

# Finding Your Power

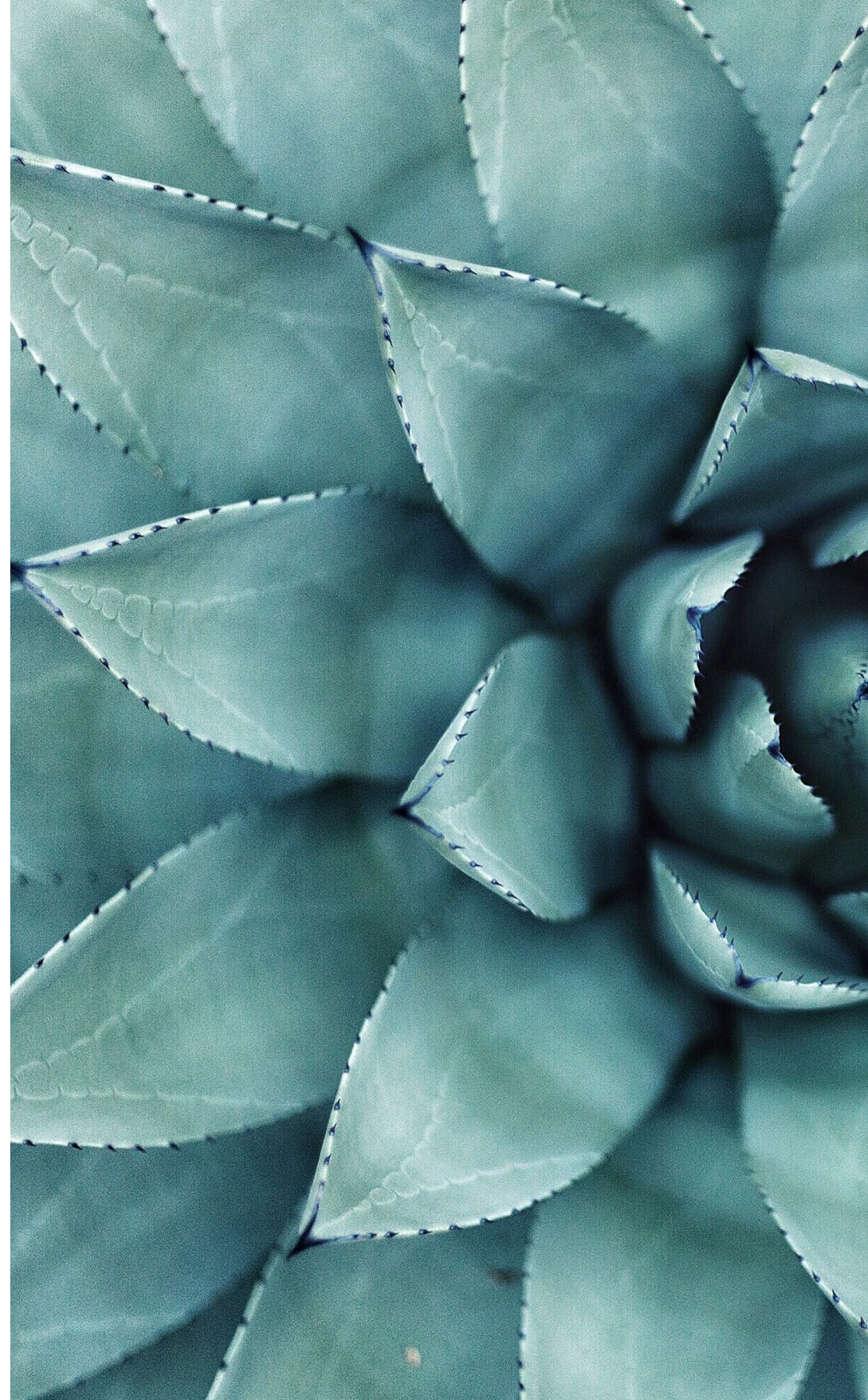
at work, at home and in life




# Finding Your Power:

Laying the Seeds for an Unshakable  
Foundation

The journey of finding your power, when taken in earnest, changes you from the inside out. It changes all that you say, do, think and feel about yourself, your relationships and life's circumstances. At first blush, the concept may sound a little foreign. But, once you commence the journey to discover your true essence, *your power*, you can never go back . . . and, you'll never want to.







## Finding Your Power

Several years ago, a series of events in my life were triggered that led me on a journey to discover my own power. It began with a difficult pregnancy followed by a difficult birth and a son who suffered from multiple health challenges during his first few days, months and years of life. Then a knee surgery gone wrong and then, finally, separating from a company I had worked with for almost decade. In retrospect, I realize that it was a journey I did not even know I was on until almost a year or two into it. (*Perhaps this sounds familiar? They always say, "hindsight is 20/20".*) Most of us begin our journeys by looking at and into the "self" (*note the lower case "s"*) and the experiences that made us who we think we are.

Most of us stumble upon a glimpse of our true power after experiencing some kind of life changing event. Perhaps the loss of a job or loved one, a life threatening disease or condition or simply unhappiness or depression about how we are living our lives and the inability to shake a deep knowing that there is more for us to see, do and share with the world than what we are currently experiencing. This then, is the launching point. It takes heart, courage, trust, patience and belief to not only begin the journey, but to stay the course.

So, what is *your power* you may ask? It is a good question. One worth asking. But, it is also one that no one can answer for you. This is the kind of question that, based on your own personal journey, you should answer for yourself. What I can share with you, however, are some guiding principles that have been helpful to me on my journey of self discovery and on the journeys of those with whom I work.

# Learning to Love Yourself

It all begins and ends with love. Yes, that's right, love. As elementary as it sounds, it's that simple . . . or is it? By love, I don't mean the kind of "head-over-heals-I-can't-breath-without-him/her" love. No, this love is quite different and something most wondrous to behold. It is the ultimate and unconditional love that we contain as an innate part of our being; a gift endowed at the time of our creation: Spirit's love. *(The name is not what matters here. It could easily be God, Allah, Yahweh, Vishnu, Quetzalcoatl, Source or whichever name you feel most comfortable calling the source energy that created all things big and small.)* This love resides within each of us waiting to be fully and truly awakened so that we can really know love of Self *(note the upper case "S" here)*. We've all heard the saying, "you can't truly love anyone else unless and until you love yourself." *(The same goes for forgiveness, by the way.)* Well, it is this love that lays the foundation for discovering your power and for unleashing your full potential and abundance in all areas of your life.

To help illustrate this point, I will share a brief story that helped me begin to understand the notion of Self love. Perhaps, at the end of it, you too will discover something about yourself. When I was in high school, I took a health class. At the beginning of one of our classes, our teacher told us to take out a pen and piece of paper. *(We did so, but quite begrudgingly as you can imagine, because we thought a pop quiz was coming.)* To our bewilderment, our teacher asked us to write down the top five people in our lives that we loved the most. He gave us a few

minutes and when we were done, he asked two key questions that I'll never forget. First, he asked how many of us had written our own names on the list. And second, how many of us had written our names first on the list. No one – absolutely no one – in the class had written their own name on the list. The realization left a silence in the room as we all experienced our own "light bulb moments." It made me realize that we often speak about self love and self respect, but we equally as often forget to integrate it fully into who we are. I've never forgotten this simple, yet quietly monumental, exercise. It laid the initial seeds for the foundation of the rest of my life.

One of these initial seeds was the understanding that all relationships take time to flourish and to deepen. Especially the relationship with yourself. So be patient as you learn how to love yourself truly and fully. Despite the pace of this journey, it is well worth doing because it builds a necessarily strong and unshakable foundation to help you grow into the fullness of you. For some, feeling this Self love and by extension love for others, will seem easier and quicker than for others. Take heart though – it is not a race. And, it is not a contest. Some of us have to begin first by drawing on this love to heal our wounds; wounds that may range from abuse, addiction, abandonment, low self esteem, anger, jealousy, and more. Pick your poison. For that is truly what it can be to your body and your energy. But, and a very huge "but," this kind of poison has an antidote. As we love and heal ourselves, we can begin to look at the experiences that we've held as toxic or poisonous in our bodies differently. We can see them as having a greater lesson or purpose - even the most painful ones – thereby setting us free from their grip and the repeated dysfunctional thought and behavioral patterns that came along with them. We can appreciate the lessons that have brought us to where we are today and that will shape us into the person we choose to be tomorrow.



# The Gift of Forgiveness.

The gift of forgiveness is the next step on the road to loving yourself. Begin by forgiving yourself for EVERYTHING. Everything that seems to replay itself in your mind or body that tells you that you're not good enough, not smart enough, not good looking enough, not worth loving or being committed to. Whatever it is that wounds you over and over again . . . forgive. Forgive yourself and forgive all those involved. Forgiveness does not, of course, mean that you have to like or even love those who hurt you, but it does mean that you will not allow yourself to be held hostage any longer.

Do you think a wolf or a polar bear or a bird troubles itself with past mistakes or missed opportunities? For losing something, breaking something, for hurting a member of the pack or flock? No, they don't. It's a valuable lesson we can learn from our animal friends. You are not your mistake. But, it is important to learn from them and then move on. By approaching life lessons in the spirit of forgiveness, you can't help but find freedom, healing, and most of all, love. So give it as a gift to yourself . . . everyday. And, with time, you will discover that you have become a gift to others.





Finding Your Power

# Healthy Boundaries.

Next give yourself permission to set boundaries that are healthy for you and that serve your highest good. This does not translate into being selfish. (*I know what those of you who always put others first are thinking.*) In fact, it's the opposite. Boundaries allow us to respect and honor ourselves and others and vice versa. They free us of feelings of resentment, anger and frustration, for example, because they help us define with clarity how we will treat and honor ourselves. Imagine being free of the anger and frustration. How much lighter would you feel? How much happier? How much freer? The answer is: the sky's the limit.

One of the many benefits we receive in return for setting healthy boundaries is that we adjust our perception of, and response to, others and their actions. We can do this because we learn to have a healthier understanding that our boundaries and the terms of our relationships, while not experienced in a vacuum, are our own to define. Without these boundaries, we unwittingly set the wheels in motion for self-sabotage and the creation of ongoing and unnecessary distractions that prevent us from reaching our highest potential.

Boundaries don't limit us, they set us free.



# Get to Know Yourself.

An infamous mantra reflects, “to love yourself is to know yourself.” So, get to know yourself. Begin spending a few moments every day with yourself (morning and evening are ideal). Appreciate yourself and all the wonderful things about you – ALL of you. Peel back the layers and be thankful for the greatness that is you.

There is no one right way to do this. There are many and the fun is in discovering the methods that work best for you. A popular way to become more in tune with yourself and your surroundings is meditation. Before you begin conjuring up images of sitting in a lotus position for hours on end, let me interrupt for just a moment. While practicing seated meditation has many benefits, it is not the only way to meditate. You may find that

your meditation takes the form of playing an instrument or even dancing. Or, perhaps simply walking quietly in nature. Relaxation and connection with nature in all its forms has loving and healing benefits beyond measure. Find what brings you peace and joy and do that . . . shamelessly often.

These gifts that flow from Self love are life changing. By practicing a form of meditation and connection to nature each day, you activate and strengthen your ability to become more aware of your thoughts, feelings and surroundings. As you become more aware, you can monitor and adjust your responses and the beliefs that you hold related to them so that you can live in authentic alignment with your true Self. Because of this, these gifts are an indulgence we can scarcely afford not to give ourselves.

# Speaking Your Truth – Releasing Your Fears

To speak your truth is to find your power. By this point, you may have had inklings about what your power is, but may not yet fully trust in it or believe in it. Or, better still, you may continue to cling to old fear-based notions of how you think you're supposed to act, who you're supposed to be and what you are supposed to say.

Ah, yes. Fear. We give it so much power. We give it *our* power . . . undeservedly so. The reason is that fear is like a shape shifter. It does not always appear the way we think it will. Sometimes it's obvious that it's fear. But, other times, it comes masquerading as anger, worry, jealousy, low self-esteem, arrogance, manipulation, victim mentality, and even self-righteousness. The first trick, however, is recognizing that, at its core, it's all fear. The second is knowing that it's also a choice: do you wish to be manipulated or controlled by it or do you wish to live free of it and experience an authentic life? Like love, the choice is simple. But also like love, if you choose to be free and authentic, it takes time, patience and trust.



To release our fears, we must acknowledge and learn from them and, ultimately, transform them into wisdom and insight. To do otherwise, only postpones the inevitable. Because, at some point, it will all boomerang back to us. And, having been unresolved the first (or second or third) time, it returns in a stronger and more direct fear-filled scenario demanding our attention once again. Releasing your fears can be done in several ways - by taking small baby steps (e.g., saying “no”, speaking up in a work meeting or expressing an opinion to someone you find intimidating) or by taking a quantum leap (e.g., leaving your career to follow a path you've always desired). The point is, you get to choose. Whatever your choice, you have the opportunity to set the scene and play the starring role in the cinematic production that is your life.



# It's Your Journey. Walk or Fly . . . Don't Run

Remember, your life is a wonderful journey, not a destination. Each experience – whether we define them as “good” or “bad” – consists of important lessons along the way. So walk or fly, don't run. Enjoy the ride while savoring every moment and embracing your lessons learned. Soar high and shine divinely . . . all the while being present and joyful in each moment so that you can discover who you already are and who you've always been. Know that your true power resides within you - always. It is simply waiting for you to open the door and receive it with a welcoming embrace.

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## About Michelle

Michelle is Founder of Lucenscia, a human potential and mindful business transformation firm dedicated to developing leaders and organizations with positive impact in the world. Named “Top Corporate Leader of the Year” and “Woman of the Year,” she is faculty and Meta-Coach for Daniel Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence Coaching Certification program and a Certified Genos International Emotional Intelligence Practitioner®. Michelle also is a certified mindfulness teacher with the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute and the International Mindfulness Teachers Association (CMT-P). She sits on the Board of the Institute for Organizational Mindfulness and is a Founding Member of Mindful Women Meditate. As a recommended speaker in SHRM’s Speaker’s Bureau, Michelle’s work has been featured across industry publications and venues including The Mindful Leadership Summit, Training, Leadership Excellence, Chief Learning Officer and Huffington Post.

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