

YOU CAN
CREATE AN
exceptional
LIFE

ALSO BY LOUISE L. HAY

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YOU CAN
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exceptional
LIFE

Louise Hay
and
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INTRODUCTION



by Louise Hay

For many years one of my affirmations has been: *Only good lies before me*. It is a comforting thought that wipes out all fear of the future and allows me to wake up each day with confidence, feeling at ease. I am often delighted and even amazed to observe how Life brings my next good adventure to me.

That is how I felt when I heard that Reid Tracy, the CEO of Hay House, was cooking up a scheme to have Cheryl and me produce a book together. A huge smile lit up my face as the idea penetrated my consciousness with possibilities.

At first, I had many questions: What would we write about? How would we blend our two styles? Since we live so far apart, would Life give us enough together time? But soon I realized that Life could not have come up with such a good idea without covering all the bases. And cover the bases it did. Cheryl

and I found ourselves in various cities, both here and abroad, with the perfect amount of time to lay out a chapter or two. And when we weren't together, we would Skype—often in our pajamas, with our hair and makeup au naturel—and it was as if we were in the same room.

Cheryl and I have both made phenomenally positive changes in our lives, and we want to share what we've learned with you. All of us can improve the quality of our lives if we practice the art of self-care and train our minds to think thoughts that make us feel good. When we do, we attract delightful experiences that enrich our lives.

The idea Cheryl and I had was to present these methods in the easiest possible way so that you could, step-by-step, learn how to have peace of mind—to live worry free in a healthy body, with a comfortable income, while enjoying your relationships. Ultimately, we wanted to show you how to move from feeling like a victim to being the creator of an enjoyable life.

As you read this book chapter by chapter, you will notice your shoulders relaxing, your brow lines smoothing out, and your tension and fearfulness dissolving as you realize that there is a better way to live.

Introduction by Louise Hay

It is the journey that brings pleasure, not the race to a destination. We love you and support you as you move with us on this great new adventure toward an exceptional life!



INTRODUCTION



by Cheryl Richardson

There is a Universal energy, a Divine force that creates us; sustains us; connects us to one another; and works in cooperation with our thoughts, words, and actions to generate our life experiences. When we recognize and learn to work in partnership with this benevolent power, we become masters of our own destiny. The formula is simple: *Think thoughts that make you feel good, make choices that make you feel good, and take actions that make you feel good.* Then surrender the outcome, trusting that Life will bring you what you need to grow and be happy.

This simple formula has radically improved the quality of my life, and it can improve yours, too. When you use it, and learn to trust it, life unfolds in miraculous ways. You'll be presented with extraordinary opportunities to make your life whole and to make a

difference in the world. This book is one of my extraordinary opportunities.



It was late afternoon as I sat down to have lunch with Reid Tracy, the CEO of Hay House. Reid and I have known each other for many years, and recently we'd been teaching a workshop for experienced professionals who wanted to learn how to expand their reach. Together, we walk participants through the process of writing and publishing, public speaking, appearing on radio and television, and using social media to build an audience for their work. We call the workshop *Speak, Write & Promote: Become a Mover & Shaker*; and it's a legacy project that affords us the privilege of cultivating new, conscious leaders in the self-empowerment field.

As we began eating our lunch and discussing the progress of our latest workshop, Reid caught me off guard with an unexpected invitation: "I've been thinking about your next project, and I wonder if you'd be interested in writing a book with Louise."

I carefully placed my fork on the table next to my plate, and looked up at him. "Louise Hay?" I asked with a mouth full of food and a worthy amount of surprise.

"Yes," he said with a smile, "Louise Hay."

Louise is considered one of the founders of the self-help movement and a pioneer in mind-body healing, and I'd known her for more than 20 years. Not personally, in the beginning, but through her writing and speaking. Published in 1984, her book *You Can Heal Your Life* was one of the first to introduce the connection between physical ailments and their corresponding thought patterns and emotional issues. I knew that Louise's books have sold more than 50 million copies and that people from all over the world have been influenced by her work.

As I sat staring at Reid, the phrase *coming full circle* popped into my head. Write with Louise Hay? My mind flashed back to our first meeting. It was the mid-1980s, and I was a young woman trying to find myself. *You Can Heal Your Life* was one of the first books to set me on my own healing path.

At the time I was volunteering at a place called Interface in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Interface was a holistic education center that boasted a curriculum taught by cutting-edge thinkers such as Marion Woodman, a Jungian analyst and pioneer of feminine psychology; John Bradshaw, the man who introduced the concept of dysfunctional families to America through his PBS series *Bradshaw On: The Family*; and Bernie

Siegel, the surgeon who challenged doctors and patients to see healing as a holistic process that encompassed our emotional and spiritual lives, as well as our physical bodies. Louise was set to give a lecture about her book at Interface, and I had been chosen to drive her from the airport to her hotel.

The thought of picking up Louise Hay at the airport was exciting. I was both anxious and thrilled to meet someone who had touched my life so deeply. In her book, Louise told the intimate story of her life with such courage and vulnerability that she felt like a kindred spirit. Her ability to turn a violent, abusive past into a present filled with peace and healing inspired me to get on a healthy path myself. And she challenged me to see growth from a radically new perspective: If I wanted to change my own life, I first needed to change my thinking. No more victim of circumstance. It was time for me to step firmly into the driver's seat by using the practical tools she provided to make positive, long-lasting changes.

As I drove to the airport, I had to keep reminding myself to keep my excitement in check, avoid bombarding her with questions, and give her plenty of space. When I arrived, I discovered that her flight from California had been delayed, so I sat at the gate for more than two hours and my excitement never waned.

It grew. Eventually, when Louise stepped off the plane, I made my way up to the gateway and introduced myself. She smiled and shook my hand, and then we walked to the car. I barely said a word all the way to the hotel.

Life would bring us together again several years later—this time under very different circumstances. The young girl who was so desperate to find herself in the '80s became a woman who would write books and take others on their own journey of self-discovery. This time, Louise and I would meet again at an authors' dinner hosted by her publishing company, Hay House. This would be the first of many meetings that would allow us to get to know each other in a more personal—and meaningful—way.

As the years passed, our time together provided me with a refreshing look at someone who, even now, at the age of 84, still practices—*diligently*—what she teaches. Louise is a beautiful example of what it means to think and speak your way to an exceptional life.

Now, as I considered Reid's idea, my first thought was, *This would be a unique opportunity to learn from a woman who has had such a vast impact on my life as well as the lives of millions of others.* It was a no-brainer. I'd write the book for the experience alone. There was more, however. My life was still being influenced in significant ways by the wisdom of Louise's work.

Over the previous year, for instance, I'd maintained a daily practice inspired by her teachings on affirmations. Each morning before starting my day, I'd write a few pages in my journal and finish with a list of spontaneous affirmations. I looked forward to this new ritual and was curious about how it might influence my life.

No sooner had I embarked on this practice than I began to notice tangible changes. I felt better throughout the day; I had more enthusiasm for life; and I found it easier to shift my mind away from things that irritated or upset me to thoughts that made me feel good. Not only that, but the longer I continued this daily practice, the more I was able to recognize deeper, more personal needs. Within months, I began to see patterns and themes in the affirmations I was creating. Certain ones would show up over and over again, alerting me to experiences I yearned to draw into my life. One, in particular, kept taking center stage:

*I work in creative collaboration with smart,
inspiring people on projects that contribute
to the healing of the world.*

At first, this affirmation surprised me. A lone ranger by nature—well, a control freak, really—I preferred to be in charge and call all the shots. But this was becoming a

lonely, less satisfying way to operate in the world. I was beginning to think more about working with others who challenged and inspired me rather than moving through life alone. Now, I watched as Life made it clear it was paying attention. The power of focusing my energy was manifesting something new.

As I thought more about Reid's invitation, I made a decision to walk through the open door before me. "Yes, I would love to write a book with Louise," I told him. "What's the next step?"



Weeks later, Louise and I met to discuss working together. We agreed that writing a book was a great idea, and we decided to do something only age and experience could inspire: *Trust Life*. Rather than create an outline or follow some kind of organized plan, she and I would allow the book to reveal itself. And reveal itself it did.

While attending events throughout North America and Europe, Louise and I enjoyed a series of intimate, heart-to-heart conversations about the spiritual principles that have shaped our lives. Although I've written the book from my point of view, it reflects our collaborative experience of talking about everything from

YOU CAN CREATE AN *exceptional* LIFE

loving ourselves and our bodies to the ways in which we've dealt with a variety of topics—including aging and a dignified, peaceful approach to the end of our lives here on Earth.

It is our sincere wish that these conversations inspire you to develop the spiritual habits that will support you in living an exceptional life. As you do, you'll soon discover what Louise and I know to be the most important universal truth of all: *Life loves you!*



CHAPTER ONE

ANSWER THE PHONE AND OPEN THE MAIL



I'm at home in Massachusetts, looking out over a frozen landscape, getting ready to call Louise in sunny California. Next to my computer, I have a cup of my favorite tea—Fortnum & Mason's Royal Blend—mixed with the perfect amount of homemade, raw almond milk. I'm excited to get started on our project.

When we first scheduled our call, I was caught off guard when Louise suggested that we Skype so we could see each other while we talked. *Skype?* I thought. *Really?* I had only begun using the program myself a year earlier. Already I was learning how hip Louise is at 84 years old. This was going to be some ride.

In an effort to get to know Louise on a deeper level, and to begin to navigate my way through this project, I was anxious to hear about her personal journey. I wondered what prompted her to get on the

self-empowerment path. What guideposts directed her along the way? What inspired her to create a company that has had such a profound impact on the lives of millions of people around the world?

My curiosity was tempered with some reservation, though. I knew Louise had shared her story many times before, both in *You Can Heal Your Life* as well as numerous talks and workshops. And, as someone who has written extensively about my own life, I know that it's a tedious telling the 400th time around. So I was determined to hear about her life from a new perspective. I was eager to learn about the wisdom gained from age and experience.

With what I would come to recognize as well-honed intuition, Louise addressed my concerns right up front as we scheduled our first time to talk. "I've already told my life story in my books, so I think it's unnecessary to go there again. I've been thinking about the things that are relevant to my spiritual growth, however, and I thought we could talk about that."

I took a deep breath and smiled. "Excellent," I told her. "That would be great."



At the appropriate hour, I dial Louise, click on the video button, and we are connected. There she is!

Beaming smile, glasses perched high on her nose, sitting upright in her chair, and clearly ready for business. After chatting for a few minutes, we get to work. I set my iPhone to record, place my fingers on the keyboard of my computer so I can take notes, and listen carefully as Louise considers my first question: *What prompted you to get on the spiritual path?*

“My spiritual growth started when I was around 42,” she begins. “I had been married to a delightful Englishman who had given me the opportunity to learn the social graces, manners, and ways of operating in the world that had been missing from my childhood. I grew up in a violent family, and we never went anywhere or did anything. I ran away from home at 15, and while I did learn survival skills, I had no skills for living well in the world. So, when I married this man who was very worldly and had the best of manners, I learned a lot from him. We did all sorts of wonderful things together, and just as I was telling myself that good things can last and we’d probably be together forever, he told me he wanted a divorce. I was shattered.”

My goodness, that must have been awful, I tell her.

“Yes. My husband was a prominent person, and our divorce was all over the newspapers. It was a very painful time because I immediately told myself, ‘See, once again, you can’t do anything right.’ But when I look back

now, I see that the marriage was an important door that needed to close in order for me to move toward the next step on my pathway. If I had not been divorced, I would never have become this Louise Hay. Instead, I would have stayed the dutiful little English wife—a very good wife according to my concept of it, but not who I was meant to be. It was time for it to end.”

As I listen to Louise, I think about the classic wake-up call, the often-abrupt and unexpected rupture that can occur in a comfortably numb life. I certainly had my share of these before I finally started to wake up—gut-wrenching heartbreaks, the shame of being fired from a job, and an actual fire that destroyed our family business. In fact, it was that fire that ultimately brought me out of my deep sleep and planted me firmly on the spiritual path.

“It was a year later, after dealing with the loss of my marriage, that a new door opened,” Louise continues. “I had a friend who invited me to a lecture at a Church of Religious Science in New York. She asked me to join her because she didn’t want to go by herself. I agreed, but when I arrived, she wasn’t there. I was left to decide whether or not to attend by myself, and I decided to stay. So there I was, sitting in this lecture, when I heard someone say, ‘If you are willing to change your thinking, you can change your life.’ While it sounded

like a small, tiny statement, it was huge to me. It caught my attention.”

Why do you think that caught your attention? I ask her.

“I have no idea, because I was a person who never studied anything. I remember having a friend who kept trying to get me to go to the YWCA for classes, and I wasn’t interested. But something about this subject spoke to me at that time, and I made a decision to go back. I can now see the perfection in my friend not showing up. If she had, I probably would have had a different experience. You see, everything is perfect.”

Everything is perfect. At first, hearing this phrase is like hearing that everything happens for a reason. It’s a tough message to swallow when faced with tragedy or deep pain of any kind. But, by training ourselves to see the perfection in our most difficult moments—a perspective that can often only be seen in hindsight—we learn to trust Life. We come to understand that, while we might not like a certain outcome, Life may be leading us in a new, more appropriate and beneficial direction.

Everything happens for a reason or *Everything is perfect* are beliefs born from a decision to see life as a school-room. When we choose to become students of life who learn and grow from our experiences, everything does,

in fact, happen for a reason. In this way, we make our most difficult moments mean something by using them to our spiritual advantage.

Louise goes on. “After that first talk I started to attend lectures at the church regularly. I wanted to learn more. I discovered that they had a yearlong training program, so I made a decision to become a student and enrolled. I didn’t even have the book at the first training, so I just listened. Then I took the entire training program again—this time with the book. It was a very slow beginning, but I stayed with it. Three years later, I was eligible to become one of their licensed practitioners, which meant I was able to do church counseling.”

What exactly did a church counselor do?

“During these sessions, a person would come to me with a problem—an illness or financial hardship, for example—and I would do a ‘treatment’ with them. A treatment was our form of prayer. In this prayer we would acknowledge the fact that there is one Infinite Power, and we are part of this Intelligence. We would declare the truth—the outcome we wanted—in a positive way. For example: *My body is healthy and free from illness*, or *There is an unlimited supply of prosperity for my family and me*. Then we would end the prayer with ‘So be it.’ From that point on, when the person thought about the problem, they needed to use their fear or

worry as a trigger to remind them to reaffirm that Life was taking care of it, and they were fine.”

I was very familiar with the concept of conducting a treatment. In my mid-20s I was captivated by the writings of New Thought teachers such as Catherine Ponder, Florence Scovel Shinn, Norman Vincent Peale, and Robert Collier. And when I was in my early 30s, my best friend, Max, had given me a book by Dr. Emmet Fox, a New Thought minister, called *Sermon on the Mount*. This book radically changed my way of thinking and inspired me to study Fox’s work more intensely. In fact, his *Power Through Constructive Thinking* became my manual for living for a year. I studied every word and put into practice his teachings about conducting treatments to tap into the Universal Source of Power available to us all.

“I love Emmet Fox,” Louise says. “He was a very good man. I enjoyed his work very much and have used it continually in my own life.”

Turning back to her work as a counselor, she tells me, “Once I finished my training and began working with people, I developed a following pretty quickly. Most church counselors did their work on the weekends or during evenings, but within three weeks I was doing it full-time. It was incredible. People were just drawn to me and wanted to work with me.”

What do you make of that? Why so much so fast?

“I don’t know. Ever since I first put my foot onto the spiritual pathway, I felt I had no control over anything, nor did I have to try to control anything. Life has always brought me what I needed. I’ve always just responded to what showed up. So often people ask about how I started Hay House. They want to know every detail from the day I began up to today. My answer is always the same: I answered the phone and opened the mail. I did what was before me.”

I knew exactly what Louise was talking about. Although I’d been on my own spiritual path since my mid-20s, it wasn’t until I hit my early 40s that I started *responding* to Life rather than always trying to direct it. In my 20s and 30s I was someone who took goal setting seriously. I made lists of career goals, financial goals, relationship goals, and so on; and I created action plans and treasure maps to support them. Looking back, they were wonderful tools that allowed me to harness my creative energy, but at some point things changed. Something shifted inside me. Although I still created treasure maps—visual boards or collages reflecting images that made me feel good and gave me something to aspire to—I became less interested in hunting for success and more concerned with how present I was to the direction Life was calling me to go in.

“That’s how I lived,” Louise continues. “It was as if Life simply took care of everything one step at a time. So the business started first with me and my then-90-year-old mother, who was very good at sealing envelopes and licking stamps, and it grew from there.

“When I look back, I can see how Life put exactly what I needed in my path. After my divorce, for example, I had a boyfriend who was a director. He was part of the Spanish/American Theater in New York, and I worked with him and some of the actors for about a year. It was experimental theater, and I ended up doing things I never thought of doing before. When this director went back to Spain, I stayed, and ended up performing in a play that allowed me to get my Actors’ Equity card. From that moment on—from the moment I received my Equity card, which was a big deal—it all disappeared. No one called me, and no one wanted me. But because I hadn’t gone into the theater wanting to make a career of it, I didn’t care.”

How was the theater an example of Life giving you what you needed?

“It was my preparation for the public speaking I would do later on. When I started speaking, it wasn’t terrifying to me because I had already made an ass of myself on the stage. And people sort of liked it. What I realized was that public speaking was the same thing

as theater, except I got to write my own script. I didn't have to do what someone else wanted me to do; I got to do what *I* wanted to do."

So you were working full-time as a counselor, and people just seemed to be drawn to you. How did your work evolve from there?

"One of the things we worked on at the 'School of Religious Science' (I call it a school) was diseases and the mental equivalents for them, and I was fascinated by this idea. I remember making notes—and at one point I put together a list of things I found in books, ideas that had come to me, and what I was seeing from the people I worked with, and I called it a list. I shared it with someone in my class, and the woman said, 'Louise, this is incredible! Why don't you make a pamphlet out of it?'

"So I put together this little pamphlet that was 12 pages long, and I put a blue cover around it. I titled it *What Hurts*, but eventually it would affectionately come to be known as 'the little blue book.' It contained a list of diseases, the mental patterns that may be contributing to each disease, and a short treatment to heal the negative patterns. I still remember going to Dr. Barker, the head of the school, and showing him what I had done. He said, 'Oh, Louise, isn't that sweet, how lovely. How many did you make of them, 50 or so?' And I said,

‘No, I made 5,000.’ And he said, ‘What? You’re crazy! You’ll never sell 5,000 of these!’

“Now the reason I did 5,000 was because I discovered from the church printer that the more you made, the less they charged per piece to print them. So I had 5,000 printed, and they cost 25 cents apiece. I charged a dollar. I never did it to make money, though—I simply wanted to share information. But eventually I *did* sell all 5,000.”

So the fact that Dr. Barker thought you were crazy didn’t deter you?

“No. I kept moving forward. Once I had the little blue book in hand, I sent a free copy with an order form to every metaphysical church I could find, and several of them bought more. And then a few people ordered it here and there. It grew very slowly. The first year I made \$42. I was so proud of myself that I had a book! To me, it was something that came out of nowhere. I didn’t know I could do this, and in two years I had sold 5,000 of them. That was when I revamped it.

“I used to go to the church bookstore and watch people. I noticed that if someone picked up my book, they usually bought it. But most people didn’t pick it up, so I realized it needed a better title. I renamed it *Heal Your Body* and expanded the material. By that time people were sending me letters with questions about

their health and their lives, and I would sit in front of an early version of a word processor and think about what they wrote, and my fingers would start typing. I found that every time I replied to a letter, I'd get a reply back saying, 'How did you know?! How did you know?!' and that gave me more confidence in what I was saying. Eventually I left the church and developed my own process of working with people."

How did your counseling work change once you left the church?

"I used to do what I called short-term therapy—five or six sessions—because either you got what I was talking about and your life was changing or you didn't and there was no point in wasting your money or my time. Some people didn't get it—they'd come once or twice and think the whole thing was stupid. But if you *could* get it or at least work with it, you would see your life change for the better.

"We'd have our session, and toward the end I'd have them lie down while I put some soft music on—I used Steven Halpern's because I didn't get bored with it and it was very peaceful. I'd then have the client close their eyes and do some deep breathing while I invited them to relax their body from either the head down or the feet up. Finally, I would do a treatment for the person. I would put it on tape and then let them go home

with it. If they came again, I always had them bring the tape so I could add to it. Eventually people would have a tape filled with positive messages that I wanted them to listen to every night when they went to sleep to reinforce the treatment. Each of them knew that the moment they stopped to listen, they could relax and have only positive things being said to them.”

So you were developing your own way of working with clients, and you published your first little book. What happened next?

“Well, it was right around this time when I was diagnosed with cancer. Of course, it scared the hell out of me like it does for anyone. You become terrified when you get that diagnosis. And I remember calling my teacher, crying, ‘Eric! Eric! They say that I have cancer!’ And he said, ‘Louise, you cannot have done all this work on yourself to die of cancer. Let’s take a positive approach.’ And that immediately calmed me down. He was someone I trusted and believed in, and I knew he was on my side. Therein began my healing.”

But as you worked with individuals, I imagine you must have heard stories from people who felt better or were healing themselves with your guidance. Didn’t that give you some peace of mind that you could deal with this?

“Yes, well, it was one thing to see the positive changes in other people’s lives, but another to believe it for myself now that I was faced with my own life-threatening diagnosis. I realized that Life was giving me a chance to prove to myself that what I was teaching really worked.”

So you received the cancer diagnosis and began practicing on yourself?

“It was marvelous, really, because everything I needed came my way as soon as I became determined to heal myself. I found a nutritionist who wasn’t going to treat me at first because you weren’t supposed to be able to treat cancer with anything but chemotherapy. He was leery of offering me a different approach. I remember he told me to go out into the waiting room and sit a little while. He saw a couple of other patients and then had me come back in. We started talking, and he discovered that I was a member of the Church of Religious Science. Turns out he was with the church, too, and suddenly everything changed. He took me on as a patient, and I learned a tremendous amount about nutrition, which I knew nothing of at the time. My diet was not very good back then.

“After finding the nutritionist, I then found a good therapist and delved into much of the childhood stuff that needed to be healed. I did a lot of screaming and

beating pillows to get my anger out. I also learned that forgiveness had a lot to do with healing, and I had to practice forgiveness. I had some cleaning up to do.”

I’d like to talk about forgiveness for a minute, I interject. I know you had a violent past, and I’m wondering if the emotional detox work you were doing with the therapist happened *before* the forgiveness process began. I ask this because I’ve often found that people rush to forgive in the hopes of avoiding the painful feelings that come up when dealing with betrayal, loss, or abuse of any kind.

“Yes, I needed to heal first,” Louise replies. “What I realized, and focused on a lot, was the fact that my parents were born beautiful little babies. I needed to look at how they got from this place of innocence to where they were mishandling me. I pieced together as much as I could of their stories—the stories that had been told, anyway—and I realized that my parents had been brought up under terrible circumstances. If you go into the backgrounds of some of the most horrendous people in the world, you always find a terrible, terrible childhood. Some people like me end up wanting to help others, and some want to get even. But you can never get even. I was able to forgive my parents because I understood their lives.”

So, to heal yourself from cancer, you enlisted the help of a good nutritionist and a therapist, and you practiced forgiveness. What else?

“Once I put myself in a position where I knew I could be healed, it seemed that everything I needed came to me. Silly little things happened. For example, I heard that foot reflexology was a powerful way to help cleanse the body of toxins. One evening while attending a lecture, I decided to sit in the back row even though I always sat in the front. It wasn’t two minutes later when this man came and sat beside me, and he turned out to be a foot reflexologist. When I found out that he went to people’s homes, I knew I was meant to meet him. So I had him come to me three times a week. It was part of what I needed. I remember when he first worked on my feet, they felt like glass as he worked to remove those toxins.”

So your healing involved a holistic process of working with the body, the mind and its thoughts, and the emotions?

“Yes. Six months later I went back to the doctor, and the cancer was gone. Gone. At that point, my inner ding—my intuition—was telling me it was gone, but I still wanted medical confirmation. Once I had it, I felt that anything could be healed if you’re willing to do the work.”

I appreciated Louise's acknowledgment that the healing of her cancer was a holistic process—a process that involved her mind, body, *and* emotions . . . not simply relying on “thinking good thoughts” to make the cancer go away.

“No, it's everything,” she says. “If you put yourself in a position where you know you can be healed, the right help will come to you. Then you have to be willing to do the work.”

What does it take to put yourself in a position to attract what you need to heal?

“You first need to change your thinking about the problem. We all have ideas about healing and how things should and shouldn't work. We need to shift our thinking from *It can't be done* to *It can be done—I just have to figure out how*. I've always said that the word *incurable* means that it can't be cured by any *outer* means at the moment, so we need to go within. That, of course, would mean changing your thinking. You also need to develop self-worth—you need to believe that you are worthy of being healed. If you can develop that as a strong belief and affirmation, then Life will bring you what you need to manifest the healing.”

So, if someone were reading this right now and dealing with their own health crisis, what kind of

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affirmations might you suggest to get them in the right state of mind?

“I’d start with these:

I love myself, and I forgive myself.

I forgive myself for allowing my [anger, fear, resentment, or what have you] to harm my body.

I deserve to be healed.

I am worthy of being healed.

My body knows how to heal itself.

I cooperate with my body’s nutritional needs.

I feed my body delicious, healthy foods.

I love every inch of my body.

*I see cool, clear water flowing through my body
and washing away all impurities.*

My healthy cells grow stronger every day.

I trust Life to support my healing in every way.

Every hand that touches my body is a healing hand.

*My doctors are amazed by how quickly my
body is healing.*

*Every day in every way I am growing
healthier and healthier.*

I love myself.

I am safe.

Life loves me.

I am healed and whole.”

So, while you were healing from cancer, did you continue to see people?

“Yes, and I didn’t tell anyone about my diagnosis except my teacher and the people who directly supported me. I didn’t want to be influenced by other people’s fear. I didn’t want to be sidetracked. Once I received notice that the cancer was gone, I began to reevaluate my life, and I made a decision to leave New York. I had been there 30 years, and I was fed up with the weather and the winters. I wanted to go back to where I could have sunshine and flowers all year, so I came to California.”

And you settled in Los Angeles?

“That’s right. For the first six months I went to the beach a lot. I had a sense that soon I was going to be really busy and wouldn’t have time to get to the beach. I also took *Heal Your Body* to every metaphysical meeting I could find in Los Angeles, and if it was appropriate, I’d give someone a copy of it. It turned out that none of the meetings were anything I wanted to go to a second

time. They didn't have anything for me. I was putting little feelers out, though, and gradually I started to attract a few clients."

So in some way you were starting all over again. Did you keep in touch with your clients from New York?

"Yes, I stayed in touch with them by phone as I built a new life for myself in Los Angeles.

"There was this marvelous bookstore in West Hollywood called the Bodhi Tree—I took my book to them a couple of times, but they weren't interested. But pretty soon Life began sending people into the store, saying, 'I want that little blue book.' Half the people didn't know the title or my name, but they knew enough to ask for the little blue book. The store finally made the connection that it was me and called to order six copies. As soon as I hung up, I got in the car and zipped down there to hand-deliver them. For the first year, every time I got an order, I would hand-deliver it to the bookstore, and I discovered they were selling more and more. This was also how people learned of me and my work and started to seek my help.

"As I began working with individual clients more, I also started to offer small classes, usually for about six people. Little lectures and classes that people discovered through word of mouth. Over time my audiences expanded, and I got to the point where 350 people

would show up to attend the workshops. I believed in what I was teaching, and those who attended were making big changes and getting good results. I then thought that if I could put this experience down on paper—what I was learning from my work—I could help so many more people. But I didn't have the time. Then a woman who had been a client of mine in New York came to see me, and she gave me \$2,000 because she was so pleased with the work I had done to help her change her life. I decided this was it!

“I gave myself six months to write the book. I gathered information from my clients, my workshops, and the stories I heard, and began putting it all into the book, along with the content from *Heal Your Body*. That's how *You Can Heal Your Life* got started. I remember once it was published, I would put a stack of books out on a table at a workshop, put change in a bowl, and people would come up and make a purchase by themselves. I had very little money then so I couldn't print a lot of books, but as soon as the ones I did print sold, I went and printed more.”

So it was the completion of the first edition of *You Can Heal Your Life* and your successful work with clients that expanded your reach and the size of your audiences?

“Yes, and the word spread far beyond where I was teaching. At some point I went to Australia all by myself—somebody had invited me to do a free lecture on a Friday evening and then a weekend workshop. When I arrived at the venue on Friday evening, there were a thousand people, and I thought, *Where the hell did these people come from?! What are they doing here? How can they know me?* Life sort of took this whole thing over.”

Buoyed by her growing trust in how she was being guided by Life, Louise’s work and exposure would rise to a whole new level when the AIDS epidemic hit in the mid-’80s.

As she explains now, “There were a few gay men in my practice, and one day someone called me up and asked, ‘Louise, would you be willing to start a group for people with AIDS?’ I wasn’t sure what I would do, but I said, ‘Yes, let’s get together and see what happens.’ So we started with six people, and the next day a man called back and said that this was the first time he’d slept in three months. Then the word got out quickly.

“I didn’t know what I was doing, but at that time I knew that no one else knew what they were doing either. It wasn’t as though there were brilliant people doing great things for people with AIDS and along came silly me. We were all on the same page. I decided

that I was just going to do what I've always done: focus on releasing resentment, help people love themselves, and encourage them to practice forgiveness—the simple things in life.

“With this particular group, I knew that we were dealing with a lot of self-hatred, more so than most people, along with all the judgments society had against them. The gay population had all the stuff that everybody else has with their parents, in addition to often being disowned by them. And then, of course, they were being called an abomination to God. How the hell are you going to have any self-esteem when you keep hearing stuff like *that*? It's impossible. So here I was, this wounded child who had been abandoned by her own parents, helping these men who had been abandoned as well. I understood them. I understood where they came from.”

It would seem that Life brought them all together in no small part because of Louise's depth of compassion and understanding. What a gift to these men!

“Well, all hell broke loose in 1987 when I was on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *The Phil Donahue Show* in the same week,” she tells me. “Both shows heard about what I was doing with AIDS, and they wanted me to talk about it. I took five of the guys who were doing well, and we did the *Oprah* show first. She was

wonderful. She let us get our message out—that we were treating the whole subject with love, we weren't afraid of each other, and our focus was on loving ourselves.

“I always wanted to keep the focus on the positive. The first thing I said when I started working with these men was, ‘We're not going to sit here and play *Ain't it awful.*' We already knew it was awful, and they could go anywhere to play that game. But when you came to my place, we were going to take a positive approach. Anybody who had any news that was positive, or a technique that was positive, could share it.”

So people knew they could count on support, empathy, and some kind of good experience?

“Yes, everybody got to share, and there was no judgment. And the longer we held the meetings, the more goodies I had for them. I remember when someone gave us six massage tables. The men would schlep them to the venue every Wednesday night and we'd set them up. We asked anyone who did Reiki or massage work to stand by a table so people could receive an energy treatment. We didn't call them ‘healing tables,’ we called them ‘energy tables.’ For a lot of guys it was the only time someone touched them all week long. That meant a lot to these men. Our focus was simple: feeling good. My ideas have always been simple. It seems the simpler you are, the better things work.

“Being on *Oprah* and *Phil Donahue* in the same week really put us on the map. The few phones we had were constantly jammed, and *You Can Heal Your Life* spent 13 weeks on the *New York Times* bestsellers list. Suddenly I had a company.”

So *that* was the point you realized that you actually had a business?

“I never said I wanted to have a business, but I remember saying to myself many years earlier that if I ever did, I would call it Hay House. So there I was. First I had the little blue book, then *You Can Heal Your Life*, and then two meditation tapes—one for the morning and one for the evening. I had four products. I did everything I could by myself at first, but when it got to be too much, I hired someone to help me. Then when things got even busier, I hired someone else; and the business grew very, very slowly from there. It started as a little Hay House. Soon I had five or six people working with me, and I remember giving them each \$50 one Christmas because that’s all I had to share.

“I was running the business out of my home in an apartment building, and at one point a couple of neighbors complained, so I had to move. I went to another building, which wasn’t too far away, and noticed that there was an accounting firm across the hall. We were at a point where we needed a decent accountant, so I

hired the firm to help us get our financial records and taxes in order. Eventually, we realized it would cost less to bring someone in full-time, so we ended up hiring one of their employees. Once again, though, Life brought me exactly what I needed to grow and help more people. Before I left for a trip, I thought we had agreed to hire a man named Michael. But when I returned, I discovered that Reid Tracy had been hired instead. Reid is now the president and CEO of Hay House. He ended up being the perfect man for the job.”

I’m noticing a theme, I say to Louise. You consistently talk about things growing slowly.

“Yes. Today so many people want fast success. But when we’re on the spiritual path and responding to what Life presents us, I think the most powerful work we do happens gradually over time. It’s almost as though we don’t realize it’s happening. We look back and think, *Oh my, look at all that!*”

In addition to measured and steady success, I was noticing other key, recurring themes while listening to Louise’s spiritual journey:

- *Simplicity*—focusing on small, simple, and manageable steps instead of making things complicated.

- *Optimism*—putting attention and energy toward solutions rather than focusing on problems.
- *Patience*—experiencing the journey fully and consciously rather than rushing to achieve a particular result.
- *Trust*—learning to trust Life by seeing the perfection and opportunity for growth in all our experiences.
- *Growth*—viewing life as a classroom where we use our experiences as catalysts for change and self-realization.
- *Service*—focusing more on how we can best encourage and assist those in need, as opposed to getting lost in our own personal vision and quest for success.
- *Action*—making a commitment to show up and walk through the doors that Life opens for us on our journey.
- *Faith*—being willing to take chances and keep moving forward without knowing the outcome.

- *Magnetism*—developing and tapping into the ability to attract what we need by putting (and keeping) ourselves in the right state of mind.

I have one final question for Louise before we wrap up our first meeting: *Do you think Life is continually tapping us on the shoulder, and if we just pay attention and do what's before us, we're likely to find the right path?*

"I think that will keep you busy," she replies. "There are a lot of people who need goals in life—a one-year goal or a five-year goal—but that was never me. I wasn't really trying to do anything that was well defined or narrowly focused. My question was always: *How can I help people?* I have asked that question thousands of times, and I continue to ask it today. When I see all the difficult things that are happening in the world, I realize that I might not be able to do anything specific, but what I *can* do is ask the question and project the intention energetically of *How might I help?*

"Once we understand how this works, and trust how it works, we simply answer the phone and open the mail."



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Louise Hay, the author of the international bestseller *You Can Heal Your Life*, is a metaphysical lecturer and teacher with more than 50 million books sold worldwide. For more than 25 years, she has helped people throughout the world discover and implement the full potential of their own creative powers for personal growth and self-healing. She has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and many other TV and radio programs both in the U.S. and abroad.

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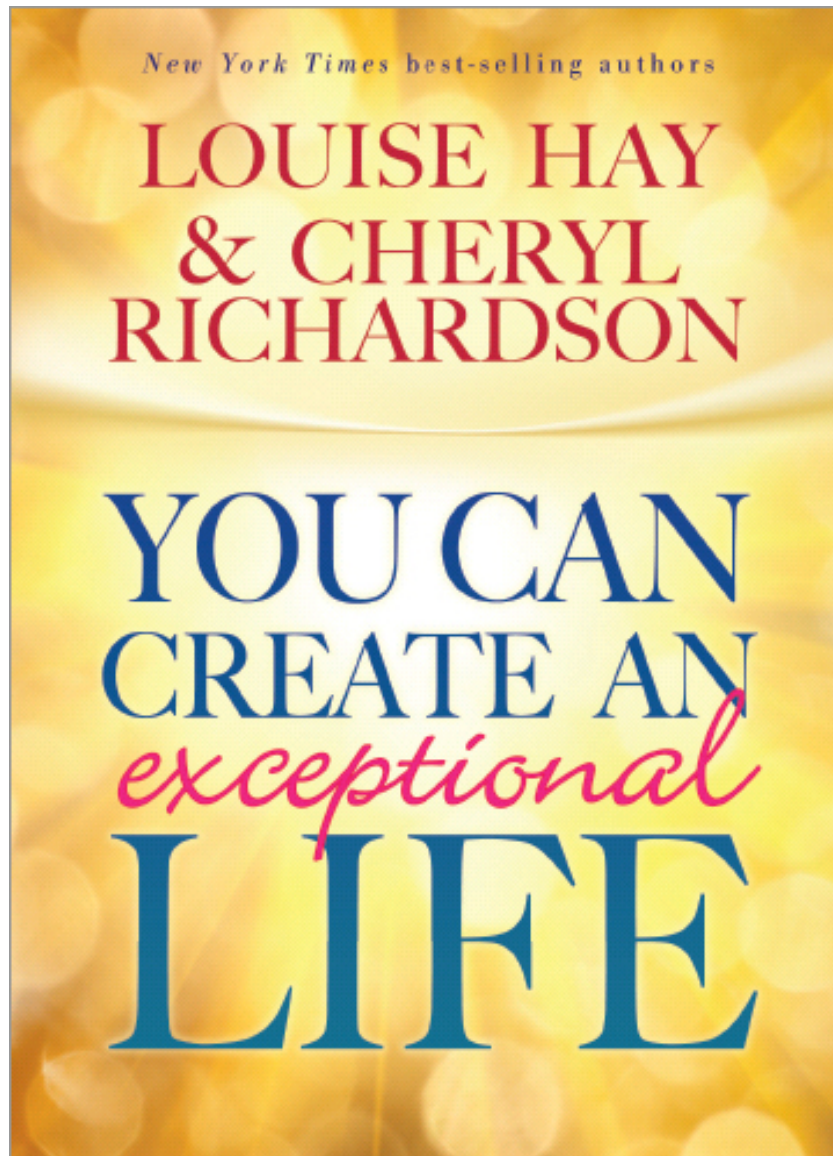
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