

Living Persistence

Creatively:

Elizabeth Gilbert chooses to dedicate an entire chapter to the topic of persistence in her book, *Big Magic*. Gilbert defines the persistence necessary in the creative process as what keeps you hammering away at your idea even when the enchantment starts to fade. At the point, when what seemed clear starts to blur, is exactly when the effort must be made to,

“seduce the Big Magic and it will always seem to come back to you the same way a raven is captivated by a shining spinning thing.”

Persistence comes from the heart of that deep love of what we do, it is our core, our willingness to move all obstacles just so that the work we are called to do can continue. Persistence is honoring the time you set aside to write, draw, build, or make whatever is your heart's desire, despite all odds. It's about finding a place and time you call your own and honoring it with a reciprocal agreement.

Most of the time this works... and then there's going to be the morning in which every possible obstacle seems to get in your way. Persistence is when in spite of all obstacles you still pick up your tools and put them to work right then and there for however many seconds you are granted. That my friend is real persistence. It is essential ingredients to lead a creative life because guess what, it isn't always going to be pretty and clean and served up to us so we can partake. Sometimes, and actually many times, we need to plow through it all to get to the good stuff.

Six years ago I had to do just that as I was led by an idea

that stalked me day and night. It would not grant me a moment's peace and before long I could not see straight through my obsession. I was, at this point in time, in the midst of passing along to new owners the bootstrapped gluten free baking company that I had lovingly nurtured all the way to the shelves of Whole Foods and was ready for a new challenge. I knew what would be required next for this homegrown business to profit was more than I was willing to invest on many levels and above all the call to work in natural health care was beckoning.

This beckoning became rather loud and annoying when I learned of the imminent closing of a boutique practitioner cooperative. Soon to be stranded were some of Austin's finest practitioners from a rich variety of backgrounds. While the cooperative model they had followed for years was not financially viable I had an idea for another model, one I had come across in California. On paper it was beyond brilliant and would provide a new home for those practitioners who still sought a community along with a few others that could be handpicked to allow for a range of therapies. The intensity of this idea was such that I was compelled to take action and so began to meet with each individual one on one and to hear out their personal goals and began to form a collective vision.

While I had years of personal experience with Homeopathy and Gemmotherapy along with mentoring by my German homeopath while living in Europe, I only dreamed that in another lifetime I would indeed practice. Surely the thought of it would rise up often enough but only to be quieted by my logical mind. The idea of it seemed too far out of reach, and I accepted that the best I could possibly do was to support those who did practice become more visible and accessible to the public. Besides, in this planned clinic there already were plenty of practitioners but what was missing in the equation was someone who held the big picture and kept the vision moving forward. So in the formulating of this natural health clinic,

interestingly enough, I envisioned myself stepping into an administrative role.

Once the group of practitioners was finalized we began regular meetings to create our mission statement, objectives and value propositions. Let me just reiterate here how my obsession with this idea grew with each step we took as a growing team. I could so clearly see the huge gap in health care that this creative endeavor would fill. In my exuberance I shared this vision with literally everyone I met in the months of our planning process and created an enthusiastic following along the way. All progressed beautifully from winter into the months of summer. We even took the steps to assemble an advisory board of key leaders in business and health and seek their input.

While looking at properties had been saved as a final step, now in August, the time had come and to no surprise one came available instantly right in the neighborhood of our choice. How perfect could it get? After viewing it and sketching out a possible layout we gathered as a team to take these next important financial steps together. However, once we were all assembled in the same room we had harmoniously gathered for months, something was tangibly different. The gentle buzz and hum of creativity was gone and instead there was a distinct metallic feel of tension that was so strong you could taste it on your tongue. There was a brittleness that had never before been present. Not until much later did it become clear that what showed up that day was FEAR.

One of the key practitioners took the lead for that meeting and from the start everything began colliding, like the start of bumper cars, all it takes is one to begin a continuous chain reaction. Suddenly this compatible group, who had gathered to form a shared vision for six months, began to push up against each other's edges and egos. The bumps experienced turned into roadblocks by the end of the meeting and no action could be taken on the pending lease. Everything was

stalled.

Check back in a week when I share what transpired next and how my persistence was truly put to the test.

Living Creatively: Permission II

“Make absolutely whatever you want to make. It’s nobody’s business but your own.”

~ Elizabeth Gilbert

In living creative lives even with every good intention, the act of granting permission can be paralyzing. Even with a healthy dose of courage summoned and the magical spell of enchantment you can find yourself engaged with an old continuous soundtrack. This tape may claim any of the following: you are not skilled, prepared, perfect, credentialed, as good as, or even deserving of taking the next creative step. Due to this you will wait, as if there is an official office of creativity that must issue a clearance stamp to proceed. This sadly is exactly what too frequently halts the creative process. As if your own will or desire is not enough you will begin to search outside for confirmation and more important an authority to approve your taking action.

Do you know what is so heartbreaking about this barrier to creative living? Not only are so many prevented from the beautiful experience of bringing forth their idea but the world as a whole misses out on the unique way in which you were destined to deliver that idea.

In discussing the theme of permission in her book *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert states,

“Never delude yourself into believing that you require someone else’s blessing in order to make your own creative work.”

That line my friends, needs to be written on your bathroom mirror and across your computer screen. Give yourself permission and do so without trepidation. We don’t create with the expectation of bringing forth a masterpiece, we create for the joy of the making. Whether that making is arranging words into a poem or short story, ingredients into a meal, or color into a painting- we do it for the love of the process.

Gilbert also offers sound advice to those who struggle with originality.

Most things, she says, have already been done- but they have not yet been done by you. Did you hear that? Your personal spin on whatever you create makes it original because no one, trust me, no one sees it and can produce it just like you. Here’s a simple illustration of this. In the region of Germany that my husband comes from, potato salad is made from a precise handful of basic ingredients to include broth, vinegar, salt, onions, potatoes. Yet, absolutely dependent on the ratio of each ingredient and the type of potatoes used, the dish will take on it’s own unique characteristics. Each Taunte or Oma, makes the recipe her own and serves it up with the love of a maker to the delight of her family who can no doubt can pick her salad out of a lineup of identical looking salads. Just imagine their disappointment should she decide hers was lacking originality and not worthy to share. So take note here, as it is not about originality but rather it is about making your mark by contributing what you can make no matter how big, small, complex or simple.

Perhaps you grew up being told you were not enough or that

creativity is only for those who can achieve perfection. While that is tragic for sure, you can choose to live out a different storyline. You are the permission granter. You control the gas pedal and are the force for the brakes behind your own creativity.

Looking for a way to find or get back your groove? Start small. Possibly begin in the kitchen with trying your hand at some new recipes or maybe attempt to capture an image each day of natural beauty that touches you. Whether you revive an old skill or learn one you've always longed to try is your choice, but the pleasure won't begin until you give yourself permission to act. And please, whatever you choose to do, let yourself be messy and fail miserably at times, it's all part of the process and pleasure.

It really is a lot like meditation practice. As my teacher Susan Piver says,

"We don't do it because we are good, we do it because when you are relaxed amazing things happen. When we choose to live creatively, accepting the invitation that is presented, and grant ourselves permission, something pretty magical happens.

Doesn't that sound lovely? Let that be your personal invitation. Choose to grant yourself permission and begin down your own path of creative living.

Living Creatively: Permission



Now that our week of of goodbyes and well wishes has passed, while far from easy, what I feel most deeply is gratitude for the rich and varied experiences of the past years. If you are just joining me, this past week I bid an expected farewell to my longtime loyal assistant Aaron and an unexpected farewell to our storeroom and shipping assistant Aubrey, whose recent health concerns required her full attention.

Here we are, right in the very midst of fall. With the contemplative months of winter in sight, it is clear that a new way of being will continue to unfold. To think that this all began with my early August commitment on a hillside overlooking the vast expanse of the Pyrenees. There, as dawn approached, I welcomed the new and declared that moving forward I would use a different approach toward my long list of personal and professional goals. I would, from that moment

forward, choose an open hearted path. However that would chose to take form, I would see.

Upon my return to Austin, I soon learned I would be traveling the path with new companions. Discovering this certainly brought up a cautious trepidation but peaking out from underneath, a playful curiosity. So, in these past weeks, with this, "new way of being," as my guide, I have navigated these days of transition feeling as if I was wearing a new sweater, a bit prickly and scratchy, but clearly the clothing I was intended to wear.

While there are moments I fear I've lost traction moving my goals forward in this period, with a closer look I touch a deep knowingness that proclaims this is just the new way. A way that is a bit slower, a bit more reflective, and just possibly, a bit kinder and gentler to me. Joining me are two bright shining lights who are more than ready to walk this new path with me. With no shared history of how things were done in the past, there will be no questioning of how I choose to work, all seen with fresh eyes and an entirely new perspective.

So what does all of this have to do with permission? Well, Elizabeth Gilbert had a lot to say about the need to give ourselves permission in her book on creative living, *Big Magic*. There, she discusses the fact that what stops so many from following the enchantment of a new idea is exactly the granting of permission. We, for some reason, are programed to expect a power greater than ourselves to give us the authority to move forward in our creative process.

I suspect some of the awkwardness I have felt these days is due to the concept of permission. I have found myself on occasion hesitating as if there were another authority greater than mine to grant me permission to act on my ideas. Once I became aware of this, I realized I needed to give myself permission on a daily basis. Permission to allow this new way

to manifest as it desires, permission to find joy in this particular time, and just possibly, permission to be a bit playful with it all. And, as Gilbert comments in *Big Magic*, I needed to allow myself to,

"Be the weirdo who dares to enjoy."

To be honest, it isn't completely enjoyable yet... but I'm working on it! It's clear this new way is going to take some getting used to. So, instead of charging forth headstrong into that deep list of projects I created over the summer, I will consciously leave some space for this new way to mature.

Playfulness is a good thing, and the "Gemmo Bar" retail display I shared last week is a great place to begin. A lighthearted approach is just what this needs, no attachments to an outcome, just permission granted to take up the time and space it needs to try one idea and then mix it up with no particular destination or deadline in sight. Yikes! This really is a new concept!

It is interesting to discover myself right smack in the middle of the whole idea of permission. Some days have felt as if I have been dropped into a huge permission swamp and if I wish to move in any direction I've got to allow myself to accept where I am, consider my options, and make some moves, even if it gets messy. What I create now, may go through several reiterations and in knowing and accepting that I've found myself stalled.

So whether my creation involves my wild Gemmo Bar idea, restructuring the work in my practice, or discovering personally a new way of accepting the only stamp of approval needed is my own, and with that permission, I let go of any expectation of perfection. I'll hang on to that scratchy new sweater and wear it until it breaks down into something comfy, cozy and all mine.

Why not join me in this journey? What might you have put on

hold, waiting for permission to be granted?

“If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.”

– Ecclesiastes 11:4

Living Creatively: Enchantment II

Living Creatively: Enchantment II



Last week I shared with you the concept of *enchantment* proposed by Elizabeth Gilbert in her book *Big Magic*. Gilbert shared her belief: *Ideas are driven by a single impulse to be made manifest. And the only way an idea can be made manifest in our world is through collaboration with a human partner. It is only through a human's effort that an idea can be escorted out of the ether and into the realm of the actual.*

Once an agreement is made, *enchantment* is what follows. Enchantment is the magic experienced when falling in love. Similar emotions arise when we engage with an idea. Signs and confirmations in support of the idea fill our days along with a nagging distraction that leads you to a state of utter absorption. This experience is absolutely something I can attest to and the very fact that I do the work I do today. I was driven by my willingness to commit to an idea that wasn't about to let me be. But that story is for another time, perhaps next week, as I have a current story line unfolding as I write. Allow me to share how Gilbert's proposed concept of ideas and the enchantment can play out in everyday life.

Negotiating the waves of transition that is underway with my office team has provided an unarguable opportunity to practice what I preach about trusting the process. I will admit however, while some days have been more challenging than others, for the most part this experience has taught me well. Taking time to get quiet, allowing all the emotions to rise and fall, wailing (or whining) when I needed to, avoiding knee jerk reactions, and most importantly always staying present have been the guidelines I've followed. This time around I have chosen to do the work now, in the moment, so it won't be necessary to replay it again in the months or years to come.

As a new way of structuring our office work began to fall in place, I am not surprised that in my days of quiet an idea paid a visit. This one in particular, I am quite sure has nudged me a time or two in the past but always at inopportune times, while I was in the throes of completing a book, or was headed off to manage a conference. But this time, it found me to be a willing partner as I was wide awake and waiting. Over the last two weeks, I have certainly fallen under its spell allowing it to guide me on a timeline of its own and the experience has been gratifying.

I've longed for a way in which I could make our Gemmo extracts more visible and accessible, but struggled with practicalities

such as time, money, and risks. Additionally, we face the challenge of having a product that needs considerable explaining to a population that doesn't know a lot about the subject we need to discuss. Try as I may, I've yet to meet success in reducing what these little dropper bottles of extracts can do into an elevator pitch. While we know visuals help, as they have done wonders for my curriculum and my books, how might we use them in a retail setting providing just enough to intrigue a customer without overwhelming?

I've read countless books on consumer behavior but none captured my dilemma more closely than the book *Crossing the Chasm*. In it, author Geoffrey A. Moore, discusses the importance of finding a beachhead in which to cross over from your early adopters to the masses. Turns out those early adopters and the masses don't speak the same language or even hang out enough to pass each other a message. This lack of connection is what creates a gap or chasm for innovative products. For those who've studied marketing this is nothing new but for me it was a revelation that has helped me see the problem I faced was not completely unique.

So here's the wild idea that won't leave me alone. Are you ready for it? It's a Gemmo Bar! A pop-up kiosk model that could introduce essential starter extracts for acute symptoms and everyday immune support with a clean fresh look that mirrors what the extracts can do for the body. What do you think? While the placement of these pop-ups as well as countless other details is yet to be determined, I've signed on and as Gilbert explains, the moment you say yes to an idea,

You have officially entered into a contract with inspiration and you must try to see it through, all the way to it's impossible-to-predict outcome. You set the terms for this contract however you would like.

So with just a hint of where I thought this might go, I reached out to my visual magic maker, designer Christine

Terrel. Christine has worked with me for years refining my vague and often rambling ideas and shaping a Gemmo narrative that actually makes sense to those who don't think like me, which I've learned happens to be a lot of people! I knew I was on the right track when it only took a few mumblings of the concept and Christine too fell under the spell. She got it all the way through and could agree that we needed to separate Gemmos from the slew of natural products available and create a display that would capture the essence of this extraordinary product and its potential. She also got the challenge behind the task.

The first week we were totally caught up in the excitement and had some fun playing with visual displays, quickly settling on one. Rest assured, you will be seeing a stream of renditions as this idea takes full shape and the fun will all be happening right on the walls in my waiting room. What better space to try the first prototype than the best idea incubator I have known these past five years. I also happen to be confident in the honest feedback we will receive from my local clients who are fabulously forthright.

Here's the latest look we are playing with.



It's a start and we never know where ideas will lead us once we accept their invitation. For now, we know our next steps will be to refine the content we use in order to best reach our audience and also to move on to various types of displays such as freestanding and tabletop. It will all be one big experiment and we invite you to play along with us! If you are in Austin, you are most welcome to drop by on a Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday after October 31, we will be opening up these days of the week for drop-in shopping during the hours of 10-2. Stay tuned to our Facebook page, or better yet follow us on Instagram for up to the minute happenings and upcoming giveaways!

Until next week, make time for some quiet in each of your days and be mindful of what idea may be trying to capture your attention.

Living Enchantment

Creatively:

A few weeks back, I shared a book review of Elizabeth Gilbert's *Big Magic, Creative Living Beyond Fear*. Her view so aligned with my own belief on creativity that I thought it might be enjoyable to engage with her message on a personal level through writing a blog series. The ingredients that Gilbert shares for creative living include courage, enchantment, permission, persistence, trust and identity... all fantastic themes to expand upon.

Let me just tell you this – I had absolutely no idea just how gosh darn personal this was about to become. I mean, here I am desperately attempting to walk the walk, and now with an audience no less!

After three weeks of sharing stories on courage, ending last week with the minor upheaval in my practice, I could not wait to move along to the topic of enchantment. Just what is enchantment, you ask? Gilbert explains that enchantment is what we experience as we engage with an idea. But where do these ideas come from? While our culture wants us to believe ideas only come to gifted minds, Gilbert thankfully proposes an entirely different perspective.

“Ideas spend an eternity swirling around us searching for available and willing partners. When an idea finds someone – say you – who might be able to bring it into the world, the idea pays you a visit.”

Crazy stuff, right? Well, not so fast. Have you never had an idea pay an unexpected visit, like the slight tickle of a

gossamer-like thread that floats across your mind? Quite possibly you have learned to tune these sensations out as adult. So think back to your childhood, when the outrageous idea for the most perfect fort ever arrived, or you were inspired to assemble that magnificent outfit (the one that made everyone in your house cringe).

Surely you have some memories you can draw from your early years. As for me, I was an idea machine, and (get this) one of my ideas was using plants to make potions that would heal all of my childhood friends!

So take note! While I believe ideas are reaching out all the time, their frequency is often missed when the recipients are distracted by the busy-ness of life that fills every waking moment with activity or noise.

I should know all about this – I spent the first half of my adult life, from 18 to 40 years of age, in this state, numb to any whisper of creative ideas and certainly shut off from the voice of my own heart. Now don't get me wrong, I knew all about ideas and how they worked as a child, and again as a fledgling writer in my teens. But at the end of those teen years, I chose what I believed to be love over creative living and entered a relationship where all that I had previously cultivated was considered foolish nonsense.

Based on this personal choice, I shut down my reception of ideas, whether they were about writing, designing or anything other than what my partner viewed as normal. The things we do for love, right? Where this led should be no surprise, as over the years the slope into despair and depression grew more slippery with time. Before long, I was in a place I never want to be again, a place in which I stopped believing in myself, my intuition and the enchantment of new ideas.

Fortunately, our soul can only accept such a state for so long, and I began to hear mine beckon from within. By

listening and paying close attention, I found my way out and, in doing so, was once again blessed with ideas and the Universe's personal invitation to live creatively.

And so my friends, let me share today that the very same invitation is right there for you, whether you believe it or not. Creativity is far from an elite club. It is for all, deeply ingrained in our DNA. When we use creativity to navigate this human life, we stop taking ourselves and our problems so seriously. We are more willing to tune into the frequency of the Universe, embrace moments of stillness, discover our own courage to engage and let the enchantment unfold.

Living Creatively: Courage Part III

Living Creatively: Courage Part III



Seriously, here we go, it's part three on Courage in this *Living Creatively* series, that I absolutely never intended to

be so up close and personal. But hey, we are here and this journey only continues to get more interesting by the day!

Last week I shared, with all the courage I could muster, the beautiful opportunity that has been presented in my practice and interwoven into my personal life. While Aaron, ever faithful, is working full tilt to complete projects she has personally orchestrated and tie up her far reaching responsibilities in a neat bow for a graceful exit, it seems the Universe might just have another plan. Together we continue to witness one piece resolved while another falls apart. Just like Pema tells us. Darn it.

Some parts of the transition have been successful. For instance, we have welcomed my niece Molly into my team to take over editing and scheduling all written communications to include this weekly blog post, our Take 5, monthly newsletters, as well as training curriculum and managing my next book project. Because it's 2017, she will do all of this from Helena, Montana! I'm thrilled to have her on board and will be sharing more about Molly in coming weeks.

On the other hand, Aubrey, who we welcomed into my practice last January to manage Vital Extract, was poised to take on a host of Aaron's responsibilities just as she encountered some new health challenges. Deeply concerned with her welfare, honoring her desire to continue, and still committed to meeting the needs of our customers, has pushed me to create some agile solutions that I would not have previously considered.

And so here we are. Things are a little messy and I can be fairly sure it will get even messier before we know what exactly is germinating under the rubble. How do I know this? Well, I've been here before and, holy cow, while every cell in my body screams resist and find something to grab hold of, my soul is quite confident we are in for a free fall with no safety harness involved.

So what to do? I'll do exactly as I have been trained by those much wiser than me. I will stay present, solve the problems of the day, and believe with all my heart and soul that we have what is needed for whatever lies ahead.

Are you ready to come along to see how this all transpires? While a part of me would like very much to hold back on sharing until every piece is in place and reveal a polished plan, I know for certain that this time around that is not an option. Instead, I am going to take a deep breath and pull back the curtain while this set is still under construction as it would be a shame to keep the lessons revealed all to myself. Let's brave this together and discover first hand, on the spot, what living creatively is all about.

I'll leave you with one last bit to ponder and that is this nagging message I continue to receive. It seems that the bits that are falling apart may need to come back together in a whole new way: One that will better support the rise of Gemmos and their well deserved space in healthcare.

So buckle up! We are in for a wild ride together and as Elizabeth Gilbert says, *"If you can't learn to travel comfortably alongside your fear, then you'll never be able to go anywhere interesting."*



New Journeys. New Beginnings.

New Journeys. New Beginnings.

Pema Chodron has written a classic book on Buddhist teachings titled, *When Things Fall Apart*. It took me years of struggles, trying to hold my life together before I could even take a peek at what she had to say. When I did garner the courage to look, I learned Pema offers a fascinating reflection on what we often view as our crumbling lives.

"... the truth is things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. They come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy."

I have witnessed this profoundly in my own life; have experienced the mysterious mingling of grief and joy all in the same moment as I stood among the rubble and yet knew in all my heart that something even more beautiful would arise. It seems I am once again presented with the opportunity to learn from this continuous cycle.

I returned just six short weeks ago from a fulfilling summer in Europe with what I believed to be a new way of working for myself and with my team. Enthused in a way I had never before experienced, I couldn't wait to gather everyone for input. At the same time, Aaron was also returning from her own journey to Europe, and a very special one indeed. During her travels, Aaron began and embraced her own new chapter and way of being... And in no small part by getting married! When we met to share our summer experiences and discuss the future, I soon learned that Aaron's future may not include working at my practice and that she was ready for challenges beyond what I could offer. Thank you, Pema. For I must admit it was truly a moment of

grief and joy. Joy for all that would lie ahead for Aaron. Grief for the fact I would miss her dearly.



The practice I have today has been handcrafted over the years by holding my personal vision lightly, remaining open, and discerning the guidance I've received. I have watched with awe as it has been shaped just as in the famous quote from the Alchemist,

"And when you want something all of the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."

One of the greatest gifts in this process and to my practice was the arrival of Aaron Thompson 4.5 years ago, introduced to me by my longtime graphic designer Christine Terrell, who believed Aaron would be the perfect fit for the direction I wanted to go. She could not have been more correct as Aaron and I have grown not only a business, but together as a team. Aaron quickly created a position for herself well beyond the 10 hours a week of clerical tasks. I am shaking my head in disbelief at the young woman whom I first met and who she has become today. I've tried always to meet Aaron's caution in moving forward with encouragement and confidence in her abilities, and soon she embodied that herself.

Over the years, I have proudly watched Aaron take more

ownership in her work as it became ours together. I remember the moment in a team meeting when Aaron first referred to our plans using the pronoun "we", rather than "*Lauren's practice.*" That's when I knew she truly saw herself as part of a team and not merely doing my work.

Aaron has learned first hand how start-ups are created, and how they evolve from the ground up, and now, as we move into the period of refining the fruits of these past years of labor, it seems only fitting she pass the baton to someone new.

Aaron, supported by the magnificent creative work of Christine Terrell, has brought my method to life for clients, the interested public, and now practitioners that I train. Over the course of the past years, she has seen me through three complete reiterations of my training curriculum, countless versions of new client welcome packets, at least five website updates, two published books, four logo changes, several office rearrangements, the masterful visioning of our weekly Take 5, monthly client and practitioner newsletters, a continuing blog that now has over 1200 entries and has single-handedly managed the office four summers in a row while I was away in Europe! In Aaron's time alone, she has supported me through seeing hundreds of clients, training over 50 practitioners, and growing our mailing list subscribership from 25 to nearly 700 readers. All of which she has done on top of the tireless, thankless task of managing our quirky office calico, Ruby.



Through this time, in which her hours increased, so did her deep commitment to the mission of this practice and the clients and customers we serve. Aaron also became my most trusted confidant and (ever so occasionally) stepped up to the daunting task of informing me when my new idea-of-the-week made absolutely no sense whatsoever.

And so, in all of this, I have to say I am not surprised by Aaron's decision because the person Aaron has become is no doubt ready for new journeys, new challenges, and new experiences. As one of her biggest fans, I applaud her self awareness and the courage she drew upon to take action.

Aaron, being Aaron, has assured me she will see all of us here and my practice through to a smooth transition. But we all know how once an idea is put into motion, it gains a timing all its own. So don't wait to express your own best wishes for Aaron's new beginning!

It is with my own bagful of mixed emotions (the greatest of which is gratitude), **I do formally announce Aaron's departure from my practice in the near future and that we have opened the search for new office staff.** Naturally, being who I am, I have taken this opportunity to revise, with Aaron's support, some of our client care processes and growing list of daily tasks. It is our main goal that none, or at least very few, should affect our steadfast clients any more than our ever-rotating arrangement of office furniture & artwork.

I invite and encourage all of you to help us spread the word that we are now accepting resumes for a Part Time Client Care Assistant. (Full details in the downloadable file.) All inquiries may be sent to Office@LaurenHubele.com.

Living Creatively: Courage Part II

Living Creatively: Courage Part II

“When someone makes a decision he is really diving into a strong current that will carry him places he has never dreamed of when he first made that decision.”

– Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist



Often we are faced with decisions and the answers that speak from your core of being defy all logic. The day I began listening to that voice was the day I began living creatively and with courage. It took the first forty years of my life to discover the magic in doing just that. Today I'd like to share two connected stories of decisions I made on the spot. The first no doubt carried me into the stream of an entirely new life. The second has yet to play out.

Eight years ago, on the advice of my physician, I walked in the Austin Shambhala Center for the first time. The entire left side of my face was still immobile, frozen in pain from recent reconstructive surgery, and bandaged with gauze and tape from the corner of my eye to my chin. I was there in search of a path that might circumvent the full-body fear that beckoned me daily to run with all my heart and soul from own life, the one which involved recurring cancer.

There in the entry way table lay a beautifully designed brochure advertising the Shambhala Mountain Center in Colorado. Four words jumped out at me: Courageous Women Facing Cancer. Feeling qualified for two out of three of the prerequisites, I picked it up to read further.

It was scheduled for two months away, coincided with the first days of the school year, and at the time I had a very reluctant soon to be second grader. My logic screamed at me to put it down, but my heart said otherwise. Once home, I discussed the possibility with Joachim who said he would agree for me to go to all the way to Tibet if I could just stop weeping! And so, with the click of a mouse I was registered and before long I would dive into this current, having not the least idea where I might be carried.

A dear friend also facing recurring cancer agreed to join me. To give you a clear picture of my emotional and mental state at the time I asked her what was to become a classic question, "You don't think we are going to have to sit in a circle and talk about our cancer do you?" Wiser than me by leaps and bounds, she smiled a knowing smile and said, "Surely not."

Well, in case you have any doubt, we did talk about cancer and so much more. It was there in that week that I could finally look cancer straight in the eye and recognize I had several choices as to how I would live out all my days to come, whether they be short in number or stretch on for years. It was there that I committed to thriving rather than surviving. And while I could not even begin to imagine where this journey would lead, I knew my heart must serve as my guide.



Fast forward eight richly textured years and I'm in the Pyrenees, spending a week restoring and preparing for a full year of projects and work that lie ahead. Each day I would walk the ridge and watch the sunrise and ask for a path that would allow me to be as productive as possible, but also kind and gentle to myself and those around me. There was now a new fear I had produced in my life of late and that fear was that if I wasn't hard enough on myself, driving myself to ultimate productivity each day, then I would not be able to achieve all I was called to create in this lifetime.

The good thing was, I had discovered I did not particularly care for this driven person and likely those around me felt the same. □ But how could I do things differently? How could I open my heart of loving kindness to myself and still share what I knew needed to be delivered?

On the last morning of our time in the Pyrenees, I committed to make this change with no road map in sight, only a request to the Universe for guidance. The next morning in my email inbox was an invitation to join meditation teacher extraordinaire Susan Piver for an Open Heart Project five day retreat at the Shambhala Mountain Center. I read these opening lines,

So, you're a spiritual seeker. A creative person. Someone who wants to bring more goodness into the world.

But the path, it often seems unclear. Solitary. A little uncertain.

How are you supposed to find the time to explore your spirituality, creativity, and destiny when you have so much to do?

How is it that we spend so much time working and so little time rejoicing?

What if you could put daily life on hold, let go of to-do lists, responsibilities, and electronic devices, and gather in a beautiful spot with friends to explore and celebrate your true self? Turns out, you can.

Done. Decision made.

And so I joined 30 others from across the country for five full days of meditation and spiritual talks. The common wish was to gain the tools needed to move through this world of suffering with stabilized open hearts. For those five days I truly, and probably for my first time as an adult, completely disconnected, knowing all would be well. Showing up and not being responsible for anything but sitting on my cushion at 7am was pretty gosh darn freeing. Each day, I was able to allow myself to rest deeper in the vastness of being, rather than doing.



Hiking to the stupa with this beautiful group of beings brought to mind the frightened and fragmented person I was eight years ago. This time, rather than seeking the courage to face cancer, I sought the courage to move through life with self-compassion and kindness and still bring forward the work I am called to do, with joy.



I'll be keeping you posted on how this goes!

In parting let me share the words of my meditation instructor, retreat leader, and NYT Bestselling author, Susan Piver,

"The more I was able to own and proclaim my tenderness, the more badass I became."

Living Creatively: Courage

Let me ask you this question: If you could put your fears aside, what would you be doing differently right now in your life? Would it be a new career path, a change in how or with whom you spend your time, a new routine for starting each day, or would you learn a new skill set? Whatever comes up, that

thing that popped into your head before you quickly discounted it for being ridiculous or impossible is probably exactly what you need to take note of.

You know deep in your heart that you were born with a unique gift and it may just be possible that you haven't allowed yourself to deliver it completely. What prevents this from happening for most of us is **fear**. Our voice of fear can quickly and easily drown out any whisper of courage, but that's not how it has to be.

When we operate out of a place of fear, rather than living courageously, there will always be a reason to withhold our gift. Nelson Mandela, one of the most courageous figures of my lifetime once said, *"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it."* Trust me on this. If you are waiting around for the fear to go away, it won't. What we all must learn to do is push through our discomfort and take action.



This applies to the big things in our lives for sure, but also to the everyday opportunities that allow us to practice courage. Standing up for someone being ridiculed, offering help to a stranger, choosing not to spend our time socializing with people who do not align with our values. These are simple but profound acts of courage.

I am so fortunate in my work to interact with individuals who have chosen to turn down the volume of their fears and work

from a place of courage. With that effort, they are able to live life creatively, fulfilling their dreams and eventually delivering their unique gift to the world.

Let me share a few stories of individuals who have chosen to triumph over their fear.

- A bright young female executive has dedicated her time and efforts to the success of the startup she is employed by. From her growing exhaustion, she becomes aware of the lack of respect and recognition for her contributions by her male superiors. As she gains clarity, she chooses to resign, take a year off to travel, and returns to start her own company.
- A middle aged man walks away from the pace and pressure of the tech world to create a more meaningful life. Along the way he rediscovers his passion for woodworking, studies to become a health coach, and falls in love.
- A young mother, fed up with a lifetime of battling chronic illness, completely revamps the eating habits of her family of seven. In the process she discovers her own courage and determination and turns around her health as well as the health and well being of her whole family
- Two Hispanic middle aged sisters decide there is a better path to health than they witness from their peers. They shed the cultural norms they were raised with, fully embraced a plant-based diet, commit to daily exercise and meditation, and look younger each time I see them!

These individuals are on their way. They have dialed down the volume of their fears and tapped into courage. They were willing, for one reason or another, to listen to their inner calling and, because of their courage, they are living creatively. That my friends is what we all must do. Some days are a little easier than others, but courage prevails.

“Creative Living is a path for the brave.”

-Elizabeth Gilbert

Heroic Pet Efforts

Heroic Pet Efforts



Wherever in the world you may be reading this, you have most certainly been touched emotionally by the horrific unfolding of news since Hurricane Harvey made landfall on the Texas

coast. The enormity of it all continues to be more than overwhelming. So many stories and so much love, all at this critical time when we Americans have been questioning whether or not compassion still existed in our country. Austinites, who remained well out of harm's way, have been granted a tremendous opportunity to give of themselves these past days to make a difference. Austin's Mayor Adler opened the door and heart of our city for incoming evacuees and they have been well received.

Today I want to spotlight the work of one amazing animal rescue organization that will get my donations until the end of my days. Austin Pets Alive! fully staged and staffed an impromptu tent shelter in a Katy, Texas parking lot, 30 minutes from downtown Houston, and began receiving animals early last week. Staff and volunteers from the Austin based program received hundreds of animals by the end of the first day and over the course of five more days rescued over 1700 animals. By Thursday, a call was put out for Austinites to shuttle these Houston area rescues to APA! headquarters downtown if medical care was needed or to a donated warehouse in north Austin where they would be screened and matched with foster homes.



The fact that this whole operation was orchestrated literally overnight and Facebook served as a their means of

communicating specific needs was astounding. Shuttles continued into the weekend when I was fortunate enough to make a rescue run with my daughter Meghan.

Not sure of how many or what exactly we'd be transporting back, we filled her SUV with supplies and animal crates and had a bit fun with our imaginations on the two hour trip. Approaching Katy, it wasn't hard to miss APA!'s tent city and we soon found ourselves in line with a fleet of cars, trucks, and vans all up for whatever cargo needed a ride to safety. We inched our way forward over the next hour and watched kennel after kennel be dispersed by hardworking volunteers. As we pulled forward into position and confirmed our destination was Austin, we were told we'd be transporting just one dog. Yes, just one, but she was in distress and in desperate need of a/c and a peaceful ride to receive medical care. They brought her over in a crate and loaded up one very worried golden hound mix with the saddest eyes I've ever seen. Needless to say, over the next two hours she stole our hearts and by the time Austin's skyline was in view we knew she'd eventually be coming home with me.



When we approached the APA! headquarters, we joined in another long queue of cars being sorted according to needs by the young volunteers. We were directed to the building that was housing pets needing medical care. If I wasn't already impressed with APA!, what we observed next was astounding. After some communications between volunteers, a vet tech and

assistant came right out to us. Due to the heat, overcrowding in the buildings, and condition of our sweet rescue, they agreed to do all they needed from the air conditioned comfort of Meghan's car. And so, for the next 45 minutes, they went through their tests and checks allowing, who we would soon call Grace, to stay put and as relaxed as possible. Three things were determined: she was old, exhausted, and had infected ears. Other than that, all our gal needed was a bath, dinner, some peace and quiet, and love. That was exactly what Grace received, in addition to some Gemmotherapy and a Homeopathic remedy for trauma.

After 48 hours, I can safely say the only condition this ol' gal is suffering from is heartbreak and I can't even begin to imagine the story she could tell. However, this morning, for the first time since meeting Grace, the rescue hound from Houston greeted me with what I know now as her "happiness bay" and a wagging tail. For now, she's got a safe place to be until APA!'s reuniting efforts are in full force and maybe, just maybe we can find the someone on the other side of her heartache.



APA!'s work is still going strong as they shift support to include Beaumont, TX. This organization is doing an incredible job of helping pets find their way to safety and into foster

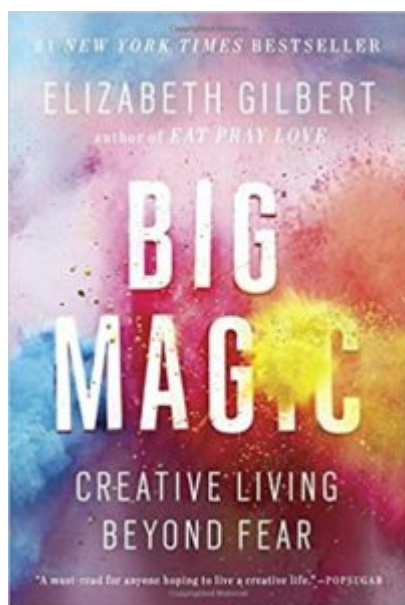
homes with the aid of like minded rescue groups from across the country. If you'd like to help their work today, I know they would appreciate whatever amount you can give.

"I do not at all understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us."

– Anne Lamott

Big Magic, Elizabeth Gilbert

Book Review: Big Magic, Elizabeth Gilbert



Each morning while staying in the Pyrenees, I would wake ahead of the family and hike up the ridge crest trail near our holiday home. There, I would find a sitting spot and, along with nature awakening around me, welcome the day ahead. I would breath in the cool, fresh mountain air scented with dewy grasses and wildflowers, experiencing with a sense of awe the

expansiveness of possible opportunities and adventures each day offered. And there, with the a 360 degree view of endless mountains, I would ask myself,

“How might I live my life in such a way to remain this open each and every day?”

In doing so, how might I push myself to the edge of my discomfort and live even more courageously than I ever have before?”

Knowing my mountain top experience would be short lived as our days in the Pyrenees came to a close, I went in search of some tangible guidance for my quest. Books and real live mentors have been generous to me in this lifetime so I did a little searching. It wasn't long before I came across *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert, the famed author of *Eat, Pray, Love*. It wasn't her subsequent books that convinced me as I had failed to gain any connection with her more recent works. Rather, what hooked me on *Big Magic* was that within the sample chapter I downloaded, Gilbert put forth a similar question to mine, but worded in a much more direct fashion:

“Do you have the courage to bring forth the treasures hidden within you?”

That answer, my friends, was exactly what I wanted to know for myself. The courage I sought and that we all are called to seek is what it takes to live out the lives we were born to live. Gilbert echoes my spiritual belief that this question must be posed to all of humanity, not just the “gifted” for we **all** are gifted. Each and every soul is created with a unique treasure that can only be brought forth with courage and a few other attributes to support it is safely delivered. Just imagine all of the suffering that could be resolved if even half of us believed this to be true and acted upon it.

Gilbert cleverly organizes the book around precisely the tools needed to live in such a way and, beyond courage, those

include:

- Enchantment
- Permission
- Persistence
- Trust
- Divinity

With each chapter she offers up real life examples and includes personal struggles of her own as well. No doubt a deep topic, Gilbert is able to remain both light and focused in her approach. The map she creates is so clear and profoundly in alignment with my personal experience that I am drawn to use it as a guide for a future blog series on Creative Living.

While *Big Magic* can easily be a weekend read, I found myself slowing down and savoring each chapter, in no hurry to let go of the imagery and awareness it created. Groundbreaking not because she reveals shocking truths, but for just the opposite reason. The words of *Big Magic* absolutely affirm the knowingness and truths we all have hidden within ourselves that must be summoned with courage and more to release.

Help Texas Today

Help Texas Today!



No doubt you, along with the rest of our nation, are more than well aware of the devastation that hit Texas, particularly parts of the Gulf Coast and Houston, over this past weekend. When faced with the horrific images and narrative of disasters, we are instantly reminded of two things, regardless of our belief system.

- Everything that exists, material or mental, is impermanent
- Nature possesses one powerful and unpredictable force

The emotion that often then arises is a sense of helplessness or powerlessness and the question of, "*What can I possibly do?*" Well, I'm going to help you out here, because there is something you can do. In fact, there are two things you can do and by doing them you will not only shift your own energy and emotional state but also those whose lives your actions impact.

1. Make a financial donation, whatever you can afford, share what you can, but do it now. Don't wait! Texas

Monthly suggests this excellent list of Donation Centers by topic. If that feels overwhelming, may I suggest one of these straightforward options? The Red Cross or Team Rubicom, a nonprofit who deploys volunteer vets trained in search and rescue.

2. Commit to spending 5, 10, or 15 minutes a day practicing Tonglen meditation. Tonglen is the simple practice of sending and receiving. Learn how directly from Pema Chodron in less than 5 minutes. You and those whose lives you touch will benefit from your practice.

Like most of the families in south Texas, we took some time to prepare Friday for what promised to be a whopper of a storm. We stocked up the kitchen, bought our supply of Mary candles and flashlight batteries, filled a reserve water supply, and secured the house and outside garden for the high winds expected. And when early thunderstorms threatened, I closed up the office and saw that Aaron and Aubrey got out the door and home to their families. Then we all settled in for a weekend of watch and wait. Having had the past 10 years of experiences with Texas drama, I know it would be an all or nothing deal. Here, politics and weather all always extreme.

The steady downpour began about 3am Saturday and, with only intermittent pauses continued, until just this morning. We had high winds and heavy rains with the downing of whole trees and limbs, but, unlike Houston, Austin sits on rolling hills. We have our problems with low water crossings and in populated areas south of the city along the river, but there is no way the entire city could ever flood. What the towns along the coast and Houston have experienced is devastating and will be for weeks and months to come. So, I ask you each today as you sit in your dry comfortable setting, to take action. Share what you have in the form of a financial donation and set aside time for meditative moments throughout your day.

“Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness.”

– *Dalai Lama XIV*