

LIVE A LIFE YOU LOVE

Workbook

7 Steps to a
Healthier, Happier,
More Passionate You

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Introduction

It never ceases to amaze me, that so many people today are so hungry for information and guidance on how to improve their lives. So many of us have felt pressured to design our life based on our standard cultural recipe for happiness and success, a recipe that totally ignores the fact that every one of us is absolutely unique. Along the way, some of us have never even paused to wonder if there might be another more fulfilling way to design a life.

Many people, including myself, internalized the belief that the way to create our best life was to complete our schooling, pursue some kind of “practical” additional training, earn a living through a “good job”, and then buy all the necessary stuff. For others that recipe included, or in the case of many women exclusively consisted of, getting married, having children, and then caring for that family to the exclusion of all other activities. We fulfill all the requirements, check off the boxes on our life list, and then wonder why we feel so empty, or sad, or exhausted.

Of course, there are some people for whom this recipe worked, who enjoy their good jobs or caring for their family – you may be one of them. Nonetheless, I’ve found that even people who are content with the general circumstances of their lives usually still have something that they would like to improve: their health and the quality of their relationships are two common examples.

I first became fascinated with improving human health and wellness over twenty years ago, and my studies have encompassed psychology, nutrition, family dynamics, medicine, mind-body health, motivation, life balance, stress management, creativity, self-development and achievement. This knowledge, combined with my interactions with thousands of patients and my life coaching clients, was further deepened by my own profound life struggles and triumphs.

Strangely enough, I found the latter to be a better and more practical education than all of my years in university.

In the end, I found that I could take almost anyone's life (including my own) and the related challenges and boil it all down to the seven key areas that are featured in my book, *Live a Life You Love: 7 Steps to a Healthier, Happier, More Passionate You*. This workbook is a companion publication to my book, but is also designed to stand alone. (Note: a complimentary downloadable workbook is available for book purchasers but this workbook that you're holding in your hands is an expanded, more detailed print version).

You don't have to read the *Live a Life You Love* book to begin to enjoy the benefits of working through the steps in the workbook, but if you'd like to enrich your experience and growth by reading the stories and tips in the actual book, you can find it in bookstores across North America or via major online booksellers.

Now, back to the seven steps; if any one of these areas is out of balance in your life, or perhaps has simply never gotten much attention, you're unlikely to be able to create lasting well-being and real fulfillment in your life. The good news is, if you're feeling overwhelmed and don't even know where to start, or you'd simply like to steadily improve the quality of your life (and who wouldn't?), these seven steps are a fabulous, comprehensive and surprisingly easy way to organize and focus your efforts. You will be amazed by how quickly you see change, and start to feel better.

This program doesn't require much more than simply finding some time to yourself, and opening this book. You don't have to do the steps in order, though I would recommend that you do the first two before jumping ahead to other steps. It's also the kind of program that you can pick up again at any time and keep going from where you left off. I've deliberately made the pages one-sided, to give

you enough additional space to write any extra thoughts, observations, or notes as you go along.

The most important thing I would recommend is to write the date on the page before you start any set of exercises. It's absolutely amazing, and so satisfying, to come across a book like this, years later, and read your own comments and thoughts. You'll see how far you've come, and how many dreams, plans and positive changes you've fulfilled. In many cases you'll have lived your way into the goals and dreams you describe, and in other cases this workbook will serve as a reminder about things you've promised yourself that you still long to and need to work on.

Congratulations on this new page in your life! I'm so excited for you, and thrilled to be part of your journey.

All my best to you,

Susan Biali, M.D.

Step One:

Allow Yourself to be You

Right now, it's just you and me. Hopefully you've found a quiet place for yourself, where you're relaxed and free of disturbances. This is meant to be enjoyable! When I first really started asking myself these questions, I'd go to a little Italian café around the corner with my journal. I'd order a cup of tea, in a delicate hand-painted teacup, and my favorite cookie, and go to work on dreaming about and planning my future self and life.

I want you to really absorb, right into your very cells, the fact that with me, and on these pages, you're free to be yourself, perhaps for the first time in years – or ever! We're going to leave behind, for the moment, all your ideas about what you should be or do, or what other people might have told you with respect to what you should be or do. You might discover that you do actually agree with some of their opinions, but that's for you and no one else to decide.

If you're worried because you think that you have no idea who you really are, and maybe never have, you're not alone. That's one of the most common comments that I hear from my coaching clients.

Let's begin by having you ask yourself some questions about you:

What do you like best about your life right now? List five things:

What do you like least about your life right now? List five things:

How would the person who knows you best describe you? (You don't have to ask them – though you might find out some interesting things if you do and if you ask them to be absolutely honest)

How do you think most people you know would describe you?

How would you describe yourself, right now? (e.g.: your occupation, appearance, state of mind/mood, health, etc.)

What are you passionate about? (What lights you up? What do you care about or love more than anything else?) List as many things as you'd like to, then circle the one that matters the most to you.

How are you different from anyone else on this earth? What combination of skills or abilities or personality traits do you have that is totally unique? Describe your uniqueness here:

How would you love to be able to describe yourself? (e.g. who would you be, if anything was possible?)

Do you feel that you're truly yourself when it comes to:

1) The person who is closest to you? (yes / no)

Comment/thoughts:

2) *Those you interact with in the outside world? (yes / no)*

Comment/thoughts:

How would you act differently, in your life, if you were really being you? Are there people you wouldn't spend time with, or activities you would stop, or things that you would say no to? List them.

If you could change five key things about your life, right now, what would they be?

If you could have one single wish granted to you, in any aspect of your life (and nothing is too impossible or ridiculous), what would it be?

What did you love to do as a child? What were your passions, what fascinated you, what could you spend all day doing? What did you dream of being “when I grow up”? List everything that you can think of!

Pick one of these things now that you can incorporate into your life today (e.g. rent a movie you loved as a child, go horseback riding in honor of your childhood obsession with horses, make a gingerbread house). What are you going to do, and when?

What “crazy” idea(s) have you had that you’ve never tried, because you thought that it would be impossible, or that people would make fun of you or criticize you? List as many as you can.

Who would you like to be in ten years?

What major steps will you have to take, or what major changes will you have to make, to get there?

What are your general habits, regarding the following areas of life? Are the things that you're doing holding you back from becoming the person you'd like to be and living the life you'd like to live? (Make additional notes if there are things you didn't note on the previous page that relate to this)

1. People I Spend Time With

2. Important Relationships (note that this may be different from #1)

3. Diet and Exercise

4. General Health

5. *Books I read*

6. *TV/Movies I watch*

7. *How I spend my free time*

8. *Finances*

What habits in the same areas would move you forward and take you closer to becoming the person you'd like to be, with the kind of life that you'd like to enjoy?

1. People I Spend Time With

2. Important Relationships (note that this may be different from #1)

3. Diet and Exercise

4. General Health

5. *Books I read*

6. *TV/Movies I watch*

7. *How I spend my free time*

8. *Finances*

This next exercise is extremely important, and can tell you a huge amount of information about; who you really are, what's most important to you, and what directions or changes you might want to start implementing in your life.

Describe a day in your ideal life, no holds barred. Describe this day from the moment you wake up: where are you, how do you feel about your upcoming day, who – if anyone – are you with? Take yourself through this entire day, until you close your eyes at night. Make this a day in which you can do anything you'd like, a day that would represent, to you, a typical day in your most ideal, wonderful, imaginary life:

We'll do more with all this information later - for now, I just wanted to get you started, thinking and dreaming about yourself and your life. Are you starting to feel a little excited about where this may all be leading?

Step Two

Learn to Love Your Self

In our world these days, we're suffering from an epidemic of lack of self-love. "What?" you might ask. "Isn't it more important to be giving, than selfish?" This isn't about being selfish – and that's exactly where many people get stuck.

Many of the clients and public that I speak with tell me that they give much, and often too much, of their time, effort, and attention to others. Typically they neglect their own most basic needs and find themselves exhausted, frustrated, empty and even resentful.

This step isn't about becoming selfish or self-indulgent. It's about filling your own well, so that it naturally overflows and blesses all who are around you. How helpful, really, can a depressed, exhausted, depleted person be to others? Do you know how to fill your own well?

It's important to "do unto others as you would have done unto you", but sometimes we forget to "do unto yourself, as you would do unto others".

Self Care

Proper care of yourself should one of the top, if not *the* top, priorities in your life. I had to learn this myself, and still have to remind myself to do it, every day. If you're looking after yourself properly, you have so much more physical and emotional energy to apply to living your life fully, including helping others.

Lots of people do this backwards, helping others and putting themselves last, until they're so exhausted, and possibly even sick, that they're forced to finally do something to take care of themselves. Does this sound at all like you?

Even if it doesn't sound like you, chances are there are still things you know you could do, for yourself and your health, that you're simply not doing, or don't do enough.

Are there people (or groups of people) in your life, who you tend to give a lot of your time and energy to, so much that you often, end up neglecting your own needs? Write down the names of these people/groups of people:

How could you back off in these areas, and look after your own needs better? (while still contributing to the lives of these people in a meaningful way – unless of course you decide that in some cases you've already done enough and need to move on)

I'm very open about the fact that I tend to: eat improperly and avoid cooking meals when stressed; overeat sweets and baked goods; not eat enough fruits and vegetables; stay up too late; work too hard; not have enough fun. And that's the short list!

In the book *Live a Life You Love*, I write extensively about the common tendency to "reward" ourselves or celebrate with treats (things or behaviors, such as junk food, shopping sprees and alcohol binges) that aren't at all in line with our goals for our lives or long-term health and happiness.

Are there ways that you reward yourself that you tend to regret "the morning after"? List them.

What are some healthier ways that you could reward yourself or celebrate that would feel delightful and fun to you, but would also leave you feeling good about yourself the next day?

In my book I also discuss how many of us engage in ultimately harmful behaviors in compulsive or addictive ways (think overeating, overspending, careless sex, drama-filled relationships) as a way of escaping ourselves and our true purpose in life. If there's any behavior in your life that you do more of than you'd like to, but can't seem to control it despite your best intentions, you'll want to look at that more closely.

What behaviors in your life would you like to do less of or stop altogether, but have a hard time controlling? (These may or may not be related to, or the same as, any problematic "rewards" you listed above)

If you listed any such behaviors, why do you think you engage in that or those behaviors? Is there something that you're avoiding or putting off by doing it/them? What purpose do you think the behavior(s) might serve, if you're totally honest with yourself?

The Semi-Naked Truth

All right – we're going to get personal now. How good are you about physically caring for, grooming, and dressing your body? Are you likely to “let yourself go”, or not pay attention to your appearance, if you think that no one's going to see you or notice?

I have news for you: “you” will see you, and yours is the very most important opinion of all.

If you have challenges with self-esteem, or tend to not have time to care for yourself, I encourage you to make loving yourself a priority. Look after your body, from its clothes right down to its skin.

This doesn't have to become a full-time job. Whether you're going to be at home or in the outside world, take the time to put some clothes on that you feel good in, and pay some basic attention to the presentation of your face and hair, enough to feel good about yourself when you catch your reflection in the mirror. If you make the effort, you'll be amazed at what a difference it makes to your mood, how you feel about yourself, and even your productivity.

Also, if you're the kind of person who neglects any details that aren't visible to the general public, start to pay attention to them, for you. For example, if you wear horrible, unflattering or embarrassingly old underwear, because no one else but you will see it – stop right there. The same goes for the rest of your clothes. Throw out, or donate, anything that's in rough shape, or makes you feel bad or ugly when you wear it. You really deserve better, and when you start to act as if you do, you'll start to believe it (and others will, too!).

How would you rate your “underwear personality”?

How do you feel you look, day to day? Do you take time or care with your appearance at all times?

How do you normally feel when you look in the mirror?

What are you going to start doing, now, to take better care of yourself and your appearance? List five things:

Clearing Out the Clutter:

What kinds of clutter do you have in your life? Are you blocked, overwhelmed, unorganized or chaotic in areas such as your personal space, professional space, social life, calendar, finances, etc.? List all the ways your life feels cluttered.

What is the form of clutter in your life that causes you the most stress on a daily basis, or affects you and your life in the most negative way?

What is the first simple step you can to begin to reduce that clutter?

When are you going to do it?

How will you prevent the clutter from coming back in this area of your life?

Receiving

How do you feel, when you find something that would make the perfect gift for someone you care about. Do you feel happy, or excited?

Now I'll flip this around. What if you were the gift recipient in the above example? How do you normally react when someone gives you a gift? Do you play the "No! You shouldn't have! Why? You shouldn't have spent your money on me – what did you do that for?" game?

If someone offers to help you, let them. If someone pays you a compliment, accept it graciously. If someone gives you a gift, smile and thank

them. Don't tarnish the experience for them by arguing, or insisting that you'll have to pay them back later in some way.

Gracefully and gratefully accepting a well-intentioned gift, compliment, favour, or offer of help is usually the most loving option, both for you and the person who wants to give to you. No matter what you may think, you're worthy of it. We all are, just by existing. So smile, say thank you, and let it in!

When someone wants to give you a gift, or pay for your meal, how do you react?

When someone pays you a compliment, how do you react?

Are you most comfortable being the giver, or the receiver, of gifts/favors/help in relationships? Why? What do you think this says about you? Do you want to change this in any way?

Step Three

Honor Your Body

We've already talked about the importance of caring for the outside of your body. Now, we'll talk about your body from an even more important perspective. Are you aware that when it comes to your health and happiness, your body is your best friend? Do you treat it that way?

If you've been experiencing frequent colds, stress-related illnesses, or other health problems, you might feel angry and frustrated with your body. I see this all the time in my medical and coaching practices. In our culture, we don't have much respect for our body's needs and limits, and push it and medicate it in order to get it to do whatever we want it to.

Most of us want to enjoy vibrant health, have lots of energy, and be successful in our life's work (and life, in general). Yet the way we behave day to day often has the opposite result. We push ourselves to meet career goals or other external demands, deny our body's needs as we do so, and then ignore the body when it tries to get our attention or slow us down. If you want to be successful *and* happy, you need to do everything reasonably within your power to maintain your body's health.

Body Language

I love talking about what I call "Body Language". How does your body talk to you? If you want to enjoy better health, and excellent long-term health, I recommend that you learn to both listen to and interpret your body's messages. It's not hard: most people, when I ask them "what do you think your body is trying to tell you?" know the answer right away. Though you may not always want to admit it to yourself!

Over the years, my body has changed the way it talks to me. Or, perhaps because my life has changed, my choices, emotions and activities now affect my body in different ways. When I was in the wrong job, I was profoundly depressed and got sick all the time. When I was in a stressful, unbalanced romantic relationship, my neck and stomach would hurt. In other difficult and unhealthy situations, I've developed allergies that went away as soon as I did something about the situation.

Lately I've developed migraines that show up as soon as I begin to push myself too hard. I now know that I need to listen to and profoundly respect my body. I take the hint, slow down, and the headaches go away.

I know several people who've even fractured bones through an accident, after a long time period spent pushing and overworking. First their bodies complained through tension-related symptoms such as neck and back pain, and usually they also developed frequent colds and flu, until finally their body just knocked them flat through an injury. I've observed this too many times to believe it to be a coincidence. And usually the "victims" of the accident agree, too.

If you look back on times of your life when you've had difficulties with your health, was there anything particularly difficult, or negative, going on during those times? (List as many episodes as you can think of)

Is there a particular symptom or health problem that you seem to develop fairly regularly? Have you noticed what seems to trigger it or make it worse?

Are you struggling with any health challenge right now? What do you think might be the deeper meaning behind it? What could your body be trying to tell you?

Nutrition for Vibrant Health & Energy

We've all got lots of things we want to do in life, and we want to feel good, and look great, doing them. Does the food you eat help you look good and feel great, or does it do the opposite?

Food ingredients such as white flour or sugar speed up aging, and suppress your immune system. Unfortunately, these are often the kinds of foods we're most likely to reach for when stressed, or busy.

The anti-aging factor really helps motivate me to eat well, especially when I'm stressed and tempted to over-ride my normally good habits. The best part is that the foods that slow down aging also help our bodies create better overall health, wellness and energy, in addition to helping us look our best.

Examples of wonderful anti-aging and health promoting foods include: fish (especially salmon); other high quality lean protein sources such as chicken; whole grains; nuts; olive oil; and colorful fruits and vegetables.

Foods that speed up aging and are hazardous to both your immediate and long-term health include: sugary foods and drinks (especially soft drinks), processed foods, fast foods, deep-fried foods, fatty meats, and anything which contains those nasty trans fatty acids (foods which contain hydrogenated vegetable oils – check those labels!).

Do you eat badly when you're busy, upset or stressed? What do you tend to eat in those circumstances?

What would say are your 5 most common "food sins"?

List 5 simple ways you could start eating better, starting today:

Sleep and Exercise

These are two aspects of a healthy life that we all know we should be getting enough of, but we don't. Why? For most of us, it's because our day-to-day activities and other priorities give us an excuse to shove proper exercise and sleep to the side.

Most of us today are sleep deprived. Did you know that getting less than seven hours of sleep is associated with high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, increased perceived stress, and puts you at higher risk for developing diabetes?

Studies have shown that people who get less than seven hours of sleep a night are actually more likely to eat more and gain weight, because lack of sleep stimulates your body to produce increased levels of appetite and obesity-stimulating hormones.

How many hours, on average, do you sleep every night?

What behaviors or circumstances in your life prevent you from getting enough sleep, or affect the quality of your sleep?

What steps can you take to change this?

Let's talk about exercise now. Do you think of it as an annoying requirement of a healthy life? Do you enjoy it, or hate it?

If my only exercise option was to go to the gym, I'd hate to imagine the shape I'd be in (hint: you wouldn't find me at the gym!). On the other hand, other people I know get depressed if there's no decent gym within a ten block radius. Exercise is essential to all of us, but not all of us like or are designed for the same types of exercise. I love to walk and dance, and not much else. Luckily that seems to be enough to keep me in shape, as long as I do something every day.

If I don't feel like exercising, I remind myself of this: Exercise keeps you young, combats stress, and boosts your immune system (as long as you don't overdo it) and helps you sleep better.

Another bonus of exercise is that it can help significantly with emotional difficulties. If you've got a challenging problem on your mind, a good walk to clear your head has been shown to be one of the best ways to encourage your brain to come up with potential solutions, all on its own. Exercise is also a natural antidepressant – have you had the experience of being in a terrible mood, and then feeling completely wonderful after just a little exercise?

How often do you normally exercise?

What kind of physical activities do you really enjoy, and could see yourself enjoying over the long term?

What would be a simple, fun way that you could increase the amount of exercise and physical activity in your life, starting this week?

Pick a day and time that you're going to start (even better, pick a friend to do it with, and make a date!)

Step Four

Rescue and Revitalize Your Relationships

In today's world, with so many demands on all of us, our most important relationships often end up getting pushed aside, as more urgent demands swoop in to take their place.

How often have you canceled lunch or coffee with a friend, because your schedule suddenly became too packed for you to be able to make it, or because someone called you at the last minute with an urgent commitment that you had to take care of instead?

How many times have you said to someone, sincerely, that you should get together sometime – maybe you said that you would invite them and their spouse over to dinner, or that you two should get together sometime to play tennis/go for a walk/go out for a drink? How many times have you run into someone, a year later, and suddenly realized that you'd never made the necessary effort to see them?

When I wrote the first edition of this section of the workbook, I was hoping to plan a trip the following month, to drive up to the Sierra Madre Mountains and visit some elderly friends in a tiny Mexican village. The timing couldn't have been worse – I had two very important presentations coming up, among other major projects with tight deadlines.

When I thought of the long drive and bad timing of the trip, which would probably add up to more stress than vacation, I reminded myself that at the end of my life, I might not even remember those presentations or those projects. The trip, however, may have been the last time I would see these precious elderly people (and sure enough, today the area of Mexico that they live in is particularly unsafe as a result of the current war on drugs). Imagine how I would have felt if I had decided, yet again, to postpone the trip, and if either one of them would have

passed away before I could find the next “opportunity” to visit. Thankfully, I went.

In our culture, we learn from an early age to chase success, money and material comforts. No one told us or warned us that these superficial elements, once you have more than you truly need in life, can't make you healthy or happy. In fact, if you're rich you're as likely, or more likely, to be miserable rather than happy.

Study after study tells us that we've got it backwards, that instead of pushing friends and family aside to work and chase money, we should probably be pushing the work and money aside to make more time for our loved ones. The people in our lives make us happy and protect our health. They're what count more than anything else.

Is there anyone in your life who consistently complains that you don't spend enough time with them? List their names. Do you think they're right?

Are there any people you can think of, whether they're long-standing friends or people you met more recently, who you'd like to spend time with but have never gotten around to it? List their names.

List three things you're going to do now, to start spending more time with people who matter to you. You might call someone just to say hello, or email them to ask them out for coffee. Write down your 3 commitments:

Now, take action on them.

Rescuing Your Difficult Relationships

I've experienced my share of difficult relationships. In fact, my "old" life seemed to be full of nothing but drama and conflicts which deeply affected the quality of my interactions with my family, romantic partners, and even some friends or acquaintances.

Nobody enjoys difficult, stressful relationships, and research now tells us that conflict, anger, and tension are hazardous to your health. Hostility and resentment are associated with high blood pressure and heart disease, and suppress the proper functioning of your immune system.

I did a lot of reading, studying, therapy and group work to understand where I and so many others tend to go wrong when it comes to handling and transforming difficult relationships. I've boiled down what I learned, and what transformed my own life, into five essential relationship principles:

- 1) **Tend Your Own Garden** - Instead of wasting time thinking about or complaining about what he or she is doing wrong, catch yourself and stop. Change your focus immediately to what would be the best thing you could do, right now, for yourself and your own life.

Is there anything in your life that you're neglecting right now, because you're focusing instead on what other people around you are or "should be" doing?

- 2) **Learn to be Happy, No Matter What They Do** - If your happiness depends on the actions of another person, you (and they) are going to be miserable. Find or create aspects of your life that you enjoy, and focus on them when things get tough.

Do you let other people's moods or actions affect your day? When is this most likely to happen?

- 3) **Listen to Your Body** - Hostility and resentment can hurt you more than they do the other person. Learn to recognize signs of tension in your body: stomach pains, neck or back pain, headaches. At the first sign, do something that helps you immediately feel better (attacking the other person does not count!).

How does your body react to stress in your relationships? Have you noticed any patterns?

- 4) **Own Your Own Buttons**- If someone knows just what to do or say to set you off, don't blame them. You can't control them, but can control your reaction. Notice yourself as you react, and interrupt it: e.g. take a time-out; leave the room; do something silly to lighten the tension.

Is there anyone in your life who pushes your buttons? Under what circumstances does this normally happen? What do you end up doing as a response to getting your buttons pushed?

How do you feel after you react? What normally happens?

What might you be able to do, instead, when you catch yourself reacting to one of your "buttons"?

- 5) **Focus on What's Good** - Focus on what you like about the other person, and what you could or should improve in your own life. When you focus on the good things, the change in you will often cause the other person to miraculously improve on their own.

Is there anyone in your life who is being particularly difficult to love lately?

What do you like best about them? What positive effect have they had in your life?

How might you deliberately focus more on the positive aspects of that person?

What are some positive aspects of your own life, right now?

In what way could you focus more on these aspects? How might you bring more positive elements into your life?

Step Five

Get A Life!

One day, I did an exercise that reviewed all the jobs I'd had in my life, and I was shocked to discover that I'd typically fallen into a job or career simply because someone offered it to me or because someone else had said it would be a good idea. I worked in some incredibly boring, smelly chemistry labs, "nannied" some rather obnoxious children, and even signed up for med school, simply because someone else in my life told me I should.

Doing that exercise, I suddenly realized that the only job (until recently) that I'd ever truly enjoyed was the only one I'd chosen on my own: I'd worked as a waitress at a couple of young trendy restaurants during my summer breaks, and had the time of my life. I'd made a lot more money than I did in the lab, too.

If only I'd known that I could stop at any stage, and ask myself what I really wanted to do. If I'd allowed myself to observe that I'm really more of a people person than a scientist, I might have saved myself a lot of grief, and costly choices, over the years.

How much of your life have you personally and thoughtfully created? How much of your life has simply happened to you, and then just stayed that way, forever? Did you deliberately choose your friends, or your job, or where you live today?

One of my coaching clients experienced decades of frustrating, unsuccessful relationships. That is, until one day we were looking back over his life, and realized that every single one of his major relationships had happened as the result of a blind date. In other words, he'd never once chosen his romantic partners himself. Instead, he just accepted what came his way, which in each

case was a person who *someone else* had thought would be “perfect” for him. No wonder it never worked.

Right now, I’d like you to forget about everyone else who has ever given you advice or made a decision for you or criticized your personal tastes or desires. I’m going to ask you a list of questions, and I’d like *you* to answer them, the real you. I want your real answers, no matter what you might think someone else might say or think.

1: If there is one thing you’d like to do or experience before you leave this earth (that you haven’t done yet), what would it be?

Why haven’t you tried it? Or if you have tried it, what made you give up on it, or what is holding you back from attaining it?

Even if perhaps you can’t devote yourself all-out to this dream at this point in your life, how could you introduce elements of it into the life you have today?

What would the next step be, to get the eventual accomplishment of this dream back on track?

Get started on it now, or commit to a time and date when you will.

2: What do you really want to do with your time? Consider your plans for today, this week, this month, this year (look at your calendar if it helps) - does the way you're spending your time fit with your long term goals and dreams for your life? Write your thoughts and observations on this:

3: List your creative talents (don't worry if you don't think you're truly "talented" just loving something is enough here):

What new creative activities would you just LOVE to try?

How and when are you going to get started? (a hint: ASAP!)

5: In what ways would you say your life is “out of balance”?

What would be the most effective thing that would help you bring it back into balance?

6: What activities in your life would you like to spend less time doing, or even stop doing?

What’s the next step you could take, to decrease your participation in one or several of these activities?

7: If you suddenly found out this was the last year of your life, what would you do and how would you spend your time? *Though this question's a bit of a cliché, it's still a great way for you to consider what really matters to you most in your life. What would you spend your time doing? What would you stop doing, immediately? (Pay close attention to your answers, and make note of what changes you might like to make in your life today, in light of what you've learned from this exercise)*

Step Six

Make Room for the Divine

No matter what your personal beliefs are, I have the utmost respect for them. I've gone through different spiritual phases in my life, each with their own set of beliefs and worldview. I'm not writing this section to convert you to my own belief system (Christianity), but rather to share with you a way of seeing life which I have found to be incredibly helpful, especially through life's most challenging times.

I originally wrote this section of the workbook during a challenging time of my life. The events caught me off guard, as thanks to the many changes I'd made in my life, things had been going smoothly for quite a while. Out of the blue, and at a critical time when I expected to be celebrating, not crying: my website crashed; a good friend died (and I couldn't make the funeral); I noticed some worrisome medical symptoms in my body; I had to say no to some wonderful dance opportunities due to pre-existing commitments; and there was very stressful mix-up with my Mexican papers. I could go on, but I won't!

I'd forgotten what it feels like to have one problem show up, and then another, and then another, until you wonder if it will ever end, or if your life will ever feel peaceful, easy and safe, again.

At one point I was sitting on the sofa, feeling extremely sorry for myself and completely baffled as to why these various things had all happened at once. Thankfully, at that moment someone who knew me well reminded me of all the times in the past when life had looked like this. In every single case, there was a huge gift that came out of all the chaos, frustration, and pain.

“Do you remember how many times you tried to make flamenco shows happen with other performers in Mexico?” they reminded me. “Do you remember how upset and frustrated you were, when each of those opportunities fell through? Do you remember when you didn’t even have a studio to practice in, had no gigs, and were rehearsing every day in a hot laundry room in the middle of the desert?” I did. And never imagined that a couple of months later, on Christmas Eve, I would be performing my solo flamenco show with two of the best flamenco guitarists in the world, in front of a celebrity audience and the owners of the Los Angeles Lakers.

That friend reminded me to have faith and to remember that everything, no matter how difficult, always seems to happen for a reason. No matter how devastating or inexplicable a crisis or disaster might be, there’s always some lesson to be gained or character to be developed. Remembering this makes all the difference in the world when your world feels like it’s falling apart.

A couple of days later I was at the salon and began chatting with a woman who was getting her hair done in the chair next to me. We exchanged life stories, and hers took my breath away. She’d left her home country to live the good life with a wealthy man who lived in the Hamptons. A place, she said, where “the most important thing about you was the kind of handbag you carried”. One day, two officials showed up at her door. Her visitor’s visa had expired, and they arrested her and threw her into jail.

She had no money, and her boyfriend disappeared. The authorities gave her the option of being deported to her own country, but warned her that that might mean months of waiting in jail. They also told her that she could choose to be deported immediately to a more convenient foreign location that required less paperwork. She chose the latter. In that new country, she unexpectedly found and created the kind of meaningful, joy-filled life that she had always dreamed of.

The worst thing that had ever happened to her, turned out to be the best thing that had ever happened to her.

Not every difficult situation or crisis may turn out this magically, as was the case with a beautiful friend of mine who passed away at a young age. It can be really hard to find the good in something that you just can't understand or explain. But when I reflect on why she came into my life, I realize and believe that through her death she taught me something very important. Before I met her, I believed that you could optimistically think your way into any outcome you wanted. Though I knew she was sick, both of us, and many others, were convinced that she could think, and believe, and pray herself well. Not so. Sometimes, life has other plans.

When you think you can absolutely control the outcome of a situation, when you think you know exactly what would be best, you're assuming that you know what's best for everyone touched by the situation. Clearly, that's not possible: we're only human. Today, my former relentless optimism has been tempered by a peaceful sense that there are some events in life that we may never understand. What we can do, however, is do everything we can to experience in these events in a positive, gracious, loving way.

In your life so far, what have been your most challenging, or devastating experiences?

When you review these crises, what happened afterwards, what kind of gift of benefit, or change, did each event end up bringing to your life, once the dust settled?

Are you going through anything difficult now? What kind of gift, or benefit, might be coming to you through it? (Don't worry if you can't see it, as we often don't see it until much, much later)

Asking for help

I've been blessed through my God-given talents, experiences and education, in that these have brought me to a place in my life where I can now share what I've learned with so many other people. However, don't think for a minute that I did all this on my own. I would hate to see where I'd be today, if I hadn't learned to ask for help.

When I found myself unable to stop my compulsive eating habits, I prayed for help. Within a short period of time, I learned that I had allergies to both

wheat and dairy (my binge foods of choice were chocolate cake, cookies, and ice cream), and also began to have severe acne breakouts whenever I ate those foods. Soon, it simply wasn't worth it to me to eat them anymore, and I was able to stop. And because of my acne, my dermatologist introduced me to the amazingly beneficial principles of the "clear skin" anti-inflammatory diet that I write about in my book.

This is just one example from a long list. And I need to add one more essential point: I didn't always get exactly what I wanted, or had thought I was asking for. I would never have asked for severe cystic acne in response to wheat and dairy. I would never have asked for my depression that ended up setting me free from Emergency Medicine, either. Yet somehow it always all worked out, more perfectly and brilliantly than I could have ever planned it.

I've learned and grown through the help of other people, many books, and especially from living through challenging yet eventually blessed experiences. In my experience I've observed that it always helps to ask for help – and then, very importantly, to let go of how and when that help shows up. It often doesn't look anything like what we'd hoped for, which is usually for the best! I'd hate to think what my life would look like, if I'd actually gotten all the things and people that I thought would make me happy.

Is there anything going on in your life, right now, that you need help with? Is there any area of your life that you've tried and tried to improve on your own, but nothing seems to work?

Have you had the experience of thinking that you know what's best for yourself in a certain situation – and then later being so grateful that it didn't turn out as you'd wanted it to?

Spirituality and Your Health

Many studies have shown that regular spiritual or religious activities, such as going to church or belonging to some other type of spiritually-oriented group, are significantly associated with general well-being, healthy social functioning, and good mental health. I also consider volunteering and giving to others to be profoundly spiritual activities, and sure enough, these generous behaviors have been found to have impressive health benefits.

I love the hope and blessings which these and other similar studies communicate. Now, your religious or spiritual orientation or lack thereof is a very private issue, and it's not my place to force any values or beliefs on you. I simply thought you might find this information as interesting and motivating as I have. These studies remind me of the immense importance of making my own spiritual beliefs and behaviors a part of everyday life, not just in times of crisis.

One study that looked at cardiac transplant patients found that the presence of religious beliefs and practices before surgery predicted better post-transplant physical function; these religious transplant patients also demonstrated less general anxiety. Another study of almost 100,000 people linked weekly church attendance to 50% fewer deaths from coronary artery disease, 56% fewer deaths from emphysema, 75% fewer deaths from cirrhosis (severe liver disease), and 53% fewer suicides.

Believing in a Higher Power or a higher order to life protects your health. A study in HIV positive men showed that a variety of religious activities (prayer or meditation, religious attendance, spiritual discussions, or reading religious or spiritual literature) were all associated with significantly higher CD4 counts, boosting the immune cells which can be life-threateningly low in people with AIDS.

What kind of spiritual practices do you enjoy in your life? Do you enjoy reading beautiful, inspiring books about the meaning of life, or going to church, or praying for others, or making gratitude lists of all the blessings in your life?

How do these make you feel when you take time for them?

When do you make or find time for these activities? Are there certain moments or times in your life when you're more likely to seek spiritual support and comfort?

Would you like to find more time for spiritual activities? How might you do that?

Step Seven

Make Someday Today

If you bought this workbook, chances are pretty good that you've been interested in improving the quality of your life for a while. Like me, you probably read a lot of motivational or self-help books, go to seminars when you can, and love to take courses, all in the name of creating a better experience here on earth, both for yourself and others.

If this sounds like you, what have you done with the information you've taken in over the years? Have you put what you learned into action, or do you carry around that niggling sense that you've learned so much, yet have put so little of it to real use?

Even if this is the first time that you've really examined yourself and your life, what are you going to do now, or do differently, as you reach the final pages of this workbook?

Write your thoughts on this:

As you worked through this book, did you have moments of excitement, clarity and hope, only to sigh and tell yourself that you'd probably never make any significant changes in the end?

I give a keynote lecture on this topic, "Make Someday Today", and whenever I give it, I hear my own voice in my head for weeks afterward, reminding me to take my own advice. I encourage you to absorb, into your cells what I'm about to tell you, and to share it with others.

You see, so many of us focus on getting through the present, while dreaming of a better future – that infamous and ever-elusive "someday". Does this sound like you?

When I was a kid, I couldn't wait to be an adult. When I was in med school, I dreamed about the day I'd have a practice and also "have a life". When I got licensed as a physician, I decided to work really hard right out of the gates, so that one day I'd have enough money to be able to work less and enjoy life more. (In a few years, of course).

Do you hear yourself talking to yourself, or your spouse, or your kids, or your friends, about "someday"? When my debts are gone...when we've finally bought the house of our dreams...when I retire...sound familiar?

I first read about this concept in an essay by motivational speaker, Ed Foreman, called "If Only and Someday". I won't reprint it here, but I'd really recommend that you read it. It changed my life forever. If you'd like help tracking it down, contact me through my website and I'll send you some information on where to find it.

Back on the subject of "Someday", I'm not suggesting that you retire now (though perhaps you could...), or run wild spending money on every whim instead of saving it. But, every time you catch yourself promising yourself, or someone else, what "someday" is going to be like, consider what aspect you might be able

to incorporate into your life, right now. After all, none of us knows how much time we each have left here on this earth.

Are you fantasizing about traveling around the world when you retire? Then make sure you plan some travel time into your life, now. Do you plan to spend more time with your kids after you get your new business off the ground? Make a point of scheduling time with them, now. Life doesn't always wait for us, and all we really have is now.

I'd like you to go back through all the exercises you've completed throughout this workbook, and make a master list of the five most important things you'd like to start incorporating into your life, today: (next to or under each item, make a note of a small, simple way you could begin to introduce this new element into your life)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Here are some extra exercises to help you get going:

- 1) What is the single special wish you listed on page 10, in Step 1? What is the first or next step you are going to take to begin to make that a reality? Remember that essentially always, *anything is possible*. Perhaps not statistically that probable, but it's still *possible*. I prefer to focus on the possible rather than the probable, and it has worked very well for me!

- 2) What crazy idea did you list on page 11, in Step 1? When are you going to try it, or at least experiment with some small element of it?

- 3) What is the single thing that bothers you the most in your life? What are you going to do, starting now, to change that - or at least to begin to improve it or make it more endurable and even enjoyable?

- 4) Have you done the Day in Your Imaginary Life exercise on page 16? If you haven't, go back and do it. If you have, what surprised you about it? What did you learn about yourself that you didn't know?

From this day forward, I want you to hold in your mind and heart the various discoveries and observations about yourself and your life that you've written down, and make a commitment to yourself to focus on making "Someday" today.

Stop putting off what matters most!

Once you commit to this way of living life, life will never feel the same again. You might not be able to change your life and health radically overnight (though in some cases, you just might!), but you will surely find yourself making lasting, wonderful changes that positively change the way you and your life feel.

If you'd ever like to share your story with me, I would LOVE to hear it. Contact me via the contact form on my website, www.susanbiali.com or email me at susan@susanbiali.com.

Please also come visit me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/drsusanbiali

Or follow me on Twitter at www.twitter.com/drsusanbiali (@drsusanbiali)

Here's to your very best life!

May it be a healthy, happy and very passionate one...

Susan

Invite Dr. Biali to speak to your group!

Keynote Presentations, Seminars, and Workshops

***Discover the Secrets of Health and Happiness from
the Flamenco-Dancing Doctor!***



Do you and your group find it hard, or even impossible, to find time for your health, passions and most meaningful priorities?

Invite Dr. Biali to inspire and teach you and your group how to:

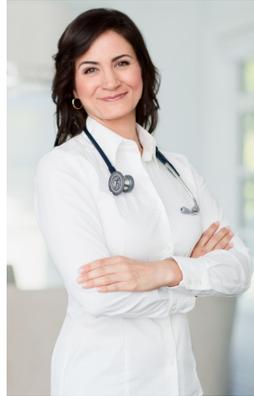
- Immediately improve the quality of your life and health
- Dramatically increase your energy, happiness, productivity
- Protect yourself from stress and life's challenges
- Balance your life and find time for the things that count most

For more information on topics, and to watch a video of Dr. Biali speaking, go to:

<http://www.susanbiali.com/speaking.html>

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About Dr. Biali



Dr. Susan Biali, MD is an award-winning medical doctor, wellness expert, author, coach and speaker, dedicated to helping people worldwide create happier, healthier, more fulfilling lives. Following a severe depression, Dr. Biali fulfilled a childhood dream by becoming a professional flamenco dancer in her thirties. For four years, she commuted between her medical work in Vancouver and her dream life in Mexico, where she performed flamenco in some of the world's most prestigious resorts. She even taught the rock star Pink how to salsa dance! Today Dr. Biali speaks and dances across North America.

Dr. Biali has appeared on *The Ricki Lake Show*, blogs for *Psychology Today* and has also appeared on *Fox News, CBS, ABC, NBC, CTV, and Global TV*. She has been quoted in *Self, Fitness, First for Women, Martha Stewart Living, Redbook* and *The Chicago Tribune* and is on *Chatelaine Magazine's* Health Advisory Board as well as being a columnist and Embrace Life Expert for *Reader's Digest Best Health*. Her book, *Live a Life You Love: Seven Steps to a Healthier, Happier, More Passionate You*, has been an Amazon bestseller in both the USA and Canada.

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