

INTRODUCTION

*W*hat if we could look at our lives from a perspective where everything—large and small, good and bad—makes sense? What if we could understand the reasons for everything that happens in our day-to-day reality? We can. This is true for all of us and this is how I discovered it.

I thought all I wanted in life was to be happy. But even when I was happy, I always wanted more. My mother used to say, “Oh, Ann, you’re never satisfied.” And she was right. No matter how good things were, I always thought there had to be something more—more fun, more thrilling, more rewarding, more anything. Somewhere deep down I knew I was right. I just had to figure out where to look. Models were hard to find. Even my happiest friends were unhappy with something in their lives.

My dissatisfaction started when I was a small child. I grew up in the Midwest with conservative parents. They lived by the rules. I thought the rules were stupid. Who made up those rules anyway? I coped with my situation by living an imaginary life with imaginary friends where nobody had to be perfect and everyone was happy. By the time I was in college I had both feet

planted in reality—but I did major in speech and drama. The fantasy world of the theater seemed a good compromise.

After college I continued in the theater as a stage manager, and later I started an online business that allowed me to travel the world. Even though my life was exciting, more often than not, no matter where I was or what I was doing, I was thinking about what might be next: maybe it would be even better. As I got older I began to wonder: what am I really looking for? Somewhere I read something about living a contented life. I looked up the definition of contentment—to be happy with one's lot. That's what I wanted! I didn't just want to be happy with what I was doing or how I was feeling; I wanted to be happy with everything in my life no matter what was happening. I started looking for the reasons why I wasn't content. First I sifted through my childhood and early relationships. Surely the answers had to be there. But that wasn't very productive. Then I tried talk therapy. That didn't help much either. So I went to a bookstore to see if someone else knew the answer.

I started with books about effective habits and releasing the tiger within. Then I moved on to books on thoughts and emotions and the law of attraction: Think it and it will come. Your thoughts create your reality. If you don't like your reality, just change your thoughts. If your emotional responses are causing problems, change them. You can even heal your body with affirmations—just repeat over and over the end result you are looking for. It must have worked for somebody. Those books were bestsellers. But none of them worked for me, no matter how hard I tried. I had small successes changing my thoughts, but my emotions didn't respond at all. And then there was the past. The past is past, they said. Just move on. Right. Easier said than done.

Somewhere along the line I learned about the subconscious mind. All our memories and the emotional programs created by our thoughts are located in the subconscious, and it's possible

to go there and change them. That sounded promising. You can only access the subconscious in an altered state, so I found a hypnotherapist to help me. She had me explain to my subconscious why I no longer thought and felt the way I used to. The results were dramatic. But after a while the old thoughts and emotions returned and I was right back where I started. I figured that even though this method made so much sense in theory, something must still be missing.

While I was doing the hypnotherapy work, I started reading about the spiritual aspect of our lives. At first I was resistant to the word *spiritual* because I thought it meant religious dogma. But I learned it didn't mean that at all. We are spiritual beings living a human life. We're all connected because we all come from Spirit. There is a bigger picture. Go within and find your spiritual essence, the books said. Get quiet and meditate. Okay, but what about all those thoughts chattering away in my head? And what about this bigger picture—how does the muck of our day-to-day lives fit into it? And why would a spirit want to live a human life anyway when it could hang out in the peace and joy and love and light of the spirit realms? That seemed like the ultimate contentment to me.

The next leg of my journey was discovering past lives. I didn't believe in past lives, yet how could all those people in all those books heal illnesses and phobias and bad habits by going to their past lives if they didn't have any? As I read story after story I became curious why some people healed completely after a regression, others only partially, and some not at all. I also wondered why a soul needed to live so many lives. Some souls lived hundreds of them. This was definitely worth exploring.

By this time I knew a little bit about a lot of things. There was the human side of us—our everyday lives with our thoughts and emotions, bodies, relationships, our failures and our successes, our physical and emotional dysfunctions. Then there was the spiritual side—the soul entering a human body

and then leaving it to return to Spirit, only to do it all over again. There was something called the Higher Self, although every book defined it differently. And there was white light and messages from Spirit and so many exciting things. But I still couldn't put it all together.

Then I found a book that connected the dots. While I was in Palm Springs to visit my brother, I made an appointment with a local psychic. I thought it would be fun to see what was ahead for me. On her coffee table was a book titled *Odyssey of the Soul, Book I: Apocatastasis*. I picked it up and read the dedication: "Dedicated to Spirit—For Those Who Seek The Answers To The Past, The Present, The Future." Wow! Maybe this would clear up everything. Then I turned to the first chapter, which began:

There is a part of you that knows everything there is to know about you. It can tell you why you are in this world and where you were before you came here. It can state both Universal Truths and the Personal Truths you need to know to get where you want to go. It can talk about your future, your present, and your past. It can tell you about the people in your life—why you are involved with them, what you might want to learn from them, and what you have to teach them. It can help you become closer in your relationships or cut the ties that bind you to them. This part knows a great deal more about you than any psychic ever could. Further, it can heal you instantly, although it may take you longer to allow, or even hold onto the healing.

This part of you is the you that always was and ever will be. It is your Higher Self.

I devoured the book. The authors were regression hypnotherapists who helped their clients heal their physical and emotional dysfunctions by finding the soul reasons for them. And there was a twist. What needed to be healed was a thought. At a certain moment in the past, a thought was formed in response to an experience that created an emotion that created an imbalance. The dysfunction was a signal from our soul, letting us know about the imbalance. The thought could have been formed during an event in this life or in a past life. But simply going to that past moment wasn't enough. You had to alter the thought.

This book offered exactly what I had been looking for. The role of thought was the missing link. I searched out the authors and found they lived in the next town! I called and made an appointment with one of them. This was my chance to learn how to fix everything in my life that was preventing me from being content. Maybe I could really push the envelope and find that elusive phenomenon called joy. So I began a series of hypnotherapy regression sessions that turned out to offer much more than I could ever have imagined.

All the things I thought were wrong with my life were actually signals from my soul that there was something I needed to learn. So I started addressing them one by one. I discovered I had shut down my emotions in the womb (chapter 6), and I learned the price of unexpressed emotions (chapter 13). My failure at marriage came from a thought at age eight (chapter 16), and I stopped remembering my dreams in seventh grade (chapter 15), also because of a thought. My poor eyesight had its source in a first-century life (chapter 2) and was triggered in this life at age eight (chapter 16). A congenital heart defect originated in an eighteenth-century life (chapter 5). My inability to leave a troubled marriage was from a third-century life (chapter 4). And I learned the soul reason why I was adopted (chapter 6) as I altered all the emotional programs the adoption caused.

These were all unlearned soul lessons. In each life there is a lesson that our soul sets out to learn. If we don't learn the lesson in that life, we have to try again in another. Before we're even born, the soul plans the major conditions of our life that create the opportunities and challenges to learn those lessons (chapter 6). These challenges often manifest as dysfunctions. Any emotional or physical dysfunction—a fall that leads to a life of pain, a difficult relationship, financial problems, illness or disease, a bad habit or addiction, to name a few—is a signal of an unlearned lesson. When we find the origin of the dysfunction and heal it by learning its lesson, we no longer need the signal.

This book tells my story, or rather the story of my soul and its odyssey through human lives. How did I find my soul's story? My soul told me.

"What," you may ask, "you talk with your soul?"

I do. You can too. And I highly recommend it because it changes your life profoundly. Our soul uses our mind to form thoughts that create the conditions in our lives to help us learn what we came to Earth to accomplish. So when we're feeling baffled and need guidance, we can ask our soul. It knows everything about us, and it tells us what we need to pay attention to. When we shift our perspective and see our lives from our soul's point of view, everything makes sense. And when everything makes sense, we can change what we want to change and create the life we want.

So how did this new perspective change my everyday reality? I almost hesitate to tell you because it sounds too good to be true. Let me put it this way: all my longtime friends are asking me, "What happened to you? You're so happy. Whatever you're doing, I want to do it."

I am happy. I'm finally content. I'm even living with joy. Why? Because everything makes sense now. Everything I thought was wrong with my life turned out to be part of my soul's plan to learn. Now when something happens that

doesn't make sense, I know where to go to get answers. My soul can tell me.

The following eighteen chapters contain the transcripts of sessions with hypnotherapist Pamela Chilton, one of the authors of *Odyssey of the Soul*. In these sessions we tracked various physical and emotional dysfunctions to their originating thought and altered that thought. During this work I also learned to connect with the Higher Self part of my soul for guidance and protection.

The chapters of regressions are followed by afterthoughts concerning how this process has changed my life, and by an invitation for all of us to light the earth with our own light. Three appendices include a discussion and samples of the two methodologies used in the therapy sessions: hypnosis and Neuro-Muscular Response (NMR), and suggestions for how to find a competent regression hypnotherapist if and when you are ready for one.

What I came here to learn may be different from what you came here to learn, but the way to learn our lessons is the same for all of us. These transcripts illustrate step by step how to find unlearned lessons and what to do about them. Hopefully reading my stories will inspire you to find yours. It's the reason you're living your life.