

This book is for the selfless souls who continue to share so much with me about life and healing. I hope by now you know how much you matter.

And it's also for **you**. It takes a brave soul to admit that they're not who or where they want to be, and then do something about it.

Here's to your courage, your determination, and your limitless potential.

The truth must dazzle gradually, or every man be blind.

Emily Dickinson

When we truly understand how the mind comes from the brain,
we will improve the lives of everyone who will have
a mental illness in their lifetime.

Kay M. Tye

Beneath the layers of emotional debris there's a version of you who's already healed. As you begin to untangle the confusion and shame of your past, this version of you will begin to rise.

It's time to stop punishing yourself for things that happened long ago, things you cannot change. It wasn't your fault, you're not to blame. The people who depressed your spirit and disempowered you no longer control you. Your truth starts there.

From the roots up, you can heal your past.

As you read the emotional truths in this book, please remember the **only** source of your self-doubt and shame are other people and the toxic opinions and criticisms they projected on to you.

If you read something and think 'that might work for other people, but it won't work for me' just pause, tune in to who that voice really belongs to, and ask yourself: what's my truth?

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

There comes a time in all our lives when we question who we might have become if the past had been any different. We think about what we might have achieved if encouragement, connection, and patience had been more abundant in our early years. As we learned to be wary of the world and the people around us, we adapted our behaviour to fit in. We questioned: Will they like me? Will they judge me? Will they include me? Will I be safe?

We learned to meet other people's needs before we met our own. Our purpose was invalidated and our potential overlooked as the people entrusted with our care were too preoccupied with their own dramas to notice us losing our way.

When we spend our younger years swamped with stress and disruption we grow into adults overwhelmed by life. We're vulnerable to triggers, struggle with anxiety and depression, we're helpless to bullies, and forced to create a persona to survive the harsh realities of our world. But when we address the root cause of our emotional suffering we can finally begin to uncover the truth of how we got 'here'.

When we stop re-tracing the same destructive pathways, deepening the missteps, the mistakes, and regrets, we get to tell a new truth - one that's free from the suffocating impact of self-criticism and distressing memories. Understanding how our emotional history continues to negatively shape and influence our mental health in the present day, means we can change and re-shape the damaged beliefs we hold about ourselves. When we understand why we are the way we are and do the things we do, when we're no longer suspicious, guarded, sabotaging our opportunities, or desperately trying to get our needs met, we *finally* get to embrace the undeniable power of emotional freedom, *and* the

undeniable truth of who we really are - and *that* may be someone we're yet to meet.

Healing our emotional history is the key to becoming the person we want to be - not a version of us that suits everybody else, but a version we would choose to be *without* the critical voices that have so far shaped us to be who we've become. Whatever your age, whatever your history, your emotional story is waiting to be told.

Within the pages of this book, we shine a bright light on a painful truth: emotional chaos and disruption experienced in our formative years carries long-term consequences for our wellbeing and adult mental health. But there's another truth we must also tell: **no matter what's been done to us or said to us, we can reclaim our power and win our emotional war.** I've done it, I've watched others do it, and I promise that you can do it too.

I know what it feels like to be at the bottom of the heap, to be hurt by people you should have been able to trust; those experiences leave deep wounds. But as we begin to untangle the past we uncover once unreachable truths about ourselves, and those truths will set us free. Someone else's controlling, toxic abuse may have got us here, but we decide how to get ourselves out. *We* are in control of our healing.

When we hold the appropriate people accountable for our emotional suffering - without them even knowing what we're doing - we can **stop blaming and punishing ourselves.** We heal the wounds that have held us back and turned us into someone we were never meant to be. Once we trace our difficulties, defences, and fears back to their source we no longer search in all the wrong places for approval and validation. Instead, with the self-worth and confidence we've reclaimed, we stop arguing for our limitations and become empowered to validate and approve of

ourselves. We finally give *ourselves* the permission we've been waiting for.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO BE WHO YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN

I wrote this book to share the knowledge I've gathered - personally and professionally - about why we are the way we are, why we do the things we do, and, despite our best efforts, why we often feel unable to turn it all around. What you'll find within the pages of this book will put you on a path that leads you to peace, contentment, and emotional freedom.

- You'll learn how to recognise and heal the **eight key emotional experiences** from childhood that continue to impact your wellbeing and your mental health to this day. You'll learn how to stop them from running and ruining your life.
- You'll discover how to break the disempowering mental and emotional patterns you picked up in childhood so you could survive your environment.
- You'll unravel the causes behind your self-sabotage, procrastination, and the coping mechanisms you created to stay safe.
- You'll learn how shame has controlled you but doesn't belong to you, that forgiveness is not necessary for peace of mind, that there's no such thing as an inner critic, *and* that you may have misunderstood the true meaning of trust.
- You'll learn how to meet your own emotional needs, heal your triggers, to set and keep unbreakable boundaries, to feel comfortable with confrontation, and how to finally show closure the door.
- You'll uncover the reasons why your emotional history still drives your decisions, beliefs, and perspectives, and you'll gain the awareness you need to regulate yourself emotionally calming your nervous

system when panic and anxiety creep in. I'm sharing a method that guarantees you'll retain your emotional power in even the most demanding situations with the most difficult people. This process has helped me and countless others to be underwhelmed by overwhelm and to manage anyone and anything with grace and dignity rather than anxiety and fear.

Whether you engage a little or a lot, the truths and practices in this book will bring you enlightening self-awareness and longed for peace of mind. By the end of the book, you'll have discovered eye-opening truths about yourself, your past, your purpose, and your future potential. You'll no longer be triggered or feel afraid to do the things you want to do. You may still see the same faces, interact with the same old negative people but inside you'll be smiling and not taking *anything* personally. You'll recognise their patterns and may even have compassion for the person they've become. Above all else I hope this book helps you realise that you're not alone. Whatever was done to you or said to you - whatever harmed and hindered you - can be healed and transformed.

The truths in this book will stay with you for a long time; they're here for you whenever you're ready. Make a note of any you're not ready to hear today, and come back to them tomorrow. This is a journey of discovery but also of *rediscovery* as the person you've always known yourself to be emerges from beneath layers of emotional debris left behind by the toxic power of other people's shame.

A PERSONAL NOTE

I'm not a celebrity therapist or a social media influencer. I don't speak five languages or have any idea how to walk into a party and be the life and soul of it. I'm not a great cook or artist although I'd love to be. But when it comes to healing and transforming the roots of emotional suffering, I

know what I'm talking about. I was a child who grew up fighting an emotional war on a battleground of domestic violence and shocking abuse. I struggled for a long time with the unmet needs and self-denial those experiences demanded from me. I buried my light and allowed darkness in. I carried the traumatic weight of those abusive years until, through urgent necessity, I learned what works when it comes to healing emotional wounds. I put the pieces of myself back together again from 50,000 feet below rock bottom. Time after time I wandered off, got lost, came back, started over, fell again, and climbed back up, again and again. Nowadays, I know enough to stay above ground. No more hiding. There will always be things that bother us. There will always be sadness, stressful situations, and people who try our patience. In this book you'll learn to swim with your feelings and emotions rather than drown in them. You'll learn to let yourself off the criticism-hook, to stop planning everything out, and stay in the present rather than futurising, and thinking long term. You'll learn to pause long enough to absorb your emotional truth and reclaim your emotional centre. Whatever's been done to you or said to you - or whatever you've done or said to someone else - you'll emerge from the shadows as you bring the light back into your life.

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT!

Throughout the book you'll find reflective exercises called '**Challenge It to Change It Journal Prompts**'. These journal prompts provide a frame within which you can paint a clear picture of how you ended up fighting an emotional war. You don't need to respond to everything straight away - you can pass on anything that feels uncomfortable, revisit it later, or just let it rest in your mind as you doodle on the page and sit with the questions. Not all the experiences that brought you *here* will rise to the surface immediately - which is probably a good thing. You can come

back to the exercises whenever you experience or remember something that needs 'challenging and changing.'

These exercises are like finding a map when you're lost; when we zoom out and look at the bigger picture - the map - we can work out how we got here, how we get out, and, more importantly, how we **never** go back. We start noticing alternate paths that take us away from cliff edges and dangerous ground. As we become more aware of why and how our past still shapes our present, our emotional wounds will finally close and stay closed. Learning the truth about how we got 'here' finally feels cleansing and enlightening.

The '**Challenge It to Change It**' questions are borne from over 15-years of research. They've been refined and enriched by the many brave souls I've worked with who have navigated their way through their own emotional storms, and whose humbling transformations have all greatly contributed to this book. Nothing in these pages is difficult to achieve, but its transformational power is immeasurable. It's all 'easy when you know how'.

People often tell me they don't know where or how to begin healing. Whatever they try doesn't 'stick' and their emotional wounds remain open, raw, and unresolved. If that's been your experience too, you're not alone. The sooner we see the truth behind what we were taught to believe is 'wrong' with us, the sooner we can heal the confusion and pain of the past. When we ask ourselves the right questions healing can happen faster than we expected with a lot less fear and emotional overwhelm about what we may uncover. Healing shouldn't be confusing, guilt-inducing, or feel like an impossible uphill struggle. When we untangle the *root cause* of our emotional wounds we become empowered to regulate our emotions, validate ourselves with positive meaning, and finally find our purpose on this planet.

All the **Challenge It to Change It Journal Prompts** have been compiled in a free workbook available on my website. You can complete it online, print it out, or use your own journal to write down your answers.

This book is for *you*. Whether you read it cover to cover, dip in randomly, or re-read the bits that shout out to you...it's your choice. If you're on the verge of giving up, feeling hopeless, worthless, exhausted, and undone, take a break, sit back, give this book a chance to help you change your life. Allow the words to wash over you and the questions to either float by or sink in. I don't want you to suffer anymore, to keep struggling, or be vulnerable to anxiety, depression, or manipulative people for one more second of your precious life.

Emotional Freedom is all about truth, so let's tell it!

WHERE DID YOU GO?

Amidst the chaos and disruption of our younger years the truth of who we were meant to become definitely 'got lost', but our true self didn't really go anywhere; it just became very quiet. We forgot about our own needs as we tried to fit in, to keep the peace, and to please others. As our mind became clouded with confusion, fear and loss, we began to search outside ourselves for the missing pieces. But now, as we learn to open up and speak our truth, we get to reclaim the person who hid themselves away, who stayed under the radar keeping out of the firing line, trading their emotional freedom for safety. Now we get to create space and energy, to take back ownership of our precious life, and to stop searching outside of ourselves for what was never really missing in the first place.

Everything we need to know about our emotional history is revealed by looking at our emotional struggles in the present moment. So, ask yourself: *who and what is the source of the emotional war I'm fighting every day?* And then ask: *haven't I had enough yet?*

One of the most transformative truths we can embrace is this: **'I meet my own needs, and my healing belongs to me.'** Someone else's toxic power may have brought us here, but our determination, resilience, and desire for emotional freedom is what will get us out.

For decades my mental health and emotional wellbeing continued to decline. I sabotaged myself every day, deepening my wounds with self-blame and emotional punishment holding myself responsible for the mess I was in. Now I know different, I do different. And so can you. From this moment onwards, the shape of your life is no longer defined by anyone else. From this moment onwards *the shape of your life is defined by you*. In the millions of moments ahead of you, you now own every choice you make, every feeling you have, and every thought you think. You control them all.

7 REASONS WHY WE DON'T HEAL

Countless conversations with emotionally wounded people have shown me **seven main reasons** why we don't heal:

1. **BLAME**
2. **DENIAL**
3. **FEAR**
4. **SELF-PUNISHMENT**
5. **UNWORTHINESS**
6. **JUDGEMENT**
7. **CONDITIONAL HEALING**

Each one makes perfect sense when you've lived through emotional chaos and disruption, but each one is stopping us from healing. Let's look at them individually:

REASON 1: BLAME

When we're waiting for someone else to take responsibility for our pain (and they probably never will) we're not focussing on ourselves or addressing our own emotional recovery needs.

Blame means we're often passive-aggressive with people who have caused us pain. We're disrespectful, sarcastic, and we weaponize silence. But a passive-aggressive blaming-style is a *toxic* reclamation of our power. We must instead find *positively assertive* ways to reclaim what was taken from us. We do this by holding the appropriate people **accountable** for the damage they've done so we can finally say and wholeheartedly mean: *'This behaviour was not my fault. This betrayal is on them. The emotional outcome is mine to heal, but not mine to carry. That is theirs and I'm giving it back now.'*

This authentic statement is the truth, and the truth sets us free. This is where we begin offloading the emotional weight we've carried. Other people will *always* be accountable for what happened to you - you know that, and so do they.

Right now, you may feel like you still want to blame them because that's where you feel justice will be found but read on; I promise you'll discover better, more empowering ways to process blame.

REASON 2: DENIAL

If we're not seeing the emotional truth about how we got here then we're in denial. We can't help it. When we're scared to talk about our feelings in case we upset someone, or they ignore us and fail to validate our suffering, we learn to deny our pain so we can cope with it.

We've been taught through painful consequences that confronting and upsetting the people responsible for our heartache must be avoided at all costs. We've learned that staying in someone's 'good books' - and therefore staying emotionally safe - means we must stay silent and deny our truth. We've learned that expressing our feelings and wanting to talk about our painful past leads to rejection, the 'silent treatment', and dismissal. If we go down *that* path again we risk restarting the cycle of abandonment that we've spent our whole lives trying to avoid. This is why the content of this book is designed for you to heal without needing anyone else's input or them knowing what you're doing.

When we stop rolling our shame in glitter to block out our emotional pain, we can get to the root cause of our struggles. I promise you, moving out of denial and into the light of your truth will move you forward on your road to emotional freedom like nothing else. And the people you're scared of offending and upsetting won't even know what you're doing. You can reclaim your power and win your emotional war, and they won't

know a thing about it. Other people's denial of your pain and refusal to talk about it has added to your feelings of invalidation, but here's the truth:

- You know what happened.
- You know what you felt.
- You don't need their version of it.

REASON 3: FEAR

Fearing what we might **feel as we heal** stops us looking at the difficult stuff, but the worst may already be over. Chances are, nothing again will ever feel as painful as the experiences you've already survived. The burdens you've carried, borne from your painful encounters, is the heaviest it may ever get. Speaking your truth to the power of the past will lift those burdens and heal what you feel. There's nothing scary about healing emotional suffering; what *is* scary is *not* healing it. Are you afraid to heal because, in some way, staying wounded feels safer? Does it protect you from loneliness, criticism, or rejection? Does it help you to feel seen, even if it hurts? That's not weakness. That's survival. There is no benefit greater than emotional freedom and when you truly understand *that* you'll begin your healing journey *fearlessly*.

So, what are you afraid of?

- The envy of others as you rise?
- The possibility of being dismissed?
- The guilt of moving forward while others stay stuck?
- The shame and humiliation projected on to you by the very people who got you here?

Let me reassure you once again: nothing in this book requires you to confront, blame, or question anyone from your past. You don't have to explain yourself. You don't have to "clear the air." You don't need their

blessing. You are free to heal in your own time, in your own way, **as soon as you say so.**

REASON 4: SELF-PUNISHMENT

We'll talk a lot more about self-punishment later but for now, from this moment forward, please know that it's no longer necessary to punish *yourself* for anything that's been done to you or said to you or that you witnessed that caused you to feel emotional distress and suffering. Sometimes we believe that we deserve to suffer especially if we've been blamed and held responsible for the things that have happened to us. You are *not* to blame; you do *not* need to punish yourself anymore. What other people said or did - the insults, the dismissal, the abuse - was not your fault. Within you is the power to heal and transform your past. You just need reminding - sometimes repeatedly - that you're worth the effort and you matter enough to try.

If you were punished a lot during your childhood, if joy and safety and love were withheld from you, you may have continued to deprive yourself of these essential emotional building blocks. Self-punishment can become a habit, a reflex, a rule you never agreed to. But it's not a rule you have to keep following.

When we begin to replace self-punishment with self-compassion, our heart opens and we start to treat ourselves with the kindness we've always deserved. You wholeheartedly deserve compassion and kindness for the road you've travelled, and for every painful, confusing, or unkind experience you've survived.

REASON 5: UNWORTHINESS

I used to feel how you might be feeling right now. Despite everything that had been done to me and said to me, despite the pain, the self-blame, the shame, I eventually found myself feeling worthy of healing. I still had

a long way to go but this was a solid start. Yes I wandered off the path many times, but now something within me was determined to get back on track and hold on.

You may not feel worthy of something better right now and that's okay, but you can recognise *the value* of change and your ability to make it happen. Put another way: you can **value the chance** to feel something different even if you don't yet feel worthy of it. You're seeking solutions; you're here because you want to heal the emotional pain that's sabotaging your life and stealing your joy. That means something.

As an adult, not feeling worthy or deserving is a long-term consequence of emotional disruption and chaos in childhood. Maybe you were told 'you're not worth it' 'you don't deserve it' 'who do you think you are'. As you begin to untangle the lies and the betrayals of your past, you *will* begin to feel worthy of so much more than you do right now. You don't need to feel worthy to begin; you just need to recognise the *value* of feeling something different.

REASON 6: JUDGEMENT

We judge ourselves when healing doesn't happen quickly enough. Worse, we give up on recovery because we judge that it's hurting too much, requires too much effort, or it's a load of rubbish. Judgement stops us but so often the voice that's judging us isn't ours - it belongs to someone from the past whose judgements have landed us in the emotional mess we're in.

I'm sure those judgemental people with the critical voices would have something to say about you 'growing up' 'pulling yourself together' and 'not being so dramatic', but if their advice was helpful it would have worked by now...

The truth is, judging yourself for the pace of your healing only holds you back. It stops you immersing yourself in the process. It interrupts your progress with old stories that were never yours to begin with. Leave 'Judge Mental' at the door and give yourself time to tell your truth and win your emotional war.

REASON 7: CONDITIONAL HEALING

We stay in a state of limbo when we put conditions on our healing. We tell ourselves we'll be happy when...we'll be at peace when. I've lost count of the number of people who have said to me 'if only I could meet the right person' or 'if only ... would happen I'd finally feel happy/healed/free/complete/at peace.'

We spend our lives waiting for someone or something to fill the emotional spaces left by unmet needs and invalidating experiences from the past. So, ask yourself: who or what are you still waiting for? *Unconditional* healing says we can be whole and complete *without* the permission, validation, love, or approval we're still waiting for from someone else because here's the truth: when someone else supplies your peace, approval or worth they can take it away again. But when you create it for yourself, it can be shared but never taken.

There are few greater achievements on your road to emotional recovery than learning to meet your own needs and renouncing the old expectation that someone else will do it for you. You don't need a rescuer. You're not waiting anymore. Peace of mind and emotional freedom is 100% achievable the moment you stop waiting for someone else to save you.

MENDING MENTAL HEALTH

Be gentle with yourself during this work; it's important you know when you've had enough, and when you need to rest. During the 'Challenge It

to Change It' exercises you may feel uncomfortable writing down names of people you love and care about especially when those emotional ties have also wounded you. Remember what we said about denial and fear? If you need to write down 'she made some really stupid choices that ruined my life' or 'he should have had better values' then write it down. You're not being disloyal, you're not blaming anyone, you're simply acknowledging what happened, and you're telling your truth about how and what got you 'here'. That's essential for your healing.

Writing your truth creates profound shifts in your emotional wellbeing and mental health. It shifts the blame from you and puts accountability where it belongs. It opens space for self-compassion.

Helping ourselves recover from the emotional war we're fighting every day can feel like arduous work. Our minds have been flooded with warnings, fear-based lies, and a barrage of distorted truths. If you're worried about being disloyal then please know this: **anyone with your best interests at heart would want you to heal; they'd want you to stretch your wings and fly. Anyone who doesn't want this for you simply doesn't matter as you navigate your road to emotional freedom.** It's a measure of how deeply your past has affected you that you're still protecting other people's feelings instead of your own. You're safe now to uncover **the truth you need to hear** so you can heal yourself. You're not letting anyone down by putting your needs first. The healing process begins when you **stop minimising who and what hurt you.**

Where do you even begin? You begin **here**. Our motto is simple but powerful: **no shame, no blame, only awareness.**