

EAT MY *Dessert* FIRST



*Daily Desserts
To Inspire
Self-Love*

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www.eatmydessertfirst.com

Published by Action Company Publishing, a division of The Action Company

Las Vegas, NV 89131 | www.actioncompanyinc.com

Printed in the United States of American

www.eatmydessertfirst.com

Welcome to Daily Desserts!

As I thought about all of the people around the world who follow *Eat My Dessert First*, I thought about how grateful I am for you. I never imagined that I would have as many people from as many places reading and being inspired by my thoughts and experiences. From China, Russia, Nigeria, Brazil, France, Ukraine, Romania, South Korea, Poland, Macedonia, Germany, Netherlands, the U.S and so many other places, you all are reading the blog and hopefully being inspired to live and enjoy your life... FIRST.

The goal of *Eat My Dessert First* is to help you understand who you are: Divine, powerful, valuable, perfect...just as you are, and to inspire you to learn to enjoy the beauty of life around you; to do the things that will bring you peace and joy... first. But most of all, my goal is to encourage you to luv your SELF just as you are.

Before you get started on your day, take a few minutes to practice self luv and indulge in “dessert”: express your gratitude, meditate, breathe deeply, dance, listen to music, make luv, read, write, sit in silence, pray, laugh or do whatever it is that will help you stay centered and in the moment throughout your day. Practicing this will help nourish your mind, body and your soul. I know that once you grasp this concept you will find peace in every experience and challenge that presents itself to you with the understanding that it has come to offer opportunity for your growth and evolution.

Daily Desserts is my gift to you to guide you in this process. My suggestion is that you focus on One dessert or theme each month. If there is something that you'd like to change like *Knowing*

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Who You Are, then focus on doing that for the entire month. Journal about it, meditate on it, pray about it, write an affirmation about it, and read about it. As you finish each “dessert” move to the next one as you are guided by the Divine. If you prefer, take each dessert daily and focus on it for the day or week. However you chose to take your dessert is up to you.

As you complete your daily dessert, you can start over from your beginning with a fresh perspective and renewed enthusiasm. Each time will be different as you gain perspective and understanding of who you are. You will be inspired to live your life and luv who you are just the way you are.

In Luv and Dessert,

Leisa Monique



Know Who You Are

Every day we receive messages from everywhere telling us who we should want to be. The Media bombards us with images of “the perfect woman” whom we should desire to look like. We are surrounded with messages on how to be better, more successful, more beautiful, thinner, appear taller, curvier, be smarter...it seems that what and who we actually are and what we have is never enough. We live in a get more, do more, be more society that honors having and doing vs. being, so is it any wonder that confusion abounds for so many? We look to external objects to define who we are: The big house, the luxury car, the high profile job, the designer clothes, bags and shoes...all things that can be taken away. But who you are is not external and has nothing to do with your possessions. Who you are is Divine, powerful, gifted, capable, valuable, beautiful and unique...perfect. None of these qualities can be taken away for they are the characteristics of the Divine.

“She is beautiful; she has love, she understands; she respects herself and others; everyone likes, loves and honors her; she is a goddess.”

~African Proverb



Know Your Self-worth

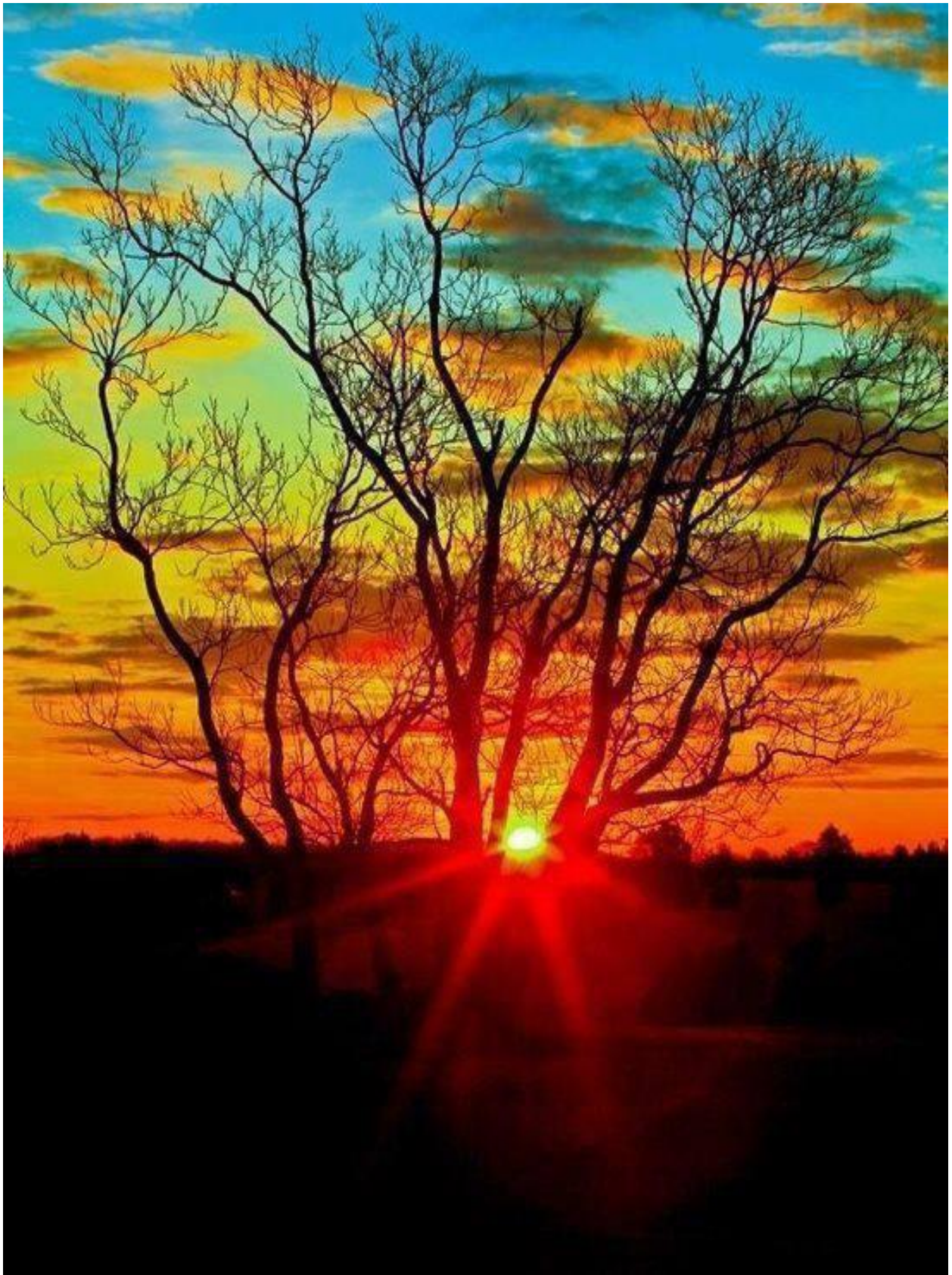
If you take away only one thing from all of my writing, I want it to be this: know your worth. Our self-worth is the premise of everything we do: how we treat ourselves and others, how we allow others to treat us, what kind of career we seek, what kind of mate we're attracted to, what we will allow in relationships...it's all based on how we see and value ourselves. We live in a society that teaches us to love and value others above ourselves and that loving and valuing yourself is selfish. Western religion plays a starring role in this thinking because it teaches us that we are wretched sinners born into sin and if not for the grace of god we would be nothing. It teaches us that we are not even worthy to be alive and deserve nothing good in life. With this kind of teaching is it any wonder why so many see themselves as worthless and treat themselves and others accordingly? Is it any wonder that we place such little value on life?

In a world where doing is valued above being, our value and worth are derived from how much and what we are doing. And for many, if they are not doing more, then in their eyes their value is diminished. I encourage you to understand your value and worth as a person; as a being who has love, compassion, empathy and who cares about others. Not just as someone who works every day and who contributes to the GDP*.

“Value who you are for a living more than what you do for a living.”

~Leisa Monique

*Gross Domestic Product



Dream On

I believe that the ability to dream and to believe in those dreams is a gift. We are often taught as children not to daydream and to "face reality." But dreaming, I believe, creates your reality and is the beginning of knowing who and what you are and what it is that you shall become. It's the Divine's way of giving you a glimpse into the future that is to be yours. When you deny yourself of your dreams you are denying the Divine the opportunity to show you your future. So how do you realize the reality of your dream? Trust! Trust that the path of life you are on is the one that will lead you right to the dream that is within you. Trust that every experience and challenge that life offers you is part of the journey to that dream. Keep walking! Even when things look disastrous trust that it's part of the plan and allow yourself to go through it. Trust that it has come to reveal something in you that is necessary for the fulfillment of your dream.

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

~ Harriet Tubman

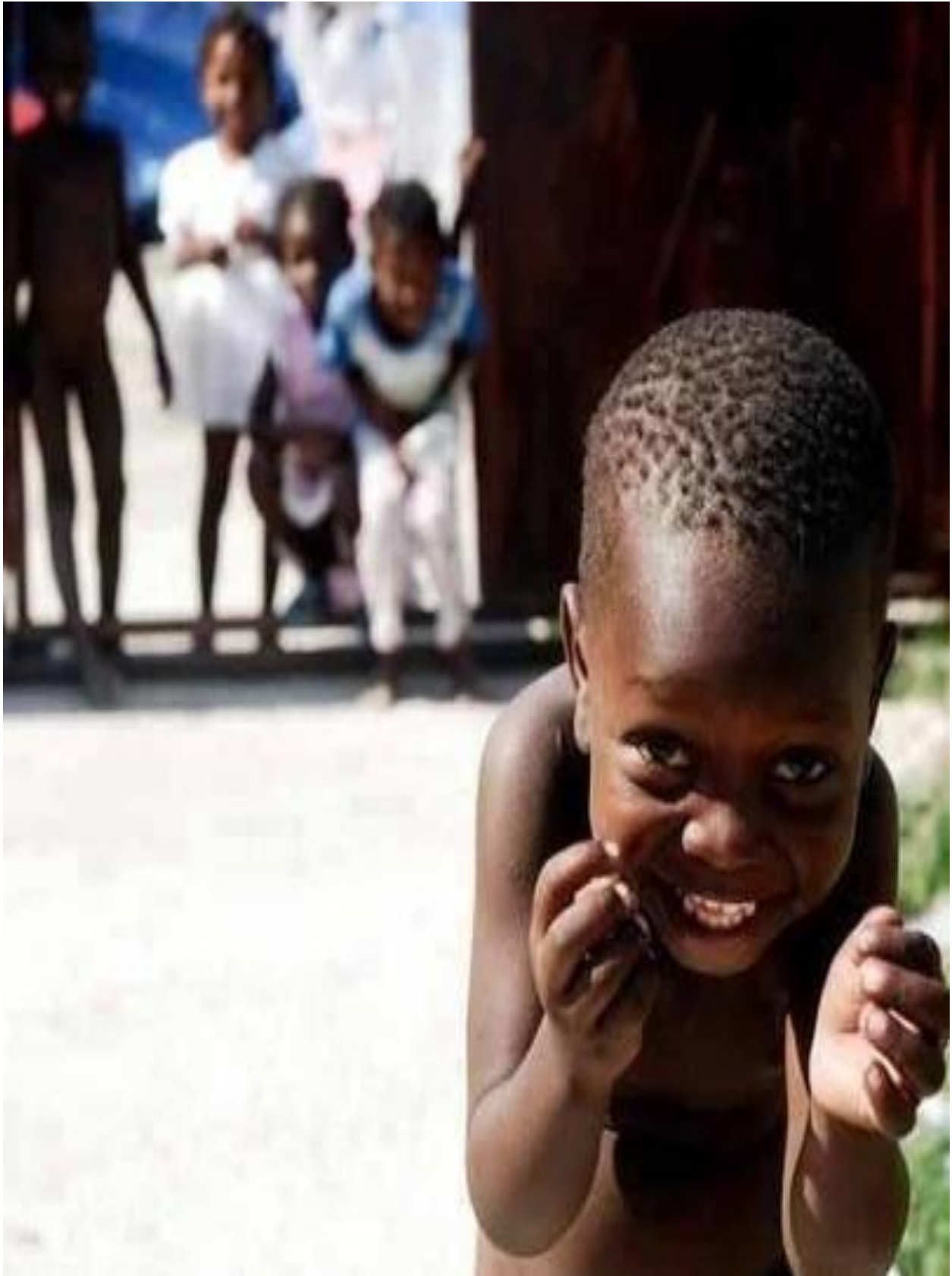


Live Your Truth

Truth is defined as: the quality or state of being true. Only this is different for each of us. Your truth is not my truth and my truth is not your truth. When you live your truth you give others permission to live theirs. Knowing, accepting and loving who you are, honoring your unique characteristics, honoring your dreams, living the life that is pleasing to you, honoring your values and what is important to you...that's living your truth.

“Life gives each of us our very own journey with paths that others may not take and may criticize you for taking. Don't concern yourself with what others think of you and the paths that you choose to take on your journey. It's YOUR journey divinely crafted for you! Embrace your journey with an open mind knowing that you are evolving and growing at precisely the rate that is meant for you!”

~ Leisa Monique



Laugh

On many occasions I have done something that made me ask the question “what was I thinking.” I’ve put my cell phone in the medicine cabinet, I’ve worn flip flops with a business suit because I forgot to put my real shoes on before I left the house, I’ve even published blog posts without a title. For some of us, these things would be causes for criticism of ourselves. How many times have you said something like “how stupid can I be?” How many times have you called yourself dumb or offered up criticism because you did something that made you wonder about your sanity? I have chosen to take a different approach at these times: I laugh at myself. I laugh at myself so hard that people really think I’m crazy. I laugh because I know a temporary moment of forgetfulness doesn’t change a thing about me. It has no bearing on who I am. I laugh because, well, it’s funny to walk into a business meeting in a skirt with flip flops on because you were in a hurry and forgot to put on your stilettos. I laugh because I am funny and I laugh because I am free.

“We have to laugh. Because laughter, we already know, is the first evidence of freedom.”

~Rosario Castellanos



Do Nothing

Recently, I watched the movie “Eat, Pray, Love” again. In the movie one of the characters points out that the Italians have a saying “*Dolce Far Niente*” which means “The Sweetness of Doing Nothing.” How did I miss this all the other times I watched this movie? Taking time to sit in silence, watch the sunrise, the sunset, and still my mind and spirit have always been important to me. This is how I prefer to spend my days. Many people in my circle often ask me “what do you DO all day?” You see, I have the pleasure of working from home and doing exactly what it is that I want to do which is writing, reading, teaching, training, consulting and going to school full time. I chose my life and I chose to give up whatever would hinder me from having this life. I have let go of the expectations that the world has for me; the expectation that says I should always be striving to do more, have more, be more. I'm perfectly OK with taking time out of my day to do absolutely nothing without guilt or shame. I work hard for my clients. I work hard in school and I work hard to take care of my children. I also make sure that I take time to do one of my favorite things: nothing.

I encourage you to take time out of your day to do nothing. Take time to sit and enjoy the beauty that surrounds you and the beauty that is you. It may feel uncomfortable at first because we are programmed to always be doing something lest we be considered lazy. This way of thinking is what has us in the state of poor physical and mental health that we are in. Let go of that thinking and allow yourself the pleasure of just being and doing nothing.

“Sometimes... "Nothing" is much better than "Something.”

~Arafath Shanas



Dance

One of my favorite “Desserts” is dancing. And for good reason. There is nothing that can raise your vibration and lift your spirit like dancing. It has health benefits-it's great for cardiovascular exercise- and it can also invoke all kinds of emotions: laughter, joy, happiness and sensuality just to name a few. Dancing just makes you FEEL good and who doesn't want to feel good! I feel sexy when I'm dancing, beautiful and even powerful. The moves are my own and I'm in sync with the energy of the universe and I am free.

I think dancing is as natural as breathing. Have you ever seen a baby who hasn't even learned to walk yet pull themselves up on a table and start dancing the moment they hear music? We can take a lesson from babies and children. They dance without concern for whose watching or how they look to others. It seems that they dance for the sheer joy of dancing and how it makes them feel. I think we should do the same.

“Consciousness expresses itself through creation. This world we live in is the dance of the creator. Dancers come and go in the twinkling of an eye but the dance lives on. On many an occasion when I am dancing, I have felt touched by something sacred. In those moments, I felt my spirit soar and become one with everything that exists.

I become the stars and the moon. I become the lover and the beloved. I become the victor and the vanquished. I become the master and the slave. I become the singer and the song. I become the knower and the known. I keep on dancing then it is the eternal dance or creation. The creator and creation merge into one wholeness of joy. I keep on dancing...and dancing...and dancing. Until there is only...the dance.”

~Michael Jackson



Breathe

If you're anything like me there are times in your day when you feel stress or pressure or frustration or sometimes all three. The challenges of trying to balance all that life requires of us can sometimes become overwhelming: family, school, a career, a social life, can all contribute to a pretty stressful day. Stress can affect many areas of our lives including our emotions, our behavior, our ability to think and even our physical body.

For a moment, turn your awareness to your body. Right where you are, turn your attention to how your body feels. Are you tense? Are your hands clenched? Are you stressed? When I practice this, I have noticed that I often am tense and didn't even realize it. It is in these times that I remind myself to breathe, to take a deep cleansing breath and release any tension that I may have been unknowingly holding onto.

According to doctors, deep breathing can help you relax and is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. Practicing regular breathing exercises can be calming and energizing and can even help with stress related illnesses (Weil, A. 2014). For me, taking a moment to be mindful of how my body feels and breathe deeply to release stress and tension is an act of self-love and self-care. Breathing deeply presents an opportunity to release what is no longer serving you and is nourishing to your mind, body and soul.

Take a moment today to practice self-love and to breathe in life giving oxygen and energy. You and your body deserve it!

“Divide the constant tide and random noisiness of energetic flow, with conscious recurring moments of empty mind, solitude, gratitude and deep...slow...breathing. Of this, the natural law of self-preservation demands.”

T.F. Hodge



Power

Where do you get your personal power from? Is it from an external source like your career, the car you drive, the house you live in or the number of educational degrees you have on your wall? Is it from the number of followers you have on social media or the number of “likes” your posts elicit? Do you feel powerful when you delete someone from your friends list on social media outlets? Does it make you feel powerful to cause another person pain or heartache; to possess something that no one else has? To be able to say “I told you so?” You may be surprised at the sources of some people's personal power. You might be surprised at the source of your own! We all want to feel powerful, to feel significant. But power that comes from external sources is fleeting. True personal power comes from within and is developed when one comes to realize who they are; it does not come from external sources. Understanding that your power source is internal and is based on your Divine nature and not on your personal possessions or any external sources is power in itself. Once you realize your true personal power, nothing is beyond your reach.

“Today I want you to become aware that you already possess all the inner wisdom, strength, and creativity needed to make your dreams come true. This is hard for most of us to realize because the source of this unlimited personal power is buried so deeply beneath the bills, the car pool, the deadlines, the business trip, and the dirty laundry that we have difficulty accessing it in our daily lives. When we can't access our inner resources, we come to the flawed conclusion that happiness and fulfillment come only from external events. That's because external events usually bring with them some sort of change. And so, we've learned to rely on circumstance outside ourselves for forward or backward momentum as we hurtle through. But we don't have to do that any longer. We can learn to be the catalysts for our own change.”

~Sarah Ban Breathnach



 MARTIN LOWENTHAL
photography

Freedom

Although there few things that are more important to me than my freedom, I found it difficult to write about it for this publication. “What do I want to say about freedom?” “Exactly what *IS* freedom?” Those were some of the questions that came up for me while trying to write about freedom. I decided that I can only share what freedom means for me and hope that you who are reading this can come to your own conclusion about what freedom means for you.

Freedom to me means being free to be exactly who I Am: my personality, my beliefs, my likes and dislikes, my passions, my quirks... freedom to speak my mind, freedom to express me; in my style of dress, my choice of hairstyle, the way I behave, the way I speak...they are all part of me being free. Freedom means being in luv with what I see in the mirror everyday regardless of what the world says about it. Freedom means being able to do the things that I luv and are important to me. Freedom means being unrestrained by the vices of others and what they think I should be as a woman, a black woman, as a mother, as a business owner, as a person. Freedom means being free of what religion people assume and think I practice and being free from their stares of disbelief when they find out I don't. Freedom for me means being free from debt; it means being able to do the things that I want to do financially regardless of what my income is. Freedom for me means giving up the things that would prohibit the kind of lifestyle that I want for me and my children and being OK with it. Freedom for means walking away from an unhealthy marriage and financial security to ensure that my children's home environment is a peaceful one even it means being a single parent. Freedom for me means letting go of the false picture of a perfect life that was suffocating me in exchange for one that sustains me.

“Now that she had nothing to lose, she was free.”

~Paulo Coelho



Love

When you hear the word love what comes to mind? When most of us hear the word love we automatically think of a romantic partnership. Even in cases where love is not defined as romantic love, the perspective is that love is about others. We are taught to care for others, to be considerate of others, to be kind to and to do for others. And of course this is a key component of love, without it we could not develop healthy relationships. Can you imagine what the world would be like if we didn't care for and have compassion for others?

But many time we love from a place of need and insecurity. We over compensate for the love that we don't have for ourselves and often find ourselves in unhealthy destructive relationships that make us feel worse about ourselves. We think that if I give myself completely in my relationships that I will get the love that I desire in return. This behavior can leave us emotionally and physically exhausted and wondering what we did wrong.

But the love I speak of is self-love. Rarely are we taught a healthy love for ourselves. In most cases we are taught that loving ourselves is selfish. Because we are taught to love others above ourselves, most of us never develop a healthy self-love. Add to that a negative self-image and we have a recipe for failed relationships, heartache and emotional pain and even destructive behavior.

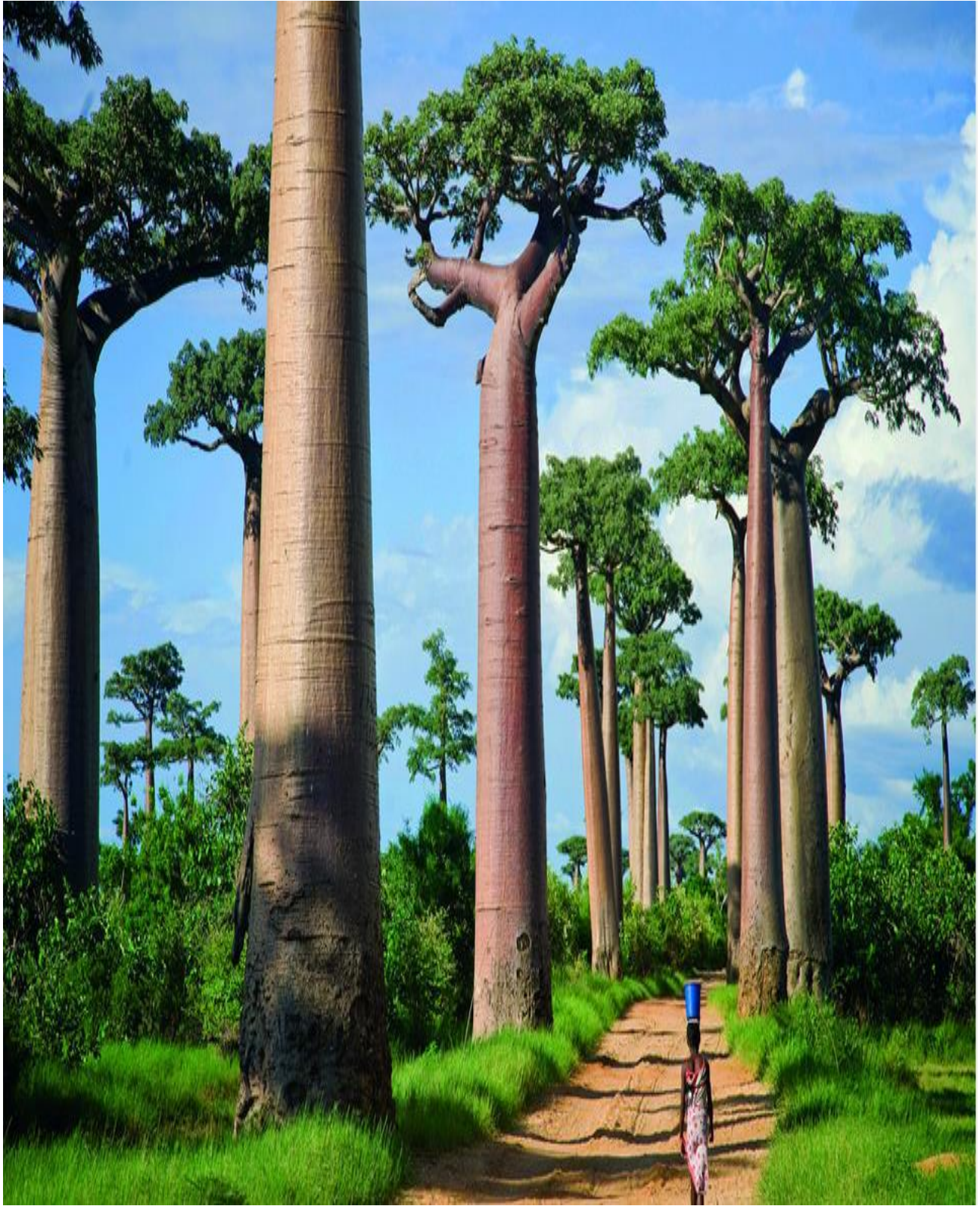
But when you have a healthy self-love along with a positive image of yourself, you can better love others. Whether that manifests as romantic love, parental love or friendship, being able to love what you see in the mirror is the beginning of having love that can be passed on to others in any capacity.

Having a healthy self-love starts with dismantling all of the negative images that we may have of ourselves. It starts with discarding the tapes that we play over and over in our heads that tell us we are not as good as everyone else. It starts with knowing that you are enough and that what you have to offer the world is valuable. It starts with knowing your own worth and rejecting every negative thing that you have ever been told about yourself from your childhood.

A healthy self-love starts with replacing those negative images of yourself with images of how fierce you are and that starts with KNOWING that you ARE fierce. It starts with understanding that you are valuable, powerful, gifted and beautiful. It starts with knowing that you are here because you have something to offer the world that the world needs. It starts with embracing the truth about you; that you are Divine and that nothing anyone says about you changes anything about you.

“You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.”

~ Gautama Buddha



Forgiveness

We've all heard that where there is no forgiveness there is no love. We've also heard that forgiveness is not for the sake of the person who has hurt us but rather it is for our sake; so that we can release any anger or resentment and be free to move on with our lives. We've heard that forgiving someone doesn't mean that we have forgotten or that we condone someone's behavior, it simply means we have chosen to release them thus releasing ourselves from the prison of unforgiveness. I have a slightly different perspective.

I believe that forgiveness is only necessary when one has perceived an offense against them, for where there is no offense taken, there is no forgiveness needed. Let me explain. Our actions are dictated by our level of consciousness. Unconscious hurting people hurt other people-unconsciously. That hurt usually stems from an unhealed trauma that that person has experienced at some point in their life.

When something someone does or says hurts us, it's because their actions have triggered a past unhealed experience or memory within us that caused us pain. Rarely is it the presenting action that is the problem; it's almost always the past hurt that their current behavior has triggered that is causing us to feel hurt or offended.

When we understand who we are at our core, spirit, and understand that nothing anyone says or does can change anything about us, we can then lovingly give others space to be where they are; we can be free to take no offense to what they have said or done for we understand the source. But this takes us reaching a certain level of enlightenment and wholeness ourselves; a level where we have full confidence in who we are and an understanding that nothing anyone says or does can hurt us.

"It has been said that forgiveness is a virtue of the brave, yet braver still are those that need not to forgive for they have taken no offense."

~Leisa Monique

Citations

Murray MT, Pizzorno JE Jr (2006). Stress management. In JE Pizzorno Jr, MT Murray, eds., Textbook of Natural Medicine, 3rd ed., vol. 1, pp. 701–708. St. Louis: Churchill Livingstone.

Acknowledgments

Glendalee Robinson

“I’ve got to finish this book but I’m having a hard time figuring out what I want to write” I said. “You already have a book” you said. “Go and compile all of those posts you’ve written on your blog over the years and create an eBook.” I had never even given any thought to an eBook before. Glendalee, I dedicate this first eBook to you. It is because of you that it even exists.

Kevyn, Kyndl and Kennedy

My beautiful artistic daughters. Don't ever stop singing, dancing, cooking, designing, building and playing your music. You are a gift to the world and the world is a better place because you're in it.

Malachi

My son. I prayed for you. I waited for you. I knew the moment I conceived you. You are the wind beneath my wings.

Sandra Bethea

My best friend. You are the Elizabeth to my Mary, the Thelma to my Louise and I can't imagine being on this journey without you. The world eagerly awaits us. Let's not keep them waiting any longer.

Chante Page

My sister, my friend. We've been through so much and shared so much together. I look forward to reading the children's books that are waiting for you to write them.

Shashana page

My sister friend from childhood. Watching you relentlessly follow your dreams gave me courage to follow mine. Thank you.

Ethan Henderson

“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.” Sailing with you has made me one of the most skillful of sailors. I sail on; thank you.

Angela Thomas, Deborah Porter, Dr. Tiffany Tyler, Germaine Byrd

We roll together, we laugh together, we cry together. Life would not be the same without the blessing of your sisterhood. I luv you all dearly.

Tony Hickman

It has been such a blessing and an honor to get to be a part of your journey and to watch you evolve into an awesome young man. The world

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