



**A profoundly  
good read!**

**Feel  
Good  
Friday**

**40 UNEXPECTED WAYS  
TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOUR LIFE.**

**EMMA WRIGHT**

# **Feel Good Friday**

## **40 Unexpected Ways To Feel Good About Your Life**

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# Hello & Welcome

Dear Reader,

Imagine spending weeks crafting the introduction to a personal development book you've spent a year writing only to realize it's (a) not quite right, and (b) completely overworked. Oh, and the deadline for publishing is next week.

What is one to do?

I had poured myself into each and every word to explain the adventures detailed among these pages, offering up my heart so you might find yours. But in the pouring and fiddling, the vitality got lost. A very dear friend went out on a limb and said she didn't think it was the best I could do.

Aw, man!

Reading her feedback, I could feel myself slipping on the well-greased slope of fear. Really? I have to do it better? It's taken me for-ever! Seriously, what do you expect? And let's not forget, deadlines are deadlines and I've told the world the book is coming. But she's right, of course, otherwise her words wouldn't have struck a cord.

What is one to do, indeed? The easy answer, we all know, is: Forget what she said, and go with what I've got. The best answer is to do it again. Go with more silence, less consideration; more heart, less perfection.

So here I am, taking a spoonful of my own feel-good medicine to write the intro that needs writing. Breathing, feeling the life pulsing in my veins, sending love to my fingers, letting go and being present. Observing my mind settle down and feeling the intentions of this book shine through: Practices – each and every one – I've taken for a spin over the last year in the course of my day-to-day life.

At its most basic, this book is a collection of missives first published on my *Feel Good Friday* blog, started for two simple reasons: To be more grateful, and to help people better understand my art.

Because my paintings depict ideas, philosophies, and ways of being (rather than scenes, moods or points of view), I thought, perhaps, exposing myself through my writing would help. As I wrote, funny, beautiful, magical things started to happen. I found gratitude made me a happier, saner person. As well as giving others a new perspective on my paintings, I personally began to understand them better. I connected with people in new, satisfying ways (tears, my friends, don't start me on the tears).

Most magical of all though, was what happened with words themselves. What started out as an extramural activity throughout the course of a year, turned out to be an artistic expression itself (not to mention the realization of a life-long dream!). I'd pushed the desire to write down so far below my radar I hadn't remembered how much I loved words.

Oh my!

At a less basic level then, you could say *Feel Good Friday* is about my Muse. When given a sliver of light, She took me on the spiritual and philosophical journey you are about to embark on, within these pages you are now holding in your hands.

I have arranged the chapters to flow in a gentle stream from one idea to the next, rather than in the chronological order they were first written. Some are a spirited look at the happenings in my world. Others look at the way a philosophy shows up in my everyday existence. Still more are a loving call to action.

Here's what I suggest: Take what you find and apply with a nod and a smile. Dip in and out to the beat of your own song. It's my absolute hope that when you need more than just an uplifting quote, but less than the latest 300-page self-help book, these words point you towards feeling good about your own life.

With love,

Emma

# Feeling The Love

I love Fridays. Not because it's the end of the week and I can't wait to get the weekend going. But because on Friday I stop and make a point of noting those things that during the past week made me smile, laugh, love, or feel grateful.

Nice, yes?

[Gala Darling](#), the outrageous Radical Self Love princess of New York City (who also happens to be a Kiwi girl) got all this started for me. Her *Things I Love Thursday* blog hits my inbox on Friday, since New Zealand is a day ahead of the States. I simply translated the idea to Feel Good Friday and began to create a weekly gratitude missive myself.

Here's this week's list o' love:

- Mathew's sweet, sweet kisses (he's two);
- fresh tubes of pigment waiting to be unleashed;
- watching DVDs in bed;
- white, crisp canvases itching to be painted;
- fresh homemade hummus, replete with loads of parsley;
- [Pete Rees'](#) advice;
- the peaceful, quiet, stillness of sitting on the ferry without my kids;
- Melanie at [The Poi Room](#)'s light-up-your-world smile.

Here's to seeking goodness and feeling the love.

X

# Wisdom vs. Intelligence

The world is suffering from the madness of humans. The chaos is everywhere and seems to be escalating. If you agree, the place we may diverge is in knowing what to do to sort ourselves out. What kind of approach to take about global warming. How to deal with crime. What policies we think would make the country thrive.

The way we think about health, wealth, values, the future, resources, and security, I've noticed, can be argued endlessly. And this is where the distinction between wisdom and intelligence might help.

All those arguments, points of view, and opinions (by terribly intelligent beings, thank you very much) have led us to where we are today. Yes, sir. Intelligence got us *here*. And if we think intelligence is going to make any difference in the future, we're straight out of luck. I'm not sure there is any research, policy, setup, organization, or structure that will save humans from their own plight. No. We'll just get more of what we've got. Chaos.

Salvation will require letting go of intelligence and resorting to wisdom. Smarts won't cut it. But love just might.

Wisdom includes heart and mind. It starts with love and takes everyone with it. It asks. It listens. It admits when it's wrong. It doesn't judge, bully, dominate, or rule. It's never good, and it's never bad. Wisdom simply *is*. It has the power to transform. To fundamentally alter individuals, families, communities. Heck, let's change the world. That is its' power.

And the very best thing about focusing on wisdom is this: We all have it. *We all have it.*

That is one seriously cool thing to know. Be wise people. You might just help reshape a planet.

X

# Everyone Has a Secret

I have a secret, one I've felt ashamed of, frustrated with, and downright embarrassed by. But it's not that I wouldn't have told you if you'd asked. It's not that I haven't told anyone. Actually, I've been open with plenty of people.

But I've been careful. I've only told those I'm sure I can trust. It's with great consideration I allow the knowledge into the open.

I had bulimia.

Maybe you did too.

Maybe your friends do (chances are you won't know - we are stealthy in our ability to hide it).

I didn't just make myself sick once or twice back in the day. No, it started when I was fourteen and ended in my late thirties. That covers most of my teenage and adult life. I can remember the first time I made myself sick. I can't remember the last.

Even writing that makes me squirm. We get the squirms, us bulimics, because we worry others think bulimia is vanity gone crazy.

Hell, I'm not even particularly interested in my appearance (a friend the other day suggested I am super 'casual' about how I look), and my post-graduate thesis was based on feminist theory. Regardless of my education and relaxed appearance, I know what it's like to be crippled by food anxiety. And to be obsessed (I mean OBSESSED) with being thinner. Like, if I could just lose five or ten pounds, my life would magically become blissful and happy. Then, you know it, feeling guilty for caring about something so frivolous.

Admitting I have bulimia has always been terrifying. Fearing I'd lose respect and be relegated to the realm of stupid selfish bitch, which in truth is what I thought of myself.

So why come out now? What's the point of shouting, "look at me — I had this embarrassing thing!" all of a sudden?

All the strides we are making to understand that depression isn't about weakness or lack of willpower got me thinking — what if bulimia were understood in the same way? What if the countless souls with their hidden obsessions could be open and honest without feeling ashamed? Would more people seek help? Could we nip the crippling disease in the bud before letting it wreak two decades of torture?

Maybe it takes someone like me to put her hand up to make it easier for those still in its grip to put up theirs.

That's enough for me to get over myself and stand up. Or shout out. Or whatever the heck you call putting it out there in cyberspace.

If you have (or had) bulimia, please know you're not weak, stupid, or vain. I know you know that, but really, truly know it. There are a bazillion of us. Smart, successful, caring, cool people. It's time we came out. It's time we stopped being so wildly secretive.

Bulimia is like heroin. It's a buzz. An escape. The desire to eat and vomit can be powerful and dominating — it certainly was for me. It was always a dizzyingly satisfying rush. From first bite to fingers down the throat, a sense of overwhelming relief set in. That feeling, I reckon, is as addictive as any hard-core drug. I'd always think — *okay, this is the last time. I'll never do this again.* Then the desire to escape into the blissful food would become overwhelming. I'd promise myself, just once more. It was heaven, until it was over. Then disgust would set in and I'd find myself craving that relief again. Once that vicious cycle set in, it was a crazy hard thing to stop. Like drugs, releasing myself from its claws took learning to live in a whole new way.

It took learning to love my body, trust myself and my appetite. It took picking up my self-esteem and self-disgust from the gutter and building a sense of self-honor.

If you're still in the clutches of the disease, I offer my love and support. You're in good company. There really are a bazillion of us.

These days I don't think about food much. Every so often, when I'm stressed or overtired, the old demons return. But not for long. And I can watch them rather than be overcome by them. I don't try to stop them. I treat them like old friends who I welcome in. Those thoughts remind me I'm off-centre. That I need some radical self-love, acceptance, kindness. It's a good reminder to have.

As my own two darlings grow up, I intend to be open about my journey. That there are better ways to feel good than attempting to lose a couple of pounds. Like understanding the beauty of my body's mechanics; the power of its energy; the crazy good feelings it can give me; the amazing way it feels when I give it love and treat it with respect. That's the world I see for my kids.

For that world to exist, people like me need to speak up.

With almost 100 percent certainty you won't know which friends of yours have bulimia. It's the best-kept secret in the world. In the right hands it might just set someone in a whole new direction.

Share this with those close, my friend. It's in your hands.

# Left Brain, Left Brain, Left Brain, Right

Last night at 3 am, I had a brain wave. Love brain waves. Not so keen on 3 am. Still. In the last six months I have been skidding around trying to find words to accurately explain what my paintings are about.

I keep arriving at insipid greeting card lines — *following your dreams, harnessing your inner spirit, getting in touch with who you really are*. Yawn, yawn. YAWN.

Everything felt wrong and clichéd, damn it.

It has been bugging me.

Here's what I did. Last thing before going to sleep I asked myself — *What do people get from my art?* I woke up with Dr. Seuss (oh, great) relentlessly humming in my head. I listened and the words were “brain” not “foot.” That got my attention.

Brain? Uh? Oh, ah ha. I got it.

The ideas I'm keen to share through my art all boil down to one thing—how we interact with the world. And the two sides of our brain have an huge part in that. [The left brain, our rational logical mind helps us navigate our external world, yet our creative, subconscious right brain, is the one that makes life truly hum.](#) It's this side of the mind where beauty, connections, love is brought forth.

My art then, is about reminding the viewer that she is much bigger than the incessant “snip, snip, snip” of her left brain chatter. And that, in fact, she gets to choose how she reacts to life, each and every moment.

It follows then, that my art is a declaration of personal power — and that this power can be harnessed by the creativity inherent in the right brain. The very purpose of my art is to offer those who see it a visual reminder of their own power.

It's a philosophical and visual reminder that the left brain is meant to be a tool, not a dictator. Like, simply ask yourself — *are you going to allow yourselves to be small and inhibited by your internal chatter? Or, are you going to call upon the vast, creative, boundless intelligence you are part of?* The cool thing is, simply by remembering we have a choice, we become bigger than we knew ourselves to be.

There I was at 3 am dumb-struck by this epiphany called “What My Art Is Really About,” when another epiphany struck. My ability to follow the call from my right brain, perfectly reflects the creative path I have travelled. The more proficient an artist I become, the more I allow my right brain to reign.

If you examine my art, you will notice the extent I use four sided motifs — X’s and flowers with four petals. These are the visual manifestation of the philosophy behind my art. They represent the signature (X being the first human signature) — saying “yes, at this moment, I choose to remember that beautiful spot where I get to choose.”

As I write this, I pause to reflect on the difference that being able to consciously choose our reactions makes. It can end suffering, repair relationships, create space, peace, and joy. That is worth painting about.

On this wet Friday morning, I’m using my left brain as the tool it’s meant to be. Like, you know, remembering these tiny magnificent things:

- mucking about in rock pools at low tide;
- seeing [Banksy’s](#) art up for auction;
- one of my favorite people coming to town on Saturday;
- rain — walking in it at the beach, hearing it fill up our water tank, the sheer unstoppable force that it is;
- Nana arriving to take my kids’ attention away from me for a few hours;
- curry that has been cooking all day;
- making it to five years in a relationship (and still going strong) — almost unbelievable to those who know me;
- sheets dried in the sun;
- brain waves.

Thanks Dr Seuss. Here's to the brain in all its two-sided glory.

X

# Awards + Rejection

Rejection. It stings, right? The letter I received this week said “No, you’re not included.” I was gutted. Mad. Bent out of shape. Damn, I wanted that acceptance.

You might ask, if it sucked that much, why write about it? Isn’t this missive all about gratitude? Well, yes. And it’s these exact times that *Feel Good Friday* is for.

Don't get me wrong — I’m not pretending I’m fine. I’m fully pissed. I'm just not going to put life on hold because of that damn letter. I'm not going to mope around thinking I'm a loser, or my art stinks. Or even that this rejection reflects on me as a person.

No.

And what's more, I want to remind everyone out there who has faced bad news, rejection, or hoped for something that didn't happen — life is still good.

*Feel Good Friday* is not — “rah, rah let’s all be positive and pretend nothing shitty ever happens.” It's about remembering life doesn’t always go right. We get bad cards, things side-swipe us, yet, we always get to choose.

We can weave bad experiences into a story about poor-little-me. Or, we can feel the disappointment, sadness, frustration, or whatever unpleasant sensation there is to feel and still know we are fine people. We can find good things to acknowledge. We can be grateful, humble, and real.

Here’s what else happened this week. My man, Big G, the wee beauty, bought me flowers, for no other reason than he knows I love them. Three days in, I still smile when I see them. I walked to day-care with my observant three year-old and saw the world through her eyes. I booked plane tickets to visit my family at Christmas. An email arrived from a couple who saw my paintings saying they “can't get them out of our minds.”

There is a lot more to focus on than one stupid letter.

Love the good, in the face of the bad.

X

# Generosity

I'm not a naturally generous person. I could bore you with a sob story about growing up with divorced parents and living in the shadow of a sister who — in my completely irrational mind — got everything (brains, looks, artistic talent, sporting prowess) while I got, well, less. It seemed perfectly clear to me that I had to protect anything I had with ferocity. It made me stingy, miserly, not to mention unhappy.

I'm glad those days are over.

Through my life, education, and some amazing people, I learned my poor-little-me story was indeed just that — a story. Therefore, I could simply invent a new, better one. That knowledge: a game changer.

The sneaky little thing about old stories—they set in motion ways of being that become deeply ingrained. I can hear myself now. "It's the way I am." "That's my personality." Hate to say, but no. Wrong. Not in the least bit accurate. They were beliefs I'd grown used to. With practice, it became possible to move and shake in new, far better ways.

One of those ways is to be generous. It became, and still is, a practice. 'Cos folks, it doesn't come naturally. But it is getting easier.

Here's how it works:

1. Being generous with money is a wonderful thing. I've learned to be as generous as I can with money, while remembering that financial contributions are not the only way to practice generosity.
2. Generosity that doesn't involve money is where the rubber truly meets the road. It makes every cell in my body shine with life. Listening with all my attention (letting go of opinions about what people are saying to me), admitting when I'm wrong, looking people in the eye when they are talking (not doing the crazy eyeball thing, but not checking other stuff out when in a conversation), assuming best intentions, forgiving easily and thoroughly (this has changed the course of my life and I'm picking it could change the course of yours too), giving as many compliments as I can, and taking compliments graciously.
3. The more generous I am, the better life feels. Absolute correlation.

Let the generosity flow.

Go practice. You might just make someone's day and change the course of both your lives.

# Who's In Your Court?

Sometimes I feel like an island. Out there beavering away in my own wee world. It's half the reason I spent sixteen hours last weekend in a sparkly room listening to sage advice from [three super successful Internet divas](#) at their [Blogcademy](#) Class. They opened their mouths, I nodded, silently checked mental boxes, and felt I had a team in my court.

I went expecting to get my ideas corralled, some directions unleashed, and a few 'aha' moments. All were delivered. What I didn't expect, and was perhaps the best thing that happened, was a secure sense of being with people who get it. My world. So good for the soul.

*"Ignore the doubters. Virtually no one thought we could make a living from our businesses. Now all our husbands have quit their jobs to work with us." Gala Darling*

That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm listening to. So, so, SO important to connect with people who believe, just 'cos you do.

I am grateful to people who push boundaries, who do things differently, and who trust in miracles, dreams, and big possibilities.

It's Friday, the goodness abounds:

- the brain ache of learning;
- sequinned bunny ears;
- reading glasses (goodbye headaches, welcome big font);
- old movies watched late on a school night;
- blocks of chocolate;
- wearing heels all weekend;
- talking, discussing, inventing, reminiscing, clarifying, brainstorming, strategizing;

- being schooled by people young enough (just) to be my children;
- French chardonnay (I've been ruined);
- My team. Oh yes, my team.

Here's to those in my court. A big, humble bow.

X

# What Went Well

Ever heard of Martin [Seligman](#)? He invented Positive Psychology.

He has this gem of a practice that is guaranteed to make you feel good. Yes, 100 percent guarantee. How? It teaches your brain to process information in a way that leads to good feelings rushing through your body. Cool, or what?

[Our brains can only process forty bits of information a second even though they can take in ten thousand bits.](#) Seligman tells us that while we can't train our brains to process more than forty bits at once, we can have a say in which bits of information get processed. You can, it seems, steer your brain in the direction you want it to go. Pretty simple really.

The practice that will put you in the drivers seat is this — each evening, just before bed, review your day, identify what went well and why. That's it.

My list looks something like this:

- Bedtime stories with the kids, because they giggled and made no fuss when I left the room. LOVE that.
- Then the next thing.
- And the next, and so on.
- Then, lights out.

Here's the interesting bit. [In a study looking at the effect of moderately depressed people doing this practice, the results showed an unprecedented 95 percent improvement in their mood. In other words, 95 percent of those in the study were no longer depressed.](#)

It's impressive, because a 65 percent improvement is the most any other intervention can achieve (any!). This includes drugs, psychiatry, and cognitive behavioral therapy. Those things, you see, don't deal with the cause of depression — they deal with the symptoms.

*What Went Well*, on the other hand, goes straight to the cause.

Google it, read the book. It's fascinating.

The *What Went Well* could pick up your day, week, month, year, life. You never know unless you try, right? I've been doing it. And, you'll never guess — I feel good.

X

# Be Of Service

It has taken me years folks — years!! — to put two and two together.

Reading [Danielle LaPorte's blog](#) this morning stopped me in my tracks:

*"Art is about self-expression.*

*Sharing art is about being of service."*

Oh my. That second line sent my brain clicking into place. Yes! That's why I keep sharing my work. That's why I love it when others get my unique expression. It has nothing (nothing!) to do with me. It's all about others. It's about the way something is lit up, moved, inspired in someone else, when faced with my art. That's what's important.

See — it's all about you, my friend. Without sharing my work (painting and writing), I can't serve you. And being of service is what makes the world a better place.

Here's to being of service in the best way we can.

X

# A Breath For Success

Drop your shoulders. Big belly breath in. Exhale. How good does that feel?

[Arianna Huffington's](#) latest book, *Thrive*, surprised me. Über powerful woman that she is — interested in competitive advantage and global domination — I wasn't prepared for her to argue the importance of meditation and awareness. Um, really? Huffington's gone all airy-fairy?

Here's the thing. She pulls together an amazing display of evidence to show that breathing (and noticing that you are) has a profound impact on your personal health and (come close for the cool bit) your business success.

Really? Just breathing? Who knew?

One of the things that struck me was the number of extraordinary leaders (oh, you know, Fortune 500 companies, Silicon Valley poster boys and Heads of State) who all said that the single most important aspect of leadership was mindfulness.

Truly? The most important thing? Extraordinary.

The way to start — inspiring people via Huffington tell us — is by being aware of our breath. So simple. But the most emphatic point she and the others make is — do start. Because businesses without mindful leadership won't establish long-term success. That's a big call. One that rings true to me.

Artists then, may not enjoy long-term success without mindfulness either. Be it a weekly yoga class, a walk in nature noticing as many breaths as you can, or being fully present while making your art. Let's say breathing is, well, fundamental.

It's easy, then, to see why a sense of goodness welled up in me reading Huffington's [book](#). Sages have been preaching the importance of meditation for human happiness, success, peace, and fulfilment for centuries. I'd like to think it is finally becoming mainstream.

Really notice. Your breath going in. And out.

In.

Out.

A few minutes of that every day equals a big difference.

X

# The Illusion Of Time

Time is a weird little monster. It feels so real, doesn't it? Yet, [some people, scientists included, tell us it's not](#). Oh, the concept of time is real. But to think time exists outside of being conceptual is, in some circles, a folly.

In reality, the theory goes, there is only this moment. Now. This moment, occurring forever and ever and ever. It's all there ever has been, and all there ever will be. Whoa!

Here's the question that helped me tease this out for myself. For time to exist, in reality, it would have to have a beginning and an end. So, when did time start? And, if time did have a beginning, what was there before it started? Oh, please, my brain hurts.

Before we get bogged down in unanswerable questions, and whether or not either camp of scientists is right, let's think about the idea of being masterful with time, rather than at its mercy.

Eh? What the?

Here's what I'm getting at. When we live in a world where time is “real” we have no power over it. It dominates us while it ticks ceaselessly away. We become rushed, time poor, stressed out, pressured. Our minds are almost constantly in the future (where we are trying to get to) or the past (where this or that didn't go right). How good does all that feel? Hideous.

Okay, so what's the alternative?

Being time's master. Which takes nothing more than practice. Simply being as present in this moment right now as often as you can. Simple? Truly. Easy? Not so much. But practice makes it easier. For example:

1. Give your full and undivided attention to what you are doing now.
2. Listen to what people are saying without holding an opinion in your mind about what they are saying.
3. Get up in the morning and say: “This is it, this is the only moment I have for sure, so I will give it my full attention.”
4. Stop in front of a piece of art and be with it. Just look. When you have a thought about anything, observe the thought and go back to the art.

5. Notice your breath (you can only notice your breath in this moment).
6. Smell.
7. Taste.
8. Feel the temperature of the air without internal comment.

By taking my business away from the past and the future, I've reclaimed such a sense of power, joy, and goodness in my life. I make better art. I'm less irritated. I laugh more. I am more willing to let things go. Small stuff gets smaller. And, I am less affected by what I think other people think of me (such a waste of this precious moment).

X

# Smile

[James Altucher](#) makes a great suggestion for feeling good. Imagine for a moment that you are five years old and looking for your mother or father at the gate, when you emerge from the classroom, after your first day of school. You spot them. They have the biggest smiles on their faces, the smile of pure unconditional love. You give them the same smile back.

Wow. What a feeling. Your heart is completely full. The world is a good place.

Here's the challenge Altucher advocates:

Smile at everyone you see (give it ten minutes for starters or do it all day, whatever works for you).

Smile like each person is your five year-old, or your best friend who you've missed all day. Imagining someone is dear to you takes the weirdness out of the smile. It comes from your heart, not your face.

This is not about them. The suggestion is not to smile to make someone else's world better (you might, or might not — it's beside the point). It's about making your day better. That's how it works. You'll forget your own problems. You'll lighten up. You'll feel so darn good, you'll keep doing it. Or, at least, that's the idea.

Sending a big, ol' loving smile in your direction.

X

# R + R

G and I have a brilliant agreement: Every year we each get a week on our own, sans kids, anywhere, doing anything we choose. How good is that? As much as I love my little darlings, a break is divine.

My week is upon me and I'm hamming it up or, truth be known, laying low, in beautiful (heart-stopping gorgeous!) Queenstown. I've thrown myself into a cavalcade of reading, cups of tea, long lie-ins. Punctuated perfectly by yoga, bush walks, mountain biking, and preparing food that kids wouldn't go near. Bliss.

The list:

- Going away, alone;
- G for making that possible;
- the lake and mountains;
- watching the sunrise from bed;
- mountain biking;
- friends;
- talking for hours, just because we can;
- art history books (I'm learning soooo much);
- getting rescued from the airport when flights are delayed;
- not even wanting a coffee;
- warm yoga classes;
- chuckling about not being able to remember;
- laughing out loud;
- brain balls (the coconut covered delights from Dr. Libby);
- little miss four missing me (it's the first time she has!);
- missing my family (missing is beautiful when you know you'll see them soon).

Feeling so lucky to be away.

# Progress, More Or Less

Are you like me? Sick of progress seen as good — bigger, quicker, faster, ways to get more money. Or bad — let's go back to the past where life was better. I can't bear it. Truly. Neither work.

How 'bout:

- Progress equals the expansion of human potential.
- Finding our edges.
- Making the world better for everyone on the planet.
- Understanding and harnessing the placebo effect.
- More job satisfaction, fulfilment, quality, joy, excitement.
- Less work, more play.
- More sleep, meditation, rest, quiet.
- More forgiveness, kindness, acceptance.
- Less “the reality is” and more “my experience is.”
- Less “in truth” and more “in my opinion.”
- Less judgment, criticism, gossip.
- More gifts, abundance, technology.
- More wonder, passion, invention.
- More art. Yes, indeed. Creativity blossoming from every being on this awe-inspiring planet.

That, people, is progress. That's what I'm working for, living for. Doesn't that feel good?

X

# Prosperity

You might be someone who skids around trying to figure out if seeking greater prosperity is worthwhile. I certainly do. Does it fit my values? Does it actually work (setting financials goal that is)? Does it matter (I mean, really, past a certain point wealthier people are no happier, so why bother)?

And then, if you do start setting goals the next set of questions arise. What's the best way to achieve such goals? Pinning up make-believe million dollar bills (seriously misguided in my book, but the idea may sound compelling)? Sitting down with a financial planner? Changing your mindset? Getting hypnotized? Gambling? Buying a business? Taking a course? Attending a seminar? Investing in property? Hmm, hmm. The list goes on.

Hands up — who has done at least some of those things, yet, still, nothing really changes?

I got to the point where I scrubbed all those questions. I realized that what I really wanted was power, damn it, in the area of my finances. I don't care to dedicate my life to the pursuit of money, but I do want to honor my desire to expand — to try new things and feel the freedom that money can offer.

The important thing, I came to see, is that the quality of my life right now is what ultimately matters.

Think about it. It's the quality of life now (not at some abstract time in the future) where we want to feel a sense of power and expansion. So how on earth does one get that?

I talked a lot with my sister (a seriously amazing woman who can get stuff transformed in the course of a morning bush-walk). I read, read, read about this phenomenon of feeling unsatisfied with the present because of financial constraints that might (or might not) happen in the future. Spiritual texts, philosophical writings, self-help books, brain science. The answers all pointed in the same direction.

Wonder.

When you lose a sense of wonder in the present, you can become disillusioned. You can lose a sense of expansion. You can stop seeing the abundant prosperity right in front of you. You can become small and mean — at least I did.

Since bringing wonder to the area of prosperity, my world has expanded. Things like:

- a sense of privilege and gratitude at the money in my wallet and bank accounts;
- an excitement about my art;

- a realization of the endless opportunities to explore in my business;
- Fun. People, making money has actually been fun;
- my money seems to go further;
- my fear of the unknown has diminished;
- I enjoy paying bills (yes, truly);
- my painting sales have shot up;
- I can't wait to get to work in the morning;
- I feel blessed and full of life.

Wonder. So simple. Just choose it. Like literally, "I'm going to look at this with wonder." You'll notice, there is no room for fear. You will feel abundant and prosperous in the here and now. You may have to attend to your finances, but your current circumstances can not distract from the present moment when addressed with wonder — unless you choose otherwise.

Here's to wonder-filled day and the true prosperity it brings.

X

# Death & Dying

Let's go there. Death and dying. Subjects many of us rarely talk about. Yet, these things unite everyone on the planet. We all are born. We all will die.

Let's poke a stick at the way we deal with death. Let's see the absurdity in it. We can live like we're not going to. We can waste days like we have endless numbers of them. We can bitch and moan like each moment isn't precious. We can stay in jobs we hate. We can honor fear more than trust. We can allow our minds to drift into the past and future, frittering away the precious moments we have to experience life now.

We can go through life thinking — *this can't be it. Once I get "xyz," then life will start.*

Not going to happen.

This is it.

And we are all going to die.

I'm not trying to be morbid. I'm not even trying to be controversial. I am trying to wake us up. Give us a bit of a shake. A reality check.

We are going to die.

Cos here's the funny thing that happens. When we get comfy with dying, life kicks up a notch.

Have you ever noticed how some people who have come an ant's-dick-close to dying take on life in a whole new way? An unstoppable force enters their consciousness. A fearless awakening descends upon their psyche. They smell the end, and their journey comes alive with possibility. Did you see [The Dallas Buyers Club](#)? Perfect example.

Have you ever met someone who is dying, whose last years, months, and days are inspirational? Confined to bed there is an absence of self-pity. A glorious gratitude for having had the days they had. They make it their mission to spread the word: "It's okay. Death is upon me and life is good."

Therein lies a lesson, one I am hungry and deeply grateful for. It's the lesson that Buddha spoke of — to die every day is to truly be alive (paraphrased by moi).

To surrender to the inevitable cycle of life is to find power. I'm dedicating today to death. To the bliss that arises when acceptance of mortality is total. To letting go of things that have gone. To the never-ending circle we are part of. To the extraordinary emotion that the death of a loved one evokes. To the gift of life, possible only with the gift of death.

# In It Together

In Japan, when someone dies (this isn't more about death, I promise) people write messages on tiny beautiful pieces of paper and tie them to a "[wishing tree](#)."

These wishing trees don't belong to a single entity. They can't be created or owned by one person. Their breathtaking beauty is made, in my opinion, all the richer because of the shared construction process.

In reality, we don't do anything alone. We don't truly own a single thing. We might legally own stuff, but nothing is ever created in isolation.

We don't get to be alive without air. Air comes from trees. If nothing else, plants are our creative partners.

Okay, I can see you thinking — she's about to get all sustainable and go hug trees on us. Nah-uh.

I am going to dedicate today to the amazing connections I've made recently, the people intricately linked to my art:

- [Timmy Smith](#) — I love being in your generous sphere.
- [Anna Church](#) — Thanks for allowing me to take care of your amazing art.
- [Anton Forde](#) — Being in the room with your work lifts my day. Again, humbled to have the custodial privilege.
- Lisa Baker — I feel saved (that sounds huge, and it is!). I can't tell you how many people have commented on the beauty of your design. I feel grateful to know you.
- [Kazu Nakagawa](#) — In one short conversation, the direction of my work possibly changed forever. Umm, how does one offer thanks for that?
- [Katie Trinkle Legge](#) — For your unstoppable energy and generosity for the Waiheke Artist community, we owe you big time.

I'm so happy to be part of something bigger than myself.

X

# How Do You Find The Time?

Being an artist takes ongoing, relentless commitment. It takes putting yourself out there regardless of others opinions. It takes being okay without a regular pay-check. It takes thick skin and a soft heart. It takes knowing people will form opinions about you and your work that aren't always positive. It takes getting up and doing it again and again and again just because you said so.

It takes putting yesterday behind you every day and leaving tomorrow until you get there.

Being an artist is not who you are, it's a role you play.

It's a choice.

A love.

A blessing.

A great life.

It's never about time. Just commitment. The question becomes how to stay committed in the face of life with all its madness. One thing that helps is counting my good fortunes. Counting them makes me hum, inside and out. And when that happens, time expands. Paintings flow from my brushes. Events get organized with minimal effort. Serendipity comes knocking on my studio door. The things that can take hours to get resolved, are sorted quickly and efficiently. Yes, the expansion of time is a wonderful thing.

Here are the blessings I'm counting today:

- my friend getting pregnant;
- an afternoon with my kids at Palm Beach in the middle of winter, in tee shirts and sandals;
- G, my gorgeous man, going fishing midweek;
- eating dinner as a family;
- mixing paint;
- snuggling in bed before facing the day;
- sending invites;
- running at dawn;

- sunrises;
- guided meditations;
- winter soup cooking on the fire;
- my two year-old singing Happy Birthday to himself in his cot.

Here's to making time for things you're committed to.

X

# The Artist's New Clothes

I can't tell you how many times I've said to G this week "It is so nice to have new clothes."

What I should say is "It's so nice to have new clothes and not feel guilty about it."

It's not that we can't afford for me to have new clothes, or even that when I buy clothes I go crazy and get things I shouldn't. It's more that my income is inconsistent and unknown, so I feel an element of — am I being responsible buying something as frivolous as clothes?

What I forget is (a) I love clothes, (b) having new ones lights me up, and (c) there is nothing frivolous about the creative energy that goes into making great clothes. I mean, I'm all about loving art and adorning my world. Ye gads, I can't believe I even need to remind myself, but that world needs to include moi!

All intellectualizing aside, having new clothes has brought me enormous pleasure. While we're on the subject of pleasure, let's indulge:

- soft, quality fabrics;
- the crack and spit of a just lit fire;
- the delight of Mr Two telling me "it's MORNING Mummy!!";
- counting down the days 'til G and I hop on a plane to Bali, sans kids;
- meeting deadlines;
- seeing paintings leave for new homes;
- my sister's loving, direct, insightful coaching;
- stepping out into the black morning and seeing the dawn awaken in front of me.

I have a lot to feel good about today. And I'll bet, if you look, you do too.

X

# Riding The Ups And Downs

Have you ever had the most amazing trip, made better with the expectation of arriving home refreshed, relaxed, invigorated? Two weeks ago, I was in Bali. It was, for me, perfection. Yoga, raw food, green juice, massages, fun, laughter, poolside gin, friends. Bliss. Heaven.

On the way home, I basked in the thought of how chilled I'd be upon arrival. How filled up with restorative energy. How lovely the world would look. I'd be on fire. Motivated, zoned in. I'd be a creative presence to be reckoned with.

Nice fantasy.

As it happened, I returned to freezing wet, grimness (just looking at my weather app made me glum), demanding kids, a mountain of washing, hideous jetlag, and a scramble to recover from losing an entire night's sleep thanks to Jetstar's fabulous ex-Bali timetable.

I immediately turned into SuperBitch (just ask my family), which made me question whether going away was even worth it.

Excuse me? Okay, girl, you need a serious dose of pull-yourself-together. Even though I'd had vacation perfection, feeling good about it took some work. (We humans are weird, aren't we?) It's one thing to get a feel-good groove going when things are okay, or even pretty good. But when one is in the midst of hang-dog city, the stops have to be properly pulled out.

Here's what I did:

1. Revisited my heroes, [Tolle](#) and [Sia Maa](#). Okay, good. It's just my ego going nuts. Nothing to do with who I really am. Phew.
2. Accepted my emotions like they were just, well, emotions. Took the significance out of them. Oh, there they go, those good friends, emotions. Yup, better.
3. Got some friend time under my belt. Friends who make me feel human. Thanks Michelle, Kate and Sarah. You guys rock. I was a transformed beast on my way home.
4. Meditated. Me and my breath. Nothing else for twenty minutes. Don't know about you, but I find meditation near excruciating when I'm in a bad mood. But I also find it makes the most difference. So I get my backside in the chair and do it. When I get up, I'm calmer.
5. De-cluttered. There is nothing like getting stuff sorted. I got a cupboard under control. A bench top squared away. Donated a big bag of bits and pieces I neither love nor need. It feels like the background noise got turned down.

6. Focused on gratitude. Every day, I write a list of three things starting with the words, "I value ... " What can I say? It works.

And guess what? I'm inching closer to feeling restored. I no longer wonder if I should have gone. I feel a groundswell of creativity starting to form. That, my people, is what I'm talking about.

X

# Old Friends

I'm not about to give a finger-wagging, list-giving lecture on why we should see old friends. It's so darn obvious. Still. I will dwell on the youth they bring out in us. That's enough, no? If you can visit them, great. If not, picture them in your mind.

They make you feel young because:

1. they transport you to times when you were younger;
2. they know other friends of yours from more youthful times;
3. they make you laugh about things you haven't laughed about in ages;
4. they remind you of things you forgot you could do; and
5. they still love you, even though you're not as young as you were, which makes you feel young again.

On that note, here's a youthful gratitude collection:

- seeing friends, who after years of absence can step right back in where we left off;
- my old hometown;
- my kids playing with my friends' kids;
- feeling safe in an earthquake;
- giggling at antics from years gone by;
- deluxe coffee;
- walking Oriental Bay in a storm;
- knowing my way around in a city I haven't been to in ages;
- being comfortable in pj's and morning hair;
- getting a cuppa that's just how I like it;
- not having to speak;
- realizing how far I've come.

Here's to the years that have made us who we are and the people we've met along the way.

X

# The Art Of Perfection

One of the most powerful tools up an artist's sleeve is her ability to press on until her work is perfect. Or at least as near perfection as possible. Attention to detail can set apart the ordinary from the amazing.

The problem, though, is taking that perfectionism into areas outside our art. It can mean wasting 80 percent of our time on stuff that only makes a 20 percent difference. Who wants that?

Ponder this:

- 80 percent of your sales will come from 20 percent of your clients.
- 20 percent of your marketing efforts will net 80 percent of your results.

Amazingly enough, 20 percent of the pods on a pea plant will produce 80 percent of the peas. This 80/20 lark is so pervasive it's got a law named after it: [Pareto's Law](#). The law states that 20 percent of energy expended will result in an 80 percent improvement.

That means if you spend two hours building a website, you'll only improve it by 20 percent if you spend an extra eight hours on it. Eight hours! That's a whole bunch of stuff you could get 80 percent right somewhere else.

By letting go of perfection in areas outside my art, I've been more productive, powerful, energized (spending hours on something to make a tiny difference is a life sapper). That feels good.

So, go on. Attend to your passion. Give everything else the 80/20 shuffle.

X

# Give Up Complaining

What if I told you I hold a major insight into being happier, healthier, and more creative? And that during the time that it takes to drink a coffee I could share my insight with you and it would change your life. What if I told you that this same insight could change the quality of your art practice forever?

Would you have that coffee with me?

Here's my insight: Give up complaining.

I know. Simple, right?

But it is one of the hardest thing I've ever done. In the wise words of the Indigo Girls: “The hardest to learn is the least complicated ... ”

It's difficult because complaining is crazy automatic. Complaining flies below the radar. It's such a conversation starter that until I put my attention on it, I didn't even notice. Scary.

I've given up, cold turkey, and I'm all awkward silences and jerky segues. Why have I given up? To be more present. To live life now, not tomorrow, next week, next year, or yesterday. To enjoy this moment and stop waiting for the kids to change, the weather to improve, the gallery to call, or for inspiration to strike.

I realized, I'm waiting for life to start. And the thing that keeps me all snitchy-bitchy about the past and waiting for the future to arrive is complaining. So, see ya, ol' complaints of mine. You are no longer welcome.

When did I think life was going to start? On holiday? When I'm fifty? I mean, please, if I don't start living like this is it, right now, I probably never will.

Here's what feels so damn brilliant:

- my productivity racing up the scale;
- an amazing head space;
- having those things that irritate me pass so quickly (zip, phff, gone);
- being with the kids however they are — so, so, so much easier than wishing they were quieter, tidier, different;
- seeing the towel on the floor, picking it up, and moving on;
- the freedom to notice the good stuff;

- feeling better emotionally, spiritually, physically;
- letting go;
- being in my studio;
- getting reconnected to a sense of wonder in life, in art, in love.

That, friend of mine, is worth the effort. Wanna join me in my complaint eradication adventure?

X

# Know When To Hold ‘em

Hands up if you've ever trucked on doing what you've always done, expecting different results. Thinking: *if I just keep going but I'm a bit more positive, a bit more grateful, or if I just (fill in the blank), it will work out better this time.*

Or, even more insidiously: *there is enough that is working, so I'll keep going and hope it ramps up eventually.* Imm hm. So there.

I've had an insight about the things that don't work for my art practice (hello 80/20 shuffle). Thing is, some of what I do that doesn't work is actually fun. Like talking art for hours. Some of it is altruistic (school shows, community events — so nice). And some of it is prestigious (hello juried shows). But no matter how fun, altruistic, or prestigious, if they don't benefit my practice artistically as well as financially, they ain't worth doing.

It is a fine line, I know. I'm not saying I'll never talk art with anyone again. But I am saying that dropping into artist studios every week to chat is too much. Those conversations can happen more sparingly and be woven into other tasks, like organising exhibitions and discussing promotions. The impact on my practice of limiting those chats, can only be positive.

Putting some of the things I do in the “I'm-giving-back” basket is cool, if they really are the best way to give back. Sometimes though, tasks I take on leave me with little time, money, or enthusiasm to really make a difference. I've helped create an Art Map for my local art community for the last four years. While I always hoped it would bring more, that map has brought me little business. While it feels good to help the other artists on the island, the time I've put into the Art Map could be better spent doing something else.

I've helped with the Map long enough to know it's crazy to keep hoping it will work out better this time. Conversely, sending potential buyers to other artist's studios has been a far better use of my time with way more up-side to the artists involved. It requires almost no effort on my part, but feels damn fine when a fellow artist makes a sale because of my small action. It was a hard call to give up working on the Art Map. But a good call.

I know — artists are not supposed to sell out (for a brilliant view on this, read Paul Jarvis's latest book: [The Good Creative](#)). They are not supposed to sully their art with a commercial thought.

But here's the thing — if my art practice doesn't earn enough, I have to make an income another way. It's a choice — change up my art practice, try something new, look at what's not working, then get to work — or, get a job somewhere else.

There are countless ways to serve with art. The best way for me, for you, for any creative soul is to serve so we create value for ourselves and others. The rest leaves one, or both, of us diminished. Recently I added up how much it cost me (in time and money) to send work to school fund-raising exhibitions. The numbers were sobering. I had spent more on shipping, commissions and entry fees than I made from the work I sold. That means I could have made donations to the schools instead and saved myself a bunch of time that I could have used to make more art; connect to my audience; put on a show. It drove it home. Both the schools and I would have been better off if I'd simply made a donation.

Who's with me? You wanna serve? Or you wanna fritter away the possibility of touching as many lives as you can?

No-brainer.

There is a lot I'm scrubbing off the calendar. And a lot I'm putting on. Scared? Hell yeah. Excited? You bet.

Evaluate. Say no. Then, change it up.

X

# The Absurdity Of Reality

Real is real, right? It's gotta be. By its very definition, it simply is. But it's not that simple and there seems to be two schools of thought:

1. Reality is black and white. Measurable. Scientific.
2. You create your own reality. Reality arises from language in the mind.

I've been romanced by the second notion. Reality is not so much "out there" but "in between your ears." In other words, there isn't such a thing as "reality" — there is only a constructed version of reality that exists in your mind. This does make a lot of sense. But it leaves me with questions. How come some people create exactly the same reality as I? How come others don't? And there really does seem to be an "out there" as much as I am connected to an "in here." And what about infants and animals who can't construct anything in their minds because they haven't got language to construct with? Does reality exist for them? I think so.

To address this, I've turned to my old friend Seligman. He tells us our brains take in [ten thousand bits of information a second](#) (from "out there"). Yet, they only process [forty bits of that information](#) ("in here"). Forty bits. That's the teeniest tiny little slither of reality we process.

It seems, where we go wrong is we think our cut on reality is the whole picture when, in fact, it's just a small slice of it. The thing I understand now is that stuff really is going on outside of us. It's just super easy to get the wrong picture when we can only process such a small piece of the pie.

So we could say that reality isn't so much created by us as chosen by us. And, how much we process has nothing to do with how smart, educated, luminosity-ed up we are — our brains will only ever process forty bits per second.

Yikes.

That means some of the 'realities' of the art world I have been dead sure exist, might simply be the things I keep choosing to focus on. Like: Having a dealer is the best way to gain credibility as an artist. Or, artists are not a very helpful bunch of people. Or another one — if I don't sell most of my work on opening night I won't have a well-selling show. Those might just be things that I keep noticing, so I don't even consider or look for better 'realities' to step into.

The great thing is . . . we can change the bits of information we process. There is a lot we can do to teach our brains to collect information it's not used to collecting. I could start

looking at those 'choices' I've made about the art world with fresh eyes. I can keep asking, seeking different views, imagining. Not stopping with "oh, that's just the reality of it."

Like this. I've googled artist's blogs and have found a plethora of helpful, generous, dedicated people. Truly, my reality about artists has flipped. Another example: I sold an entire show of work that hadn't had a single opening sale at an exhibition by contacting people afterward and offering private viewings. My people wanted intimacy and connection. They were no longer interested in buying from a faceless gallery. That is a beautiful new reality to step into.

Here are some more new realities I'm choosing (just as "true" as their counterparts, but make life a million times better):

- video games are actually good for teenagers (so not going to dwell on the negative side of video games anymore);
- this time in history is statistically the safest time ever for human beings to be alive;
- we are less likely to die from the hand of another human and more likely to live longer than at any other time in history (please, enough of the doom and gloom of human plight);
- at times, stress can be hugely beneficial to us (it can cause motivation, elevate energy, ignite innovation and invention, help us lose weight).

For more intriguing facts to process, check out [this guy](#).

Here's to choosing your reality.

X

# The Positivity Trap

There are a million (okay, so I haven't exactly counted, but you get the picture) books out there that seem to say if you want to manifest a billion dollars; the body of your dreams; perfect health; or your knight in shining armor, all you need is a good set of positive affirmations and BAM, you'll be on your way. When nothing happens, they say — *oh well, I guess you still have some unconscious negativity to deal with. Here are some more positive affirmations, meditations, limiting belief eradicators to assist you.* Sure, tucked away in the background, many of these positive-your-way-to-anything people do say you need to take action, but, really, you'd be forgiven for thinking that's just sort of an if-you-want-to-once-you've-done-your-positivity-practice step.

It's a shame. Not to mention a sham.

I mean, hey, I'm a big fan of positivity. You're reading *Feel Good Friday* for goodness sake. Its unapologetic intent is to bring some light and feel-goodness to your world. If that's not positive, I'm not sure what is.

But here's the rub: If you think positivity is the thing that will make the difference in your world, you're plain out of luck. Seriously. You know the old icing-on-a-cow-pat-metaphor? That's what we're dealing with here.

Being positive is about teaching the brain new ways of seeing the world. It creates an excellent platform from which to grow. It's about realizing that you are dealing with a cow pat and need to learn new skills and get new ingredients to bake a delicious cake. But being positive in itself will never actually teach you the new skills you need. You need education for that.

Learning to be positive is a bit like house-cleaning. Baking in a messy dirty kitchen is possible but waaaaaay harder than if you start with clean surfaces and the right tools. However, thinking that practicing positive thoughts will manifest your deepest desires is like thinking that cleaning the kitchen will magically produce the cake. Um, truly? Never going to happen. If you pull out your old recipe in a clean kitchen, you'll still end up with a cow pat.

There is a pile of science that says teaching your brain to be more positive is a powerful thing. It changes our biochemistry, rearranges our brain patterns, and we feel happier. More content. Better able to take advantage of opportunities that arise in our presence. It's a practice I endorse with every ounce of my slightly-soft body.

But, please, when things are not shifting in your world, do your affirmations, be grateful, look on the bright side, just don't think that this alone will manifest your dreams. You need

to do other work for that. Like, you know, taking action, being responsible, learning new skills, apologizing, giving up complaints, getting advice, going outside of your comfort zone, listening to experts, being a bigger person. Digging deep. Being brave.

You are up to whatever it is you desire. To wheel out an overused, but deadly-accurate cliché, there is not a possibility out there that you cannot create. (But it will take more than being positive, I can promise you that.)

Let's remember. Clean space works. Get those positive thoughts going. Feel good. Then, go learn a new recipe.

X

# Suffering, Optional

We all feel pain. All of us. Emotional pain. Physical pain. Perhaps even spiritual pain (I've absolutely no idea what that means, but I've heard it spoken of). We break legs; break hearts; break commitments. Get sick, old, tired, sore. Depression, anxiety, stress. They all suck.

But do they have to?

That's the big question. We all feel pain. But not all of us suffer. Some people, I've noticed, when terrible, painful things happen, sure, they feel dreadful, but they don't experience suffering.

Remarkable.

Inspirational, in fact. I want some. I want that space between who I am and the pain I feel. That's what it is, I think. Space. Those who don't suffer are those who don't turn pain into who they are.

This was me the other day — "I've got my period (physical pain), and I can't stop snapping at the kids (emotional pain). I hate it (suffering). It's so unfair I have to go through this every month (more suffering)." I had physical pain, then I added my belief about my pain and voila, I was suffering.

Thing is, I had a choice. It was an automatic, unconscious choice until I stopped and paid attention to it. But when I did...

Hello, power.

Goodbye, suffering.

Pain happens. It's not so much that we are tired, sore, or angry. As if tiredness, soreness, or anger is who we are. It's more like: We have tiredness, we have soreness, or we have anger. They all pass. No need to add suffering.

Always check your options people. Like this: Am I in pain? Sure, but am I choosing to suffer? Then watch the space, the beautiful, peaceful space.

X

# Blessing The Weather Gods

A few years back, I spent three months in Los Angeles (painting, you know, as you do). My first lesson there? They don't talk about the weather. Straight off the plane I went to a party, peppered with Scrubs cast and crew. Zac himself wasn't on the scene, but still. Here's me all awkward, and up until then, slightly bent from the force of a Wellington southerly: "Um, lovely day today." The über cool LA lad looked at me with a raised eyebrow and snidely said, "Um, well, like yeah." Okay, so that was the end of that conversation and my first lesson in what not to talk about in LA.

Not talking weather takes a lot of practice for a Kiwi.

Today it's pissing down outside my fabulous island studio. And I'll indulge in a little weather chat, thanks very much. Apologies to my LA followers, please bear with me.

Weather is good. Being in it. Talking about it. Watching it change. I like that where I live I get to experience all varieties of weather. Rain, especially when I'm lying in bed makes me smile. So does:

- splashing around in puddles;
- powder snow days;
- sleet that goes sideways and makes you cover your face with your hand;
- arriving at a warm tramping hut (that's a hiking hut to you US peeps) soaking wet and drying out by the fire;
- quiet blue-white fluffy snow that squeaks when you walk in it;
- laughing at the ridiculousness of trying to stay upright on a road bike in gusty winds;
- putting my paintings out in the rain just before they dry (curiously cool patterns emerge);
- whisking in the washing;
- the steam rising following a quick summer shower;
- body surfing;
- gumboots;
- vast warm-cool sunsets that stop you in your tracks;
- and let us not forget rainbows.

Yes please. All of the above again and again and again. It's pissing down this morning, and it's all good.

X

# A Short Sweet Jab In The Arm

I'm in bed with the flu. Not just a head cold thingy. I'm talking crazy bad headache, fever, vomiting, coughing like a glass exploded in my chest, aching all over, unable to get up. Seriously not fun.

I totally considered giving *Feel Good Friday* a miss. Like, really? Is there anything I can feel good about today?

Well, surprisingly, lying there feeling ever so sorry for myself, I sent my intention off to find something I could feel good about. And it made me feel a little less dark. That's enough. No?

The following brought a little happiness to this otherwise grim girl:

- Soup. Thin, salty soup;
- Feeling my appetite come back;
- Writer [Danielle LaPorte](#). I've only just discovered her and am in love;
- Lemon and ginger tea;
- G picking up the slack with the kiddies;
- Same with Mum;
- A comfy, comfy bed;
- Doctors who make me feel human;
- My little Miss Four asking what chores she can do for me while I'm sick. Awwww;
- Showers;
- My SodaStream machine—it has been put through its paces;
- Having a job that can wait when I'm sick.

Here's to feeling a little less dark. Or even a little brighter . . .

X

# Digital Detox

Are we really so addicted to our gadgets that we need to detox? I think we might be. A friend and I were talking. We agreed one of the best things about being on holiday is that we turn off our phones. Our partners turn off theirs. A relatedness sets in. Our minds clear. We relax, breathe, settle.

And who knew? Our creativity rises. Ideas spring to life. Energy flows where it has been stuck for a while.

That got me thinking. [Arianna Huffington](#) was onto something when she suggested businesses would see measurable results (like, you know, better profits) by instigating and rewarding 'Digital-Free Time'. Encouraging no-contact weekends. Rewarding week-long gadget-free vacations. In other words, Digital Detox helps us *Thrive*.

Don't get me wrong. I'm a big fan of technology. Hell, I wouldn't have a business without it (show me someone who does). I am suggesting that we stay the masters of it. I'm standing for using it, not being used by it.

Digital Detox — be it turning our devices off at a certain time each evening, a device-free weekend, or a month-long sabbatical — will make you feel good. It will remind you who's in charge of your life. It will allow your brain to reconnect with your goals and dreams in a way you might have forgotten.

Best of all, your relationships might improve.

Here are ten ways to detox:

1. Don't turn your phone on until after breakfast (79 percent of smartphone users check their phone within fifteen minutes of waking up).
2. Power down everything at least an hour before you go to sleep.
3. Dedicate one weekend each month to no digital connections. That means no texting, emails, social media. If you feel panic rising, make that two weekends.
4. Take a lunch break without a mobile device.
5. Take a week of lunch breaks without a mobile device.
6. Create an hour of family (or couple) time each evening where you all power down.
7. Make a family rule of no devices before school or work. Like none.

8. Take a device-free vacation (alone, with your partner, or family). If you must, give yourself half an hour each day (at an allocated time) to check absolutely vital stuff and leave everything else. Better, yet, make it truly device free, and only take one phone for emergencies.
9. Encourage your work place to have a device-free weekend.
10. Encourage your staff to turn their mobiles off for an entire week at least once a year. Reward it.

Go, unplug and be more productive.

X

# An Emphasis On Feel

Do you really know how you feel? I'm not talking about having emotions (we all have them). I mean, when you have an emotion, do you know how it feels in your body, where it manifests, and how big it is? It's so easy to be all talk. I feel this. I feel that. Chit, chat, chat ...

I started thinking about this "I feel" thing and wondered if I knew what I was talking about. All that "I feel" stuff is very cerebral. All in-between my ears. I'm not saying I'm making it up, but I am saying I often don't get past thinking about how I feel to physically experiencing the feeling.

But, dang, when I do, those feelings are good. Even fear, anger, regret, and sadness are sort of nice (if you can forgive me for that word) to just sit and be with. Sure, they might be uncomfortable at first. Like bad weather. Once I know they will pass, though, I kind of like them. And when the roughness does go, wow, the opening for feeling the good stuff is clearer, stronger, sharper.

It's nice (there's that word again).

Take this morning for example. I was crouched in close quarters under the house we are building, hammering in nails to hold the insulation in place. It was awkward, intense sort of work. The angles were hard to get to. The hammer slipped easily off the nails. I found myself "feeling" annoyed. Okay, I thought, what does annoyed actually feel like in real terms? What are the associated sensations? It was a curious thing. I learned that annoyed feels like a crab crawling up my back towards my neck, and like a string is pulling the top of my shoulders towards my ears. Annoyed also felt like a warm, almost too hot, poker jabbing into the top of my stomach. Its comes on hard and fast and violence feels like a good option, just for a moment, before it all passes. I'd never paid attention to that before. In the inquiry I found myself smiling. Annoyed is okay. Annoyed is not pleasant but it's got a bit of personality. It's the pre-schooler who's profane vocabulary startles because the context is bang on. It's the painting you first look at and don't like, but can't help but revisit before you leave the gallery. I'm almost looking forward to being annoyed again. That hard and fast burst of energy needs another inspection.

Here's what I reckon. Take today and feel whatever there is to feel. Close your eyes if you need to. Find somewhere quiet where you're not self-conscious. Feel, in real startlingly honest terms, what's truly there.

X

# Take A Break

Get up. Move about. Stop what you're doing. Best of all, go for a walk. Because most of us don't. We either feel too important or too busy. I'm here to say, you're neither. Uh-uh. Never.

True story: I once asked a guy out for coffee who responded by saying that he would love to and even though he was super busy right now his schedule would open up in about six months.

Seriously?

After giggling, I sent him a message saying “honey, you need to learn to say 'no'. I'm 35, it ain't gonna kill me. And thanks, sweet boy, for not wasting my time.” If he really thought my self-esteem was low enough to wait six months to have a coffee (a coffee, people!) he wasn't the kinda guy I was interested in.

As my awesome mate P.V. said when I told him, “who the hell does he think he is? Barack Obama?”

The point is, no one is so important they can't find twenty minutes to have a break (with someone they might like). And now some [brain scientists](#) are telling us how good breaks are for us. They make us happier, more productive (hello Mr. Too Busy), more creative (I knew it!), and ultimately healthier. (Not too shabby).

Next time you think you're too busy, too important, or feeling too guilty, remind yourself that having a break does you a world of good (and makes you better at your work).

Take a break and ramp it up.

X

# The Placebo Effect

Lean in folks. The placebo effect is all kinds of amazing. In this readable essay by Seth Godin he shows us that [acupuncture is the best form of back-pain relief on the planet](#). Its only rival for effectiveness — you may not see this coming — is placebo acupuncture. Godin offers up a sea of evidence showing that acupuncture itself is a placebo procedure, but it is also profoundly effective at relieving pain. What he's getting at is that acupuncture is effective because it initiates the placebo effect so well.

He explains that just because people get pain relief from acupuncture doesn't mean it's not a placebo. If this is confusing you, look at it this way. If 100 people take paracetamol and 100 people have acupuncture (for back pain), a greater number of people will get relief from the needles than the pills. At the same time — if you give 100 people placebo acupuncture and 100 people regular acupuncture, more people will get pain relief from the placebo acupuncture. The long and the short — acupuncture would be my choice if I had a sore back.

How about these other amazing facts?

- [Brand-name pain pills \(with exactly the same ingredients as non-brand-name\) are more effective than non-brand-name pills](#). Yes, we are that susceptible to marketing, folks.
- [Placebo heart surgery \(where you get a pacemaker without a battery\) is effective 20 percent of the time](#). Twenty percent without a battery! Really, that astonished me.
- [Injections are more effective than pills even when they administer exactly the same medicine and there is no scientific benefit for how quickly the body absorbs that medicine](#). We might be told by the doctor that the medicine will get into our system more efficiently, but that is often just a placebo trick used by the professional (I'm happy with that).
- [White coats can make a huge difference when prescribing medicine. Health professionals themselves are placebos](#). That's why it's so important to like our doctors, teachers, chiropractors. No two ways about it. I went to a chiropractor for a while, until I got the yips. Totally didn't work after that.

The reason double-blinded, placebo-controlled science is important is because the placebo effect always happens. [There is not a single medical procedure on the planet that doesn't work to some degree as a placebo](#). The mind/body connection is powerful, people. Way more so than we may appreciate (or at least some of us anyway).

But what does all this mean? Here's my take — the human brain is beyond amazing. The connections between out-there, in-here, what-we-think, and how-the-world-occurs are so intertwined that it's impossible to know what is really making a difference in any given circumstance.

Which leads to . . . we make a difference. We matter. Our thoughts, our feelings, our hearts, our minds, our perceptions, loves, hates, ideas, bodies, minds, and spirits. All make a difference. They all make a difference.

Knowing the placebo effect is so crazy effective and pervasive is exactly my kind of Friday topic. We are only scratching the surface of our power to heal, change, grow, and manifest. That, my friends, is all kinds of wonderful.

For more reading about the placebo effect (and where I got my facts), here's a start:

1. [Mind over Medicine](#): A doctor's view on how to use the placebo effect as an important part of your healing plan.
2. [Bad Science](#): A brilliant look into how to tell robust science from “bad” science and how to tell if something is being sold as “scientifically effective” when, in fact, its effectiveness is from the placebo effect (which in itself isn't bad or right, but being told otherwise just might be).
3. [Seth Godin's short but incredibly detailed .pdf \(free\)](#) about the placebo effect and why it's important in marketing.

X

# Change That Annoying Person

Here's what I grappled with: I wanted certain people to change certain things. The impact of their shortcomings became a dominant fixture in my mind — *If only...* , and — *They should...* , and — *If that were me...* .

Soooo unpleasant.

What I failed to see and have only just recently realized is this: I thought they were responsible for the unpleasantness. I mean, seriously, if that behavior weren't in my space, I'd be fine and dandy, thanks very much. So please, change already, will you!

I went as far as pulling them up and suggesting that a change was in order. Because, you know, my happiness should be front and centre of everyone's mind, and even if I find significant changes hard to make, surely you can just snap to it because I want you to (can you feel the cynicism dripping off my words?).

You see, the thing at the heart of it all was that I didn't like certain things. And I was living in an either/or world. Either they have to change, or I have to like the behavior being displayed. But, really, I didn't like the behavior so I thought they had to change. It seemed my only option was to try and reason with them that they "needed to" or "ought to." Oh, you would have been impressed with my arguments. I could have been on *Boston Legal*.

I was completely oblivious to a third option: I could want those things to change (and even make that known), but at the same time accept that it's not my place to make those changes happen and work on being okay if they don't (without having to actually like the behavior).

In my annoyance that things were not changing, I lost all perspective. I'd forgotten to remember the great things, the admirable things, the love.

I'd lost a sense of my own power. The power to choose what to focus on. The power to lead by example (you know, I could get my own house in order and show an alternative rather than demand they change first).

It has been a humbling experience. I've had to apologize, admit fault, and start to clean up the wake of destruction I'd left. Not easy, but good.

Here's what I'm left with — would I still like those things to change? Sure. Do I need those things to change for me to get on with what's important to me? Certainly not. Can I have compassion that it's hard to change? Absolutely. Can I offer support (if it's wanted)? Ah-ha. Can I love them wholeheartedly just as they are? Of course. Can I make sure my apologies are honest, understood, and enough? Yes, yes, and yes.

These are the things I'm dedicating this Friday to. What about you? Perhaps it resonates, irritates, or starts a fire. Wherever, whatever, it's good.

X

# Love A Good Wedding

It's that time of year: Nuptial season. Awww. This weekend, G and I are off to see his nephew tie the knot. I'm not your die-hard I-love-weddings kind of gal (you know who you are!), but I always enjoy a good weep and a room full of frocks.

Confession, though — I am a total fan of love (I mean, do you know what inspires my art?). If a wedding is about that four-letter word, I'm a sucker.

If you're about to be married, off to a wedding, or celebrating an anniversary, here's to feeling good about all things matrimonial:

- the best kind of party there is;
- family in all its extended messy madness;
- a weekend away without children (you know it);
- bubbles. Laughter. Giggling;
- speeches that make you cringe;
- speeches that make you cry;
- speeches you talk about years later (usually the cringe ones);
- someone behaving badly;
- eloping;
- chalking up a practice or two before finally getting it right;
- teenagers defying their parents and proving the statistics wrong by staying together forever.

Yes. There is a lot to feel good about when it comes to love and our slightly irrational obsession with 'the big day'.

Let's all raise our glasses.

X

# It All Starts At Home

I moved this week. Doesn't the old wives' tale say it's meant to be one of the top five most stressful things you can do? Up there with getting divorced, losing a loved one, and getting fired?

In that case, I should be more stressed.

Oh, don't get me wrong. I had my moments. The one thing I said I didn't want to do (carry heavy stuff up and down stairs — “please get one of the lads to help with that,” I'd said), I found myself doing. And then — how dare he — I got the look. You know. That look that gets wheeled out when you're being annoying.

*Hey. You don't get to be irritated with me, I thought. I told you, it's the ONE thing, and here I am doing it. Truly, where do you get off? I'm the one that had to, neh, neh, neh. Me, me, me. Bleet, bleet, bleet.*

Then, just at the pinnacle of my righteous internal ranting (pretty good at that, if I dare say) I realized my sweetheart had moved not only a three-seater couch, but also a fridge, all by himself, all the way from our old house to our new place.

Oh.

That's my honey.

Sheepishly I realized I'm the one who needs to buck up her ideas and count her blessings. Who has a man who quietly goes off and moves a three-seater couch and a fridge down stairs, onto a truck, off the truck, and up the path all by himself? Um, that would be me.

Exactly.

It was a sobering reminder that there is always something to be thankful for. The man (woman, child, colleague, teacher) might not be perfect, but he brings something worth his weight. He contributes something you can't.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, gratitude is always possible, and feeling good starts at home. Feeling good takes work, responsibility, acknowledging your own shortcomings (okay, so I do have a few... ), and then seeing what is working.

X

# You Be The Judge, Or Not

Being the judge is a sneaky thing. It's our brain's automatic assessment of what's happening. So often, we don't even know we're doing it. You know, like this: *Oh, I like those shoes; don't like that opinion; they should be doing it more like me; why can't they see; heavens; really; seriously?* Judge, critique, analyze, assess, rewind, replay.

I'm not singling you out here. It's human. It's the way our brains work. At least, it's how they work when on automatic pilot. Even if we are aware of this automatic thinking, why does it matter? We all do it, right? So who cares? Everyone's judging me, so why not judge them?

Well, it doesn't matter. Unless you want more happiness, more space for creativity, more connectedness to the world around you, more peace, more thoughts you enjoy thinking. Then, well, it matters. A lot.

Those judgmental thoughts sap our love. They hijack our life force. They set us up to worry about stuff we can't do a thing about. We can't make anyone change. We can't experience the world in someone else's shoes. We can't make decisions for others (as wonderful as that would be sometimes — I do get it).

Here's the other, wee, sneaky, pesky little thing: While we are busy judging others, we take the focus off ourselves. Ah-ha. Much easier to let the mind neh, neh, neh about what someone else is or isn't doing than sit with ourselves.

And sitting with ourselves is where we get to be more giving, loving, generous, caring, forgiving, and responsible. Those are the things that bring feel goodness to our world.

Here's what I reckon. Next time you find yourself judging someone, just smile. Remind yourself, "That's my brain doing its thing." Don't be hard. Let it go, and return to the juice (you know, love, peace, and all that). Let go of judging others and yourself. Your life will get easier. You'll like yourself more.

Have a judgment-free day, people. Or, go on judging. Who am I to say? I'll love you anyway.

X

# I Can Always Choose Me

It's a funny thing, power. We give it away so easily. Mostly without even thinking. Like me, at age seven being the slowest in the race to swim the length of the pool (despite giving it my utmost) then allowing the judges to define who I was: Slow and “un-co.” Then at thirteen waiting to be picked for the team and remaining last on the line. I gave those pickers the power, once again, to define my worthiness.

The list goes on. At fifteen, failing English. At twenty-one, getting fired from my waitressing job. At twenty-five, having lumpy legs that looked crap in bell-bottoms. At thirty-eight, being single and childless.

You see folks, I learned this lesson late. I gave my power out. Relentlessly. Always willing to think someone else was more qualified than I. They got to say who I was, how worthy I was, how much I mattered. Faced with choice, I never chose me.

Some call that low self-esteem. I've never really understood what that means. I reckon it's more like forgetting your power.

I've learned a good lesson. An amazing lesson. One that has me grounded in reality, where goodness happens.

I can always choose me. *I can always choose me.*

My opinions, ideas, worthiness. Because I can.

I'm about to publish a [book](#) (the one you are reading) and in the process will be faced with great choices. Choices that could have me run for the covers, or hold my head high. I could choose to let what other's think matter, or not. I can choose to focus on the fact I'm about to accomplish a life long dream. Or I can look at the sales and use them as a measuring stick for my personal worth (I'm not suggesting that looking at statistics isn't a good idea, I am suggesting vigilance about what we make them mean).

Here's what I know. Some people might like my book. Some might love it. Or not. I might sell five copies. Or five million. The fact remains. I get to choose. My reactions, my focus, my damn privilege of being human and having the power to choose myself.

The rest? It is what it is.

Who's it gonna be today, people? Who are you putting at the helm of who you are. Choose you. You are magnificent (even if you don't know it yet).

X

# The Game Of Life

Imagine if there was only one ultimately important task for human beings. The rest? Relatively important. Yes folks, we're going deep.

I have these two questions I've been asking myself for years. Fussing over them like a busy child: "What is my life for?" and "What is truly important?" Guess what? I've been asking the wrong questions. I know, crazy! The fundamental flaw? I had two words in the mix that threw me off course.

My life.

It now seems so silly, I want to giggle. I mean I thought I had "A Life." Like I have a leg, or an eye, or a cup of tea.

No, seriously. Life isn't something I, or you, or any of us can "have." It's not possible. This isn't something I've come to believe, or am asking you to believe. It simply is.

We are life.

You can't have something you fundamentally are. A chair can't "have" a chair. It simply is a chair. It might have a seat and a leg. But a chair by nature is a chair.

Bloody brilliant.

The realization hit me. I mean, hang on. That energy pulsing through me? That is life. If I'm quiet and still, I can feel it. It's always there. It's the life in me.

These days I can feel that force even when I'm busy or talking or resting. That's a wonderful reality check. Yes, I am life, here I am.

I do a lot of observing of my thoughts. Putting space between them and me. I am the life, my thoughts are my thoughts. I've become aware of my sensations. Again, space. They are sensations I have. I am the life that has them. Same with feeling, emotions, even outbursts, rants and complaints. Oh yes, I have all those. But they are not who I am. No. I am the life that knows I am thinking. I am the awareness of everything I have.

Life then, is beyond thought. Beyond time. Beyond emotion. Equal in everyone. No one gets more or less life than anyone else. Banker or beggar, life does not discriminate. Sure, some of us get more time, but we don't get more life. Life only happens now. Life is the energy that connects us, to each other, to the planet. It is shared and abundant.

Ultimately then, the only important task I have, you have, we have, is to bring life to everything we do.

The rest? Is of relative importance and therefore may as well be played like a game. I mean, why not? There are many games I have to play, regardless of my skill level, talent or desire. The games of finances, health, relationships, parenting, work. The list goes on.

Each area of life requires a role that I can play like a game. Just like an actor on stage, not a single role I play, has anything to do with who really I am. God I love that.

Whether I play well or stick my head in the sand then, is up to me. No-one is exempt from these games. No-one gets to bow out. Sure, I can avoid, complain, rile against. Ultimately though it's my choice. I either throw myself into the current or thrash wildly trying to stop it.

I've noticed that when life feels off, it's because I've forgotten who I am and started thinking I'm one of my roles. So I practice the art of bringing myself back. Back to the life.

I've lightened up. What I think, feel, have to do, is a game. Just a game! And winning is fun.

Winning doesn't mean beating. It does mean getting better than I was. Learning. Finding more fulfilling strategies. Giving it my best. Enjoying. I'm up for winning in all my games. Bringing life to everything I do. That is the ultimate.

Can you see the roles and tasks of your world as a game? Can you bring life. Will you bring life?

Here's to playing, with everything you have. Here's to feeling the pulse of life in all that you do.

X

# New Beginnings

I know, I know, I know, forgive me. It's a cliché but I'm going there. It's the first Friday of the year and I'm all 'what-am-I-creating,' 'what-am-I-excited-about,' 'the-world-is-my-oyster.' And, you know what? I love that stuff. I'm such a starter, such an all-fired-up-at-the-beginning-of-a-project kinda girl.

All issues with clichés aside, I'm diving into this first Friday of the year with some brilliantly awesome, standing on the start line feelings:

- blank stark white canvases (one of my favorite things in the world — so much possibility);
- the physical fervor of new love;
- babies, freshly born;
- reading the first page of a long anticipated book;
- a naked building site;
- stepping out of an airport into a new country;
- the first sip of morning coffee;
- a conductor raising the baton in a room pregnant with anticipation;
- a new diary, notebook, or sharpened pencil;
- a photograph coming alive in a darkroom;
- the first day of school.

Whatever your relationship to beginnings, I hope your year, month, and day start with a beautiful kick.

X

# Before We Say Goodbye

If you liked this book you may like my next book, which tells the story of my recovery from Bulimia [Love Your Body, Change Your Life: Know Who You Are](#). (The first chapter is printed at the end so keep reading...)

Or if you would like to be notified when as my books come out — sign up for my Feel Good Updates [here](#).

If you want to say hi, email me at [emma@emmawright.co.nz](mailto:emma@emmawright.co.nz)

To check out my blog and latest projects go to [emmawright.co.nz](http://emmawright.co.nz)

If you enjoyed this book, there are two ways you can help me by helping other people find it. First: Amazon reviews are invaluable. If this book made an impression, for better or worse, please leave a review (see links below for your country). I'm asking for honesty, not five stars (unless that's how you see it).

Click [here to leave a review in the US](#)

Click [here to leave a review in the UK](#)

Click [here to leave a review in Australia](#)

Click [here to leave a review in Canada](#)

Second: By recommending this book to friends who you think will like it. Word of mouth is the best kind of marketing (and what, as an independent author, I rely on).

Thank you. *Thank you. Thankyou.*

X

# About Emma

Emma works full-time from her home on Waiheke Island, New Zealand, where she lives with her partner and two small children. Emma writes and paints to give people access to a more creative life and is inspired by teaching others to love themselves and to leave the world in better condition than they found it. Which ultimately means she writes and makes art about love.

Emma has been writing daily since she was ten. Back in the day, she kept a journal and fantasized about being a writer. That dream was crushed when she failed High School English and turned her focus to other things.

It wasn't until Emma had been painting full-time for ten years and had started a blog to express the ideas in her paintings, that she was brave enough to put her writing in the public domain. She thought — “if I write about art, perhaps people will forgive my writing skills.” As her blog became known, a beautiful thing happened. She started getting comments such as:

— *I am so loving your blogs ... thanks for being such an inspiration in my life.* ~ Kerry

— *LOVING your blog posts Emma! Keep 'em comin' ...* ~ Kate

— *I have commented before ... and, I am moved to applaud again. I note your writing to be sensible, readable, grounded, and 'inspirational'. But I suspect ... it is also reaching a 'transformational' level regarding the impact (it) may have (on) others.* ~ Fiona

Comments like this — and many more — reignited Emma's passion for writing and pushed her to overcome her fear. Nowadays, writing is at the core of her creative practice.

Emma has sold over five hundred paintings to people all around the world and has been featured in magazines and newspapers in four different countries.

Her blog ([www.emmawright.co.nz](http://www.emmawright.co.nz)) launched in 2013 attracts worldwide readership.

# Acknowledgements

I love reading acknowledgments in books. Kind of nerdy and voyeuristic, I know. But truly, creativity is not an island. The creative one might get the glory, but it's the team that gets them over the line.

Here and now is my time to give thanks. Not just because I can. Most importantly, I want to.

Thanks seem infinitesimally stingy compared to what I owe the following people. I couldn't have chosen to be an artist or a writer without them. My debt is big. I'll start with my sister, who leads by example and inspires me to accomplish things that matter. My brother and sister-in-law who make a living from their creativity and always see the best in people. Tom for making me promise to keep going, no matter what. Suzie for relentlessly demonstrating what following a dream requires.

My four mothers, in order of appearance: Mum, for passing on an expansive love of reading and for calling me a writer way before I could acknowledge that gift in myself; Faysie, for being the ears and wisdom I needed when life went wonky; Ellie, for being the role model I always wanted; Ann for being a living example of unconditional love.

Dad for encouraging me to follow my heart, always, regardless of, well, anything.

My artist friends; my other creative friends; my mummy friends who kept (and still keep) me sane when the grenade that is children exploded into my life; and my long time friends who lent an ear, gave a hug, pulled out a stern sort-yourself-out when necessary. Hugs to you all.

Everyone else who touched my life, inspired me, allowed me to create and, of course, bought my work.

Caroline for editing that not only made my words sparkle, but brought heart, generosity, love and guidance to a process that at the start put my heart in my mouth. By the finish I found elation, courage and gratitude. Deeply, deeply humbled to have worked with you.

All of you darling people who proof-read, beta-read, gave me feed-back. So lucky to have you on my court.

Last, but in no way least (in fact, probably most), my family: my immediate one, G (I'm so proud of the life we are creating) and our two darlings (seriously, love like I've never known); and my wider scrambling messy fabulous whanau (Maori for; extended family including blood relatives and extra close friends). You know who you are.

Thanks, thanks and, again, *thanks*.

Blessed in every way.

X

# Love Your Body, Change Your Life

## Introduction to the Love Your Body, Change Your Life Series

### How It Begins

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness;  
only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drown out hate;  
only love can do that.*

~ Martin Luther King

When I was nineteen, I told my parents I was bulimic. They didn't believe me. Or, at least they didn't believe it was really a problem.

I was so "together" on the outside. They saw my eating disorder as a kind of blip, phase, or thing I was trying out like a new fashion, or type of music.

What they failed to see was the bottomless self-hatred I kept veiled from the world. I desperately wanted to be the sparkly person my parents thought I was. So I slipped back into the jail of my secret and kept trying to fix myself – to change what was wrong with me, to tame my body so I could like myself and have a better life.

It took twenty-five years to escape that jail. It took that long to accept myself, love myself, and find the freedom and peace I sought.

I've written this series of books as a possible way out from the sentence that food and weight obsession can impose on day-to-day life. I had full-blown bulimic hell. You may have the same, or something different: A constant disappointment in your body; a nagging sense of doing the same thing again and again, hoping you'll get a different result; the fear of eating what you really want; a wild out-of-control feeling; a lifetime of dieting; obesity. All of these can come from the same place and, as you will see, can be healed in the same way.

Almost every day, it seems, another weight loss or healthy eating program becomes available. I used to be compelled by each new offering. Buoyed up, I'd think, this will be the ticket. This time will be different. I'll find the strength to commit to what they say. I'll start tomorrow, and it will all work out.

But it never quite did. Nothing lasted. Nothing parked up and changed me the way I really wanted.

And worse still, trying to solve the issues of my body—through good nutrition and exercise, plus other things like understanding emotions, setting up habits, looking to past events, making commitments—all gave some temporary relief but, in the end, only worked to deepen my despair. With every failure, these things done in the name of weight loss, inevitably led to more weight (even if it was only a pound or two), more despair, less freedom, and, most importantly, less peace. This cycle was vicious, cruel, and frustrating ... and often made me hate myself more.

Those things I did got the whole deal inside out.

I bought the false bill of goods that the promise of weight loss sold me—that being a certain weight or eating a certain way would automatically result in the things I wanted in my life appearing and staying ... for good.

It wasn't weight loss or good nutrition I *really* wanted, it was the results they tantalizingly but deceptively offered: Freedom and peace from obsessive thinking about food; feeling good in my body; confidence; close connected relationships with those around me; an end to the shame I felt for being so concerned about something so, well, logically stupid; enjoying getting dressed;

eating in social situations; taking pleasure (rather than sanctuary) in my food. Simply being okay with what I saw in the mirror and not thinking about food and weight and weight and food all ... the ... time.

I now have all those things I always wanted (way beyond grateful). I got them by practicing the steps I outline in this series of books, which details my journey to loving myself from the inside out.

This series takes an entirely new approach. You won't find seven easy steps to your perfect body. You won't be given the secret to an instantly brilliant life. I will, however, show you how I extricated myself from the hell that food was for me. Through my example, may you discover a path toward healing for yourself.

### **It's Got Nothing to Do With What You Eat**

*When you believe in yourself more than you believe in food,  
you will stop using food  
as if it were your only chance at not falling apart.*

~ Geneen Roth

I was shocked to discover that ninety-five percent of people who diet end up putting on more weight than they lose. Can you imagine a doctor prescribing a drug that results in ninety-five percent of those taking it worse off than not having taken it? Regardless of these grim statistics, doctors and nutritionists still prescribe diets (with the best of intentions, I imagine).

In 1950 a long-term, scientific study (The Ancel Keys Semi Starvation Study) was done on thirty-six men of the highest physical and psychological health to ascertain how few calories they needed to survive. In essence they were put on

a strict, low-calorie diet. Along with a host of physical symptoms including declined metabolic rate, indications of accelerated ageing, depleted physical endurance, all thirty-six participants developed severe food obsession and, get this, distorted body image. You read that right. These perfectly healthy males with no prior food issues ended up not only stealing food out of rubbish bins, bingeing uncontrollably, obsessively dieting (then regaining more weight than they started with) - they became obsessed with getting thin, staying slim, reading dieting books and hating their bodies. Going back to how they used to eat and how they used to think about themselves was a difficult, long winded task and for a few of them, impossible.

Reading that study, I was compelled to share my approach to having a body I love. Tinkering around with food and exercise doesn't carry the day; it only deepens frustration, adds weight, and leads right to the gates of hopelessness and powerlessness.

If you use food to remove yourself from the stress of the world, or to quiet down thoughts that steal your peace and drive you mad, this series of books is for you.

Begin now to believe in yourself more than you believe in food. It is possible. Let me show you how.

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To continue reading, [follow this link to buy Love Your Body, Change Your Life now.](#)