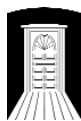


What's Important Now

**Shedding the
Past So You Can
Live in the Present**

John Kuypers



Present Living & Learning, Inc.

www.presentliving.com

Comments from audiences and seminar groups about John Kuypers and his teachings on living in the present:

On the main message...

"I liked your message: Believe that everybody does the best they can."

"I loved the idea of coming to peace with my imperfections."

"How important it is to live in the present! Relax and live now."

"Some insight into how to face fear."

"Be comfortable with myself."

"How important it is to try to be a kid again."

"Amazing insights – simple and powerful."

"You left me feeling hopeful about myself."

On John Kuypers' teaching style...

"John presented a new way of thinking with easily understood analogies."

"Lots of practical, helpful, timely tips."

"I will certainly use what I've learned in my day-to-day activities."

"Great job...explained complex subject matter in simple language that made it easier for everyone to grasp the intended message."

"Far more than I expected."

Prologue: The Journey

FUEL FOR THE JOURNEY

If you want to discover the personal excellence that comes from shedding the past so you can live in the present, you have to know what that looks like and feels like for you. You will recognize it as those times when you felt that you were at your best, regardless of whether you were immersed in your favorite activity, or surviving a disaster. You must rekindle your memories of those times in order to provide fuel for your journey towards knowing and doing what's important now for you.

I want to share with you an experience that kept my desire to discover what was right for me alive over many years. I had a magical time when I was twenty-three years old. For nearly two years, I soared with a deep joy and confidence, accomplishing more than I ever dreamed possible for a Dutch immigrant farmer's son. My soaring began when I was fresh out of university with a business degree in hand. I was starting my dream career as a marketing whiz kid-in-training with a multinational consumer products company. Within less than a month of starting the job, I was on the company jet with the president of the U.S. division. Already, I was a big wheel! Six months later, I completed my sales training in Montreal. Not only did I become fluently bilingual, I over-achieved on all my sales targets. When I returned

to the head office in Toronto, I had already developed a reputation as a “shooter”. My confidence soared even more when I took an assertiveness training course—just to accompany my somewhat timid girlfriend. To my great surprise, I was the one who really benefited.

I especially noticed the effects at work. For a twenty-three year old guy, I sounded as if I actually knew how to run the multi-million dollar slice of business on which I was a mere product assistant. I was decisive and I had good ideas. I was also learning at a phenomenal pace. At the end of each work day, I felt that I had great clarity about what I had done well or not. I could see clearly the changes that I wanted to make in how I did my job. I applied those changes the very next day. My bosses were impressed. I was pretty impressed myself.

Even if I made a mistake or offered up a dumb idea, I felt unperturbed. My managers viewed me as a rising star. They seemed to see only my positive qualities. The more they believed in me, the more I believed in myself. I had a tremendous feeling of ownership concerning the product that I was working on. I lay awake at night, thinking about ways in which I could motivate Canadians to buy more of my company’s brand of fabric softener. Many of my ideas were well received. I was rewarded with two promotions and numerous pay raises within my first two years.

Sometimes I wondered how I could have become such a successful, popular guy, when I had always thought of myself as a loser. I decided that if I had been able to get this far, I must be capable of being anyone I wanted to be. All I had to do was put my mind to it. Somehow my hard work and determination had made me a hotshot businessman. There was no other way in which I could explain my unexpected and extraordinary success.

My success did not stop at the office door, either. That same summer of 1981, I played softball for the company baseball team. I had never been a great hitter. In a good year, I would hit around .300. That summer I was on fire. I finished the year batting .490 against some excellent pitchers. I was the top offensive player on our team and one of the top hitters in the league. I seemed to perform especially well when we were under pressure, making clutch hits that won games for us.

Socially, I developed many new friendships. Whether it was business lunches, parties, or interdepartmental baseball games, I was a well-liked and popular guy. Women were attracted to me, although I didn't do any dating. I was still feeling too wounded from my recently failed relationship.

Sometimes I felt as if I were living in someone else's body. It was as if I had entered a whole new world, where I had checked out my old brain at the door, and put on a new one instead. My old brain said I was a loser. My new brain said I was a winner. I made a concerted effort not to think about my success. I was afraid that thinking about it would jinx it. I found myself accepting my performance as if it were the most natural thing in the world, even though a little voice inside me was having its doubts. Could this really be happening to *me*? Yet I felt a growing confidence that it would last. I just kept hitting like a machine—on the field, at work, and socially.

At the end of the season, we were in the final game of the playoffs. We were losing and we weren't getting any runs. I was late for the game and the coach was visibly annoyed with me. He decided to leave me on the bench. When the fifth inning began, I could hear some of my teammates muttering just loudly enough for him to hear, "C'mon coach, we've got our best hitter sitting on the bench. Watcha' doing, coach?"

Finally, the coach relented. I got up to bat. Same confidence. Same “I’ve got all the time in the world to hit this baby” kind of feeling. On the third pitch, I cracked the ball to a hole in center field and raced down the path to first base. Boy, did I feel some satisfaction in that moment. Not about rubbing it in my coach’s face. But rather that I had come through in the crunch. I really loved myself in that moment. No ego stuff. Just self-trust. I could count on me.

The next season began with high hopes and high expectations. I felt quite nervous. There was a voice inside my head asking the same question over and over: “Can I do it again?” The thought of not being able to repeat my star performance scared me. Everyone on the team and even everyone in the company was now aware that I was a “great” hitter. I desperately wanted to live up to their expectations. As the season unfolded, my fears came true. I lost my touch. I struck out a lot. I hit directly into the opposing team’s fielders. I felt my spirits sink deeper and deeper. A little voice inside my head said it all. “See, you really are a loser.”

Meanwhile, back at the office, I grew dissatisfied with my job. Despite my rapid ascent up the corporate ladder, I decided that the company was not growing fast enough to meet my ever-expanding expectations. At twenty-four, I was pretty sure I knew how to run the company. Despite that, top management still kept doing things the same old way. I convinced myself that I had to find a new job with a more aggressive company.

I left that job in my third year. On my first day at the new job, my heart sank. I immediately knew that I had not done what was right for me. Suddenly, I saw all the warts of the new company. It lacked the positive spirit and supportive environment of my old company. Only then did I fully appreciate the good things about my first job. I spent seven

miserable months with that second company before leaving to begin an entirely different career adventure. After eight months, that move did not work out, either. To my delight, one of the managers at my first company offered to hire me back. I decided to accept, grateful for a second chance. But I just didn't feel the same. After two "failed" career moves, my confidence was deeply shaken. I felt embarrassed that I had gone crawling back to my first job. After just four months, I made my fourth career move in a year and a half, determined to make it a success. I stayed with that company for the next nine years.

How we make sense of the major successes and losses in our lives determines what we think is important now for us. When we make the "right" moves, we are brimming with confidence, certain of who we are, what we want and how we are doing it. When we make "mistakes", experience "failure" and "tragedy", we open ourselves to self-doubt. When good things happen, we soar. When bad things happen, we crash. Our sense of peace, our sense of happiness, and our sense of self-worth are inextricably interwoven with what's happening around us. We know something's wrong yet we are unclear about what it is because we are depending on events outside of ourselves to give us our self-confidence.

I want to briefly review my magical year with you, so that you might appreciate the major themes of this book on discovering what's important for you, in the present moment. What happened that helped me feel confident, outgoing, and decisive? What happened that spun me into a cautious, conservative state of mind? If these themes stir you, then you will benefit greatly from learning how to live more fully in the present.

First of all, I felt that I had the permission, support, and encouragement of my managers and my colleagues to be the

best I could be, mistakes and all. Feeling accepted is the core foundation to finding the courage to be who we really are, in the moment. However, I depended on other people for that. *We need to learn how to feel accepted within ourselves, even when other people no longer give us the support they once did.*

Taking the assertiveness course also helped me tremendously. I began to believe that I was entitled to have opinions, feelings, and desires, even if other people disagreed. I became willing to speak up, without fearing that someone might ridicule me or that I might lash out at them for disagreeing with me. *We must have the courage to say and do what's right for us despite experiences in the past when doing so felt dangerous.*

Ironically, my success became a barrier to living in the present. I became so convinced of my brilliance at work that I wanted to do more than I had the right or the responsibility to do. I did not accept that top management was doing the best they could. I wanted them to run the company the way I thought they should. When I left that first job, I was hoping deep down that top management would be sorry I had left and would make changes to the company. When we pressure others to do what *we* think they should be doing, we are naturally led to become anxious or obsessive about it. *We need to learn how to do what's important for us without an intention to pressure others to change what they think is right for them.*

Even my baseball success led me to stop living in the present. I became so anxious about failing that my mind was no longer clear and empty, focused solely on the coming pitch. Instead, I felt self-conscious about what my teammates would think if I failed to get a hit each time. The more I struck out, the more I felt a self-imposed pressure to do even better the next time. Becoming anxious reduces our effectiveness, thereby *increasing* the likelihood that we will fail. *We need to learn to detach ourselves from future outcomes*

based on past results so that we can totally focus on what we are doing now.

If you want the joy and the deep self-confidence that come with living in the present, take a moment right now and search your memory for those moments when you really loved who you were. Whether it was a day ago or a lifetime ago, allow the details to come into focus on the screen of your mind. Remember how good you felt about yourself. In those moments lay hidden the many secrets of how you were everything you wanted to be. Now you must learn how to extract those secrets without trying to reproduce the situation itself. That time is now over, yet that person who soared to great heights is still alive and well within you.

THE REWARDS

When you are living in the present, you *know* what's important for you, and you act on that knowing. You are able to see the big picture and the smallest detail all at the same time. Your sense of timing and your instincts become sharp. Time itself slows down and you adapt fluidly to the reality of the present moment. You become an extraordinary and powerful human being. Great athletes show us just how true this is. Even if you are not an athlete yourself, you can learn something from them. After all, no person's body is independent of their mind, their heart, or their soul. When you are fully present, all four of these dimensions of your humanness are operating in harmony, letting you be as excellent as you can be.

Wayne Gretzky has been hailed as the greatest hockey player who ever lived. Hockey experts often describe him as having a sixth sense. They say he could see the whole ice surface at once, recognize the pattern of how the play was unfolding, and intuitively make the right decision about where

to pass or shoot the puck. By his own admission, he did not possess superior skating or shooting skills. Wayne Gretzky is simply an incredibly present athlete.

In the summer of 2000, Tiger Woods won the PGA championship, the only one of the four major championships he had yet to win. When asked afterwards how he handled the pressure of making a crucial chip shot on the last hole that ultimately led to his victory, he said, "I just tried to stay in the moment and focus on the shot I had to make." Tiger Woods did not let his mind drift to the importance of making that shot, or to worrying about what people would think if he failed. His entire being was focused on what was important for him in that moment.

At the 1999 World Track and Field Championships, Canadian sprinter Bruny Surin lost the one-hundred-metre dash to American Maurice Greene. Greene set a new world record of 9.79 seconds. However, Surin was leading the race for the first forty metres. When Surin was asked afterwards what happened at that moment in the race, he said that he became aware that he was beating Greene and became elated at the possibility that he might actually win. At that moment, Greene raced past him to win gold and set a new world record. Surin had let his mind drift to the future, a future that was still five seconds away.

All great athletes describe their talents at the moment of truth with one common reality: Time slows down. Great home-run hitters say the baseball slows down for them, even though it is streaking in at over ninety miles per hour. They say that the ball looks like the size of a pumpkin. They feel they have lots of time to decide whether to swing or not. These athletes are incredibly present in those moments.

It is not that you and I don't know how to live in the present in our own less glamorous lives. We are often pres-

ent when we are pursuing a favorite pastime or hobby. Gardening, cooking, watching a fire crackle, and mountain biking are just a few of the hundreds of ways in which we can get into times of flow that could be described as being fully present. The key question for you and me is whether we can create that same experience for ourselves when we feel under pressure. When the chips are down, our ability to be present measures whether we are able rise to our full potential. I learned a lesson on how we can do this from a professional basketball coach, long before I had heard of living in the present.

I was at a senior management meeting in Connecticut. Our president invited Pat Riley, then the coach of the NBA's New York Knicks, to speak to us. Pat Riley told us about the concept that he used with his players to get the best out of them:

W.I.N. What's Important Now.

I was struck by this simple idea. "What's Important Now" was Pat Riley's way of helping his players to be fully present while they were on the court. He talked about the distractions that his professional basketball players had to deal with—endorsements, business deals, contracts, money management, women, and so on. I could certainly imagine how easily any human being could get distracted by these seductive things, and how these distractions could reduce a person's effectiveness.

I was also impressed by one other aspect of What's Important Now. These were top players. Their skills were among the best in the world. They did not need a lot of skill-based teaching and instruction. What they needed was the right *attitude* to succeed. In Riley's experience, motivating his players to be present was the most powerful tool that he had

to help them perform to the top of their game... to be the best they could be... superstars in their field. He knew they could achieve greatness if they devoted all of their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual selves to that one thought: What's Important Now.

Is it any different for the rest of us? When we focus on What's Important Now, we become the best we can be during our own most challenging moments. Whether we are dealing with a rebellious child, persisting with an annoying repair job around the house, or leading an important business meeting, we are deciding that this activity is *the most important thing* we could be doing in our lives in this moment. We are not experiencing an urge to be somewhere else, to do something else, or to think about something else.

To achieve this wonderful state of mind, you must know who you are. You must trust yourself that you will do what is right for you, without having overly pre-planned your actions, and without the memory of past wounds holding you back. Mark Twain once said, "I have worried about a great many things in my life. And a few of them actually happened." To experience the joy, the self-confidence, and the excellence that comes with living in the present, you must find a way to let go of what you think *should* be happening, in order to immerse yourself in what *is* happening. The purpose of this book is to teach insights and techniques that will help you to uncover how your past is infiltrating and distorting your ability to *know* and *do* what's important now for you.

WHAT IS "THE PRESENT"?

The present is what is happening when you strip away all the resentments of your past and all the worries you have about your future. To live in the present is to live as if the

past never existed and as if the future were irrelevant. Living in the present is a vision for life that is achievable in *any* moment, yet is unattainable in *every* moment. None of us is that perfect.

To live in that seemingly surreal state of mind requires one thing: a deep self-confidence that you are good enough. In order to live in the present, you must trust that you will be able to handle whatever comes your way, without undue thought or preparation. When we were toddlers around the age of two, we had that deep self-trust. We knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that we were good enough, because we had no concept that we could be anything else but good enough. We were at ease with who we were. We were open and curious about each new moment. We had no expectations about what was *supposed* to happen. We didn't judge events or people as good or bad, nor did we blame anyone. Instead, we adapted, showing our feelings in the moment and without reservation. Our joy was complete joy. Our anger and our tears were full and intense. We recovered from the setbacks of life in minutes. We were not self-conscious about what we were doing or about how we looked while doing it. Life was an adventure that we explored passionately and intensely.

As an adult seeking to know and do what's important now when facing uncertainty, you must rediscover this child-like state of mind. You will find it when you know in your heart that you are *already* prepared for this moment. Then you will be free to be true to who you really are at any-time, anywhere. Your joy will abound because you have no reason to fear what might happen if you make a mistake or if you don't do things the way someone else would want you to do them. You are good enough, even if others disagree.

When you do what's important now for you, you create a past that leaves you ready to handle the present. By default, the future is taking care of itself as you make decisions that are acceptable to you no matter what happens tomorrow. You no longer give yourself reasons to feel self-doubt, anxiety, or resentment. You are doing the best you can. You accept that what happens next is not in your control. You trust that you will handle whatever comes your way, no matter how fabulous or awful it may be.

When you are fully present, you are open and vulnerable. You say and do whatever comes to your mind without filtering it. You disclose your true feelings, right in the moment. You follow your inner spirit, trusting that you are doing what is right for you in that moment. If you don't get the result you wanted, you don't judge yourself or others as having failed. It's just what's happening in this moment. Your only question is, what's important for me in this new moment? In this way, your excellence is allowed to emerge from within you in ways that you may never have dreamed possible.

You might appreciate that this can also be a very dangerous way to live. You might say or do something that someone in your life is not going to like. You might offend someone important at work. You might do something impulsive, like having a sexual fling or quitting your job. You might spend yourself into a deep debt. You might even lose control of your emotions and do something vindictive or cowardly that you might later painfully regret. For these reasons, you need to feel very safe in order to dare to be present. When you expose who you really are, unfiltered and unguarded, you are very vulnerable. Is it a coincidence that we typically only show the "dark" side of our personalities to those whom we love the most? We don't yell at our boss or at our customers. We yell at our spouses, our children, and perhaps our employees. We

feel safe with them. We know we can be who we really are when we are with people who love us or who have no power over us.

In order to live more fully in the present, we must learn how to feel safe even when a situation feels threatening to us. We must learn how to risk being vulnerable even when we can get seriously hurt, emotionally or physically. Does this not explain the appeal of “extreme” sports? When a person is climbing the side of a mountain with only a thin rope separating them from certain death, that person becomes very present. Is this not also what great athletes do in the last minutes of a championship game? They are vulnerable to the risk of disappointing their fans, yet they remain focused on doing what’s important now for them, in order to get what they want in that moment—victory. They put out of their minds any fear of the consequences if they fail to perform. They feel safe within themselves, at least in that situation, knowing that they are doing the best they can regardless of what results occur. If they don’t do this, then their self-doubt will most assuredly lead to a decline in their ability to perform with excellence.

Being capable of doing what’s important now for you is a paradox. You must feel safe *especially* when a situation feels dangerous. Learning to be more present is therefore entirely about creating for yourself the ability to feel safe, *no matter what is happening around you*. You create this for yourself when you are able to seek fulfillment from within yourself, rather than searching for it from outside sources. When you feel fulfilled from within, you will feel good enough to make the mistakes that you will inevitably make when you dare to do what’s important for you, right in the moment. When you are fully present, you are accepting of who you are. Your sense of self-worth is not linked to the world around

you. Your every thought, feeling, and action is yours alone. In contrast, the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others are theirs alone. There is no such thing as blame, because they didn't "do it" to you, and you didn't "do it" to them. Life is happening and you are merely adapting to it. The journey hurts because you are giving up your desire to have power and influence over others. The rewards are sweet, however, because you are gaining power over yourself, the only person over whom any of us truly have control.

This separation of yourself from the world around you is not to be confused with building a wall around yourself and being insensitive to the feelings and needs of others. Indeed, the effect is quite the opposite. Because you are so open and vulnerable, you feel a tremendous compassion for those who are suffering. Yet you are aware at all times that their suffering is not your suffering. You are aware that it is not your duty to change, fix or alter their life experience, even if you think you "know" what's better for them more than they know themselves.

When you are present, you are not needy. You don't "need" others to change who they are or how they behave in order for you to feel safe or loved. You don't "need" positive or instant gratification in order to feel good about yourself. Your sense of love and well-being comes from within. If you feel unsafe, you trust that you will do what you need to do in order to feel at peace again.

To be present is to be living in a state of consciousness. You may do things out of habit, but nothing you do is an unconscious habit. Rather, you are very intentional. Every word, gesture, and deed is intentional. By the same token, you are highly conscious of what others say and do. Instead of being lost in your own thoughts, you are tuned in to the world around you. The result is that other people feel your

“presentness” in a deep way. Paradoxically, you are much more connected to them because you are no longer reacting to them as if your sense of self-worth were affected by what they say or do to you. Because you feel complete, you can set your own needs aside and simply be present with them, giving them the love, empathy, or advice that are truly helpful to them. You don’t act out of a need to feed your ego.

When you are present, you are tuned in to the four dimensions of your body, your mind, your heart, and your soul, all at once. You are aware of how you feel within your body. You are tuned in to your emotions. You are in charge of your thoughts, rather than having your thoughts race frenetically in your mind. You are also connected to your soul, that part of you that directs you towards some higher purpose for your life beyond the need for instant gratification. All this is happening for you at the same moment in time. You feel fully integrated. Your mind’s eye sees what your physical eyes see. You feel energized and passionate about what you are doing. Your thoughts are focused on what is happening, and you adjust and adapt your actions accordingly in order to do what’s right for you. Your soul resonates with a deep peace that you are living this moment as you were meant to live it.

When you are fully present, you become open to a new way of making decisions in your life, using your own “sixth sense”. Your sixth sense is your “Inner Knowing”, that part of you which is not logical or emotional. You seek to develop this part of you as your surest guide for knowing what’s important now for you. You accept that this “knowing” is distinct and separate from thinking, which is merely logic and therefore only as good as the facts and skills that you possess. You understand that “knowing” is also not your feelings. Though your feelings may be powerful, they are

merely your heart bringing the past back into the present. How can you be sure that your feelings about this present moment will bring about the same result as the last time? You cannot. Only your Inner Knowing rises above your thinking and your feeling. Learning how to recognize and act on your Inner Knowing is the greatest tool for discovering what's important now for you by living in the present.

THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

The journey towards living more fully in the present is like traveling down a “yellow brick road”, as Dorothy did in *The Wizard of Oz*. You must feel motivated by the idea that there is a Land of Oz, where you will truly feel happy with yourself and your life. You must feel willing to face many frightening obstacles along the way. You must do this knowing that you have no idea whether you will ever find this mystical place.

The Land of Oz is a state of mind in which you feel good about who you are, what you want, and how you do things. This is the place where you will no longer feel you need to improve in order to be a good-enough person. All your desires to make changes in your life will go away, to be replaced by a desire to know who you are and to be true to yourself. You will still be “improving”, but your reason will have changed from trying to be good enough to wanting to fulfill your purpose in life.

For this journey to appeal to you, you must decide that this is a state of mind worth finding. Otherwise, the enormous barriers to getting there will most assuredly knock you off the path. The barriers are the many reasons why you don't *already* believe that you are good enough right now. Like the Lion, the Tin Man, and the Scarecrow, at the end of the journey you may discover that you *already* have the courage, the

heart, and the intelligence to be good enough to do what's important now for you. This is precisely what makes this a frightening journey at times. You will find it terrifying to face the possibility that you tried so hard to be *better* than you are, when the "real you" was good enough all along.

When we try to be better than good enough, we erect walls around who we really are. We do this with the best of intentions. From infancy to adulthood, we learn from our parents, mentors, friends, and from life itself that we must be a certain kind of person if we are to be loved and successful. We might learn at age four, for example, that having temper tantrums results in our parents' being angry with us. So we learn to put up a wall around that part of us that wants to have temper tantrums. At the time we erect that wall, it serves us. But behind this wall, we are hiding part of who we really are, from others and from ourselves. In this way, our walls ultimately also make us blind to our "real" selves.

Removing a wall is very frightening. We erected that wall to protect ourselves from being hurt. We put it up in order to fit into how other people defined "good enough" for us. We learned that to have a temper tantrum might have painful consequences for us, such as rejection, criticism, humiliation, and attack. To tear down a wall is to expose ourselves once again to the risk of more pain and heartache.

Overcoming our innate desire to have that temper tantrum in the first place is the real secret to succeeding on this journey. When we have our walls up, we are *suppressing* who we are out of fear that our real selves might do something we'll regret. By facing our fears that we might actually do just that, we give ourselves the opportunity to *overcome* that dark side of our personalities. Then we can risk being who we really are without fearing that we will go on an angry rampage, or collapse in a weeping puddle of hopeless

futility. Then we can truly dare to live in the present.

Facing each wall is frightening. That is why it is so vital to appreciate the rewards of being present. No sane person would otherwise want to go on this journey. Our fear of what might happen without that wall serves us. Our fear warns us that we are in danger. To then go ahead and do exactly what our fear is telling us *not* to do is...painful. If you are like me, at the moment of truth, you will want to bolt as fast as you can. Your memory of the rewards of being present is all that you will have to keep yourself from running away.

Each time you dare to cross through a doorway, you will likely experience powerful and bone-chilling emotions. If you consider acting in spite of your fear, the door will open for you, exposing a dark and foreboding abyss. You cannot see what is on the other side. You have to go forward with blind determination. You have to trust that you are not about to step off a cliff, hurtling towards a rocky and bloody bottom, like a skydiver whose parachute does not open. Each time you dare to break through a wall, you will be rewarded with the knowledge that you can live without that wall and survive to tell the tale. You will feel an unloading of a burden that you probably didn't even realize you had been carrying. The burden is your wall. The wall that you erected to protect yourself from being hurt unwittingly becomes a huge weight around your neck, aging you and crushing you. On the other side of each doorway, you will feel a deeper, more open connection to the people and the world around you. You will feel more connected with who you really are.

Crossing a doorway is not a one-time event. All it means is that the next time you stand at such a doorway, you will cross it with greater courage. Each subsequent doorway invites you to uncover your vulnerability at an ever-deeper

level. In that respect, the doorways are tools for you. They are actions that you can take anytime you feel anxious, discontent, or worried about what is happening in your life and about what it might mean for you.

These are the six doorways that will help you shed your past and dare to do what the real you is aching for you to do:

1. **Listen to Your Body:** Facing the fear that your body is trying to tell you something that you do not want to know.
2. **Change Your Beliefs:** Facing the fear that what you have always believed to be true may not be so.
3. **Be Authentic:** Facing the fear of exposing to other people what you are truthfully thinking and feeling.
4. **Risk Disapproval:** Facing the fear of hurtful consequences once you allow others to see your true self.
5. **Let Go of Outcomes:** Facing the fear that you might crumble if your most valued people, possessions, and passions are taken away from you.
6. **Feel Your Feelings:** Facing the fear that you can no longer blame how you feel on other people.

By crossing through these six doorways with ever greater courage, you will begin to strip away the baggage of the past that is clouding your ability to *know* what's important now for you. Indeed, you will begin to build a wellspring of strength from within yourself that will allow you to withstand the enormous pressures you will undoubtedly feel from others around you as you begin to embrace the person you really are, rather than the one they wanted you to be. In doing so, you may not become rich, famous, or find your soul-mate, though any of these things might happen. But

you will be more satisfied with who you are, with what you want, and with how you do what you are doing, regardless of what results you get for your efforts. You will feel the joy of being connected to the real you and to the world around you as it really is. You will know in your own heart that you are doing the best you can because you are focusing all of your body, mind, heart, and soul on what's important now for you. Is there anything more that you can ask of yourself?

Here are some closing thoughts about *The Journey*...

Remember...

- Keep a vision in your mind of a time when you were everything you wanted to be, letting it pull you forward when you feel defeated.
- Each of us is the best we can be when we are fully present, focused yet relaxed, curious yet non-judgmental, committed yet flexible.
- You will have the self-trust it takes to live fully in the present when you can create for yourself a deep sense of emotional safety, regardless of what is happening in your life.

Watch for...

- Pushing yourself too hard. You spent a lifetime building your inner walls of self-protection. You won't tear them all down in a month.

Try this...

- Start writing in a journal. Your self-disclosure will act like a mirror, helping you to see the real you that is hidden behind your walls. Do whatever you have to do in order to safeguard your journal so that you can frankly and openly write down your true thoughts and feelings.