

Jennifer Hawthorne's



“Seven essential ingredients for finding balance and serenity”

by Patricia Kirby

The title of a new book, *Life Lessons for Loving the Way You Live*, intrigued me so I contacted the author, Jennifer Read Hawthorne to ask for a review copy and a possible interview for the next cover of Radius.

As soon as the copy arrived, I delved into the contents and was soon contacting Ms. Hawthorne. Though many of our conversations took place electronically, I found Jennifer to be delightful and very insightful. Not surprisingly

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so, as she has co-authored a number of best selling books, traveled extensively, and made numerous guest appearances on television and on stage. She authors and co-authors with Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, co-creators of the national bestselling *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series.

On a personal level, Jennifer shares her life with—in her words—two GREAT, gorgeous, intelligent, fun loving, and highly spiritual stepchildren, Manjula, 26, and William, 24. She is an avid reader and lifelong learner, currently studying Spanish and sacred geometry. “I have a passion for the development of higher consciousness and human potential,” she claims, “and love spending time in my home Energy Enhancement and Rejuvenation System, a cutting-edge technology that allows me to recharge my batteries for greater health, creativity, and mental clarity. I take an integrative, complementary approach to wellness, approaching any health challenge with thoughtfulness and knowledge, looking for the source rather than focusing on symptoms alone. I’m trying to cultivate a kinder relation-

ship with my body, listen to its wisdom, and respond in a conscious and comprehensive way to healing.”

On a typical day at the business level—although there is no typical day says Jennifer—she works from her home office writing her monthly column for *Affluent* magazine and copy for her website. This environment allows her the opportunity to include time for meditation and prayer and personal health care through yoga and walking. She consults by phone with new authors who want to write and publish their books. She travels to give keynote presentations about finding balance and loving the way you live at all types of conferences for a variety of clients, including many hospitals, medical centers and wellness events.

R: What do you hope to offer people through the reading of your book?

J: Writing always helps me to distill and articulate my own life lessons and wisdom. With this book, I hope to share the best of what I’ve learned about simplifying and enriching life.

“As a culture, we often mistake pleasure for happiness. I have learned that true happiness is peace of mind, and that it exists beyond the circumstances of life, beyond the daily swings between pleasure and pain. It is human nature to seek happiness, but divine grace to know that it is always with you, inside.”

- Jennifer Hawthorne

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R: Does one of the “Life Lessons” stand out as a favorite and how have you applied it to your life?

J: All of the life lessons have been invaluable for me, but the ones I’m working with most deeply right now are these:

The lesson “Let Go of Goals” has been life changing for me, having taught me that the ability to let go of goals is as important as the ability to fulfill them. What I’ve gained through this process is an inner comfort and contentment with what I have and where I am in the moment, rather than always grasping for something in the future—whether more stuff, more friends, more spirituality, etc.

The theme of “Getting Beyond Right and Wrong” is also important to me. Realizing that my beliefs are not necessarily “right” or better than anyone else’s frees me from the tension of taking a position. My favorite new phrase is: “You could be right.” And I’ve learned to mean it.

R: How will readers of a health magazine (presuming they are health conscious) benefit from reading your book?

J: As one reader wrote to me: “This book will change the way you think, act, respond, feel and ultimately, how you live.” Why is this important? As Deepak Chopra, a pioneer in the field of mind/body medicine says, “Medical science was not being true to reality until it conceded that illness is connected to a person’s emotions, beliefs, and expectations.”

Life Lessons support high-level wellness by catalyzing breakthrough shifts in the reader’s consciousness. Each of the 36 life lessons is designed to evoke an “ah-hah” experience—those moments of insight when we break free of the past and suddenly have a clean slate for new imprinting, new learning, new creativity, and new behavior. In the time-stopping moment of this shift, the heart and mind can rest easily, beyond the polarities of daily swings between pleasure and pain, enduring and overcoming. The result is reduced stress, a deep sense of ease, and openness to new possibilities—a way to love life no matter what it brings and to enjoy greater health and well-being.



Personal picture taken in India by Evert Odekerken

R: You say in your bio that practicing yoga helps you to be at peace with yourself...how does this happen?

J: Just carving out the time for yoga is an act of self-love for me. Yoga helps me develop physical strength, balance, and flexibility, all of which translate into my life outside my yoga practice. Balancing poses steady my mind and emotions, helping me feel more centered and grounded in daily activities. When I practice moving in and out of a pose with awareness of breath, I find myself moving more gracefully through life's transitions. When I practice holding a pose with mental focus, I become more capable of focusing at work or any task. And when I practice noticing without judgment what I'm feeling during the practice—happy, frustrated, challenged, unworthy, elated—I learn how to notice my feelings outside of yoga and become much more honest in the way I live as a result.

R: Who has influenced you most through your life and in what way?

J: Mrs. Dyer, my beloved high school speech teacher! She allowed me to explore my inner life of feeling, ideas, and creativity through multiple avenues using the arts and the skills of writing and speaking. She was able to take the raw talent I had as a speaker (I started in my driveway at the age of seven) and help me develop my passion into a profession. Her voice still guides me in much of my career today.

Meeting Mother Teresa in India was a high point, which I write about in *Life Lessons*

R: How did you meet Jack Canfield and Mark Hansen and form your co-authoring relationship?

J: My business partner and I were doing self-esteem programs for women in the early nineties. Through a series of synchronous events, we found ourselves at a meeting with Jack at which we proposed *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*, the first niche "Chicken Soup". When he asked us why he should let us do it, we pointed out all the reasons, including the fact that we were women! He said yes, and the rest, as they say, is history.

R: Who came up with the "Chicken Soup" title?

J: The idea for the title *Chicken Soup for the Soul* was Jack Canfield's. He realized one day in meditation that his collection of inspiring stories did for the heart what a bowl of hot chicken soup does for a sick body.

R: What famous person have you met during your travels and/or appearances who impressed you the most?

J: I've met or spoken with lots of wonderful people in my travels, including Oprah, Barbara Walters, Elton John, and actress/princess Catherine Oxenberg. But meeting Mother Teresa in India was a high point, which I write about in *Life Lessons*. Other standouts include eight of the 2008 presidential candidates who caucused in Iowa, along with many of their spouses and other family members. Regardless of political affiliation, each of them gave me hope for our country.

As I stated at the beginning of this article, Jennifer is a delightful person and her book is meant to inspire and provoke thought.

For your enjoyment we have included an excerpt from Jennifer's book:

Life Lesson #5: CHANGE YOUR MIND

Change your thoughts and you change your world.

- Norman Vincent Peale

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Was he implying that, when it comes to our happiness, we actually have a

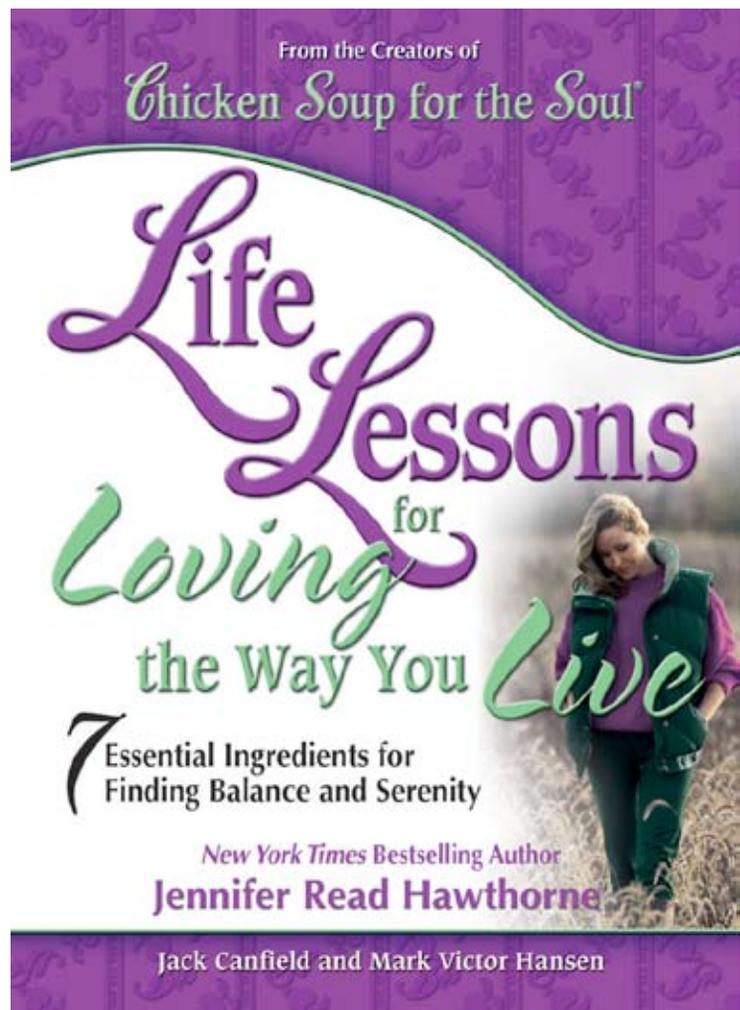
choice? Apparently, yes. Research abounds on the impact of positive and negative thinking on ourselves and others, showing that we have the potential to transform ourselves by changing our habits of mind.

For years, it was thought that the brain was fixed and immutable—that we were stuck with what we were born with in terms of hardware and its abilities. Then along came Sharon Begley's book *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*, offering ground-breaking documentation to support the idea that we can even change our brains by changing our thoughts. The results are staggering. These breakthroughs show it is possible to “reset our happiness meter, regain the use of limbs disabled by stroke, train the mind to break cycles of depression and OCD, and reverse age-related changes in the brain.”

So where do we start? What needs to be changed about the way we think, anyway? Let's look first at the number and nature of our thoughts. We humans, it seems, have anywhere from 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts per day. But the scary part is that, according to some research, as many as 98 percent of them are exactly the same as we had the day before, and 80 percent are negative. Talk about creatures of habit! And if the mind/body connection is real, it's no wonder we're exhausted at the end of the day—negative thoughts deplete the body by creating corresponding chemicals that weaken the physiology.

So if we can begin to recognize a negative thought—words like “never” and “can't” or anything that diminishes our own or another's sense of self worth – we can consciously choose to change it. Instead of saying, “I can't meet this deadline,” try “I'm not sure how I'm going to meet this deadline, but I'm going to do my best to make it happen.”

A large portion of the so-called “negative” thoughts is composed of whining and complaining. Pastor Will Bowen of Christ Church Unity in Kansas City knows well the power of changing the way you think. In an effort to help his congregation find a concrete way to focus on what they do want rather than what they *don't* want, he created a purple bracelet and gave one to everyone at church one Sunday. Because it takes twenty-one days to create a new habit, the idea was for people to switch the bracelet to the other wrist if they found themselves complaining – and keep switching it until they'd gone the full twenty-one days without a single complaint.



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The Complain-Free World Project exploded from 250 bracelets to five million in nine months. Pastor Will receives letters daily from schools, prisons, hospitals, churches, businesses, and even the Pentagon, telling him what a powerful and positive impact the bracelets are having. Families are getting closer. People's health is improving. People are turning their lives around.

Remember: it takes twenty-one days to break a habit and create a new one – not much time and a relatively small commitment. But the results can astonish, as you'll read in

the next story by cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien. Taking responsibility for oneself has a powerful impact on a person and her environment. It is always a step in the direction of wisdom.

THE POWER OF CHOICE

There was an event in my life that had a very deep impact on me. It is one of the memories I always go back to in meditation, because it's a deep source of inspiration. I was waiting for the shuttle to take me to the airport. Sitting next to me was this woman reading her newspaper. But my eyes were on a fourteen-year-old boy who was on his skateboard.

He wore his baseball cap turned around with the bill in back, the cool look, you know. And he buzzed us once. He buzzed us twice. Then he came back around a third time for his grand finale, and he inadvertently knocked the newspapers of the woman's hand

She immediately started yelling, "Oh, you teenagers! No wonder the world is going to pot, because you're in it! I can't stand it!" And so on.

The boy went down to the corner to talk to his buddy, and they turned back to look at us. Then they talked together some more. In the meantime, she began to roll up her newspaper and get it all back together. She put it under her arm, walked to the middle of the block, and motioned

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the boy to come over.

Very slowly and reluctantly, he came on his skateboard, and almost as an act of defiance, he turned the baseball cap around, put the bill straight up in front, and said, "Yeah?"

And she said, "What I meant to say is, I was afraid that I would get hurt, and my comments were coming from a place of fear. They weren't right, and I hope that you will accept my apology."

That boy's face has been an inspiration for me ever since, because he looked at her and smiled, then said,

If the choice lines up so that it supports truth, health, happiness, wisdom, and love, it's the right choice.

"How cool."

I was deeply moved and touched by that moment.

In Latin America, in some of the Hispanic societies of the world, that moment would be seen as a healing moment, as a holy moment. They would call that moment a *milagro pequeno*. *Milagro*, miracle. *Pequeno*, small. A small miracle. Within ten minutes time, through conscious awareness, this woman made a choice. She made a life-affirming choice to create a Blessing Way between herself and that boy. A *milagro pequeno*. He will never forget that moment. I will never forget that moment. And she who shapeshifted that moment through conscious choice will not forget that moment.

There comes a time in the spiritual journey when you start making choices from a very different place. One of the most important teachers in my life told me that you know you've touch the beginning of spiritual maturity when you review a choice considering five things: Is this choice in alignment with truth? Is this choice in alignment with health? Is this choice in alignment with happiness? Is this choice in alignment with wisdom? Is this choice in alignment with love?

And if the choice lines up so that it supports truth, health, happiness, wisdom, and love, it's the right choice. That's a choice that indeed furthers life-affirming action and can create the Blessing Way in our own lives as well as other people's lives. Then we have the ultimate experience of being the steward of our new life, and the experience of internal and external success.

- Angeles Arrien

Copies of the book can be purchased at any bookstore or on-line at www.jenniferhawthorne.com.

