INSIDE OUT

BY LAVINIA ERRICO

JOURNAL TO JOY

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This journal belongs to:

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"Joy is an inside job."

— LAVINIA ERRICO

LET'S BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

I am often approached by people who are trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives – both personally and professionally. And many times, after speaking at length to these people and asking them lots of questions, I discover that what they're really struggling with is trying to figure out what they want out of life — what motivates them and makes them happy. So, let's begin our Journal to Joy by asking ourselves some fundamental questions. Learning about who you are and what you value most in life sounds very simple and basic. But you can't know your true self unless you take the time and space to embark on a journey of genuine discovery. This Journal to Joy is designed to help you do just that.

Lavinia

EXERCISE ONE

Discovering Your Authentic Self

Give yourself one day — four hours. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by any outside things — no phone, no screens, no music — nothing but yourself, your thoughts and this journal. I find going out into nature works best, because it helps focus my senses and my attention. Let's begin by doing some heart-centered breathing. I want you to feel the breath move in and out, and let your mind focus on your breathing. You can do this either sitting or lying down, but try to keep your spine straight. Close your eyes, and think of something that makes you feel good. Feel yourself breathing through your heart and opening yourself up to your thoughts and feelings. Now ask yourself these questions and see what comes up. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers or thoughts, just self-reflection and acceptance.

WHO AM I?

WHAT DO I DO?

(Note: This isn't about your job, but about your path in life. Are you a leader, a caregiver, a thinker, a lover...)

WHO OR WHAT INSPIRES ME?

WHO OR WHAT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD ABOUT MY LIFE?

WHERE DO I WANT TO GO NEXT?

Jotting down the answers to these questions will help you access your inner voice and gain insight into the way you are currently living, and the way you might want to live in the future.

EXERCISE TWO

Checking for Blockages and Canceling Them

It's important to understand that your words, your thoughts, your feelings, your attitudes and your behaviors create your reality. Understanding all of these things will help you find the ways in which you might be "blocked" from moving forward in your life. For example, if you always say "I" instead of "We" when talking about your relationship, you are creating a separation that can have important implications. If your thoughts and feelings are not in balance with your behaviors, you are going to struggle personally and professionally.

Let's get back to the breathing we used in Exercise One. This time, I want you to clear your head and think about a problem or challenge you have been facing in your life. These disturbances, or problems, can create imbalances in our thoughts and feelings, or "negative spirals" of fear, shame, anxiety, and self-reproach. Learning how to deal with these feelings and thoughts is key to removing blockages and opening yourself up to authentic joy. So, here's a tool I use to manage them and return to equilibrium.

Whenever I'm faced with these thoughts and feelings, I literally hold up my hand and say out loud, **"CANCEL!"** By doing this, I am both physically and verbally re-wiring my thoughts and feelings. I am "Canceling" them because they don't help me deal effectively with the issues at hand, and they actually block my ability to move forward and solve the problem. If I am frozen by fear, I won't make a good decision. When I am plagued by anxiety, I can't act and take care of business. When I reproach myself for past mistakes, I leave myself unable to correct them.

I want you to go someplace where you have some privacy and let your mind go to the fear, the shame, the anxiety and the self-reproach. Now when that thought comes, hold your hand up and shout "Cancel" as loud as you can. Once you have practiced this a few times, you can say it more quietly to yourself. But I have been known to raise my hand up and say it (not shout it) in public places, because I find it really helps.

Use this space to write down some thoughts and feelings you want to "Cancel." Then practice doing so out loud.

EXERCISE THREE

You Have to Get Healthy to Be Healthy

Over time, I've learned there is no short-cut to a healthy mind. That's because in order to be mentally healthy, you have to also be physically healthy. This doesn't mean you have to adopt an extreme diet and exercise plan, but it *does* mean you have to incorporate movement and healthy eating into your life. So this week, your goal is to find 45 minutes each day to do something physical and fun. Take a walk with your partner, go dancing, decide to take the stairs everywhere instead of the elevator. Do yoga on the beach or ride your bike in the park. Get yourself out in nature and move, breathe, and feel yourself open up to better health and more joy.

After each exercise session, jot down how you felt before and how you feel after. Exercise elevates your mood and clears your head. It's a powerful antidote to depression and anxiety. If you make this an everyday thing, you will be much further along the path to becoming the person you want to be.

HOW DO I FEEL BEFORE EXERCISE?

HOW DO I FEEL AFTER EXERCISE?

EXERCISE FOUR

Two Must-Have Tools for Healthy Eating and Nutrition

I have two very simple tools I use in my home to help with my healthy eating. One is a big, beautiful bowl I keep on my kitchen counter and replenish daily. In this bowl I keep only healthy, nutritious snacks – fresh vegetables, fruit, nuts, and other snacks, each in the 100-150 calorie per serving range. It's a big beautiful bowl of **YES** – a place where I can grab something and enjoy it. And I make sure it looks appetizing and beautiful, to remind myself that healthy looks and feels great.

The second tool I have is a ladder, which I keep in a hall closet a ways away from my kitchen. I need this ladder in order to reach the food I keep high up in my kitchen cabinet, out of reach. In that high cabinet I keep my kryptonite, chocolate, and a few other things I often want to eat when I feel stressed. I keep them there *not* because they are forbidden, but because I want to remain conscious of when I crave them and when I eat them. If I have to go to all the trouble of walking down the hall, opening the closet door, and setting up the ladder, then I know I am choosing very specifically and consciously to eat that particular food, and to really enjoy it in the moment. In other words, if I really want that chocolate, and only if I really want it, I will be willing to do a little more planning and a little more work to get it. I find this conscious eating helps me make better food decisions, and I think it can help you, too.

Your exercise this week is to set up a healthy kitchen counter snack bowl, and to get yourself a ladder. Use this space to make a list of items for your bowl, and remember to note portion size and calorie count.

EXERCISE FIVE

Recharge Your Life With Two Very Important Questions, and a List!

In my experience, two of the most important questions you can ask yourself are: "What saps my energy?" and "What gives me energy?" That's because many of us spend way too much time on things that sap our energy and inhibit our progress in life, and not enough time embracing things that give us energy and propel us forward towards our goals. So how do you break this cycle? My advice is to go deep and make an energy list. Start by sitting down in a quiet, contemplative place, and asking yourself, "What (or who) saps my energy in the following areas?"

WITH MY SPOUSE?

(e.g. arguing, resentments...)

WITH MY CHILDREN?

(e.g. trying to control too much, sweating the small stuff...)

WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS?

(Note: mothers and in-laws can be big ones here!)

WITH FRIENDS?

(e.g. are you holding on to friendships that no longer work for you...)

WITH MY JOB?

(e.g. conflicts with co-workers or employees, setting the wrong expectations...)

WITH MY OWN ISSUES?

(e.g. not being organized, procrastinating, being too self critical, not taking time for yourself...)

If you're like many of the people I work with, this list can be a long one. Don't be intimidated by this process. Use it to make positive changes in your daily life and relationships, and to stop the energy drain before it leaves you too depleted to pursue your dreams.

And now, for the fun part: make a list of all the things that give you positive energy, using the same categories from above.

WITH MY SPOUSE?

WITH MY CHILDREN?

WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS?

WITH FRIENDS?

WITH MY JOB?

WITH MYSELF?

Take a good, long look at this list. Post it someplace you can see it everyday. Your assignment for the next week is to do as many of the things on this list as possible, and avoid as many on the "sap your energy" list as you can. This is a great and empowering (literally) tool to find your best self and that extra jolt of energy you need to move forward in your life.

"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; Who looks inside, awakes."

— CARL JUNG

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