



CLARITY

*Step One:
Accept Where You Are*

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“But beware of this about callings: they may not lead us where we intended to go or even where we want to go. If we choose to follow, we may have to be willing to let go of the life we already planned and accept whatever is waiting for us. And if the calling is true, though we may not have gone where we intended, we will surely end up where we need to be.”

— Steve Goodier

Step 1: Accept Where You Are

My story:

Years ago, I worked as a weight loss consultant for Jenny Craig. Just like my clients, I was focused on reaching a certain goal weight, and just like my clients, it was extremely difficult to maintain that weight. I counted calories, paid attention to food groups, reduced my carbs, and exercised regularly to maintain my weight. I really liked my body but I also felt somewhat obsessed with weight and food. And more than that, I also physically felt like crap a lot of the time. Eating too little for too long will do that to you!

So here's what happened. One day I decided I was done. I was tired of worrying about my weight. I was tired of worrying about eating too many carbs or too much sugar. I was tired of putting my energy into something that wasn't benefitting me or helping me to be a better person in the world.

So I decided I was just going to eat what I wanted when I wanted as much as I wanted. No more dieting. No more worrying about food groups. If I wanted to eat cake for dinner, I would eat cake for dinner.¹

I decided I was going to consciously make the decision to love my body wherever it was and however it wanted to be. If I gained weight, I was still going to love my body.

And I did gain weight. Not a lot. Maybe about eight pounds? I'm not sure exactly because I didn't own a scale at that point (still don't).

And I didn't love my body every single moment. It wasn't always easy. I liked how clothes fit better when I weighed less. I liked how I looked in the mirror when I weighed less. Honestly, I liked how my body felt and moved better when I weighed less.

But I also liked eating without stress. I let myself step out of the diet obsessed world I had been in and just observed all of it. I paid attention to what was going on in the media and started noticing more body positive activists. I exercised because it felt good, not because I needed to lose five pounds. I ate vegetables because I liked them, not because they were low in calories.

¹ I had been on a gluten free diet for many years at this point and continued to eat gluten free even after making this decision because I knew that I felt better mentally when I avoided gluten. Today, I follow a gluten and dairy free diet, not for weight reasons, but because my body and mind feel better.

And mostly? I loved that my years long struggle with binge eating went away *as if it had never been there*. That was something I had suffered with for fifteen years! It had - at various points over the years - taken over my life and consumed my thoughts. I had been to therapists and nutritionists, and nothing ever made such a difference as those two things: *letting myself eat whatever I wanted whenever I wanted as much as I wanted and consciously deciding to love my body no matter what*.

Once I made that decision, everything began to shift. It wasn't instantaneous but rather a slow unraveling of years of stress and societal hypnotizing. I felt as if I could breathe again. I started feeling healthier than I had felt in years, and the lightbulbs began going on in my head.

No wonder I felt like such crap! I wasn't eating enough. It was so simple yet I had never realized it. I was so used to eating a low calorie diet after my stint as a weight loss consultant that even going to grad school for nutrition didn't change that. Although I ate healthier when I was in grad school (the quality), I didn't eat more (quantity).

It wasn't until I finally got fed up with my own weight obsession and started seeking out body positive spaces online that I was able to wake up to what I had been doing to myself for years.

Very soon after I made that decision, I felt like my body was in a really healthy place. At that point, I had become a certified hypnotherapist, and

meditation had become a huge part of my life. So one day during meditation, my spirit guide told me it was time to go off birth control. She didn't specifically say, "It's time to get pregnant," but I knew what would happen. I knew what it meant. So I had my IUD taken out and three months later I was pregnant.

During my pregnancy and afterwards, I continued my practice of consciously loving my body - even when I didn't love it - and eating what I wanted. The eating part was actually hard for me because I had a ton of food aversions and really disliked food all throughout the pregnancy. My midwife actually sanctioned me eating ice cream for dinner because it was all I could stomach!

I gained about 30 pounds throughout the pregnancy (midwife's scale because again I didn't have one), and afterwards I didn't worry about losing the baby weight. That was the last thing on my mind! Mostly I thought about sleep. But I did continue to eat whatever I wanted and not worry about calories or carbs. And I took a lot of walks pushing the stroller around the neighborhood because it was the only way to get my baby to sleep.

The weight came off naturally, in large part I think because my metabolism had reset itself by my eating normally again. When I was dieting, extra carbs would cause me to gain weight overnight and wake up completely bloated. Now? I eat waffles for breakfast almost every day and my weight is stable.

Why am I telling you all this? To brag that I can eat carbs without getting bloated? No, I'm telling you this because the step I took to reset my metabolism and find a healthy relationship with food and my body is the same step you need to start with when finding your calling.

Acceptance of Who You Are and Where You Are in Your Life.

You have to make a decision - today - to accept yourself and your life no matter what's going on. To decide that you are going to stop trying to be anyone other than who you are and that you're going to stop trying to force your life to be anything other than what it is.

When you are constantly striving to be a different person or have a different life...guess what? It's just like dieting. That tightness you feel in your chest? Does it remind you of the same feeling you have when you look in the mirror and think, "I wish my thighs looked different. I wish my stomach was skinnier?"

I am a big believer in dreams. I always think we should reach for the stars.

I am also a big believer in accepting what is and finding beauty in it.

Only when you let go of dieting and love your body as it is can you really learn to honor your body.

Only then can you really listen to it and find out what it wants.

And only when you accept where you are in your life and the reality of what is can you really listen to spirit and find out what your life wants for you now.

Your Practice: Compassion is Key to Acceptance

Imagine someone or something that represents unconditional love and acceptance for you. This could be anything! It might be a beloved pet. It might be Mother Mary or Jesus or God. It could be the earth itself or Mother Nature or trees. It doesn't really matter what it is.

You might be thinking, "But wait, I can't think of anything that represents unconditional love and acceptance! I don't even know what that would feel like because I've never experienced it."

That's totally normal. I think we all feel that way to some extent. But in that case, just imagine what you would *want* unconditional love and acceptance to feel like. If there were some guide out there watching over you who loved and accepted you exactly as you were, what would that feel like?

Now sit, and as you breathe in, imagine that this figure is sending all that love to you. Then as you breathe out, imagine softening your body and

letting down any walls that you put up between yourself and love. As you breathe in again, imagine allowing that unconditional love in and as you breathe out again, soften your body even more.

Just for this moment, be completely kind to yourself and let go of all judgments you have about yourself and your life. Just let them go. They'll come back. Of course they will. But just breathe in that love and soften your body even more as you breathe out. For now, practice compassion.

As you breathe in that compassion and love, allow your thoughts to turn towards acceptance. In that same physical state of relaxation and softening, think about the things in your life that you might not be accepting. Think about things that you're trying to change or deny. Keep breathing and softening your body, allowing for the idea of acceptance to come.

You may feel sadness or anger about things you've lost, people you've lost or dreams that have never come to fruition. Allow yourself to completely feel the grief, anger, and any other feelings that come up. Keep softening your body as you do this, taking deep cleansing breaths and consciously relaxing your body.

Mantras that help me when I'm doing this type of meditation are:

Soften.

Allow.

Don't force.

Stay with this practice as long as it feels right, finally bringing yourself back to the idea of unconditional love and compassion. Breathe that into your body again and imagine breathing it back out into the world.

Afterwards, ask yourself these questions and spend some time journaling the answers:

- 🌸 If you were completely accepting of yourself, what might be different?
- 🌸 If you were completely accepting of your life, what might be different?
- 🌸 Where in your life are you acting out of a desire to be different than who you truly are?
- 🌸 If you were to be completely yourself in that area, what might happen?

But if I completely accept myself or my life, then nothing will change!

You know this argument, right? It's the same one we use for not completely loving our bodies. We think if we completely love and accept our bodies as

they are, we will a) eat crap, b) never exercise, and c) gain tons of weight. Or, you know, just stay the way we are.

And here's the thing. If you completely accept your body as it is, losing weight is no longer going to be your goal. Treating your body with loving kindness will replace your desire to lose weight.

If you completely accept who you are...then you completely accept who you are. It doesn't mean you stop trying to be the best version of yourself that you can be. It doesn't mean you stop trying to make a difference in the world. It means you stop trying to contort yourself into someone you aren't to fit a mold you don't really want to be in.

If you completely accept your life as it is...then you completely accept it as it is. As I'm writing this, I am on food stamps and have over 100k in student loan debt. For a long time this kept me in a constant knot of anxiety. I tried all the manifesting and abundance tricks, thinking somehow I could change my financial situation through magical thinking.

And then I got honest about where I was in my life and what needed to happen. I started to really accept my financial situation and created a budget for my family (more on that later). I began doing compassion meditations and really allowed myself to feel the sadness of not being where I thought I would be at this point in my life. I let myself be kind and stopped judging myself. I stopped hiding what I was going through.

I just accepted it for what it was.

And I had this vision in a meditation, one that really helped me when I got stuck in wishing things were different. I saw a man whose wife and infant had died.

In one version of his life, he couldn't handle what had happened and so he killed himself.

In the other version of his life, he woke up and went to the spot where he was going to end his life. But instead of ending it, he just sat there. The next day, he woke up and went back to that spot and sat there again. Day after day, he went back to that spot, and day after day, something began to happen. He started to breathe again. He cried. He screamed. He went through all the grief of what had happened and began to accept it.

And then one day, he woke up and instead of going to sit in that spot, he went somewhere else. He began to build a life again, one that was different from the life he had dreamed of having with his wife, but one that was still filled with joy and love.

After I had this vision, I experienced a deep shift in how I went through my own life. While I was happy in my own life, I had of course let go of some dreams and ideas of what I thought would happen. We all do. And yet I

hadn't allowed myself to grieve those losses. I thought that acknowledging and grieving them would mean I wasn't appreciative of what I had.

And I was appreciative. I was so deeply grateful for my life, my child, my partner, my family, meditation and hypnotherapy, and so much more.

But when I realized it was okay to feel sad and grieve the things I had left behind - the people and places I had left behind - I gained *so much more* appreciation of what I had because it was no longer tempered by unresolved grief and anger.

Everything is a Process

Just like exercise and healthy eating, you can't practice compassion and acceptance once and call it a done deal. It's a muscle and you have to practice it regularly. It is the foundation on which the rest of the work in this book relies upon, and ironically, it is something I didn't discover until I had already worked on so many of the other pieces of this work in my own life.

But as I worked through all those other steps, I was missing the unconditional love and acceptance of myself and my life. And that one missed piece kept the whole puzzle from coming together.

Without compassion and acceptance, you will always feel anxious about what you *don't* have or who you *aren't* and that anxiety will keep you from being able to see and receive the gifts that want to come to you.

So I want you to practice this compassion meditation first, and practice it weekly (daily is better) as you go throughout the rest of the exercises in the course.

Note: There will be days when this meditation doesn't work for you and you just can't imagine unconditional love and compassion. That's okay. Don't give up or decide this doesn't work for you. On those days, go outside and take a walk in nature, then come back to this practice the next day. It isn't something you can force. It's something you *allow* to happen.