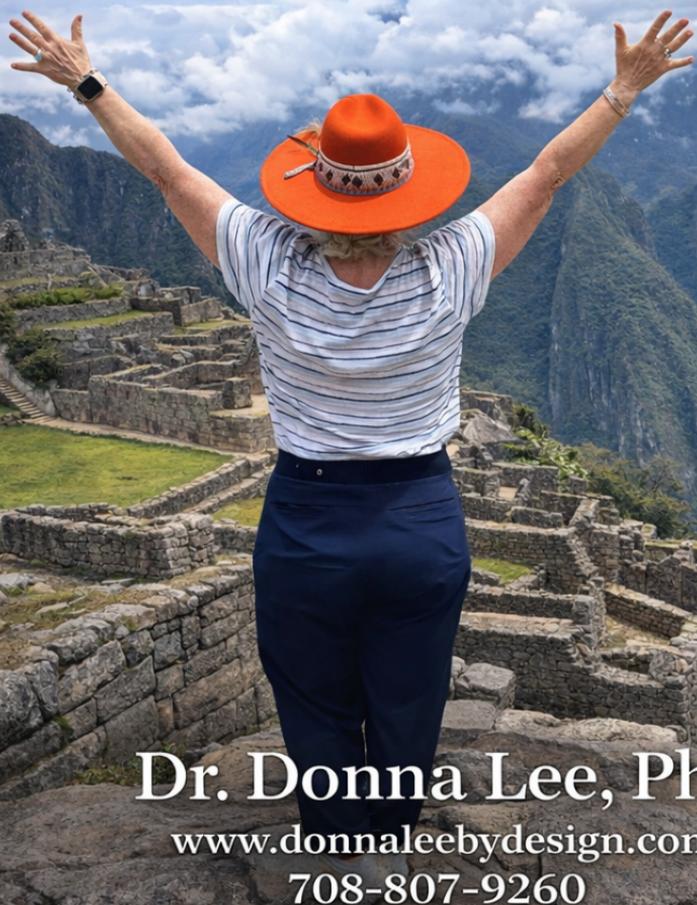


# To The Brink *and Back*

How Changing My Thoughts  
Changed My Life



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“My life didn’t change when my  
circumstances changed.  
It changed when my thinking did.”

— Donna Lee

## **A Note From Donna**

I'm Donna Lee—speaker, consultant, and coach. For years, I stood on stages around the world, built and led a national consulting firm, and helped organizations grow people and performance.

But this booklet isn't about what worked. It's about what broke—and what had to change for me to rebuild my life from the inside out.

To *The Brink and Back* is a reflection on how familiar patterns keep us stuck, and how new thinking creates forward motion—personally and professionally.

## **How I Work With People**

I help individuals, leaders, and organizations break unproductive patterns and build sustainable change through:

- Keynote speaking and conference sessions
- Leadership and communication workshops
- Executive and personal coaching
- Retreats focused on clarity, resilience, and reset

My work blends lived experience with practical tools—designed to move people forward, not overwhelm them.

## **Before It Broke**

From the outside, everything looked successful. I was busy, visible, and in demand. My calendar was full. My reputation was solid.

But success can be loud enough to drown out warning signs. When you're constantly creating, delivering, and holding things together, there's little space left to ask harder questions.

I didn't feel stuck—I felt responsible. And that sense of responsibility kept me moving forward, even as the pressure quietly mounted.

## **The Loop No One Talks About**

Familiarity is comfortable—even when it's exhausting. We repeat what works, what's expected, and what keeps things running, rarely stopping to ask whether it's sustainable.

I wasn't repeating failure. I was repeating patterns. Patterns of over-functioning, over-delivering, and postponing rest and reflection.

The loop doesn't announce itself. It feels like momentum—until it doesn't.

## **The Intersection**

The unraveling didn't come from one decision—it came from timing. A company I had worked with went bankrupt, owing me well into six figures. Overnight, stability disappeared.

At the same time, my marriage was ending. After twenty-three years together, I asked for a divorce.

I paid my employees. I paid my vendors. Then I walked into Bankruptcy Court—not to walk away from responsibility, but to reorganize it.

## **The Moment of Choice**

I won't soften this part. I was exhausted. I was overwhelmed. And I didn't know how I was going to walk back from what I had lost.

But I did know this: I wasn't willing to disappear.

I signed the paperwork, closed the door on what had ended, and focused on what was required next.

I didn't have a long-term plan yet. I had one clear decision: take my life back—one practical step at a time.

## **Changing the Thought**

My life didn't change because circumstances improved. It changed because I began questioning the thoughts I had been living inside.

I stopped asking "Why is this happening to me?" and started asking "What is required of me now?"

New thoughts create new choices. New choices create movement. And movement—no matter how small—breaks the loop of familiarity.

This wasn't about positive thinking. It was about honest thinking.

## **Making Sense of the Past**

I didn't erase my past. I organized it. I separated experience from identity, and lessons from labels.

What I had been through didn't define me—but it did inform me. When I stopped fighting my history and started learning from it, the present became livable again.

The goal isn't to forget where you've been. It's to stop letting it decide where you're going.

## **Back, But Not the Same**

I didn't return to who I was before. I became someone clearer—more grounded, more intentional, and more honest about what matters.

If you are standing at the edge of something right now, you don't need to have everything figured out. You only need one new thought—one choice that interrupts the loop you've been living in.

Here's your invitation: Write down one thought you're ready to release—and one new thought you're willing to try. Carry that with you this week.

Change doesn't begin with certainty. It begins with willingness.

Some moments change  
everything.

*To The Brink and Back* is for anyone who knows something has to shift—but isn't sure how to begin. It's a reminder that clarity doesn't come from having all the answers, but from choosing one new thought and moving forward.

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