

The Messages in Our Bottles: Transforming Pain into Freedom

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I am often asked why I do what I do and how I got to this place in my life—a place of love, purpose, and passion. The answer is not a short one, for my journey has been an incredible adventure of learning, synchronicities, and epiphanies. There has also been plenty of trauma, but I am here to say that your worst trauma is often your greatest gift towards—and the key to—your life purpose. Why else would we go through such hardships, but to learn life lessons and build character? My legacy is to share my journey with others, to be an inspiration and encouragement whenever I can. I am my own walking testimony.

I grew up in Northern British Columbia, Canada, in the area where the Great Spirit Bear Kermode lives. On road trips to visit my grandmother we passed through my birth town of Smithers, BC. My mother would point to the mountaintop forestry lookout tower where my father used to work and where I was conceived (I love to tease her about that now). Perhaps this is where my love of mountains comes from. According to Akashic records, this aspect of my conception is indicative that I am one of eight-hundred special souls who have come to Earth to encourage others. It didn't always feel this way, however. Although I do have good memories, most of my early life was overshadowed with trauma, upsets, and a myriad of fears. We often had boarders and foster kids living with us. When I was six, a certain sixteen-year-old boy stayed with us for the summer. The sexual abuse—and his subsequent threats to torture me and kill my parents if I told anyone—left me with deep fears of darkness, guns, confined spaces, heights, being alone in the forest, and being tied up. I also had trust issues, a multitude

of “triggers”, and recurring nightmares well into my twenties. I had a skewed sense of respectable personal and social boundaries as well. This, however, was only the first of four separate cases of childhood sexual abuse I would endure until the age of fourteen. My father had a totalitarian rule over our home. I was his confidante, “Daddy’s girl”, and he took his “teaching” with me across a line a father should never cross. This in turn damaged my relationship with my mother.

These experiences and the resulting shame and low self-esteem contributed to many years of being bullied and withdrawn throughout my grade school years. When I was fifteen, I latched on to the first boy who told me I was beautiful. Ironically, he had been one of the boys who picked on me back in grade six. Thinking I could escape my father, I got pregnant right away, but I had only jumped from frying pan into the fire. My new husband was rarely home, and when he was home he had an unpredictable volatile temper. It was a tumultuous relationship, exacerbated by my childhood secrets that had surfaced, and at one point he slit his wrists while I was at home.

He was also unable to hold a steady job, and our time on social assistance ended only after I secured a job at the post office. With my new income security, I was able to help him secure a business loan, which he used to buy a carpet cleaning business. That venture was productive for a while, but my husband lacked business sense and it eventually became a financial strain. Our marriage was stagnant as well. It takes two to make it work, and after a total of four children and ten years, I gave up. The truth was, we were both mentally immature and contributed to the breakdown. There were several years of tearful conflict in court over maintenance and custody as he blamed me for everything, and left me with the majority of the marriage and business debt. At twenty-eight I found myself divorced with four children to raise. I would learn many harsh life lessons during that time, lessons that most people learn in their teenage years. For all I had been through, I was in many ways extremely naïve. My childhood issues lurked beneath the surface, and I attracted all the wrong people into my life. I have been lied to, betrayed, violated and heartbroken more times than I

care to count.

In 2002, a whirlwind romance and impromptu marriage turned into a two-year nightmare with a pathological liar. Whereas my first husband's neglect had brought out my abandonment issues, my second husband's clinginess amplified my claustrophobia issues. When I finally said I wanted a divorce, he overdosed on prescription pills and had a seizure in front of me. When one marriage fails, it is easy to blame the other person. When a second marriage fails, it is time to look in the mirror! I was so scarred from that marriage that I didn't date anyone for almost six years. It was a lonely time of my life, yet it was also when my personal growth accelerated, and since then I have learned to enjoy my own company, rather than relying on a romantic partner.

As children go through the various stages of development, they often assert their independence by throwing tantrums until they learn healthy coping skills with which to navigate the world. I believe this process is not limited to children and that we go through these growth stages at any point in life. That said, it is more difficult to learn these skills as an adult, when we are "expected" to be mature. Trauma keeps us stuck in the past and creates a landmine of unresolved triggers. For some, these triggers cause an explosion of rage; I, on the other hand, would implode, withdrawing into myself like a wounded animal. I have since learned my issues were similar to hypo-sexuality and PTSD, and this manifested in my early life as poor choices and coping skills.

Childhood sexual abuse ravages a person on every level, right down to the core of their being. It can manifest physically and be a precursor to internal health issues. Twice in my life I went through the horrifying experience of passing a kidney stone. The pain was so excruciating, I would rather go through all four of my childbirth labors at once than ever go through that again. In 2006, I had been sick for over a year with stomach issues for which my doctor could not find a reason. I had unexpected flare-ups, often while out on my mail route and I took excessive sick leave that year. Eventually my doctor discovered that I had an ulcer. This was also unbearably painful, and there were times I wondered if this is what it is like to die. Between my illness and disruptive office

politics at work, coupled with yet another court battle with my ex-husband, I was overwhelmed. On April 23, 2008, I reached my breaking point. While at work I erupted in hives and began hyperventilating. Realizing something had to be done, I took three months off work and re-evaluated my life. I knew I couldn't stay in a job that was no longer aligned with my values, and the other areas of my life were not going well either.

Not long after my soul-searching began, I started experiencing a series of synchronistic events that would change my life. First, with this new perspective, I enrolled in an evening Psych 101 class. I'd had always been interested in psychology, but with my financial and time constraints, I had never before been able to pursue it. Within just a few exhilarating and intriguing classes, I knew I had found my happy place. Around this time, I met a lady who was involved in a women's business network. She introduced me to a line of nutrition products that helped heal my stomach. Later, I also met several influential mentors, teachers, and business people who catapulted my personal growth to new levels. I took classes and courses, learned new skills, and started my own business, Ladybug Wellness. The ulcer experience had turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The breakdown at work was the pivotal point that changed my life path and my healing journey. I am grateful for the corporate job that provided a steady income so that I could raise my children, but after twenty-six years, it was time to go. My decision to explore other avenues allowed me to retire early and focus solely on my passion.

Through the years, counseling was a source of support, but not relief. I was numb, yet easily triggered. At one point, as a therapeutic release, I wrote out my disturbing ordeals in detail. There is an analogy I like to use about trauma. Each event is like a ship in a glass bottle. Each time an upsetting event happens, we put the pieces together in the bottle and place it on a shelf. Whenever a new upset happens, those glass bottles fall and shatter on the floor and we seem to relive everything all over again. Over time we get more efficient at putting everything into glass bottles and putting them back on the shelf, but they are always there and always fragile. When we begin our real healing journey, we start to put

those pieces back into Plexiglas bottles, and eventually we can close the door on the storage room that holds those bottles. There are no longer any triggers that pull us into the oblivion of glass shards, compounded pain, and an overwhelming disorganized mess.

The most profound transformation came when I was introduced to the Emotion Code, a non-invasive technique adept in releasing the emotional charge that keeps us rooted in traumatic thoughts and blind to the good memories. I was finally able to put those horrific memories in the past where they belong! These days, the writings of my ordeals now read like someone else's story. I can remember those events if I choose to, but they are not in the forefront of my mind anymore. The wonderful memories have now been unblocked and my future looks brighter as well. I can feel—and am grateful for—all the good things in my life!

Music is the language of the soul and has always been a source of inspiration throughout various times of my life. The various genres from metal to instrumental classics have been indicative of the themes of my life; from rebellion and anger, sorrow and loss, to contemplation and happiness. I am grateful for the many activities that have helped me gain confidence over the years, including modeling, Toastmasters, hiking, scuba diving, firearms safety courses, and skydiving. Most of all, I am grateful for my maternal grandmother's Christian influence in my life. Faith has been my solace.

My relationships have also healed. My father passed in 2014. Our relationship was contentious, but thankfully I learned to forgive him for the past before that point. He raised me with his own continued cycle of abuse. No matter the relationship with our parents, when they are gone, we grieve. And I cried profusely. It was from him that I gained my love of rocks and nature, my resourceful survival skills, and my fascination with words and language. As the eldest of four girls, he was hard on me; but that adversity is part of what forged my inner strengths. My relationship with my mother has also drastically improved and I am blessed to have many wonderful friends as well.

The bio-energetic modalities and techniques I use have allowed

me to witness miracles of transformation in myself, my loved ones, and my clients. My worst trauma has emerged as my gift of compassion and encouragement, and I share these resources with others through my website to assist them with their personal growth. When asked about my philosophy on life, I defer to Bon Jovi: “Take my hand, we’ll make it I swear, Livin’ on a Prayer.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jackie lives in Prince George BC Canada. She has four grown children and four grandchildren, so far. She retired from an exhausting corporate job in June 2016 and now lives her passion through encouraging and empowering others to find their own life purpose by overcoming trauma and letting go of the past. Jackie is a practitioner in several bio-energetic modalities and techniques. She is a perpetual student, always eager to progress in personal growth. With her interest in human nature and psychology, she shares her extensive list of resources and tidbits of wisdom on her website at www.ladybugwellness.ca

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