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IDENTITY ROADMAP WORKBOOK

CORE STRATEGIES FOR REDEFINING
WHO YOU ARE & HOW YOU LIVE





IDENTITY ROADMAP

**CORE STRATEGIES FOR REDEFINING
WHO YOU ARE & HOW YOU LIVE**

BY

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Welcome to a new step in your process of reclaiming control after trauma! As challenging as post-trauma life can be the rewards of doing the work to create your post-trauma identity can turn your life from intense and overwhelming to manageable and freeing.

Trauma causes a break in the narrative of the story of your life. Whether it's trauma or *Trauma* your story changes because of events out of your control. One day you're living your life, very sure of who you are (or who you think you are), and somewhat sure of how the world works and operates. Then, something unexpected occurs and the next thing you know everything about what you knew changes.

The disappointment, stress and frustration of trauma can, at the least, temporarily divert you from your path. The grief, shock and loss of Trauma can, at the most, completely hijack your life so that it becomes reduced to simple acts of coping. In either case, the foundation of what goes wrong is largely due to *change you did not choose*.

The changes we experience after trauma are often psychological, mental and physical. Many include a sense of chaos, powerless and lack of control. For example, emotionally you may notice that you have trouble regulating your moods. Instead of being balanced your emotions swing between a pendulum of extremes. You may feel flooded by unexpected and overwhelming feeling. Or, you may find yourself numb to all emotional sensation. Mentally you may find that you have trouble concentrating. Perhaps you have to reread a passage several times to reach the end or even grasp what the words mean. You may experience frequent memory lapses for simple things. When it comes to language you might find it hard to find the right words to express what you're thinking and feeling. Physically, too, you might notice that you have muscle and joint pain, a heaviness in your body and even, in extreme cases, body system dysfunction, especially in the gastrointestinal tract.

The affect of trauma on the mind and body has been extensively documented. So, too, have ways to recalibrate. We're taught to reduce stress, manage anxiety, stop panic and replace the feeling of threat with one of safety. The popularity of breathwork, meditation, mindfulness and yoga attest to the benefits many survivors experience in finding a way to move their minds and bodies back toward homeostasis.

While we focus on retraining the brain and revitalizing the body there's one area we don't often discuss: The inner self. Or, your identity.

The way you define who you are – the way you see yourself – contributes to the 98% of habits that determine how you live. If you see yourself as solely a survivor, you will live through a belief system that sees threat everywhere. If you see yourself only as someone trying to escape the past you will see the past relentlessly popping up in your present. If you see yourself as someone who didn't deserve to survive you will devalue yourself and your life in the process, ensuring that you struggle more than ever would be necessary.

How you define yourself forms the basis for your belief system and vice versa. It is essential that thoughts, feelings and behaviors align with what you value in terms of how you want to be known. Likewise, your belief system affects your self-definition by holding you in a pattern that can cause repetitive negative experiences.

Identity acts as a compass directing you on a steady course of continuity in your life. Though you change and evolve through different phases, elements of who you are and how you define yourself remain constant throughout your life. Often after trauma the inner self recalibration process involves identifying and reconnecting to those foundations of your identity that bring you back from the unfamiliarity of trauma into a space that feels comfortable, familiar and connected.

How do you reset the very core of who you are? How do you assess the deepest affect of trauma so that you know what's been damaged and needs to be repaired? How do you reconnect to your authentic self when it's been altered by trauma? These are the questions the *How Trauma Transforms You* program begins to answer. Through the integration of Part One, which guides you toward developing a transformational approach, and Part Two, which explores twenty-four core strategies you will learn to develop a process that allows you to recalibrate and move toward homeostasis in the quest of the most important element in the trauma recovery process: your inner self.

Part of trauma recovery is a journey of self-discovery. There is a you separate from trauma. There is, actually, an enormous YOU that has nothing to do with trauma whatsoever. In order to discover that person, you will simultaneously learn to redefine who you are and look ahead, plus dream and desire the future, even while you resolve things in the present brought on by things in the past.

This workbook complements any work you will be or are already doing either on your own or with a healing arts professional. It is meant to help you not only connect to yourself in a deep and meaningful way, but also to help you develop a physical touchstone for your transformation; a document that will assist you in realigning when you feel off-center, reorienting when things get out of focus, and getting back on track toward what is most important to you.

In addition, the mission of the work you do in these pages will be to aid you in identifying where you get tripped up in the recovery process. The more you develop clarity and a strategized process the more easily you can make change.

Everything in this workbook is part of the work I do with my private and group clients. They are exercises I've seen work and continue to see the benefits of with survivors using these tools every week. Before working with this workbook listen to the accompanying audio. As in everything with trauma recovery:

- work on these exercises at your own pace
- follow what feels good

- skip what feels bad (you can revisit it later when you feel stronger)
- trust your intuition
- build a support system
- stop if you experience an increase in distress
- skip exercises until you feel ready to do them

This workbook of exercises and the audio that accompanies it are not meant to replace the direct and individualized care of a trauma trained professional. Rather, they are meant to supplement whatever process you may be currently using. Likewise, if you're working alone the content of these pages is meant to be a support not exclusive of your receiving additional professional help at any time.

A note about how to use this workbook if you have:

Ω Experienced trauma at a time when you can look back and see your Before self clearly – you will find this book straight-forward as it helps delineate the past and the present between your distinct Before and After selves.

Ω Experienced trauma at a time before you had grown old enough to remember a distinct prior self – you will approach this workbook from the perspective of *imagining* who you could have been had trauma not gotten in the way. Some of this workbook will ask you to look back at your past self. If you cannot remember a time before trauma simply answer the exercises by imagining who you wish you'd had a chance to be before trauma occurred.

You have enormous healing potential. The goal is learning to access it. If you work through this workbook – all the way to the end – you will be well on your way to unleashing a part of yourself that is stronger, clearer, more empowered, focused and committed to achieving your trauma recovery mission *plus* creating the life you know you would most love to be living.

Go for it! You can do this. I believe in you,



Michele

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Post-Trauma Coach

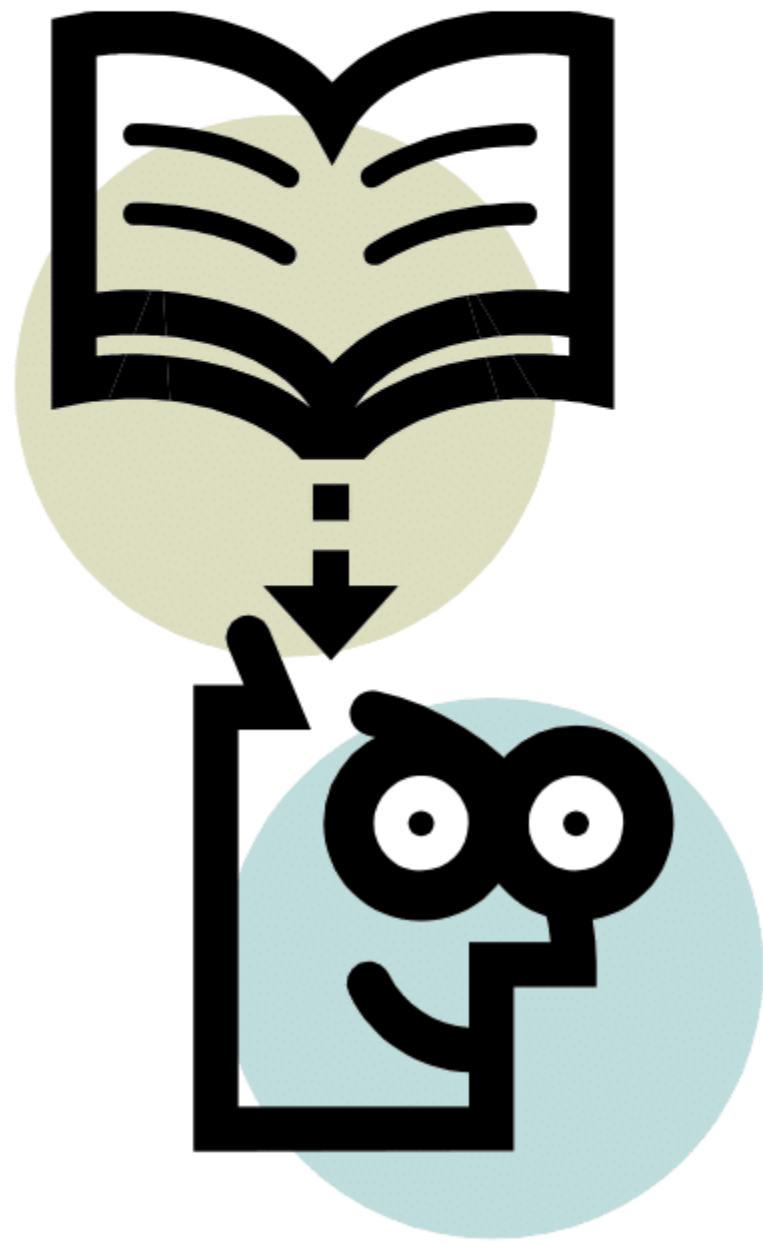


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PART ONE



DEVELOPING YOUR APPROACH



CHAPTER ONE:

WHAT KIND OF POST-TRAUMA IDENTITY DO YOU WANT?



Empowerment comes from awareness and clarity. Being conscious of what you want allows you to become focused on figuring out when you're headed and how you're going to get there.

- Michele Rosenthal

What do you want your post-trauma identity to look like?

There is life after trauma and the transformation of who you are. It's time to begin thinking about what kind of life you are moving toward. Your *commitment, excitement, diligence, strength* and *courage* are all vastly increased when you have a very clear idea of why you've chosen to go through all of this transformation! Let's get a good look at your life goals....

List 3-5 things you want to achieve through your post-trauma identity transformation process:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list, explain what makes that so important to you:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list, describe how your life will be different when you achieve it:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list explain what will have to change for you to do achieve that:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list, describe the first thing you will have to do to move toward that achievement:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list describe what resources you will need, including people, to help you achieve the goal:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

Life's challenges get you so mired in the moment it's easy to forget that there's another moment coming, and another after that! Knowing what you're moving toward helps fuel your transformation.

In all of your answers **BE SPECIFIC—USE ADJECTIVES, DETAILS AND AS MANY FULL SENTENCES AND IDEAS AS POSSIBLE.** If you don't have specific details yet respond to the prompts in terms of what *feeling* you'd like to have.

When you've achieved your post-trauma identity....

Describe the type of friends you would like to have.

Describe the type of relationship you would like to have.

Describe the career you would like to have:

Describe the family you would like to have.

Describe the type of financial situation you'd like to have:

Describe the type of fun and recreation you'd like to have:

Describe the type of spiritual life you'd like to have:

Describe the type of health/fitness you'd like to have:

Describe the type of personal development you'd like to have (what do you want to learn/do?):

Why do you want your life to be like that?

It's not enough to know *what* you want. You need to know *why* you want it, too. Otherwise, you've just written out a bunch of ideas that are not deeply connected to you. Let's connect the dots...

Look back at the full range of your answers from the previous pages. Explain why you want that kind of post-trauma identity:

Explain why those kinds of friends are of value to you.

Explain why you want that particular type of relationship.

Explain why you want that career.

Explain why that kind of family is important to you.

Explain why you want that type of financial situation:

Explain why you want that type of fun and recreation you'd like to have:

Explain why you want that type of spiritual life:

Explain why you want that type of health/fitness:

Explain why you want that type of personal development:

Other notes:

What is your post-trauma identity intention?

Now it's time to distill all of these thoughts and ideas into a simply manageable statement. By doing this you will have something you can refer to when times get tough; something that will remind you of your objectives and why you want them so that you have concrete reasons to stay on your path.

What do you want? Based on the discoveries you made in the previous two sections of this chapter, write a new description of what you want to achieve through your post-trauma identity construction.

Why do you want that? Explain why this transformation is so important.

Put the above statements together in one place. (For example, "I want ____, ____ and ____ because ____.")



CHAPTER TWO: WHAT'S IN YOUR WAY?



Fears are natural in the post-trauma identity construction process. They can stall or even completely block your efforts. Becoming aware of what frightens you immediately begins to lessen its hold, and allows you to strategize what to do to reduce and eliminate these issues.

- Michele Rosenthal

What is holding you back?

It's easy to feel stalled and/or unable to move forward in developing your identity. You can reduce the likelihood of blocks by being proactive. Think about where you are today: what inner or outer conflicts exist? What's stopping you or likely to stop you from making progress?

Make a list of things that are or will get in the way of you making the progress you desire:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

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For each item on the list, what would need to happen for it to be removed?

1 -

2 -

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10 -

For each item on the list, what would be the first step to making that removal happen?

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

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10 -

For each item on the list, who or what could help you achieve that?

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

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7 -

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10 -

What are your fears?

It's only natural that you'd feel fear surrounding post-trauma identity transformation. Successfully completing this process will change how you and others relate to you, plus open up possibilities to your life that might (at first) seem overwhelming. Everyone moving through this process experiences some fearfulness. The beginning of eliminating those fears is becoming clear on what they are....

List 3-5 fears about how building your post-trauma identity will change you:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

List 3-5 fears about how others will respond to these changes:

6 -

7 -

8 -

9 -

10 -

List 3-5 fears about what these changes mean about your future:

11 -

12 -

13 -

14 -

15 -

List 3-5 general fears about moving forward:

16 -

17 -

18 -

19 -

20 -

List 3-5 specific fears about the moving forward process (e.g. what you will have to do, feel, see, think, etc.):

21 -

22 -

23 -

24 -

25 -

List 3-5 fears about who you are today:

26 -

27 -

28 -

29 -

30 -

List 3-5 fears about who you will become when you are who you want to be tomorrow:

31 -

32 -

33 -

34 -

35 -

List 3-5 aspects of changing who you are that you don't feel prepared, able to handle or ready for:

36 -

37 -

38 -

39 -

40 -

List 3-5 bad things that will happen if you change:

41 -

42 -

43 -

44 -

45 -

Look back at all the fears you listed. For each one, write a simple sentence about how it does, can interfere, or will interfere with your transformation goals.

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

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38 -

39 -

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42 -

43 -



CHAPTER THREE:

WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE?



Constructing your post-trauma identity requires you to engage to the utmost degree. If you're dragging around, berating yourself, or refusing to participate then success will be that much more difficult.

- Michele Rosenthal

Why is all of this important now?

You've felt disconnected from your core self for a long time. And yet, now you've taken a new, proactive step in making the shift toward post-trauma freedom. Let's explore that for a moment:

Why did you decide to use this workbook?

Why does this workbook feel like the right thing for you right now?

How is this moment in your transformation different than the ones that have come before?

How are you different now, in the moment of taking this new action, than you have been in the past?

What do you believe?

Building your post-trauma identity is difficult enough without your own thought systems getting in the way. It's time to get clear on what you are thinking—and what you *should* be thinking! For example, how strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Rate your belief on a scale of 1 – 10:

1 – I believe it's possible to create an identity that feels good to me.

2 – I believe I have what it takes to create my post-trauma identity.

3 – I believe I deserve to transform who I am and how I live.

If you rate anything less than a 10 on any of those questions, here's the next thing to ask yourself:

What would it take to move that belief up ONE notch?

When you identify what that thing is, go get it: give yourself that experience, engage that support, etc. Whatever it takes to move up to a 10 is what you will do.

The three statements above are examples of what kind of thinking helps you achieve success in the post-trauma identity construction process. Now, what else is rattling around in your mind?

When it comes to post-trauma identity construction I believe:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

How negative are those statements? For each one, reword it to something positive. (For example, “I don’t think it’s possible to completely release my survivor identity” transforms to “I am open to the possibility” or, “I will have to work very hard so that I succeed.”):

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

How will your life change?

When you step into The New You your life and world will dramatically alter. Being clear on change helps you move toward it. Imagine this: Tomorrow morning you wake up to find you are your new self....

List 3 -5 beliefs you hope to have when this process is complete:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

List 3 – 5 positive new ways you will relate to others:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

List 3 – 5 positive new ways others will relate to you:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

List 3 - 5 ways your changes will benefit your friends, family, lovers, and colleagues:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

How do all of these future changes feel to you? If any make you feel uncomfortable, do some free writing to further explore why. This is a great way, actually, to find clarity for any topic.

Free writing works like this:

Set a timer for 10 minutes. Give yourself a prompt like, “The idea of _____ makes me feel nervous because...” and then spend 10 minutes (or more if you really get going!) letting the ideas flow onto paper. The best way to do this exercise is freehand with a pencil or pen on paper – no typing. (Okay, you can type if you *really, really* need to!)

The goal is to keep your hand moving; if you get stuck just keep rewriting the prompt over and over again until a new thought occurs to you and then follow it. You may, for example, get stuck, write the prompt, and then have a grocery list pop into mind—write the grocery list! Your mind filters up and gives you things in illogical ways. Respect the process. Honor it and allow it to go where and how it wants to.

Some rules:

Do not edit, censor or filter what comes to mind; right it all down!

Do not correct spelling, grammar or syntax; that’s not important here!

Do not judge your thoughts; allow them to flow with abandon.

Do write everything you think of, regardless of whether it makes sense.

Do give up control to the flow of words.

Do let your mind wander wherever it wants to go, even if the train of thought doesn’t seem logical.

You now know all you need to know about free writing. Ready? Set? Go!

What innate gifts do you possess?

You've gotten as far as you have because you are in possession of some pretty wonderful talents. You cope, you manage; you get through the day to day. You survived something traumatic and yet, here you are, taking proactive steps to get better. All of this indicates that you have gifts—what are they?

List 5 qualities you possess today that have gotten you where you are:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

List 5 qualities that you admire about yourself (even if this is a tough exercise, force yourself to do it):

1-

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

How are all of these gifts useful in your transformation process?

1-

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

6 -

7 -

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9 -

10 -

Take a look at the list above: How can you positively apply these useful gifts to your transformation process? Name a specific situation in which you plan to incorporate each gift.

1-

2 -

3 -

4 -

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6 -

7 -

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9 -

10 -

Are you self-empowered?

Identifying where you need an attitude adjustment can help sharpen your post-trauma identity focus and process. One of the things you should want for yourself—both during your transformation and after you have fully embodied your new identity—is a strong, powerful self that guides your life, actions and achievements. It's never too early (or too late!) to begin building, expanding and enforcing a self-empowered perspective and way of life.

So the question becomes: How self-empowered are you? A short pop quiz will help you gauge your current attitude and start you thinking about how to make change. Answer the following questions as **true** or **false**.

1 – I approach **every transformation action** with the conscious determination that I will do my very best to communicate, listen and dig inside myself for answers.

2 – When I get afraid of something in this process I take a deep breath, center myself and plunge into the unknown.

3 – I know my job in transforming is to process what's frightening me so that I can move forward.

4 – I know I need to deal with difficult challenges and even though that makes me feel anxious I focus myself and do what needs to be done.

5 – Even on bad days I know that I have deep healing potential and I remain committed to accessing and using it to find my freedom.

6 – When I stop making progress I sit very still and figure out what is stalling me.

7 – When I figure out what is stalling my progress I take steps to remove the obstacle.

8 – When I feel uncomfortable with an element of transformation I listen to my intuition and find another way to approach the material so that it feels comfortable.

9 – I am very clear about my post-trauma identity mission.

10 – I research, strategize and plan how to strengthen, support and empower myself throughout the transformation process.

OK, now add up how many ‘T’s you have and rate yourself on this scale:

1-3 Ts: You need a way more self-empowered attitude! Based on the Fs you marked down focus on each one and figure out what you would have to do in order to turn them into a T. Slowly attack the list.

4-7 Ts: You’re on the right track! Take a look at the Fs you marked down. What do they have in common? Figure out their similarity and decide what you can do to eliminate that from your approach.

8-10 Ts: Rock on! You’re already hip to the self-empowered healing attitude. Each week give yourself a challenge to refine that approach. Track your progress. Notice how bringing your attention to this area causes your recovery work to deepen.

Tying it all together:

Review the exercises in this chapter. What needs to be changed about your attitude and approach to moving forward in your transformation? What gifts do you possess that can help you do that?

PART TWO



CHOOSING WHO YOU WANT TO BE



CHAPTER FOUR: RECOGNIZE YOURSELF



Reclaiming who you are today begins by acknowledging, validating, honoring and appreciating who you were yesterday.

- Michele Rosenthal

How well do you relate to your past self?

One of the toughest things about trauma is that it causes such a dramatic break between who you were or could have been Before and who you become After. Even if your trauma happened so early you don't remember yourself before, you have ideas *of who you could have been*—trauma negated all of that.

Healing that enormous chasm between what was or could have been and what actually is has a lot to do with reconnecting to that past self and the things you loved about it, plus bringing those things into the present.

In order to move ahead it's important to take one good, final look behind. Too often we ignore, avoid or are told to release what we've lost, but that's not always what creates healing. Sometimes, there's a reason to hold on, and to find a way to use what you're holding on to in positive and healthy ways.

Feeling better comes from clarifying, identifying, reclaiming, restoring, embodying, embracing and exhibiting those aspects of who you are, have been or wish to be that are meaningful to you. By looking back you acknowledge and validate the truth of who you used to be, or who you might have been without the interruption of trauma. You also connect with the goodness in that person, and learn to infuse those strengths into who you are today.

This is the truth of who you are: the past and the present combined. In exercising the power to access these elements you have being constructing a post-trauma identity that resonates with and fits you. Leaving in the past any disconnected qualities that did not suit you, at the same time you can deliberately choose to bring forward those that you miss, value, love and wish to have again.

Note: If your trauma happened so early you have no recollection of a former self throughout this chapter respond to the exercises with the image and details of who you *wish* you'd had a chance to be.

This chapter contains exercises to help you:

- Acknowledge
- Validate
- Rage
- Grieve
- Remember
- Appreciate

To begin the process think back to or imagine who you were before trauma occurred...

What was your reality (how closely were you living or in touch with your dream)?

If you were living closely, what elements are different between now and then, and which ones would you like to repossess?

If you were not living closely what elements need to be changed to create a closeness today?

Assess your answers to both questions above; what would it take to bring these things into your life today? How can you do that? Who can help?

In order to move forward it will be helpful for you to:

Acknowledge what has been lost and the impact of trauma

Describe what you feel you have lost about yourself:

Describe what you feel your life has lost because of this loss of who you used to be or could have been:

Validate why you feel this loss

Describe why these losses of who you were or could have been are important:

What do these losses mean about you?

Describe why it bothers you to have lost them:

Give yourself permission to rage

If you could express all of your anger at the unfairness of losing these aspects of yourself what would you say or do?

Transform Your Fear

On any given day it's natural to feel anger, which is really fear and can cause resistance in your post-trauma identity construction. When this happens welcome it as official notice that you need to take action in some arena of your process.

Ask yourself, “What’s really ticking me off?” Moving forward and reducing anger will be easier if you acknowledge, validate and transform the fear beneath it. When you feel anger in any moment try this:

Action	Example
Welcome the feeling of anger as best you can. It has a message; your job is to receive it. Label the anger by writing in your notebook: “I feel angry about/that _____.”	“I feel angry that such a horrific thing happened to such an innocent child due to an adult’s mistake.”
Why does this anger you?	“Because I was betrayed. I depended on the adult in charge to protect me.”
Imagine you are that past self right now. What’s his or her fear in this area?	“I’m all alone in being responsible for keeping myself safe.”
Examine your statement. In what ways in your present day life do you feel that fear?	“Another person will make a mistake that will cost me my life or further damage.”
How can you ameliorate that fear?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a process of self-protection • Install appropriate boundaries • Identify safe people

When you’re studying for a test highlighted passages focus your attention on meaningful information. Intense emotions are like highlighters in your brain: they let you know when you’re in the vicinity of important details and concepts.

When you feel an extreme emotion (especially grief or anger), try this:

- Notice the emotion.
- Identify the thought that is causing the emotion.
- Then, ask yourself, “Why is this thought so important?”

By asking yourself that simple question you can gain further insight into the source of your discomfort. To open the way to discovering how to alleviate it ask the follow up question,

“What is this emotion asking me to do?”

Try this process now with a recent experience of anger:

Grieve the sorrow of losing these aspects of yourself and your life

Objectifying any emotion shifts it out of your internal space and into the world which, being large in comparison, helps to shrink down the feeling.

If you were to meet a person with zero concept of grief and your job were to teach her what it means to feel these things according to your own experience, how would you do it? Using the list of options below, record in your notebook what your expression would be:

- **Words:** “Grief is/feels like _____”
- **Action:** What action would you take to show this person grief?
- **Song:** What song would you play to allow her to hear what grief sounds like?
- **Food:** What food represents grief?
- **Weather:** What weather creates a mood of grief?
- **Clothing:** What clothing would create in her a sense of grief?
- **Smell:** What smell would induce a feeling similar to grief?
- **Sound:** What sound holds the moan of grief?
- **Metaphor:** What comparison of one thing to another describes the experience of grief?

Looking back at your answers notice how and in what way you feel a sense of separation from your grief. Note them below. Then, share your examples with someone.

Remember that you love

The chief reason we grieve is because we love. In the emotional numbness of the post-trauma world, plus the experience of disconnection from yourself and, hence, the process of truly and deeply loving, grief allows you to know that a very vital part of you is, in fact, still very alive and active.

What does love mean to you?

What does it mean about you that you are, even right now, feeling a great amount of love?

How can you express this love today?

Appreciate who you used to be

What did your past self (real or imagined) know, understand, do, (or would have), etc., that was worthwhile and meaningful?

Based on your answer to the question above, how can you behave, plus what activities can you engage in that will allow you to embody and give new life to your former self?

Tying it all together:

Look back at the exercises in this chapter and your responses. In what way has your perspective and feeling about your past self changed, altered or evolved?

The exploration you've just completed opens up new ideas for creating a connection to your past self. How can you put those ideas into action?

We can use our memories—painful as they are—as a road map back to the feelings we want to have. We can let the loss in the past guide us into the gain in the future. In this chapter you have identified many things of value about who you used to be. How many of them can you bring into the present in terms of how you behave and the activities you do? Who can help you actualize these ideas?



Memory is a way of holding on to the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose.

- Kevin Arnold



CHAPTER FIVE: MAKE SOME DISCOVERIES



You can only make change when you're clear on what changes need to be made; you can only be clear about that if you look closely at how things appear.

- Michele Rosenthal

one following it you will develop the finer points on knowing both what about today must change and also who, exactly, you want to be tomorrow.

This chapter contains exercises designed to help you:

- Assess
- Accept
- Desire
- Trust
- Intend
- Choose

To begin, let's get a clear picture....

Assess your self-connection

You have within you a mechanism that allows you to understand or know things without conscious thought. As 88% of your brain, your subconscious mind notices and records ~20,000,000 bits of environmental stimuli *per second*. Compare that to the approximate forty thousand bits per second your conscious mind processes as the remaining 12% of your brain. From this quick snapshot you can see that your subconscious mind has access to much more information than your conscious mind in any moment. The significance of this lies in the fact that when you hear that small voice in your head or feel that feeling you don't understand you may discount it because your conscious mind can't qualify its accuracy—but it is sending you valid and important information.

Intuition becomes useful when 100% of your brain works together. With so much going on below the surface you may receive the message to take a particular action without clearly knowing why. You may challenge it by asking, “Why should I do this?” or “How do you know this is true?” But there is a better question to ask. When you receive intuitive messages forget about why and how; ask instead, “What do you want me to do?”

A call for action always accompanies intuition. Sometimes this means heeding the impulse to walk on the other side of the street while other times it means picking up a book to read. In any case, learning to receive the messages from and defer to your intuition is a valuable skill that develops self-trust, self-efficacy and a deep connection to your inner sense of knowing. It also helps you develop a practice of following the feeling that feels most good, comfortable and right—even when you can't explain why.

Step One: Take some time to **listen for that small inner voice**, what does it tell you?

Give your intuition a megaphone, turn up the volume and then do what it says. For example, when you walk to work, the grocery store or the mall, forget the quickest path and allow your inner voice to decide what route you take. When you drive to the movies forget your usual route and instead let that small voice tell you which streets to take and when to turn left or right. In this simple process you give up control in a safe way to a part of you that transcends fearful and limited thinking and instead operates from a sense of security, safety, knowledge and confidence. Fostering this inner connection is enormously healthy and beneficial to your future stability. *For seven days develop your ability to trust this part and its ability to make good decisions.*

Step Two: Amp up your awareness of what your body feels like.

Your body processes information and creates signals for you to interpret. Simply by noticing how your body feels you can increase your ability to make good decisions. The best questions to ask to get useful responses from your body are Yes/No questions. You can ask, “Should I go to this event?” And let your body offer an answer.

Sometimes the answers from your body may be directly opposed to the ideas in your mind. For example, your mind may be full of jittery, “I am not in the mood to have dinner with my friends,” while your body may be saying, “Go, it will be all right and you’ll feel better.”

Conversely, your mind may know you must attend an event while your body says, “Don’t go, I feel frightened!” This feedback clues you into what you need to do in order to successfully attend the event: find a way to feel more safe and secure. If you form a partnership with it, your body can play a large role in delivering feelings that accurately point you in the right direction. *Over the course of the next week make seven decisions based on the information your body gives you.*

In using both of these intuition exercises begin with small, inconsequential decisions. The first step is to gain a sense of comfortableness and trust. Once these elements are established you can take the exercise to the next level by applying it to more consequential instances.

Accept how you are different now

It’s normal to not like things about yourself and so resist them. The problem is that “what you resist persists”. So, the more you fight against the changes you see in yourself, the more you will experience them, plus the more you will be disturbed by them. One way to begin accepting something you don’t like is to appreciate some aspect of it. Challenging as that may initially sound stay open and see how tomorrow or the day after that or next week your perspective subtly shifts.

Make a list of the things you are most unhappy about in terms of who you are today:

For each item on the list identify one good thing to come out of it:

How can you use these things to benefit someone else?

Desire what makes you feel good

The first step to making change is knowing what you want. When you're coping you're not dreaming—you're just getting through the moment, day, week or month. Transforming your life after trauma means opening up your "I want" portal and letting the ideas flow through.

This is a practice you can actually implement on a daily basis in a variety of ways, from the small everyday wants (i.e. "I want pizza for lunch!") to larger life goals (i.e. "I want to find a job that allows me to work from home.") by waking up in the morning and making a daily "I want" list. Also, checking in with yourself at certain intervals (i.e. hourly) to ask yourself, "Right now, what do I want?" Your next step will be implementing actions that bring you what you desire.

You can start here by listing 10 things that are not true about you today but that you would like to be true about you when your transformation is complete:

Take each of those reasons and turn them into belief statements that read, “I believe _____ will happen because _____.”:

Intend and specifically place your focus

One of the necessities in ensuring change and transformation is for you to focus your intention. What’s an intention? It’s your purpose and objective. It means holding in your mind what you want, plus making choices and taking actions in that direction. It does *not* mean knowing exactly how you’re going to achieve your goals and insisting that’s the only way. I often tell my clients,

More intention, less expectation.

To succeed at this exercise post notes, program your phone and computer wallpaper, and ask trusted friends to remind you to constantly make decisions according to how you fills in the blank. The purpose of the game is to encourage you to develop a habit of considering what you want, the options for having it, and then making deliberate decisions on your own behalf. After only a week of this process you will hear yourself saying, “It’s so *empowering!*”

Choosing reminds you that you matter, and that you can have what you want. Trauma makes you forget those things; healing helps you to remember.

You can begin developing your decision-making process and “I choose” habit with small things like, “I choose to have a burger for lunch.” Or, “I choose not to watch this movie.” While you train your own self to look, wait for and expect your choices this habit will simultaneously and elegantly announce to those around you that you are assuming a more empowered role. Initially, the response from others may be unreceptive. They may challenge that you don’t really know what you want, or that they can make better decisions than you do. When you’re safe and it feels appropriate, respectfully stand your ground.

While you can be respectful of another’s feelings you can equally respect your own journey and the changes it requires you to make. The bolder you become in your decisions the more you may have to explain your actions to others. Take these moments as opportunities to practice both deferring to your intuition when choosing how, when, where and in what way to express yourself and using strong statements to make your points. While your own self or others may resist the initial changes you implement the natural challenges this presents offer you moments to commit even more deeply to your growth, health, life and recovery. They are moments ripe with the opportunity to say, “I choose to become who I really am,” and stand by that through all of the uncomfortable—and liberating—moments that follow.

This exercise may just be the most simple in the whole workbook! When making any decisions (small or large) follow this process:

- Pause
- Take a step back
- Reflect on what you want
- Assess your options for having it
- Make a decision by saying out loud, “I choose _____.”
- Take the appropriate action to bring to yourself exactly what you want

Only read this section when you have done all of the exercises up to this point.

Defining who you are finds its foundation in “I am” statements, which at their best are simple sentences that pair your own recognition of yourself to what you want, and at their worst pair who you are to what you don’t want. Consider these examples:

I am strong and courageous vs. I am a powerless victim.

Normally, you probably don’t walk around being conscious of the negative *I am* statements that swirl through your head. They don’t light up with the usual “danger” neon sign so it’s easy to overlook them in favor of the threats you can actually see. But what if every negative “I am” statement *did* light up and flash? Starting this moment let’s say that they do. Now, you’re going to begin raising your awareness of them, and also, deliberately crafting the “I am” statements by which you wish to live. Here’s why this is so very important:

You create your world, your life and your experiences based on what you believe. What you say to yourself about yourself is what you will see, hear, feel and experience. You will see in the world what you *believe you will and expect to see*.

What you believe about yourself is what you bring to you, both by the experiences you seek or don’t seek, and the experiences that others choose for you based on their perceptions of the persona you inhabit. At first, as you explore this area of self-definition statements using the word “I” may feel uncomfortable. When you’re disconnected from your inner self the word “I” can seem not to have an internal referent. Meaning, there is no “I” below the surface how of you show up in the world and get through the day. As happens often in trauma recovery, what you feel is different from what is true. “I” does exist for you; it’s just a matter of reconnecting and getting used to it, plus learning to parlay a thought, feeling or desire into a statement that refers to who you are in a way that feels acceptable to you.

In their purest essence “I am” statements are all about standing up for and choosing who you are. What kind of statements do you want to define you?

Step One: Make a list of ten “I am” statements.

Begin with statements that are true today. Start with something simple about your perspective, perhaps. For example, “I am hopeful.” Spend some time thinking about what defines you in this moment that is unimpeachable and good.

Go deeper to more complex definitions and add ten more.

Step Two: Refer to page 55 for the list of things you appreciate about your past self. Craft “I am” statements using these details.

How do these statements feel? What would it take to make them be comfortable, accurate representations of who you are today? How can you be more of each statement than ever before?

Step Three: Refer to page 61 for your description of things you want to be true about you when your transformation is complete. Craft an “I am” statement for each element.

How can you exhibit each of these qualities more thoroughly and with more intention?

As you move through this exercise, resist the urge to worry if developing your “I am” statements feels phony or inappropriate. If you don’t fully connect with or exhibit them immediately, that’s okay. Sometimes, you have to introduce an idea and warm up to it. This is part of the process of accepting and inhabiting it. Expect to encounter this kind of challenge and allow yourself to move through it. If it feels more comfortable, amend your statement to “I am open to being _____”.

Get hip to acting “as if”

When you were a child you had an incredible gift for imagination. You could pretend to be a cowboy or Cinderella even though you knew you were just a kid in your hometown. Now is a great time to return to that ability to be something you aren’t and wholly buy into it. You don’t always feel immediately the way you wish to feel. However, you can act “as if” over and over until the feeling of being it and the label itself becomes a part of who you are and takes on a life of its own.

When you have compiled your “I am” statements it will be time to fully incorporate them into who you are today. Read the statements you’ve crafted in the morning when you wake up and at night before you go to bed. (The last thoughts you have before you fall asleep stay with you for the next four hours—make them good ones!) Some people like to carry the list of statements and refer to it during the day. The more you experience these statements and train your brain to focus on them the more real they become.

It’s time to become extremely clear on who you want to be in the future. Let your desire to choose really come up and dream of your ideal self. Then...

Describe the person you most wish to be in as much detail as possible:



CHAPTER SIX: **CREATE YOUR REALITY**



Changing who you are owes its entire foundation to your ability to imagine who you want to be. It may feel awkward and unfamiliar and challenging, but right now, start letting your imagination run wild!

- Michele Rosenthal

Who do you want to be tomorrow?

A lot of life and experiences are out of your control. This makes it even more important for you to develop clear intentions for what *is* under your control. How much are you intentionally creating actions, feelings and experiences designed to bring you closer to what you really desire?

When deciding who you want to be it's an absolute must to be clear on who that person is and begin to bring elements, aspects, thoughts, feelings and actions into your present day life.

This chapter contains exercises to help you:

- Visualize
- Clarify
- Access
- Imitate
- Plan
- Act

We're about to move into most active phase of constructing your post-trauma identity. It's a phase in which you will work more concretely with choices, desires, creating the right pictures in your head and taking actions to bring the pictures in to reality. Exploring in that space means opening yourself up to very clear hopes and dreams. This can be both a valuable and vulnerable experience. When you hope and dream you admit the opportunity for being disappointed, which can be scary.

To counterbalance that fear it can be helpful to recalibrate your philosophy about success and failure. See how you feel about these definitions:

Success happens every time you take an action regardless of the outcome.

Failure ceases to exist. Going forward there are only **unexpected outcomes** that supply feedback and information for what your next action could be.

Inside these statements exists a philosophy in which you can roam, explore, attempt, play and learn. These are the attributes of your ideal post-trauma identity construction process. In the spirit of the safe space they provide, it's time to let your mind wander.

What are your new your dreams, desires, wishes and hopes for your future?

Too often in the new normal the feeling that drives your coping behaviors is not one of strength but weakness and foreboding. You lose sight of the fact that you survived, which means even if you have become temporarily disconnected from its source your self-efficacy has deep roots and resides within your potential to reconnect. If you examine it, you'll see that even in your post-trauma lifestyle you are extremely effective. Consider the coping mechanisms you've developed and the safety habits you've created. You have very effectively responded to trauma and put in place actions that answer your emotional and physical needs.

In survival mode there isn't time or room for choices. Survival mode requires quick, instinctive reactions. After trauma and deep into living in default mode you will forget that you have choices. Choices mean you have time to pause, step back, assess, reflect and decide what is the most appropriate item in the moment. Getting back in touch with your right to choose—and the safety of doing so—is a critical aspect of constructing your post-trauma identity. Choice breeds creativity, rational and relational thinking, long-term analytical forethought, empowerment and the idea that you can have what you want. That last element is enormously essential because it develops many important beliefs. Namely, that you are *deserving, worth it, entitled, allowed* and *able*. These are elements that help you form a future vision. If you already feel those things then focusing on making choices will deepen and strengthen them. If you don't feel them, then get ready to feel a real surge in the connection to who you are and can be. Making choices (from the mundane to the incredibly critical) places you at the center of yourself and in the role of a powerful being in your life and your world.

While the idea of making choices can seem relatively small, the overall and long-lasting impact can be huge. Throughout the day pause and ask yourself the following two questions,

- *What do I want?*
- *What are my choices for receiving that?*

When you identify an answer take an immediate action toward actualizing the desire.

Visualize who you want to be

When you get in touch with changes you want to make it can be hard to actually *see* them, and yet it will dramatically help your brain make the changes if you do. For this exercise you need only to close your eyes and....

Imagine what you will look like when you become the person you want to be. What will be different? How will you dress, talk, walk, behave?

Hint: Sometimes, it can be challenging to get yourself out of the moment you're in and into imagining the future. If you experience that glitch, try this...

Close your eyes and **imagine yourself as you are today.**

Notice all of the things you want to change about how you look, dress, behave, etc.

One by one, **alter each aspect of your mental image** that you want to change. For example you might begin with your clothes or your facial expression. You might then move on to your hairstyle or posture.

Clarify who you want to be

Now that you have a working image, let's build it out more fully. Since trauma is not the sum-total of who you are, it's time to get (back) in touch with the rest of you. After you have moved forward you will not only have reclaimed your life, but yourself, too. Who will you be.....?

You're about to develop an updated view of your future self. List 3-5 qualities you want that self to possess:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list, explain why you want it:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

For each item on the list explain what would have to change for you to acquire it:

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

If you made those changes, how would they help you move forward into the person you wish to become?

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

Imitate someone you envy

When you don't have hope of your own you can borrow hope from someone else. I love that idea because when you're looking to develop yourself it can be helpful to let the success of someone else help you do that.

Envy is a powerful emotion; it lets you know that you are passionate about some desire. Following that emotion can lead to ever closer to who you want to be.

When you're learning to develop your next self and the characteristics that you want that self to embody sometimes it can be helpful to borrow those traits from someone who already successfully encompasses them. Look around. Who do you envy for the way they live, work, express themselves, etc.? Having a strong response like envy clues you into things you value. With that information you have a terrific playground for exploration and discovery.

List three people who are living a life and a persona that looks attractive to you:

For each person, what specific qualities resonate with you?

Utilize your responses above in either of these options:

- a) Circle the moments that rate highest on the scale; brainstorm ways to recreate those experiences today.
- b) Circle the moments that feel most accessible and comfortable to you today; brainstorm ways to create those experiences.

Note: You may not feel the same interest or pull toward old joyful experiences, nor might you have access to the same activities as in the past. That’s okay. Identify what it was you liked about the feeling and brainstorm how you might create that same feeling in a new way today.

Act on your desires

To shift into developing internal control in your post-trauma identity evolution, pause and write up a set of ground rules: intentions for your approach to the process. For example, “Always keep an open mind,” might remind you to consider new ideas. Or, “See all obstacles as puzzles waiting to be solved,” might remind you that while there will be unexpected hindrances the promise you’re making to yourself is seeing the puzzle versus the block.

The criteria for ground rule writing are very similar to affirmations. That is, always write in the positive and be very specific. The objective here is to imagine how you would *like* yourself to approach, behave in and center yourself throughout the identity discovery process. You will have slip ups and make what feels like mistakes, that’s a given. The purpose of this list is to help guide you back to the perspective you wish to hold and remind you how to do that.

Begin contemplating and creating your ground rules: Refer back to your intention statements on pages 18 and 64. Study what values you decided were most important for you to embody. Then, build a ground rule around each one. Act from each intention whenever circumstances allow. Alternatively, identify the qualities you wish to exhibit throughout your identity quest; write a rule for each. Or, reflect on what kind of mindset you wish to have. What needs to be true about your beliefs, behaviors, choices and actions in order for you to have it?

Write ten rules now.

1 –

2 –

3 –

4 –

5 –

6 –

7 –

8 –

9 –

10 –

Now that you're warmed up keep going and write as many ground rules as you can think of for how you wish to act, behave, think about and approach future experiences in your life in general. Include ground rules for how you will respond to unexpected outcomes, plus a range of emotions, including fear, apprehension, guilt, shame and disappointment.



CHAPTER SEVEN: COMMIT TO SUCCESS



Along the way to your post-trauma transformation there will be new challenges, unexpected obstacles and bumps in the road you didn't see. Deepening your commitment to the work is the best way to ensure you overcome anything that gets in your way.

- Michele Rosenthal

How will you stay committed to the process?

You're coming into the homestretch of the content related to the audio program. Congratulations on working through the details and fine points. By now you will have a much more clear picture of what you want, why you want it, plus how you will begin making it happen. In this final section it will be critical to put in place systems that support the work you're doing.

The exercises in this section are designed to help you:

- Pledge
- Ask
- Pace
- Persevere
- Learn
- Rebound

Pledge to make the changes

You have mapped out many things you want and are going to do. You've had time to think about why these changes are important to you and how you will evolve because of them. It's time to make yourself a promise.

In the space below, write out your promise to yourself about what you will do:

I, _____, on this _____ day of _____ do solemnly pledge to _____

Now, with three different colored pens, pencils or highlighters break the list into HIGH PRIORITY, MEDIUM PRIORITY, and LOW PRIORITY by using a color coding system.

Rewrite the HIGH PRIORITY items here:

Of the list above, prioritize which item to work on first, second, third, etc.:

Hint: While some desires may overlap, use this order to keep yourself slowly moving forward without overwhelming yourself with too much to do and too much change at once.

Persevere despite setbacks

Whenever you set out to accomplish a mission it's inevitable that there will be obstacles that crop up on your path. Moving through them can be easier if you have a process that helps to ground, center and focus you.

When something happens that throws you off your game, how do you like to decompress and take five? List some activities that give you a good feeling and take your mind off any distress:

What are your favorite methods to make yourself feel empowered, strong, courageous and revved up to move forward? Make a list including everything from things you do (i.e. exercise) to things you hear (i.e. music) to things you see (i.e. movies) to things you wear, plus anything else that shifts you into "I can do this!" mode:

Rebound in style

Accessing resilience is an art all its own. Anyone can hit a speed bump, fall down or miss the mark and give up all together. What will make you special is how you bounce back. Resilience means going down inside yourself and finding the strength to carry on and try again. It means tapping into your hope and belief that success is possible. It also means accessing the part of you that deeply wants what you're going after and allowing the strength of that want to buoy you up.

Affirmations can be a great asset in any transformation and can be particularly useful in building in resilience as you go along. They can also help you bounce back when you need an extra little shot of courageous energy.

Guidelines for developing affirmations:

- Start with "I am" to bring it into the present tense
- Make a positive statement
- Use an action verb
- Keep the statement brief and concise
- Include a feeling word
- Make affirmations for yourself, not others

For example, an affirmation might be, "I am effortlessly releasing my need to control everything," or "I am happily allowing myself to become more adept at setting boundaries."

Writing your affirmations makes your goals more real and further clarifies them. Many people like to write them on 3 x 5 cards and carry them with them throughout the day. Say these affirmations aloud, with feeling, at least once a day for at least the next thirty days and your brain will begin to form neural pathways devoted to the ideas.

One final note: You do not have to wholeheartedly and completely immediately believe each of your affirmations. When you feel resistance or disconnection, tap into your *hope* of the truth of each statement and let that feeling suffice until you begin to actually acquire the feeling of real belief. You can do this by adding, “I am open to...” at the beginning of any affirmation.

Create some affirmations now to guide your way:

Revisit Your Desires—Are You Focusing In The Right Place? Re-identify your objectives. During your identity discovery process your perspective will shift and change. Successfully working on one issue can unexpectedly clear up another—or bring up another. Due to the organic nature of your evolution some phases will go quickly and others slowly. All of the changes will affect your overall strategy, which means from time to time it will be helpful to stop and reassess your objective, focus and action plan. Use the space to periodically reassess your priorities. Ask:

What is your overall desire at this point?



One day, after you've done a lot of hard work and despaired that you'll never be the person you want to be. One day, after you've moved forward and then felt like you've fallen back. One day you will surprise yourself and experience the most unexpected progress.

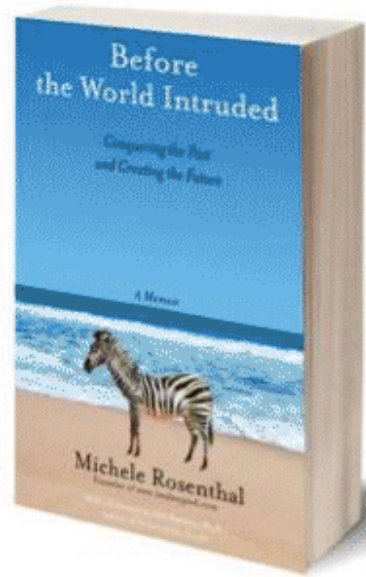
I hope on that day and in that moment you think of me and the work you've done here and realize that all along, a part of you actually did know what it was doing. It just needed your time, attention, patience, commitment, persistence, permission, and determination for it to get the whole job done.

You have enormous healing potential – always remember that. The goal is learning to access it. You can do this. Dig deep. I believe in you!

Onward toward freedom,

Michele

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Praise for triple award-nominated *Before the World Intruded: Conquering the Past and Creating the Future*

... addictively readable By the end of the book you will be crying and laughing at once, and applauding Michele Rosenthal for her courage. ~ Jessica Stern, Author, Denial: A Memoir of Terror and Terror in the Name of God

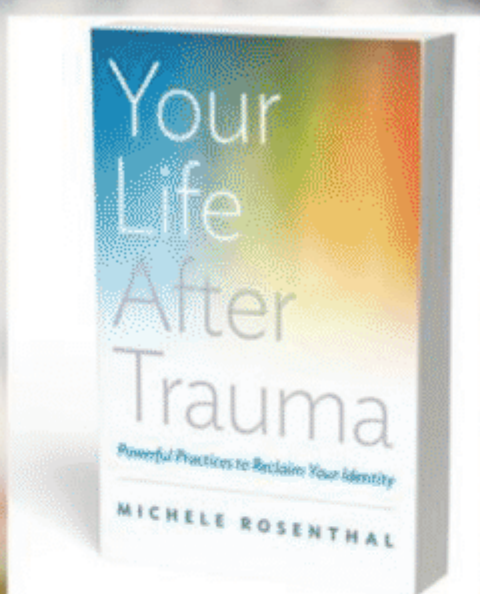
Before the World Intruded is stunning in its intimacy... Michele's courage in deciding to face her PTSD and heal it is the message of this story. ~ Bill Krill, Jr., MSPC, Author, Gentling: A Practical Guide to Treating PTSD in Abused Children

... this book is important for anyone who has personally experienced trauma or knows someone who has. Don't wait for the movie. Read this book now. ~ Nancy O'Reilly, PsyD, Author, Timeless Women Speak: Feeling Youthful

The twenty-six year journey beautifully described in Before the World Intruded shows how deeply rooted trauma can become. Much can be learned by reading this book. ~ Ron Ruden, MD, PhD, Author, When the Past Is Always Present: Emotional Traumatization, Causes, and Cures

Michele Rosenthal has written a wise, compassionate and comprehensive book on the profound loss of identity that occurs with posttraumatic stress, and offers a grounded, realistic approach for establishing a new sense of self. ~ Belleruth Naparstek, Author, *Invisible Heroes: Survivors of Trauma and How They Heal*

This study of trauma and identity is really the cutting edge of where the field is going and Rosenthal's work has applications for all of us, no matter what the specifics of our journeys. ~ Lee Woodruff, NYT Best-Selling Author, *Those We Love Most*



Praise for the only book helping survivors answer the question:

Who am I now?

Michele Rosenthal ... shows readers how to eliminate what is destroying them to save their lives.... Michele's wisdom can make it happen for you. ~ Bernie Siegel, MD, NYT Best-Selling Author, *A Book of Miracles*

Michele Rosenthal's book... shows how PTSD, whatever the cause, can be transformed from weakness to strength, and how one can grow strong from the breaks. ~ Larry Dossey, MD, Author, *One Mind: How Our Individual Mind Is Part of a Greater Consciousness and Why It Matters*

