hurts. The last thing the world needs is another shyster or charlatan selling snake oil to needy people who are desperate for a quick fix.

I know no one reading this is at risk of this kind of integrity violation, so I want to focus on a sneakier way well-meaning, honest, heart-full visionaries violate their integrity unintentionally. Integrity is slippery. As soon as you define what it means for yourself, it starts to slip through your fingers.

For example, you might create a product you wish to sell online, and the product is completely in line with your integrity. But then when you hire someone to help you market it, you find yourself reading sales copy that makes you want to vomit. But you’re afraid to speak up, because hell, you rationalize—maybe that’s what it takes to sell your product. Plus, other people are doing it and good people are benefiting from the programs. So it must be okay to compromise, right?
The key is to get clear on what integrity means to you. Nobody else’s rules of integrity will completely apply to you. Integrity is deeply personal. Remember, karma, baby. Even if you’re the only one who knows you’ve stepped away from your integrity, it’s bad juju. Avoid the temptation to let fear motivate you to violate your own truth.
How to Stay True to Your Integrity

1. Determine where you lie on the integrity spectrum. We all have movable lines on a spectrum that run from 100% pure integrity to 100% pure sellout. Depending on the circumstance, most of us move that line. Figure out where yours lie. Be honest with yourself. Check in with how you feel about that. Does your line need to be reevaluated? What’s true for you?

2. Listen to your gut. Have the courage to trust what your body compass tells you.

3. Don’t impose your integrity on others. Remember, integrity is completely personal. What is aligned with your integrity may not be the same for someone else. There are few black and white “rights” or “wrongs.” Try to resist judging anyone who isn’t in line with your personal rules of integrity. We’re all entitled to our own journey.

4. Be aware of the relationship between integrity and control. Some of us use our integrity as an excuse to be controlling. Picture this. “I am a vegetarian, and it would be out of my integrity to serve meat at this business conference we’re hosting, even though the whole board has all voted on serving the chicken. So we’re serving
veggie lasagna or I’m resigning from the board.” Integrity? Or control freak? Discerning the difference can be tricky sometimes.

5. **Follow your heart.** Being aligned with your integrity should feel good and resonate with the vibration of your heart.

6. **Avoid using your integrity as an excuse.** If you don’t want to do something, just say no. But don’t brandish your integrity around as an excuse to say no. Sure, if it’s out of line with your integrity, say so. But don’t use it as crutch for not speaking out about how you really feel.

7. **Avoid using “integrity” as a mask for limiting beliefs.** One of the most common hurdles I witness my visionary clients bumping up against is their aversion to getting paid what they’re worth. Whether you’re fundraising for a nonprofit, dipping your toe in the waters of online marketing, learning to sell a product that will help you change the world, recruiting clients, attracting people to your workshops, starting a business-to-business corporate training, or pitching your show to producers, limiting beliefs about your worth, your money, and your service can get in the way of realizing your vision. When faced with their limitations,
some cite “integrity” as a stumbling block. “It’s out of integrity for me to charge for my work.” Really? If so, great. Trust yourself. But make sure you’re not using your so-called integrity as a mask for core wounds that need to be healed so you can truly step into your worth and value.

8. **Never compromise your core values.** When you do, you’re acting out of fear. You believe, somewhere deep down, that you won’t succeed unless you do. But it never works that way. Ultimately, the visionary who realizes her vision does so because she stayed true to her principles and trusted that her needs would be met, even if she had to say no to a few less than aligned opportunities along the way.
Inspired visionaries never realize their visions alone. It always take a village to bring a true vision into being. Not only will it serve you to find your karass. You’ll also likely benefit from mentorship, personal growth work, masterminding with other visionaries, connecting with others who serve the same tribe, and seeking support from within those who you are here to help. (You might be delighted and surprised how many other inspired visionaries will be within the tribe of people you attract!)

Every visionary needs at least one mentor to help navigate the often twisted, circuitous, sometimes terrifying hero’s journey of the visionary life. I was blessed to have such mentors, which is part of what inspired me to start the one-on-one Visionary Mentoring Program that I co-lead each year with Anne Davin, PhD. (Learn more about the Visionary Mentoring Program [here](#).) Although some of my visionary clients are still trying to find their calling, most of them already have a clear vision and are stuck, bumping up against internal or external blocks that interfere with their ability to realize their visions. The most common internal blocks I see are limiting, self-sabotaging beliefs that make it hard for the visionary to get out of his or her own way.
Common Limiting, Self-Sabotaging Beliefs Held by Visionaries

- I’m not worthy of achieving my vision
- Being successful [or famous or rich] will ruin my life
- I’ll be burned at the stake if I realize my vision
- I’m not smart enough, young enough, pretty enough, financially solvent enough, brave enough, popular enough, [fill in your blank] enough
- It’s not safe to shine my light
- Everyone will reject me if I realize my vision
- Everyone will reject me if I fail
- Only bad people make money
- I’m not a good person unless I give [time energy money my gifts] until I’m depleted
- It’s wrong to charge for the services I provide because people need me so much

Some blocks are more external, so the right support can help break down these external blocks as well. This is part of why
Amy Ahlers and I created Visionary Ignition Switch, so we could fast track visionaries past those external blocks that can get in the way of realizing one of God’s holy ideas.

**Areas Where Visionaries Often Need Education & Support**

- Growing your social media presence so you can spread your message
- Attracting traffic to your blog
- Monetizing your blog
- Increasing the size of your newsletter list
- Acquiring a literary agent
- Writing a book proposal
- Getting gigs for public speaking
- Spreading your message on television, on the radio, in print magazines, and on the internet
- Networking with leaders in your field
- Attracting clients and filling events
- Creating and selling informational products on the internet
- How to become a bestselling author

If you feel unsupported on your visionary path, here are some strategies meant to guide you.
Tips for Finding the Right Support

1. **Tap into your Inner Pilot Light** and ask who you need to help you realize your vision. Listen to that quiet, still voice. Surrender your desire to Divine Will and pay attention to signs from the Universe.

2. **Utilize social media.** Social media can be the law of attraction in action. Put yourself out there. Be authentic and vulnerable. Ask for what you need. You’d be amazed at the miracles that can happen on Facebook and Twitter!

3. **Ask your visionary colleagues for referrals.** Who helped them most? Who do they go to when they need support?

4. **Start a mastermind group.** Invite four or five other visionaries who are aligned with the work you’re doing to meet once a month (in person or via phone) and take turns being in the spotlight. Bring up any struggle you’re facing to the mastermind and let the other visionaries coach you, while you do the same in return. It’s win-win and costs nothing if you already know enough visionaries at similar points on the visionary path.

5. **Join a platinum program.** If you don’t already know other visionaries who could support and lift you up, platinum
programs such as the Visionary Ignition Mastermind program I co-lead with Amy Ahlers and Bruce Cryer link you to other visionaries, as well as offering expert guidance from visionary business leaders who are passionate about uplifting you and your work. These programs often include retreats aimed at helping you realize your vision, as well as teleseminars that teach you what you need to know in order to succeed. Many other visionaries also lead programs meant to support you, so keep your radar tuned and trust your intuition to guide you to the right programs. (You’ll know you’ve found the right match when you get the “whole body YES!”)

6. Seek out people who serve the same vision you do and reach out to them. Many people are reachable via Twitter or Facebook, and often, there’s a contact page on a website that will put you directly in touch with others in your karass.

7. Own your worthiness. When you’re reaching out to someone who appears to have achieved more on the 3D plane than you have, know in your heart that you are worthy of being in this person’s sphere, not only because you have within you a Divine Spark that makes you inherently worthy, but because when you serve the same vision, you’re often part of the same soul family.
8. **Offer to serve those who could serve you.** Remember that visionaries are often barraged with messages from people who want something from them. Start with determining what you have to offer these people who might help you, not as a way to manipulate them into giving you what you want, but as a way to serve the karass in your own way. Offer to volunteer at a workshop, help them promote their next book, or if you offer a service, gift them with your service. Don’t expect anything in return. Just give generously because it feels good to serve the same sacred purpose.

9. **Make the ask the right way.** When you do connect with other visionaries who might help you, make the ask clear and brief—two paragraphs max. Want someone to write the foreword to your book? Say so. Need an endorsement quote for your product, offer a free copy and ask them to endorse it if they love it. Want to collaborate on a project, outline the project clearly and succinctly. If someone says no, don’t take it personally. It means they’re swamped or it’s not an impeccable alignment fit for them. It doesn’t mean you aren’t fabulous or that they don’t love what you’re doing.
OPEN-HEARTED COLLABORATION

Keep in mind that we need each other to bring into being holy ideas. One key to realizing a vision is committing to collaboration, rather than competition. Traditional masculine models of getting ahead in business and making things happen include such tactics as scoping out and scooping the competition, creating products and services that are better than the competition, and then barreling right over the competition and leaving them in the dust. (SCORE!) But the secret weapon of many visionaries is a much more feminine approach. Instead of competing, visionaries who share similar missions collaborate, lifting each other up, rather than squashing each other down. By doing so, we create win-win situations.

There’s enough for us all. Inspired visionaries trust that lifting up a “competitor” will lift up everyone. Thinking abundantly attracts abundance, good will, and an easier path to realizing your vision.
When you collaborate with like-minded visionaries, you:

- Introduce each other to your respective communities, thereby growing the size of your tribe and growing the reach of both parties.
- Have the opportunity to compare notes and learn from the lessons of your fellow visionaries.
- Learn that $1+1$ equals much more than 2. Collaborative creations can be exponential in power, vision, reach, and dollars.
- Generate good will.
- Develop relationships that can lead to affiliate relationships with each others’ programs which offer you the chance to sell jointly created products, and help you create mutually beneficial personal and professional arrangements.
- Can share resources, tips, support team members, and cost.
- Alleviate the loneliness of leadership. Making friends with other visionaries can lift you up and help allay the fears, insecurities, and doubts that invariably accompany being on the front line.
- Model the benefits of collaboration for other visionaries.

With whom could you collaborate? How could $1+1=100$?
Tips for Successful Collaboration

1. **Find the yin to your yang** (and vice versa). If you rock at social media but lack a big newsletter list, find someone clueless about social media who has a giant list. If you’re great on video but lack writing skills, partner with a fabulous writer who is shy in front of the camera. When you find someone who can round you out, you’ll deliver better programs, create better products, and realize your vision more successfully.

2. **Think outside your niche.** I’m a physician, but I’ve offered programs with a spiritual teacher, a financial coach, a dance teacher, and an internet marketing genius. All of us are in service to a greater goal—the self—actualized, empowered person, so there’s plenty of overlap in the work we do.

3. **Make sure the collaboration is in impeccable alignment and serves your sacred purpose.** It can be tempting to say yes to every collaboration because you want to be of service and you want to help your friends and fans. But you’ll have to be discerning if you want to avoid burn out. So make sure you don’t get seduced off purpose just because you want to please people.
4. **Avoid using collaboration as an excuse not to shine your light.** If the spotlight makes you uncomfortable, you may hide behind collaborations when what you’ll need to do in order to fully realize your vision is to step firmly into the spotlight on your own. Own the spotlight. Don’t shy away from it. Remember, you’re in service to a mission here. Use your time in the spotlight to shift attention to what matters most to you. Remember, fame is merely a means to an end, a way to get your message heard, have influence in powerful ways, and realize your vision. Be willing to be the messenger of a holy idea if that is what is most aligned, not because it feeds your ego, but because it serves the vision when you allow yourself to be a vessel of Divine love in the world.

5. **Don’t wait to be asked.** If there’s someone you’re jonesing to collaborate with, express your desire - and be specific.

6. **Plan ahead.** A lot of visionaries have their collaboration calendars booked a year in advance, so no matter how much they might want to work with you, if you only give someone a few months notice, they’re likely to decline. Plan ahead while still being willing to flex with the flow.
7. **Be generous.** A lot of people are so proprietary about their content that they aren’t willing to share enough to make a collaboration successful. Don’t agree to collaborate with someone unless you trust them and are willing to put everything you’ve got into the partnership. Don’t be greedy. Share money and work load fairly. And don’t set out with the idea that your collaboration partner is going to steal your best stuff. Practice generosity and expect it in return.

8. **Practice good business.** Like any business partnership, you want to know up front how money will be split, who will handle payments, how you’ll be dividing up the work, etc. Business partnerships are like a marriage. You want to anticipate potential challenges and write up your prenuptial agreement before any conflicts arise. Contracts, while not always necessary, can be helpful as a tool for managing expectations and getting clear on the partnership terms.

9. **Give yourself permission to switch gears.** If you agree to a collaboration, try it, and if the vibe isn’t quite right, give yourself permission to say no next time. You know a collaboration has gone well when everyone feels like they got the better end of the deal. If you feel like you did all the work and someone else took advantage of you, don’t do it again.
10.

**Have fun.** Collaborations should be a blast. You should feel lifted up and jazzed about how you lifted someone else up. Practice laughter, gratitude, and good old fashioned silliness. Have a great time. ENJOY!
{Attribute #9 SURRENDER}

Whether you have faith in “Spirit,” “Source,” “God,” “The Universe,” or your “Inner Pilot Light,” trusting that Something Larger is guiding your path and learning to surrender to this Universal Intelligence is an essential factor on the inspired visionary’s path. It’s easy to get attached to how we want things to go, goals we want to achieve, accomplishments we’d prefer to rack up. And there’s nothing wrong with setting goals or gaining clarity around our desires. But surrendering our goals, desires, problems, and even the most seemingly trivial decisions to the Divine allows for a profound transformation that not only profoundly affects your business; it also revolutionizes how you live your whole life.

It’s easy to think you have to push your vision into being through the force of your effort and your will. Sure, there are times for inspired action, when it’s time to do what I like to call the “ass in chair” work. And yes, effort and will can get you far. Many have achieved great things through the sheer might of their effort and will. But there’s another way to bring a vision into being, and not only does it tend to come with greater ease and more peace; it’s also more effective, as long as you’re not grasping at particular outcomes.

As fellow visionary Dr. Christiane Northrup once said to me
when I was pushing my vision and getting nowhere, “Be less sperm; more egg.” Sperm chase after what they want. Eggs magnetize, attract, and receive. Both are powerful aspects of the Divine Feminine Sacred Masculine dance within us all. Here are a few tips for finding the balance between surrender and inspired action, excerpted from my book *The Fear Cure*.

**Practice Surrender**
(Excerpted from *The Fear Cure*)

**1. Name Your Desire**
Whether you’re applying this process to your desire to be less afraid, your desire to get healthy, or your desire to find love, the process of surrender begins the same way. In spite of what you might have been taught in Sunday school, desire is never wrong. It’s a signpost pointing toward what lights you up, feeds your soul, sparks your enthusiasm, and makes you feel alive. Sometimes we’re misguided in what we think we desire. You might think you want your best friend’s husband, but what you really want is the kind of soulful connection you feel when you’re with him—which you’re likely to find in someone else in a way that doesn’t threaten your integrity and lead you into betraying your best friend. Desire is simply information. It’s feedback about what sparks your Inner Pilot Light.
2. Surrender Your Desire
The minute you identify your desire, turn it over. Want to become brave? Surrender. Afraid your husband is cheating on you? Surrender. Worried you’ll pick the wrong gift for your bestie’s birthday? Surrender. Frustrated from trying to fix the computer glitch that just ate your blog post? Surrender. Usually, in our culture, we skip this step—or come to it on our knees, as a last resort, when everything else we know how to do has failed—but really it’s the first thing we should do. How do you surrender a desire? The Small Self will always try to take control of the process of surrender. But that’s not what surrender is about. It’s not about teaching your Small Self how to surrender so you can get what you want. It’s about making an offering to the Divine and being genuinely willing to accept whatever is in the highest good, even if it flies in the face of what you desire. Surrender is about unburdening yourself from the weight of your longing. Tosha Silver teaches us to see the desire like a 100-pound box pushing heavily on the heart. Visualize this, then visualize giving the weighty box to whatever Higher Power feels right to you. The longing is no longer yours to force into being. The problem is no longer yours to solve. Tosha also teaches what she calls “Change Me” prayers, because they bypass the attachment of the Small Self. For example, “Change me into someone who can surrender instead of someone who has to always be in control.” As Martha Beck says, “Attention. Intention. No tension.” The key is releasing attachment to the specific outcome you desire. Let your prayer be “This—or
better.” Be open to miracles.

3. Get Wordless
This is an energetic step, which requires dropping into a certain state of consciousness. Getting Wordless, which activates both sides of your brain, is what Martha Beck calls the “First Technology of Magic.” Jung called this Wordless state the “collective unconscious,” and Martha likens it to tapping into some sort of “energy internet” that allows you to hook into something larger than little ol’ you. Getting Wordless can be facilitated by techniques such as feeling into the insides of your hands, pulling your senses into “open focus,” following your own bloodstream, “sense-drenching” (letting yourself experience the world through all five senses at once), connecting deeply with nature, sacred dance, unfocusing your eyes and thinking about sleep, or opening the mind through the use of paradox. For specific instructions on how to practice these techniques, read Martha’s book.

4. Tap into Oneness
Tapping into Oneness (Martha’s “Second Technology Of Magic”) is about getting out of the Small Self and becoming One with all that is—allowing the separation between you, other life forms, and what you desire to dissolve. When this happens, it’s as if you’re sending an e-mail on the energy internet, bringing the essence of what you desire closer to you. Don’t forget that what gets closer may not be the thing you thought you desired.
It may be a feeling state you think you’ll get when you have a certain thing. Perhaps you think you want a million dollars, but what you really desire is the feeling of ease that accompanies your idea of having a million dollars. It may be that ease shows up in other ways, minus the money.

Some of Martha’s techniques for tapping into Oneness include easefully bending flatware by energetically becoming One with it and feeling it “melt” under your hands, letting the produce in the grocery store communicate with you about which plants are good for you and which ones aren’t, entraining other humans into a calm state of consciousness, or telepathically communicating with your pet—or even a wild animal—and seeing if it responds to you.

5. Imagine Your Intention into Being
Imagining yourself being brave represents Martha’s “Third Technology Of Magic.” Although it may seem similar to fantasizing, this process is vastly different. Fantasy has a quality of grasping about it. It almost hurts to fantasize because you’re afraid you’ll be disappointed if you don’t get what you’re dreaming of. Fantasy often has an unachievable feel about it; Imagining feels as though, in some dimension, what you desire has already come to be. Imagining is about sensing what yearns to be created, rather than merely getting what you want.
Here’s an example. Dennis, my friend whose stories you have heard throughout this book, is Dutch. At the time I was writing this, he had been living in the United States for 18 months, and his attorney advised him against applying for the green card he had been counting on in order to stay in California. Unless something changed, Dennis would have to leave the United States in a few weeks. This was not what he desired. To his rational mind, staying in California was what was best for him. But when Dennis shifted his consciousness by going Wordless and tapping into Oneness, and then started Imagining, he saw himself doing something quite different—going to Peru to study with shamans for a while, then coming back to California with permission to stay. Although he didn’t consciously want to leave California at all, that feeling of “rightness” about going first to Peru began growing stronger in Dennis. He’s seeing pictures of himself going to Peru. This is how Imagining works. By opening himself to sensing what wanted to become, Dennis started co-creating something. Would he get the right visa to stay in the U.S.? Would he go to Peru? Would he get a green card? No way to say for sure. But by Imagining the possible outcomes, he was participating in the creation of what was unfolding energetically. The same can be true for you when you Imagine yourself taking courageous action.

6. Be On the Alert for Guidance
Now that you’ve gotten clear on your desire, turned it over to the Universe, practiced Wordlessness and Oneness, and
Imagined what you desire coming into being, it’s time to let yourself be guided. Practice radical listening. Watch for signs from the Universe. Pay attention to your intuitive knowing. The signs are everywhere, and they’re trying to get your attention, but you’ll miss them if you’re not on the lookout. Anticipate guidance and then tune in. Be aware of the tendency to misinterpret guidance, especially when it is guiding you away from what you desire. This is where nonattachment is especially crucial. Remember, it’s not about getting what you want; it’s about surrendering and aligning with what wants to become.

7. **Take Inspired Action**
When you’re paying attention to guidance, at some point you will be called to **DO SOMETHING**. Martha’s “Fourth Technology of Magic” defines this stage as “Forming.” Tosha Silver suggests paying attention to spanda at this point in the process. Spanda is a Sanskrit term that means “to move a little.” In other words, surrendering doesn’t equal passivity. Sometimes you’ll be called to inspired action. Can’t tell whether or not to act? Then use your body as a compass. If you’re considering taking some action in the direction of your desire, do you feel a full-body YES that makes you leap up with enthusiasm? Or does it feel like a “should” that leaves your body exhausted at the mere thought of it? Inspired action feels energizing and easeful, while ego-driven striving can leave you feeling drained, stressed, or overwhelmed with dread. Inspired action may require you
to put your butt in the chair and do something challenging, but it will still have the feeling of play about it.

8. Be Patient
This is the hard part. You may wish you could become brave overnight. You may wish you suddenly had what it takes to ditch false fear and let courage take the lead in all your decision making. But sometimes what you desire doesn’t show up exactly when you want it in exactly the form you want it in. This is when people have a tendency to get frustrated, blame themselves for not “manifesting” correctly, or get angry at God for not delivering the desire on a silver platter. Once you’ve practiced the other steps, be willing to wait. And wait. And wait. Trust divine timing. And be willing to change course if guidance leads you to do so.

9. Practice Gratitude
Maybe you got what you desired and fear is a thing of the past for you. But maybe, if you’re like most mere mortals, you’re still afraid from time to time. Either way, find the perfection in it. Be grateful for the learning. If your desire came into being, let yourself be awash in the grace of it all. If it didn’t, be grateful that something even better—whatever wants to become—is on its way. Even if you only feel a little more brave at the end of this journey, express thanks. As Mama Gena says, “Unexpressed blessings turn to shit.” Thank your courage—or whatever else
you may have called into being. Trust the process. Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

You may also want to keep your eyes open for ways that spiritual guidance can show up to guide inspired action.

**Tips For Listening To Signs From the Universe**

*Pay attention when you notice any of the following:*

- Synchronicities that you might be tempted to call coincidence, except that the timing is too perfect.

- Dreams that offer you messages or suggestions.

- Books or blog posts that speak directly to where you are in your life.

- Physical symptoms that signal something deeper.

- The “Cosmic No.” When roadblocks appear on your current path, the Universe may be trying to get your attention. If something seems much harder than it should, it may be a sign that you’re being gently (or not so gently) redirected towards what is even more aligned.
10 Attributes of the Successful Visionary

- Messages that arise during meditation.

- Gut feelings or other recognizable feelings in your body compass that direct you away from or towards your true north.

- Something someone says that cuts right to the core of you.

- A sense of inner knowing that something is true, even though it may not be logical.

- Song lyrics that pop up over and over again. Unexpected answers to prayers that direct your path.

- People you attract who share your calling and guide the way or share the path with you.
{Attribute #10 DISCERNMENT}

Once you’ve surrendered your desires, problems, and decisions to a wiser, larger Universal Intelligence that guides your visionary path, discernment becomes key. How will you interpret what arises on your visionary path? Is a blocked road the Cosmic No? Or is your resolve merely being tested? If you bump up against resistance, are you meant to quit swimming upstream, or is it an opportunity to buckle down and practice persistence?

It’s affirming when you’re “in the flow” and the signs from the Universe validate everything you wish will happen. You feel like you’re floating on a lavender-scented river, and everybody and everything you need shows up exactly when you need it. People on the sidelines sweep you down the river. An extra raft appears just when yours hits a log and gets a hole in it. The check shows up in the mail. The opportunity appears. The perfect partner calls.

But what about when all doors slam shut? What if you’ve lost your way? What if the money runs out, you find yourself sinking, your partner leaves, and it appears that the only way to stay afloat is to sell out your integrity? Does this mean you’re on the wrong path and need to give up your visionary dream? Or is your resolve just being tested? Are you simply in
the narrow place and need to allow yourself to get squeezed so
you can experience the inevitable rebirth on the other side of
the narrow place?

This is one of the hardest challenges inspired visionaries face.
Usually, when the doors all slam shut, it’s a sign that we got off
track and are supposed to redirect. But sometimes, those closed
doors are just temporary setbacks, and the only way to stay on
the path is to soldier on and persevere. This is where
discernment comes in.

You’ll also need to call upon your discernment in order to
choose which opportunities should make you leap and which
should make you step back. Which partnerships should make
you jump forward with a “Hell yeah” and which should make
you pause? How is your time best spent? Which clients might
you be better off referring elsewhere? When should you say no?

When you’re passionate about realizing your vision, it’s
tempting to say yes to everything. But sometimes the most
enlightened action is to say no, even when opportunities arise
that seem like the fast track to visionary success. Some
opportunities will be out of your integrity. Some clients will be
out of alignment with you. Some partnerships will be fueled by
motivations that don’t serve you or your vision. Sometimes
you’ll just need to say no to a great opportunity so you can say
yes to your child or your self care or your best friend with cancer. Discernment helps you keep your priorities straight and keeps you from getting swept up in a tide of ego fuel.

Much of what I learned about discernment, I learned from Martha Beck. I was at a phase of my journey when a lot of opportunities were streaming in. Luxury problems, yes. But problems nevertheless, because there are only so many hours in the day and many people I love who also need my attention. So do you practice discernment when your inbox looks like this?

*Speak at this telesummit.* *Keynote our conference.* *Give me advice about my sick child.* *Write the foreword for my book.* *Help me with my book launch.* *Promote my teleclass with me.* *Give me suggestions for how to get more traffic to my blog.*

I want to be useful. Many of these people are SO nice. And yet, there’s only so much of me, and if I say yes to everyone, I wind up neglecting the people I love most, my health suffers, and I lose my sense of connection to Source. Martha knows this about me, and she has also seen what happens when I enter the ring during equine therapy with her. Martha said, “Lissa, horses don’t do favors.”

When you enter the ring with a horse, the horse will only “join up” with you if the horse reads the energy you exude and
genuinely wants to join up with you. If the horse doesn’t like what it reads of your energy or even if the horse is simply more interested in something like, like a pretty girly horsey outside the ring, the horse will turn away from you without a lick of concern about hurting your feelings. Horses are not people pleasers. They aren’t motivated by the desire to be liked or even to be helpful. But they are motivated by clean, positive energy. If it feels good to a horse to join up with you, they’ll bump their life force up against yours and basically mimic everything you do—happily.

When To Say Yes, When To Say No

So what should we do when trying to decide whether or not to say yes to someone who wants something from us? When you notice an impulse to say yes, when you’re feeling like you want to help, check in with your motivations. Are you saying yes because the person who is asking has such pure, radiant energy that you want to bump up your life force against theirs or because the opportunity feels so yummy that you find yourself bounding out of your chair with glee (“clean energy”)? Or are you motivated by wanting to be liked, a desire to please, a sense of obligation or guilt, a fear of disappointing someone or missing out, a fear that a better opportunity will never come and this is as good as it gets (“dirty energy” or what Martha calls “Skanky ‘Ho energy”)? Learning to practice discernment will help you tell the
difference. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be kind or do helpful things for people you care about. Just notice what motivates you. If you’re not sure, go back to the practice of surrender. Put it into the field and ask for spiritual guidance about whether it is most aligned for you to say yes or no. Trust that you will be shown and have the patience to wait until you’re clear.

Tips for Discernment

1. Understand the difference between judgement and discernment. You don’t have to judge a person or an opportunity in order to discern that it’s not a good fit for you at the time.

2. Learn what freedom tastes like. Connections, collaborations, and opportunities have a vibe to them that you can learn to interpret. If you’re on the fence about saying yes or no, check in. Close your eyes. Feel the energy. Trust those vibes. Martha Beck suggests asking, “Does it feel like Shackles on?” Or shackles off?” The aligned choice tastes like freedom.
3. **Protect your time.** Understand that even if you really want to be helpful, if you say yes to everything, you’ll wind up depleted—and the depleted visionary serves no one. Fill yourself first so you can serve from a pure place.

**Embracing Your Visionary Path**

Joseph Campbell said, “So that’s what destiny is: simply the fulfillment of the potentialities of the energies in your own system.”

Nobody has forged this path for you, because it is your unique path. Nobody can predict for you where the path will end, because every twist and turn of the path will be a surprise, and anything is possible. But one thing is guaranteed. When you fully commit to the realization of your vision, free from the ego’s grasping attachments, unseen forces are likely to help you out. My new favorite word is “pronoia,” the opposite of paranoia. It’s the unshakable belief that everything in the Universe is conspiring to support you and shower you with blessings.

If you have been called to serve one of God’s holy ideas, you will not walk this path alone. The perfect people will show up to support your journey. The check will arrive in the mail.
The tools you need will be offered to you. You will be given opportunities to learn the lessons you must learn. And when you look back upon your whole life—the triumphs, the challenges, and everything in between, you’ll discover that you were groomed for this task your entire life. There is no greater gift in life than this.

Joyce Carol Oates said, “I don't understand why people make a fuss over me as a writer. I'm just the garden hose water flows through.” As I wrote in *The Anatomy Of A Calling*:

>This journey isn’t so much about your job, though a professional mission can certainly be part of your life’s purpose. It’s bigger than that. This journey requires a lot of personal and spiritual growth work. Once you’ve done the heavy lifting, it requires a lot of maintenance. This is the meaning of your life, to become a clear channel so the Divine can flow through you and allow you to serve out this mysterious unknown purpose only you can fulfill. Your path won’t be easy, because your ego will attach to what it desires, and you will be frightened of not getting what you want.

>When you clear your channel of the residues of ego, when you truly trust that living in Divine alignment will bring
you peace and magic, when you commit to letting yourself get used in service to this higher purpose, the fear dissipates, the ego takes its rightful place in the backseat of your life, and the majesty of your Inner Pilot Light can ignite this planet on fire. In the wake of this transformation, you will be left with nothing but gratitude. You will sit in awe, overflowing with wonder at the mystery that unfolds like a rainbow-colored rose, every petal more splendid than the last.

This morning, I noticed that my heart felt—open. That’s not quite the right word, but it’s the closest word I can find. It feels raw, vulnerable, fragile, tender—but, really, it’s more like open. Open almost feels like a wound. But this opening doesn’t exactly hurt. To quote Brené Brown, “I feel like a turtle without a shell in a briar patch.” As uncomfortable as it feels at times, I wouldn’t avoid it, because I choose this opening. It’s more like feeling un-guarded in a world filled with people who walk around with armor. To walk around this way feels supremely risky. I wonder what will become of me. Surely, it’s foolish and naive to stand before a guarded person and lay down your armor. And yet, I keep laying my heart bare, in spite of the risk. I question whether this is the wisest practice. Maybe I should guard my heart more. Yet deep down, I sense that the open heart is not a weakness;
it’s the strongest thing in the Universe. Maybe we don’t need to protect the heart in order to stay safe. Maybe it’s where our ultimate safety lies. Or maybe we can simply trust ourselves to discern when we can lay our hearts bare and when it is most loving to tend to the delicacy of the heart with the self-nurturing of gentle protection, the way a daffodil bulb might get sheltered so that it can flourish into a blossom.

I don’t really know. After all of this, I realize that the more I experience, the less I know. All I know is that we are here to love and to be loved, to open our hearts all the way and to let the impulse of love spawn a revolution that helps us remember Why We Are Really Here. Each of us will participate in this revolution of love in our own unique way as we navigate our own heroic journey. As we journey together, we will all wake up to the truth of what is real and why our souls chose to incarnate at this special time on Planet Earth.

This is why you are here, so we can co-create a more beautiful world together, one little miracle at a time. If the phone is ringing for you, trust your heart if it tells you to take the call. Your instructions await you. The time is now.
ORDER *THE ANATOMY OF A CALLING* AND READ MORE [HERE](#)

Blessings on your visionary journey, my friend. May you too feel the deep fulfillment of serving your sacred purpose with a pure heart and a loving spirit. I am so so grateful you exist.

With love,

Lissa Rankin, MD

PS. As an offering to spiritual visionaries, I’m co-leading a free class with one of my dearest friends, the remarkable Amy Ahlers, Bestselling author & fellow spiritual seeker called: Stop Being the World’s Best Kept Secret: 10 Heart-Centered Ways to Attract Your Tribe & Grow Your Platform.

This special webinar is for visionaries who long to stay in impeccable alignment with their souls while creating abundant livelihood, sharing their message with the world in a big way, and creating sustainable businesses that allow for personal happiness and peace.

[Go here to register and join us.](#)