

# PUSH PAST PAIN TO PURPOSE

*A Self Help Guide to Overcoming Past Hurts  
and  
Embracing Your Life's Purpose*



Magda Demerritt, LCSW

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**and**

**Embracing Your Life's Purpose**

**Magda Demerritt, LCSW**

*To my family*

*who have allowed me to be me*

*every day, scars and all.*

# Forward

There are many self-help books out there. What sets this one apart is, while it is filled with valuable information, it remains easy to consume and digest. In addition, the book is written as if the author is present with you. While reading this book you will feel like you are in the office having a session with Magda.

On the topic of pain, it is something that everyone experiences. However, not everyone is properly equipped to deal with that pain. Most would rather sweep it under the rug and pretend the pain does not exist. Well, the only way to do that is to put this book down now. While continuing to read this book will challenge you, you will be glad you did.

In her book, Mrs. Demerritt takes it beyond providing information. In her book she includes exercises and assignments that encourage the reader to actively participate in their healing process. Through these exercises and assignments, readers able to think of their circumstances in ways they perhaps had not imagined. For the individual seeking to get past the pain, this book will help you get there.

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small steps...BIG changes

## **Preface**

Welcome to the first day of the rest of your life. I am so very pleased you picked up this book. My next question is why? I want to challenge you to ask yourself a few questions: What are you looking for? What appealed to you? What do you hope to gain by reading this book? These are important questions to know the answers to. Whenever you pick up a self-help book or guide, it is important for you to have an expectation of growth. You must be intentional about getting something out of the process of reading and working it. If your goal is simply to read and you do not prepare to do some work then unfortunately little

progress will be made. On the other hand, if you are ready to work through some issues and pain to become unstuck, then this book will help you in many ways.

In my work as a therapist, what I have discovered is that many people are stuck in two places. They are either unaware of what has them bound and are unproductive or they know what has them bound, do not know what to do about it and continue to remain stuck. Pushing past pain is easier said than done. I pray this book gives you the thrust you need to be propelled into becoming the best you; that you become educated about your struggles, identify areas that you are ready to



improve in and work toward change. Do not be misled! In and of itself, this book has no power to make you into a new person. It is designed to serve as a guide to support you as you start or continue your journey toward healing, restoration and purpose.

This guide will assist you in working through your pain in a very structured, intentional way. Here are some suggestions before you start your journey:

1. Do not skip sections. If you find it difficult to work through anyone section, I would recommend you take a short break and return to it later. If you continue to find it difficult, this may very well be an

indication that some form of therapy is needed.

2. Be sure to notify important persons in your life that you are on this journey. This is important because there are action steps listed in this book that may require you contacting people from your past and you want to ensure that relevant parties do not misunderstand your actions.
3. Understand and accept that it is a process. Embrace your emotions and embrace this opportunity to grow.
4. Pace yourself. There are 9 Chapters to work through in this book. Organize your process. You can do a Chapter a week, for

example. You may even want to gather a group of people or a book club and work this process together. The point is, do not rush it!

# **Chapter 1**

## **About Pain**

Take a moment to look inside yourself and ask yourself this question: Am I aware of my personal pain? I ask this question because many of us go from day to day, carrying around pain without even realizing it. We go about burying ourselves in our daily routines oblivious to the fact that we are hurting. We get up, get ready, some of us get the kids off to school, take care of our spouses, conduct ourselves at work or take care of household duties, pick up the children, fix the snacks, check the homework, run the baths and then it's finally bed time. It's not until we lay our heads to sleep at night, maybe while scrolling through various social media sites, that we are

faced with those questions that bring a plethora of emotions back into perspective for us.

Why am I not happy?

What's missing?

Why isn't my job enough to help me feel productive, important, excited and useful?

Where am I going with my life?

Who cares about me?

What does my future hold?

Why am I still alone?

Why am I married, but still feel alone?

If I died today, who would care?

Maybe I should just go ahead and die.

Does any of this sound familiar? Well if it does, please know that you are not alone in your whirlwind of emotions and questions and doubts. Research has found that countless individuals actually conduct daily life in a state of mild to moderate depression. You may have noticed an increase in advertising for anti-depression medications. The demand for stronger, more convenient ways to cope with feelings of emotional pain and depression is growing. I won't bore you with the statistics, but I assure you, they are alarming.

Why are so many people living in such pain? Why are we struggling with this concept of being happy? Well, I can tell you that happiness is relative, in other words no two people share the same definition for their personal happiness. More significantly, most people fail to, firstly, realize the difference between joy and happiness. Second, we fail to define what happiness or success means to us. In lieu of defining it for ourselves, we adopt someone else's definition. We envy and chase the success ideals of others and become discouraged when we do not accomplish them.



Another reason for pain is emotional trauma. Unresolved trauma is the foundation of the painful existence many are experiencing. We will discuss this further in the next chapter.

In Exercise 1 you will assess your level of pain. Ask yourself the tough questions. In your mind there may be many reasons why you feel that you are not worthy to care about your personal growth and development but we must begin with *you* to achieve change. These questions are designed for you to move from saying, “I just don’t know anymore” to “Ok, I see what’s happening now”. If you find that you are having any suicidal or homicidal thoughts, ideas or have made any attempts, I

strongly recommend you seek help outside this book. Here are some resources that you can connect with: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone Number: 1-800-273-8255; Police Emergency Line: 911. If necessary, you may consider checking yourself into your nearest crisis center.

## **Exercise 1**

### **Are you in Pain?**

1. Describe your eating habits. Do you eat too much or not enough? Do you care to eat?
2. Describe your sleeping habits. Do you sleep too much or not enough? Do you sleep enough and still wake up tired?
3. How is your physical health? Are you affected by ailments that doctors cannot identify or diagnose? Specifically, heart palpitations, tightening in the chest, fidgetiness, headaches, stomach problems?

4. Are you motivated to conduct your days? What is at the root of your motivation or lack thereof?
5. What about your life brings you the most sadness (BE HONEST!!)?
6. If you had a magic wand and your life could be the way you want at one wave of it, what would that look like?
7. What is your definition of success?
8. Are you on the road to accomplishing your goals to achieve your definition of success? How do you know?

**Your Assignment:** Do some research comparing joy and happiness. You can research online, post the question on social media, and speak to your pastor or a minister about it. What did you learn about the two terms? How are they different?

# **Chapter 2**

## **The Effects of Trauma**

Trauma is a fancy word used to describe something negative that a person has experienced that leaves a lasting effecting or impression in their lives. Different traumas affect people in different ways. This is why it is ill-advised to judge others trauma with statements such as, “Well, I went through that, and I came out fine”. We all develop differently and have a unique set of experiences which causes us to react differently to our individual traumas. Trauma teaches people life lessons in different ways. Sometimes trauma teaches a person a life lesson and produces positive outcomes, while some trauma teaches a life lesson that

produces a negative outcome. So what experiences are considered traumatic? Please consider the following list, keeping in mind that it is not exhaustive, and that really, any event that a person perceives as negative and that leaves a lasting impression on them, can be considered traumatic.

- Experienced Divorce (Child or Adult)
- Domestic Violence (Child or Adult)
- Sexual Abuse/Molestation/Incest
- Experiencing a Natural Disaster
- Child Physical Abuse/Abandonment/Neglect
- Absent Parent
- Involvement in the Foster Care System
- Bullying
- Substance Abuse Challenges/Addiction (Family or Self)
- Car Accident
- Death of a Parent/Family/Friend or Loved One



- Engaged in War/Military Duty
- Rape
- Witnessing violent act such as a shooting, rape or murder
- Fire
- Property Loss (car, home, any item of value to you)
- Loss of employment
- Homelessness (even if you lived with someone)
- Loss of Money/Failed Investments
- Involvement in Toxic or Abusive (Verbally, Physically, Mentally, Emotionally) Relationships (Family, Friendships or Romantic)
- Medical Illness/Terminal Illness/Major Surgery or Hospitalizations
- Threat of Physical Violence
- Raising a Wayward Child
- Challenges with Mental Illness and/or Psychiatric Hospitalization(s).

Wow! What a list right? Perhaps you are thinking, "Yep I been through a few of these,

and all before my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday!" It is amazing how many things in life can cause us to become unstable in our daily functioning. Perhaps you are thinking, "Yep, been through some of these, but I am over it. It is the other areas of my life I am having trouble in."

Recall that traumas affect individuals in different ways. Some persons are very resilient. These are people who go through traumatic experiences or are raised in tough environments and it propels them to actually do better and persevere. For many others, inappropriate lessons are learned from traumatic experiences and then applied to other areas in our lives. We call these lessons,

## Distorted Thinking Patterns or Thinking

Errors. Some thinking errors are:

- *Black and White Thinking*
- *Excuse Making*
- *Jumping to Conclusions*
- *Distant Elephant*
- *Fortune Telling*

Here are some case examples of how this all comes together:

***Example 1:*** *Let's say you were involved in a toxic relationship with someone. This individual cheated on you, verbally abused you and there was constant fighting. This person violated your trust and caused you tremendous amounts of pain. After finding the courage to leave the relationship or maybe they broke up with you, you learned some negative life lessons. Now, you enter into a new relationship with a different individual. The minute they don't answer your call, you accuse them of cheating. This is an example of "Jumping to Conclusions." This means you*

*have made assumptions about the situation which may not be accurate. You justify your assumptions by rationalizing that you already know what's going on here. You have seen this before! You know these patterns and don't need any explanation or evidence because you have been down this road before. This person is no different. In fact, They are ALL the same.*

**Example 2:** *You recently purchased a new home and went into some business ventures. In the course of the following year the economy takes a dive and you lose your home and lots of money. The market begins to recover and there are several opportunities to purchase homes through programs and grants to start a new business. However, you choose to continue renting and remain settled in your "job" because why should you start over, if it's all going to be lost again?: This is an example of "Fortune Telling." This means, you fear so much to try again that you decide the future before you give it a chance to unfold. You keep yourself from trying anything new, because "it will turn out bad".*

**Example 3:** *You spent years recovering from being involved in domestic violence*

*relationships. You decide to enter into new relationships with a gentlemen. Things are going great, but you have an issue with him working late nights. However, to avoid conflict you decide to not address it hoping it will go away or get better on its own. This is an example of "Distant Elephant." This means you believe the problem will resolve itself if you ignore it.*

***Example 4:*** *You were severely bullied in school and had very few friends. You grew to be very self-conscious and avoided social scenes out of fear of being judged or ridiculed. You have an idea for a new business, but know that in order to be effective, you must increase your networking skills. You tell yourself that unfortunately the economy is not in a good place, so you will wait until the economy improves to move forward. This is an example of "Excuse Making." This means instead of you admitting that you have some anxieties about being social, you choose to find another reason to keep you from venturing out. This is much easier than admitting your struggle, working through it to achieve the goal.*

***Example 5:*** *You were neglected emotionally as a child and placed in Foster Care. You have seen many people come and go in your life. You have been friends with an individual for about 2 years now and they ask you to give them some space while they figure out their direction in life. You say to them, “Well, we're either friends or we're not and if not, lose my number”. This is an example of Black or White thinking. This means, you do not have the ability to be flexible or compromise. Before people hurt or abandon you, you give them an ultimatum eliminating room for negotiation.*

Do you see how our experiences can shape the way we think and consequently direct our future choices? Do you see how when we act according to the lessons we learn from traumas; the traumas themselves continue to impact our lives in a negative way? Even when we have been out of the situation for a while, the lessons we learned

from the situations continue to impact our decision making. These are the choices that keep us stuck, unable to move forward, unable to see different outcomes in our lives. and unable to break generational patterns. The key to remember is that it is not the trauma itself but the thinking we develop as a result of the trauma that continuously impacts our lives. So in order to move forward we must identify the trauma, the lessons we developed from the traumas and correct negative thinking patterns.

## **Negative Lessons Learned on Limits**

For individuals seeking to venture out into the business world, another way negative thinking patterns can be developed is exposure to or relationship with people who have limiting mindsets. For example if you grew up in a home with parents who enforced getting a job, always staying in line, following the rules, color in the lines or discouraged taking risks, more likely than not, you will take this mentality with you into the real world. Perhaps school was not the best experience for you. You were labeled a problem child or told you had a learning disability. Can you imagine what years of



being told this can do to you? I imagine it can really impact your self-esteem and discourage you from thinking you can be successful in life at all. Finally, maybe you're from an impoverished neighborhood and you are frequently around people whose only goal is to ensure that they have all their government entitlement in place to survive. Let me be clear, there is nothing wrong with getting Government assistance. The point is that these are all examples of people who may have adopted past generations way of thinking which can influence the way a person thinks about their life and what you expect from themselves and their lives.

## **Exercise 2**

### **Assessing Your Trauma**

1. Identify your trauma(s):
2. What are some thinking errors that you developed from those traumas?
3. What do you need to unlearn as a result of your trauma?
4. What limitations have you put on yourself/your life as a result of your trauma or being around negative people?
5. What scares you about dealing with your trauma(s)?

–

**Your Assignment:** Read and meditate on Jeremiah 29:11. Compare this scripture with what your life experiences have been so far. Reflect on that here. Ask yourself can my trauma and pain actually be used for good? Am I meant to live a life of pain and frustration?

## **Chapter 3**

**Don't Avoid it, Address it!**

One of the things I run into a lot is family or friends inquiring about counseling for someone they love and care about. Many times, the individual they are inquiring for doesn't even acknowledge that they have a problem. Often they even blame (thinking error) others for their problems. What I often end up having to do is letting the concerned party know that until that person is ready or acknowledges that on some level, their lives are not what they want, then there is not much we can do. With the exception of those persons who have been court-ordered to receive mental health treatment, individuals are only receptive to change when they are

ready or forced to by another life circumstance, such as losing a spouse or employment. If you are serious about making life changes, you must not be afraid to address the issues. You must be willing to admit that you're in pain, admit that life has taught you lessons that you must now unlearn, and then do something about it. There are three reasons why we tend to avoid addressing our issues:

1. *We are not ready to acknowledge we have an issue.* Everyone else seems to be the problem except you. You truly believe that the way you function is completely acceptable. This is because the life lessons you learned from your

trauma have told you this is true. It is totally normal to be dismissive of people's feelings since no one acknowledges yours. It is completely appropriate to ignore the interest of men because you know all they want from you is sex. It is totally acceptable to curse at others when you're angry, because after all that is how you learned to deal with anger.

2. ***We are not able to address it.*** We fear confronting our issues that have developed as a result of trauma. Understand that if someone has never obtained help and/or support, then their

way of functioning is all they know. If they admit the fact that the way they have been living and the choices they have been making are all based on fallacies, then what will they do now? How will they proceed? How will they make better choices? This has been the way for so long and change is often difficult and scary. It is uncharted territory where there are new skills to be learned on how to function. We also fear confronting people. Sometimes resolving our traumas requires us to confront some people or discuss some hurtful things. If that person is not



working with an individual trained to assist someone in addressing their trauma, the person can be re-traumatized.

3. ***We are not willing.*** Sometimes people just do not want to do anything about their circumstances. They are perfectly comfortable in their situation and don't see the need for them to do anything about anything. In this situation, it's not them, but us that need to accept this fact and allow them to grow and change at their own time and pace. We obviously will not allow children to be victims of situations where they are

abused, abandoned or neglected. We must also be sure to intervene as much as an individual will allow us to get them help. However, the reality of the situation is that these are the people that tend to be forced into therapy because their situations have gotten so out of control that they put their lives at risk, risk legal consequences or risk losing important relationships or even their children, at which point it creates a motivation for change.

Avoiding our pain in hopes that somehow things will just get better and our lives will change on their own is like burying a seed.

What happens when you bury a seed? Yes, it grows! Even worse, sometimes we expect that we will find the right person to come into our lives and change it for us. That is an incredible amount of pressure for any one individual to carry, to be responsible for your happiness. Consider what happens when the relationship fails. Do you now go back to being unhappy? Or even worse, do you end up sabotaging the relationship anyway because of those pesky thinking errors that refuse to go away? Have you ever realized that your life seems to be following the same patterns? Your relationships all end the

same way. You keep getting fired for the same reasons. You keep getting speeding tickets. At what point will you realize, "Hey, the only constant in all these situations is me!" We can't keep blaming others and everything else for the way our lives tend to develop. At some point we must accept responsibility and begin the path to make changes.

Our traumas, history, or past pains have a nasty way of making us believe that we are not happy. They have a way of convincing us that we are not worthy of happiness. They even convince us that without others or possessing material things we cannot

possibly achieve happiness. We must confront these negative thinking patterns so that we can come to realize that happiness is a choice that we make. Being grateful for your current position in life and striving to be the best you is where happiness awaits you. The best you cannot be achieved until you realize the worse parts of us and improve them.

## **Exercise 3**

### **Don't Avoid It, Address It**

1. Why are you considering making changes now?
2. Why have you been avoiding addressing your traumas? Were you not ready, able or willing to change or work on them?  
  
(Explain)
3. What do you think your happiness depends on?
4. What do you feel will be the biggest benefit from dealing with the past?
5. What part of your life do you expect to benefit the most from you getting rid of the baggage gained from your trauma?

**Your Assignment:** Write a letter to your past self.

Your past self is yesterday's you and all the days before. Think about your state of mind before learning about trauma. Based on the new knowledge you have gained, what would you like your old self to know? What advice would you give your old self?

# **Chapter 4**

## **Damage Control**



Now that you have learned about pain, trauma and identified your thinking errors associated with those traumas, it's time to assess the damage. You have made some pretty bad choices, and you're currently in a bad situation as result of your choices. What now? For many of us, by the time we realize we need to make changes, we have already caused a tremendous amount of damage in our lives. Damage to people we love or who loved us, damaged partnerships, damaged relationships, internal damage no one can see and damaged opportunities. This is the part of the journey where we stop focusing on what the past did to us and begin to look at and take

responsibility for our present. This is the threshold for change, the turning point! You must decide the function of your past. Your past can either continue to keep you bound or your past can give you tools to grow. The choice is yours. The days of blaming others for where you are today are over. Here are the three major steps in the damage control process.

### 1. **Assess the Damage**

As a result of your negative thinking habits, what has it cost you? What have you lost? What have you given up or decided not to pursue because of your past experiences? What relationships are

you in now that you need to get out of, but are afraid to because of fear of loneliness? What debts have you incurred trying to keep up with everyone else, because growing up you were teased and didn't have anything fancy? Take some time to meditate on these questions. Answer honestly.

## 2. **Accept Responsibility**

This is probably the hardest of the three steps. It is hard to take responsibility for where you are in life because it's been your truth to blame others or make excuses. The problem with that is that as long as you can blame others,

you can remain trapped, because they put you there and they hold the key. I have news for you, they will not come to unlock the door and let you out! If you want out, you must break out. Once you accept responsibility for the choices you have made after the traumas, something magical happens. Suddenly, you gain the power to change your situation. Guess what? You held the key the whole time! You begin to realize that although the situation happened or these persons hurt you, you don't have to stay a victim. You don't have to continue

making choices based on the fact that your life will always be filled with pain. You can choose to do something different. You can choose to THINK differently.

### 3. **Commit to Change**

Once you have assessed the damage and accepted responsibility, then you make the commitment to change. Now this covers several areas, so let us explore.

#### a. **Change your thinking patterns.**

When you are presented with new situations and you begin to think through them, ask yourself, is this a

rational thought? What evidence do I have to support this line of thinking? Am I making something out of nothing? Did I learn to assume this based on my past experiences? Questioning yourself like this is like adding nutrients to old soil. The more you question yourself the more you will make different choices. These different choices will lead to a different outcome than the outcomes of your past which occurred due to choices based upon distorted thinking patterns.

b. **Change the people around you.** If you have people around you that continue to be abusive toward you or treat you unfairly, then it's time to clean house. However, make sure, that this is an assessment based on true evidence and not you interpreting their behavior as abusive because of your past traumas and thinking errors. Clean up your social media accounts and clean out your phone contacts. Choose new lunch buddies or do lunch alone. Creating new boundaries is essential to this

process of pushing past pain. People have a way of bringing up old stuff that you are trying to leave behind and getting you all bothered up again. Have you ever gotten mad at a significant other, forgiven them and then realized your friend was still mad at them? Decide to not live in the past. You may lose people in this process but it's a necessary casualty. Not everyone has to be lost though. Some people will understand and respect what you are trying to do. Other people, because they are stuck in their own past will



tell you , “you changed” and you can say with confidence, “yes, I have”. You must be ok with these losses. God willing, one day those relationships will be restored.

- c. **Change your environment.** If you have a messy home or room, it’s time to DECLUTTER. Get rid of old mementos from the past. Items that constantly remind you of how hurt you were. You know all those old love letters, or pictures that remind you of something you lost. Have a yard sale, have a burial or burning ceremony of the old you!

Get rid of the five shampoo bottles, old jewelry you don't wear, scrap pieces of paper, old clothes, things just taking up space for no reason at all! This will serve a few functions. One, it will help you symbolically release that past that is encapsulated in your surroundings and two it will help you breath and feel better! Choose to live with as little "stuff" as possible. Many times we bury ourselves in our mess to symbolically represent our wishes to being really buried in a grave. When

you choose life, your surroundings should demonstrate as much.

- d. **Change your source of information.** Too long have you been getting the same information and advice from the same sources with no change. Read books, get a therapist and talk to older, wiser, more experienced persons. This not only applies to relationships, but in areas of finance, child rearing and even business. When you get new information from new sources, you become empowered to make better choices. This results again in better

outcomes for your life. Humble yourself and ask for help! You will be surprised at all the people God has placed in your life to help you if you just gather the courage to ask.

## **Exercise 4**

### **Damage Control**

1. What or who have you lost as a result of your thinking errors?
2. What is the scariest part about accepting responsibility for where you are today?
3. Who are you most afraid of hurting during your growth process? Who are you afraid of losing?
4. Is keeping that person worth stagnation?

**Your Assignment:** Write a letter to yourself in the present. What would you like to tell yourself about your past choices and how they have affected you? What would you like to tell yourself about the present and the new course you have decided to take? What reminders would you like to give yourself?

**Chapter 5**  
**Lessons Learned**

As a therapist, I have learned that one of the people we often blame the most for the bad things that happens to us is ourselves. In order to move past the pain of the past, you must take the traumas of the past and assess them correctly. If you are a survivor of sexual abuse, how can this be your fault? This is rooted usually in the grooming that perpetrators carefully do to make you believe you caused the abuse to be brought on. This is one of the reasons we don't tell, many of us till this very day. We believe deep down inside that it was our fault. Or maybe your parent was absent and you may tell yourself that it was because you were a bad child



unworthy of love. That was a choice he or she made; it had nothing to do with you. Maybe your heart was broken by a guy and you blamed yourself for not being skinny, pretty or busty enough. You have to change the way you evaluate the events of the past. If you find you cannot do this on your own, obtaining professional therapeutic help is the best way to do this. This is because the pain is so dominant, you can't see past blaming yourself to realize the truth.

Once you are able to see clearly past the cloudiness of fear, anger and low-self-esteem you will realize that there is much to gain from all you been through. Good can

come out of it. If you do the work you will see that our struggles have made us stronger. You are a lot wiser than what you were before. You are better equipped to handle whatever the world has to throw your way. It is imperative that you allow yourself to be a student and allow your past to be the teacher. What we have allowed is for the past to teach us bad lessons and then we applied them to every situation as though they were all the same. Instead, learn from your past and apply what you have learned to make better choices and avoid further hurt. See yourself as a survivor not a victim. Accept what you went through and be proud that you made it out

alive and can push for different outcomes for yourself. Understand that there are other people hurting from the same things you have been hurting from and they are waiting for you to come out and say to them, “You can make it out too”.

Let me also add that you will make mistakes in the future, but the key is not to spend another ten years crying and beating yourself up about it. What we tend to do after we are able to move from the pain of the past, is that we start to blame (thinking errors) ourselves when things don't turn out right. We say things like, “I should have known better”, “Why did I let that happen”, “I am so stupid”,

“I should have seen that coming”, “Fool me once”, etc. Instead, I challenge you to give yourself permission to learn quickly from new challenges, what thought patterns lead to the feelings you had that yielded the decisions which caused new problems or pain. Apply those lessons in a healthy manner moving forward. Instead say, “I accept responsibility for my role in this, I have learned \_\_\_\_\_ from this experience, and moving forward I will be sure to

\_\_\_\_\_ in order to avoid this not happening again” or “ I apologize for what I said/did, I was acting out of \_anger/fear/doubt/pain\_\_\_\_\_, I should have

\_\_\_\_\_ instead, and this will not happen again”. Then simply, let it go and move on. Even if that person does not accept that apology, you have allowed yourself to grow by holding yourself accountable, learning from it and moving forward.

## **Exercise 5**

### **Lessons Learned**

1. What lessons have the past taught you that you have been applying to your current life?
2. Based on what you read in Chapter 5, how will you use the past and future negative experiences to help you be more productive moving forward?

## **Chapter 6**

# **Forgiveness, Healing and Spiritual Growth**

This chapter may be very difficult for you. This chapter is about the internal healing process that must take place in order to move forward. First and foremost, what happened to you is in no doubt painful. Why you? Why did they have to treat you this way? Why did they not love you enough to be there? Why did you have to be rejected like that? What was it about that situation that said to you that you were not good enough? Why did tragedy have to come knocking at your door? What did you do to deserve this? Well the answers to those questions are irrelevant. You may never find those answers and it's those questions that keep us trapped in despair.



## **Forgiveness:**

Forgiveness is an essential part of pushing past pain. The problem for many of us is that we expect that forgiveness should only follow an apology. The problem with that is that an apology may never come. In other words, if the apology never comes, we remain stuck in anger and that person maintains control of you. Many times, people are not even aware that they have hurt you. Sometimes, people are in denial or have blocked out the experience all together not even being able to remember what it is you are talking about. We stay angry at things people did or failed to do to us and for us for years. All the while, these

people are living their lives free and as happy as can be, that is to the naked eye. Here you are depressed, hurt and angry unable to be productive in life because of what “they did”. Here is the task. Forgive them, even with no apology. In order for an apology to be effective, people must be aware of what they did wrong. Half the time, people are caught up in their own mess and don’t even realize they have caused damage. Recall the chapter on Damage Control. Remember how you had to go back and assess the damage you caused? Be sure to complete the forgiveness exercises at the end of this chapter.

## **Healing:**

After forgiveness, then what? Well, the healing process is the next step. For some people forgiveness is the same as giving that person a pass on what they did to us or giving ourselves a pass for what we have done to others or ourselves. We figure, if I maintain my anger, I am punishing them or I deserve punishment so I won't forgive myself. This causes us to trap negative energy into our bodies. It is no shock to me that one of the last things Jesus said, was "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was at the same moment they were crucifying him. Even in the midst of that, Christ demonstrated

to us the importance of forgiveness. Forgiveness allows you to be free and to begin the healing process. No it was not right what they did. No it was not fair. No you did not deserve that, but how much longer will you allow these feelings to grow inside you causing stress, depression and even real physical problems like headaches and high blood pressure? If you have trouble forgiving to provide yourself with freedom, I recommend for you to find a good therapist to help you in processing these feelings so that you can let them go once and for all.

## **Spiritual Growth:**

This is a last critical piece in learning from your past. Just because you are able to forgive and work through issues of the past, does not mean the work that needs to be done cognitively has happened. What this means is, you are likely to respond incorrectly in new situations because of what your past has taught you. Renewing your mind is a process. This happens through learning from those around you but more so, learning from God. How do you learn from God? You learn from God through His word, the Bible. Studying the scriptures regularly gives us opportunity to infuse our minds with teachings that helps

us to grow and respond differently than what we have done in the past. Reading, listening to a solid, Bible-teaching Pastor, and attending a healthy, functioning Church with supportive ministries, will give you tools to continue growing throughout your years. You may find that as time goes on, you will struggle with some issues and are no longer bound by others. This is all normal and God understands! Use of prayer, meditation exercises, physical exercises are also vital to reconnecting with God and yourself. Once you learn how to have better control of yourself and your emotions, it makes functioning in relationships with others a

whole lot easier. There are tons of resources for studying the bible, and self-help books that will help you tap into all the Bible has in store for you. If you are not a believer in Christ, I encourage you to try Him out, until then look into Yoga and Mindfulness Exercises that will teach you how to slow down your thoughts, center yourself and increase your ability to self-regulate. This can also be used by Believers as well.

## Exercise 6

### **Forgiveness, Healing and Spiritual Growth**

1. Make a list of those persons you know you have hurt. It does not matter if you felt they hurt you first. If you inflicted any pain, write their names down. Write a short letter, inbox, email, text or phone call asking for forgiveness. Do not include in this letter any justifications for why you did what you did, just apologize and explain what you are apologizing for. Now here is a WARNING, they may not accept it and that is ok. Some may even lash out back at you and that's ok. You don't have to go there with them. Just



apologize and leave it at that. If they forgive you, that is great, but the goal is you learning to accept responsibility and admitting your faults.

2. Write a list of all the people who have wronged you or caused pain in your life in any way. Stand in front of a mirror, read their names one by one and say (name)

\_\_\_\_\_ I forgive you for (what they did) \_\_\_\_\_. When you do this, mean it. Pray and ask God to give you strength for this task, because it is not easy, but it is necessary.

3. Finally, write a letter to yourself, asking yourself for forgiveness for whatever you felt you have done to hurt yourself and others (Be specific) and write a letter of response accepting the apology from yourself.

# **Chapter 7**

## **Affirmations**

Congratulations! If you have done the work and made it to Chapter 7, you're on your way to a new you! These next few chapters focus on who you are going to be. We started by addressing the past, looking at the present and now we will focus on our future selves. Many of us are basing who we are on what our parents said we would be or not be, what teachers said we would be or not be, what significant others said we would be or not be, or what society says we would be or not be. The problem with this is that we are trying desperately to live up the expectations of others or even worse, we're suffering from a bad case of *compare-initis*. This is when you

look at the progress of others and beat yourself up for not being where this person is or married like that person. You look and say, their life is so perfect. Note that this is a thinking error of assuming! Trust me; every situation has its struggles. So where does that leave you? If you did not have parents who poured into you growing up, affirming you, encouraging you and guiding you, then how will you know what to do? How will you know who you are? One of the dilemmas with healing from the past is that it leaves you with these huge questions of "Who am I ?" and "What do I stand for?" You may be wondering, why is that? Well you have spent

so much time functioning in your dysfunction, so that is all you know. Now you have challenged yourself to be different, to do different, to go to different places. If you have no instructions, no map, how will you get there? The good news is, I have answers.

When you grow up in a situation where negativity is all that surrounds you or you have had a set of experiencing teaching you negative lessons about yourself, you must now search for the truth of who you are. The Bible is a great place to start. God did not create you to suffer your entire life. God made you for a purpose. Everything God made was good and yes that means you too.

You must start training your brain to think differently about who you are and the value you bring to the world. One effective way of doing this is through reciting daily affirmations.

Affirmations can be a list of sayings that you believe or want to believe about yourself. They can also speak to future goals that you may have. You place these affirmations somewhere where you can see them and recite them every day. You don't only recite them, you say them like you mean them! At first you may feel uncomfortable, unsure and even silly. But I encourage you to press forward anyhow. Over time, you will

see that you grow to believe these things about yourself. You begin to believe that you can achieve these goals. When you least expect it, you feel empowered and then your behavior follows. The positive energy you start to put out into the atmosphere invites other positive people into your sphere of influence and before you know it, your life is totally different than what it used to be. You are a different person with a strong understanding of who you were, are and going to be. You have direction and purpose.



## **Exercise 7**

### **Affirmations**

- 1) Grab the Bible or Google Ephesians 3:20.

Meditate on it. If you dare to dream, what does God say about your future?

- 2) Meditate on Psalm 139. What does God say about your importance?

- 3) Mediate on John 10:10. What does God says about your life and how it should be lived?

**Your Assignment:** Write your list of Affirmations. Be creative! Decorate it! Put in on poster board and hang it up in your room. Begin reciting them by looking into the mirror and declaring what you have written as though it were so. There is no limit to how many. Examples of affirmations could be: I am a conqueror, The past no longer holds me hostage, I will think positively about my situation, Good things are meant to happen to me, I have a great future, I will pass my GED, I will start my business, I will have a God fearing relationship, etc.

# **Chapter 8**

## **Under Construction**

Remember change means that people may start to look and treat you differently. Not only were you comfortable in the painful living but so were the people around you. They were used to seeing you sad, downtrodden, defeated, discouraged, and disengaged. People may start to say to you, "What is the purpose of all this *change*? You think your situation will change? You have too many hurdles to jump, why even bother? Once you have worked on minimizing those thinking errors, you will find that those who are closest to you, often family, will try to remind you that you are in prison. You will be able, because you read this book, to be able to

identify those around you who have thinking errors. At this point, I encourage you to remind yourself that whom the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, sets free, is free indeed! I am not here to say to you once you work through your issues, things will get easier. What I can say to you, is that you will be wiser and much better equipped to not make your situation worse.

When you are building your muscles you begin with simple weights and resistance. When muscles start to grow, you don't decrease the weights, you increase to continue growing. Life will continue to throw

things your way, but I challenge you to make this statement every time a new problem or emotion arises, “Great, another opportunity to grow or “God, what lesson would you have me to learn here”? You'll note that I did not invest any time or text in this guidebook discussing “the devil” because I believe we truly are our own worst enemy. It’s our thoughts, emotions and actions that determine the outcomes of our lives. Yes, I think there are negative forces at work against many of us, but we have the power within us to overcome such perils. Always remember that you are under construction. All of us are. Never allow yourself to think that you are

perfect having arrived to a place of high functioning where nothing bothers you and nothing causes you pain. People who have accepted this as their truth are hurting the most. These are the people who on the outside tell the world they are fine, while all the while suicidal thoughts race through their mind constantly. The idea is to admit that you are a work in progress. Surround yourself with a good support system. Get yourself a safe place. A safe place is a place or person or a group of people who will allow you to express yourself and be free from any judgment or unhealthy criticism; a place to acknowledge what you feel, process it and work through it.

## **Exercise 8**

### **Under Construction**

- 1) Based on what you read in Chapter 8,  
How will you respond to your future  
mistakes?
- 2) How will you continue to challenge  
yourself to grow in future situations,  
instead of reverting to the “old you”?



**Your Assignment:** Write a letter to your future yourself. Who is this person? What do they do for a living? Where do they live? What is this persons extracurricular activities? Is this person married? Do some reflecting on where you have come from. How proud are you of this future person? How will you work each day toward becoming this person?

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Purpose in your Pain**

Well bravo! Let me begin this concluding chapter by affirming you! You are a champion. You have made it through this intense process of pushing past your pain to purpose. You were brave enough to recognize that you needed help and even bolder for going after it. Now that you have done all this work, what comes next? I know you did not think that you would go through all you went through just for you to grow. The tree breaks through the soil, grows, and endures harsh weather and for what purpose? It is for the purpose of giving fruit and shelter to others. Believe it or not, your pain is not only for you, but it's for others. You had the blessed

opportunity to work through your pain, but what about the person who may never see this book? What about the person who feels so alone, that they continue to endure their pain in silence, dying each day inside. One of the proudest moments I have as a therapist is when I see or hear my clients reaching back to help someone else. I can provide the therapy; teach about trauma and help people understand why they are going through what they are going through. However, nothing is more powerful than someone saying, “I know exactly how you feel, because I was there.”

For many trauma victims, group therapy is one of the most effective interventions. This is because you are surrounded with other people who get it. Your ability to push past your pain has given you a powerful ability. You now have the ability to really help someone, guide someone and teach someone. Many people think that they should keep their issues a secret. No one needs to know, because if they did, they would judge you. Well, that is their issue, not yours. Winners should tell the world they have won. You are a winner. Ultimate healing comes when you are able to tell the story. Each time you tell the story, it becomes a little easier and

that more powerful. Imagine yourself standing before a group of people, once beaten, lost, confused and depressed. However, in that moment you are standing before them as a champion, an overcomer of your past, functioning and maintaining a healthy life. What a testimony to those in pain! If you can do it, so can they. I encourage you to seek out support groups, church groups, women's meetings or men's meetings and listen to the stories and tell yours. You will likely find that the greatest gift is not in what you received, but what you can now freely give.

## **Exercise 9**

### **The Purpose in your Pain**

1. In what ways can you take your story to help others?
2. Are you able to join a ministry or start a small support group for individuals who have experienced some of the things you have?
3. How do you think telling your story will help you?

**Your Assignment:** Imagine you were starting a program for individuals with stories just like yours. What would your program consist of? How will you help those persons? What resources would you make available to them? Now, what are you waiting for? Go for it!





## Push Past Pain to Purpose

**A Self Help Guide to Overcoming Past Hurts**

**and**

**Embracing Your Life's Purpose**

A South Florida native, Magda Demerritt, LCSW was born and raised in Miami-Dade County. She attended Florida International University where she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Social Work. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the State of Florida. She is also certified in Child Welfare, trained in several crisis management interventions and speaks fluent Haitian/Creole. She has worked in a variety of capacities providing community mental health services to adults, children and families. Her passion is in helping others find their way by teaching them how to change their thought patterns, develop new normals for themselves and depend on God for guidance. She also enjoys helping other Mental Health Professionals find their niche

Magda Demerritt, LCSW wrote *Push Past Pain to Purpose* to provide those with pain in their lives to work through those issues that have imprisoned them for far too long. The book is written as a self-help guide and takes the reader step by step in identifying their pain, the impacts of that pain and working to improve their thinking to develop new positive outcomes for their lives.

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If you have found yourself in a place where you sincerely want more from your life than your present circumstances; if you have finally realized that there is pain in your life that is hindering you from all God wants to birth out of you, then this book is arguably one of the best places you can begin your journey towards freedom from pain and position in your purpose! Though labeled a self-help book, a more appropriate description may be a "God-help book". Magda takes you through an authentic, Christ-centered, healing process with practical tools to usher clarity of your mind and wholeness of your spirit as you embrace new truths concerning yourself, your circumstances and your future. Read this book with expectancy! Make room for the wisdom and awesome love of God in your healing journey. Open yourself up to freedom and encourage others in your life to do the same!

~ **Rachel C. Scott, MPA, Founder of 14 to Forever, Inc.**