



# *From No to Yes*

DARE TO BE REAL



By Dot Claire, BSN, RN

*H*ow would my life have been different if I had known it was safe to be real, that I could speak my truth and would not be burned at the stake for loving myself and caring for my needs first?

Daring to be true to myself was radical thinking and not part of the feminine profile in the forties and fifties when I grew up. *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best* were my models of family life and a woman's role. For me, the choices were marriage, teacher or nurse. Niceness and servitude were my models. In fact, martyrdom was a virtue. As a result, I found myself falling into the habit of saying yes, when I really meant no.

There were many times when I was afraid of displeasing others and did not want to look selfish. Therefore, I compromised myself for the sake of others. I think when I got married I said *yes* when I really meant *no*. Little by little, I lost my identity until the "I" in me no longer existed. I became invisible. My unconscious desire to be liked had become more important than being true to myself.

When I awakened from a deep sleep and opened my Pandora's Box, fear and anxiety met me head on. I challenged my role of the good little girl who obeyed family, culture and Catholic teachings from my childhood. In the seventies, I developed my courage muscle by saying *no* to birthing more children. At the time, I was overwhelmed raising six children. I questioned the sanity of adding more to my tribe just because the church said my duty was to procreate. Making that choice was my first act in caring for my body and my needs.

I spent years perfecting the “good wife” and “good mother” roles by numbing my inner pain with food. Humorist Erma Bombeck broke the Donna Reed myth of perfect wife and mother with her satire on motherhood. She kept me sane during difficult times. “Life is a bowl of cherries; it's the pits that are hard,” she wrote.

At that time, I was stuck in far too many pits. My efforts at controlling everyone around me in order to look good began to fail. My emotional and physical health were at risk. I numbed my feelings by stuffing myself with food. My body reached a peak weight of 210 lbs. I hated the person I saw in the mirror each day. I had tried many diets, only to regain the weight I had lost. Diets clearly did not work for me.

#### AWAKENING

Feeling frustrated with my weight, I accepted a friend's invitation to an Overeaters Anonymous meeting. It was a God-in-skin moment. At my first meeting, I heard words of struggle and hope. Participants were real and vulnerable. I had come “home.”

In working this 12-step program of recovery, the “I” in me found her voice.

I heard that I no longer needed to be perfect. Food was not the main problem, but a symptom of underlying issues. I discovered that reconnecting to the divine—God, goddess, the name you give for a power greater than yourself—was essential for lasting change.

*“We all have a need to be visible, to be heard, to make sense of our lives, to wake up and grow and belong.”*

—Anne Lamont, American author  
and spiritual teacher

I faced a head-on collision between religiosity and spirituality. Surrender and forgiveness were the keys that lightened the load I had been carrying. I was responsible for my past misery, and I could change my story. I did not have to stay stuck and did have a choice. After being wedded to the drama of victimhood for forty years, this was a new concept.

Surrendering to the divine meant praying through fear every day. One of my sayings—I call them “Dot-isms”—is, *Courage is fear that is prayed about*. I was becoming a courageous woman.



Brene Brown, PhD, author of *Daring Greatly*, says, “To be authentic, to be real, we must cultivate the courage to be imperfect—and vulnerable. We have to believe that we are fundamentally worthy of love and acceptance, just as we are.”

My search to discover and love the real me was under excavation. Similar to Julia Roberts’ character in *Runaway Bride*, I had lost my identity by being nice and doing what other people liked. In the movie, Julia’s character did not know how she liked her eggs cooked—fried, scrambled or sunny side up. She discovered she did not even like eggs.

Freedom from the prison I had created required tearing down and clearing out old beliefs that held me hostage from being a visible “light” in the world.

When I walked through fear and left a 25-year marriage, I said yes to me. I said yes when I left nursing and became a massage therapist. After the loss of my son in my early sixties, I listened to my inner nudge and left a thriving massage practice in Indiana to reinvent myself in California. Life is short, and I wanted to be surrounded by natural beauty and a creative environment where differences were supported. Daring to be real, to be truthful and resist the urge to accommodate my truth away was slowly becoming a daily practice. I was listening to my inner voice.

During my life, I have supported thousands of women through childbirth, healing addictive patterns, menopause—which I call “a pause from men” or “a time to discover me”—and completing the circle of life by midwifing them to the other side.

In my intuitive healing practice, I listen deeply. As I wake up, I hold sacred space for others to awaken, to be authentic, and to be at home within themselves. I love to create beauty and flow out of the ordinary. Today, my home is symbolic of my foundation. It is a reflection of who I am in this moment and who I am becoming. My home sings with happiness. Life is a blessing—even the pits—because everything has meaning and purpose.

I was inspired to use the acronym CREATIONS to build a foundation for loving and appreciating who I am. The following nine practices have guided me in identifying, shifting and stripping away the sabotaging patterns of my childhood, religion and culture. They helped me embrace, honor, and heal heartbreak when my son died.

They are the creative tools in my medicine bag that empower me to live an extraordinary, vibrant life in my mid-seventies.

C - Create a haven that loves and supports you

R - Respect your tears

E - Embrace fear with tenderness

A - be Alone without being lonely

T - Treat your body and soul with respect

I - Initiate laughter often

O - OM (a mantra consisting of the sound om) in silence

N - Navigate change with grace and ease

S - make Sacred ceremony and ritual a part of your life

Because the complete CREATIONS process is more extensive than space allows here, I will focus on three of these essential aspects. I hope they speak to you as powerfully as they resonate with me.

#### C = CREATE A HAVEN THAT LOVES AND SUPPORTS YOU

Move in so you can move on. Have you really moved into your home? That means you have unpacked those boxes, hung up your art, and finished home projects. Ideally, your home reflects who you are and who you are becoming, not who you have been. If you are not happy, your home will show it.

*If you don't love it, get rid of it* is my motto. Consider exploring your stuff and give it the *I love you* test. It may seem strange to start with "stuff," yet the truth is that clutter is not just an eyesore. It is a setup for confusion and overwhelm.

From my Feng Shui training, I discovered that everything has a vibration, even the pile of magazines and laundry in the corner of your bedroom. Our "stuff" either raises our vibration or drains it.

Whenever I am ready for change, I make it a practice to create a clear vision. I begin by clearing out my bedroom, closet, desk, or any area where “stuff” has accumulated. When a project is complete, I celebrate my success by sharing about it with a friend.

So unpack those boxes, hang up your clothes, toss items that are broken or you do not use. Get rid of old history that does not love you. Surround yourself with things that lift your spirits. A headline in Oprah’s March 2013 magazine says it perfectly: “De-clutter your life and discover the incredible lightness of less.”

Are you ready to put the timer on? Commit to 15 minutes a day for the next thirty days. Start now! You can do it.

**T = TREAT YOUR BODY AND SOUL WITH LOVE AND RESPECT**

Did you know that your body is wiser than your mind and speaks the truth? It holds onto physical pain until you listen to it, say hello and attend to it.

I encourage you to love every inch of you—every cell, every organ, even the wrinkles and extra fat around your belly. Caring for your body is not something to do only in a crisis; it is something I encourage you to do as an ongoing spiritual practice. Do not be the busy woman who forgets her body until pain or dis-ease wakes her up. Without your health, you have nothing. Everything suffers: finances, relationships, travel and play.

Sit in a comfortable chair. Take three deep breaths in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Now notice what areas of your body seem tense, tight or uncomfortable. Breathe into the pain and say hello. This exercise is about noticing where tightness and pain has lodged itself in your body. It is not about getting rid of it. Listen

deeply to your body's message. Place your hands on the tight or sore area. Breathe in and hold your breath. Slowly exhale. Send love and kindness to your body through your hands. Notice what happens. Awareness is the key to change.

Here are some practices for alleviating stress and treating your body with loving care.

- Pause throughout the day, stretch and take three deep breaths
- Fill up your tank first before taking care of someone else's needs
- Take a walk in nature
- Soak in a bubble bath with lavender essential oil
- Massage your feet or get a massage
- Listen to uplifting music
- Call a friend and do something fun together

Explore creative solutions for treating your body with kindness.

#### **S = MAKE SACRED CEREMONY AND RITUAL A PART OF YOUR LIFE**

Author and visionary Carolyn Casey describes ritual as the means whereby we bring a story to life. *“If myth is breath, then ritual is the act of breathing... We connect with something larger than ourselves when we perform ritual.”*

Simply put, ritual means “a repeated act.” Sacred rituals create the space to focus on what is important to us. In ritual, you make commitments, forgive, show appreciation, honor community and reinforce beliefs. Every day, whether you realize it or not, you are doing rituals of some kind.

Rituals have guided me through many transitions. They have given me hope, a way to release the past and welcome new beginnings.



Ritual is in my bones. It is a part of everyday living, just like brushing my teeth in the morning.

When my 31-year-old son died, I learned to create beauty out of shock, anger, guilt and sadness. I journaled and cried. I dug in the earth while raging and crying. I created a magnificent garden honoring my son and cried. I hosted healing rituals and cried. Tears of sorrow were shed until I was done. I was just like Forest Gump, who ran until he was ready to stop. Mourning was a ritual that supported my grief. Women witnessed and held me through my transformation.

When two or more come together in ceremony with the intention of celebrating a transition, the energy or frequency of the group increases exponentially. Magic happens.

Sacred ceremony and ritual help you:

- Step into the present moment
- Create meaning out of your messy life
- Be grateful for your life
- Embrace change with more ease
- Take action
- Be at peace with what is

There are three secret keys that make the above practices work—especially sacred ceremony and ritual. If you do not implement them, you may not experience permanent change. In addition, transformation and magic happen when you make the following three C's part of your authentic life:

1. **Clear and complete** the past so you can be present to the moment.
2. **Create** clarity of vision or intention, so magic and miracles can naturally unfold.

**3. Celebrate your successes** with a friend or a community of wise women to witness, uplift and support change.

How can you shift from habitual rituals to conscious intentional practices that connect you with your inner wisdom? Do you have a ritual for staying positive or do you get stuck in negativity? Perhaps you are ready to start a new ritual that supports success.

Grab a journal or, better yet, decorate the cover of a composition notebook with stickers and your name. If you are an artist, create your own design. Choose one of the following for your new practice and stick with it for at least thirty days:

- Before going to sleep, write down what you are grateful for. Review the day and journal with the intention of releasing negative stories.
- Practice unstructured, unedited writing to reflect your observations of feelings. I call this “Stream of Consciousness Journaling.”
- Record your dreams upon awakening—Dream Journaling.

Any of these practices will force you to stop what you are doing and pay attention to and listen to the sacred within yourself. Spiritual practices help you live the life you want by showing up authentically in the life you have.

If you find yourself stuck in an old story, repeating the same patterns, know that change is difficult to do alone. In my own life, when I released sixty pounds more than thirty years ago, I needed support from friends and mentors. If it had not been for mentors, friends, and a women’s support group, grieving my son’s death would have been impossible.

But change is possible. I now know that it is safe to be real. I can speak my truth and experience joy from loving myself and caring for

my needs first and then enjoy serving others from a place of fullness. I know this can happen for you, too.

Leave what you have been to become what you can be. Spirit flows through you and through what you do in the world. Are you ready to be real?



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Dot Claire's medicine bag overflows. She weaves a tapestry that embodies vibrant health, empowering women over fifty to awaken their courage, activate their power, and create a joyful life.

Magically creating beauty and harmony out of the ordinary, Dot knows that your body and your living space are sacred TEMPLES that nourish the beauty of YOU. She brings nursing, healing touch, and aromatherapy to her work as a massage therapist and Reiki master teacher, helping you break through tension, stress and pain. As a Sacred Place practitioner, she creates healing experiences, ceremonies, and supportive sacred environments that help you enter into a deepened quiet place where transformation happens. Through speaking engagements, seminars, and private sessions, Dot passionately helps you raise your vibration so you can flourish in your life and business.

When Dot isn't exploring spiritual growth or being uplifted by a circle of powerful women, she enjoys nature, dancing, drumming and playing with her grandkids.

*Contact Dot at [dot@dotclaire.com](mailto:dot@dotclaire.com) for your complimentary Vibrant Woman Breakthrough Session. She will empower you to dare to be real, live your truth, and become who you were meant to be—vibrant, whole and complete.*