



Introduction

UNDERSTANDING THE PEACE AMONG THE PIECES

*“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize
how close they were to success when they gave up.”*

— Thomas Edison,
American Inventor

Are you hurting due to circumstances that dimmed your light? Do you feel like you can't escape the darkness, leaving you feeling tired, afraid, or broken? If this situation resonates with you, know you are not alone. Though the path may seem dark, there is light to be found. Though hope may seem hidden, a healing journey awaits you. The hurt you have experienced is not the end. Until you find the hope, let me carry it for you. As you read this book, I will give you insight into healing paths you can take, and we will do this together. Remember, the light you desire could be just around the corner; until you find it, don't give up! Keep trying. When you fail, try again. In failure, there is hope—hope of a better future—and together, we will find it!

DISCOVERING THE LIGHT

As I tightened the bright green light bulb into place for our Halloween decorations, it shattered in my hand. Looking down, I saw shards of glass everywhere and a problem that needed to be fixed. Just as that light bulb started out whole with a purpose, so did you. No one in this world is unbroken, but the exciting fact is that in your brokenness, you can find your light, your purpose, and your passion. Think back to some of the times you felt betrayed, broken, or mistreated. Everyone can relate to these feelings because they are all more common than any of us care to show.

Maybe you have experienced loss in your career. You might have lost a loved one—a child, partner, parent, friend, or family member. Maybe you have been the unfortunate victim of neglect or mental, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. You might have experienced an affair, betrayal, or loss of trust. Whatever hurts that you carry, your brokenness is not the end of your story. In your brokenness lies unexpected beauty. There is no foundational purpose to you being broken. You were not intentionally broken by the “powers that be” so you could be light to others in the world, as I often hear people say to those who are hurting. Hearing such feedback can be really damaging; the person then begins to question why hurt must happen at all. Choices were made—just like with me screwing in the light bulb—that resulted in hurt.

Once you begin to realize your value is still there after the brokenness, you can begin to heal and move forward. That is not to say you won't become light for those who are also hurt. You may discover yourself finding comfort in others' experiences of hurt as you learn how they got through the hurt. People who have been hurt—who have gone through

the work of healing, who feel comfortable and confident being vulnerable, and who choose to share their journey of hurt and healing—can become inspirers. These people are valued because they can be an example of how you can continue after experiencing hurt and loss.

You can learn from people who share their stories of hurt. But hurt was not intentionally allowed in that individual's life by the "powers that be" just so they could be the light to someone else. If that were the case, why would hurt have to happen at all? Someone made a choice, and hurt was the outcome. Brokenness happens, but be assured, healing happens also, and there is hope! If you are hurting now, or if you have already gone through a journey of hurt and healing, think about sharing your story. It could inspire others who feel like they are stuck in the dark. Of course, some stories are just too painful to share and best left in the dark. If healing has been accomplished, choosing whether to share is a personal choice that should be made by you.

PAVING THE PATH FORWARD

Coming from a family with multiple divorces and cracks in the "bulb," I had the powerful desire to achieve success and pave a different path. As I grew older, I held strongly to the belief that I did not want to end up like others I had witnessed. In high school, I heard a speaker who talked about what I assumed was their perfect life. I thought I could never achieve the fantastic things they had found on their journey to success. Success is interesting because people define it differently, but ultimately, they are all searching for the foundational concept of a happy life.

Doubt can rob you of the actual reality of the amazing things you can

accomplish. Had it not been for a couple of extremely strong mentors, I would not be where I am today. Those mentors taught me an amazing survival skill: If I felt like I could not do something, all I had to do was find someone who knew how to do the thing I wanted to do and ask them for help. Sometimes that meant paying for services such as business coaching, mentoring, and counseling. If there is something you would like to accomplish, but you don't think you can, you are wrong. You just need to find the right person to walk the journey with you and show you how to do the thing.

In a seminar I attended in Washington, DC, a speaker shared a gem of knowledge I have never forgotten: If you see another person achieving something, you can do it too. If it is humanly possible and you want to learn how, with enough work, it can be within your reach. Never believe otherwise. You may feel like a broken light bulb, but that doesn't mean your pieces are less valuable.

In this book, you will learn how your brokenness can become your strength and how you can accomplish things you dream about. You will learn about the concepts of brokenness, strength, and success, and how these concepts apply to various parts of your life so you can achieve the things you set out to achieve. Life does break us into pieces at times; getting back to your peace is a journey that needs to be intentional, authentic, and filled with vulnerability and self-kindness. Failure is an important part of your journey, and the only way you will truly remain broken is if you choose to stop trying. There is peace for you to find and experience.

As you read, I encourage you to highlight sentences and sections in this book that provide you with hope. Then if (and when) you find yourself struggling in the future, you can reread these sections to give yourself a

boost of inspiration. If you apply the wisdom and knowledge you gain from this book to your everyday life, you will be on your way to finding a stronger foundational sense of peace that will help lead you to achieve the things you desire. The purpose of this journey is not to become whole again because that is a difficult task. The purpose is to find your peace among your pieces. People all have pieces. You are not alone. No one goes through this world without scratches, scars, and broken glass, but with the hope, knowledge, and skills you discover in this book, you will be able to navigate your journey toward a happier, healthier foundation.

JUMPING TOWARD THE LIGHT

Knowing that I don't have all the answers, I have written this book for you as a "jumping off point" to inspire you and provide a level of ongoing hope that will motivate you to take the next step in your journey to success. I believe in you, and I believe you can do it! Just like you, I have experienced brokenness on my journey to success. Just like you, I am human and have made mistakes big and small. My journey started the instant I felt like a mentor believed in me. That journey took me on to college, then graduate school where I earned my Master's in Marriage and Family Counseling. When I was younger, I never thought I would even earn a bachelor's degree. After graduating with my master's, I opened Family Counseling Services in Meridian, Idaho, in 2008. Today, I have a staff that averages twenty-five full-time employees. I share all this to show you it can be done. You can achieve the goals you want to. Don't let anyone make you believe anything less. You've got this; you always have—you just might not have known it until now.

You might still be carrying doubts even as you read this. Know those doubts are natural and, in fact, can help motivate you toward your goal. Those doubts cause you to ask important questions, and you will find your brain starting to engage. Your brain will start to think about answers to those doubts and can even help you overcome the obstacles in your path. Do not be afraid of the doubts! Embrace them, and if they become intrusive, grab a journal and a pen and write them down. Get them out of your brain and onto paper.

Having doubts is one way your brain is working through the possible scenarios and answers to the roadblocks you face. It is okay if you don't have all the answers right now. If you come upon a roadblock you cannot overcome, ask for help. You can do this by spending time with a friend or family member, or through more official actions such as business mentoring or counseling. Remember, we are all broken—every one of us. Even in your brokenness, you can achieve your goals and find success. Keep going and you will rise above. I believe in you. I believe you can do it! I believe you can accomplish the things that may have only felt like far-off dreams in the past. Take one step at a time, and when you need help, ask—do not quit. You can do this. You've got this!

TAKING A MENTORING APPROACH

Going forward, I want to be your mentor, coach, source of inspiration, and accountability partner. You may experience various emotions as you read different sections of this book. Come to this book when you feel sad, inspired, or ready to act. Take a break from this book when you feel you have what you need for the day, when you want to stop and do work

on some of the tasks, or when you need a break from the subject you are reading about. Be assured, this book is written for you; this is your journey to go through at the speed you feel comfortable. Life is a journey with ups, downs, broken pieces, and peace...among all the other things you experience throughout your life.

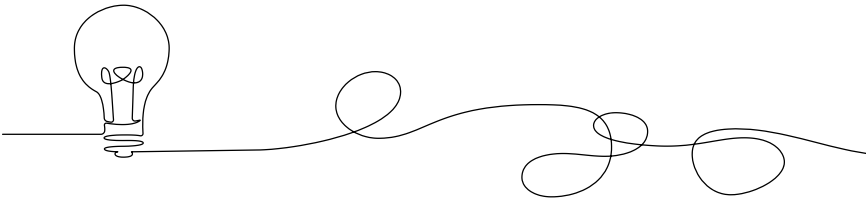
Are you ready? Take a deep breath, and let's begin this journey together. Reading this book for the first time? Enjoy the journey and go through it at your own pace. As the characters in the movie *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* say:

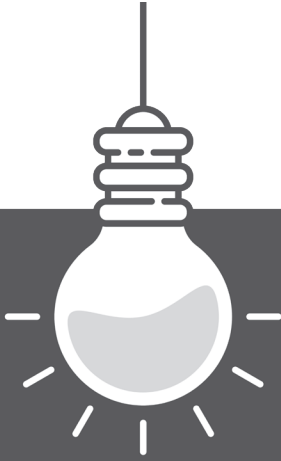
Larry (Ben Stiller): I have no idea what I'm going to do tomorrow.

Teddy (Robin Williams): How exciting!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Michelle". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being significantly larger and more decorative than the others.

Jennifer Michelle



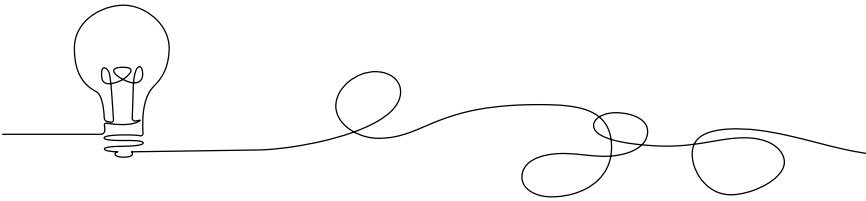


Section 1

DISCOVERING THE JOURNEY TO HEALING

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

— Lao Tzu,
Chinese Philosopher





Chapter 1

SHINING LIGHT ON YOUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

*“The heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the
harvest of the future.”*

— Wendell Phillips, American Reformer

(In 1881, Phillips gave a speech that William E. Sawyer
transcribed in time to print the next morning in
the *Boston Globe*. The article was called “Voices for
Freedom.”)

Thomas Edison received a patent for his light bulb on January 27, 1880, but he was not the only one working on creating light using a filament (the little piece of wire in the bulb that produces the light). In 1835, the first constant light was produced. Dozens of scientists over the years from 1835 tried until Edison was able to produce the first practical, long-lasting, high-resistance carbon filament. In fact, Thomas Edison found himself in some legal trouble with both William E. Sawyer and Albon Man—who worked together on several patents for light bulbs. Edison’s path to inventing his incandescent light bulb featuring a high-resistance,

commercially viable carbon filament was paved with his own intelligence and that of his associates at Menlo Park and his competitors. Many have said Edison thrived and did his best when he faced competition.

Just like Edison's invention has a past, present, and future, so do you. Your journey has included successes and failures, ups and downs, allies and enemies. All these ingredients are part of the recipe that helped make your success. They are part of your journey, and whether good or bad, you would not be where you are today without having those pieces in your life. You may have experienced the most beautiful upbringing, or you may have been brought up in a home that was far from a fairytale. You may have easily found the love of your life, or you may have had to experience some bumps in the road. You may have made the most amazing decisions on the way to your career, or you may have had to go through some trials to get to where you are today.

Whatever your journey has been, the present is here, and the future is still yours to create. That is the ultimate beauty of invention. If something is not working the way you want it to, you can choose to invest time and effort right now, in the present, to turn it around and make something better in the future. If you don't lose hope for a better future, and you are willing to put the work into the present, you really can accomplish even more than you set out to achieve.

In 2019, as a single mom, I was tasked with decorating for Halloween. I was eager to make the holidays special for my children. I had been single since 2016 and had found I could do a surprisingly excellent job with holiday prep. At Halloween, I was screwing in a green light bulb to set the ambiance for the decorations, when it shattered in my hand. It caught me off guard, and for a moment, I felt completely discouraged. Then I had an

epiphany. I looked at the pieces of green shattered glass on the ground, and as I started picking them up carefully, I thought to myself how much I related to this small light bulb, once whole but now broken. At that very moment, a metaphor came to my mind about how we all start out whole, but through life's journey, we get scratches, scars, and sometimes even break. I grabbed a paper towel and decided to keep the pieces of this light bulb in my office as a reminder that even in my brokenness, there is still hope. To this day, I have that white paper towel with those pieces of broken light bulb displayed in my office to remind me that not everything will go my way, but even when things go badly, there is beauty in my pieces.

In that moment, looking at the shattered pieces on the floor, I realized that in my brokenness, hope for the future remained, and I would rather carry hope than continue to choose to feel broken. The power was within me, and how I approached my future was fully up to me.

I quickly grabbed some paper and began writing down some of these thoughts. As time passed, each time I walked by the broken pieces of that light bulb, more metaphors came to me. As often as I could, I wrote down the thoughts I was having about those glass pieces, and that is how this book began—with the realization that I would rather embrace my brokenness and know there is beauty and hope in the pieces than try to hide my brokenness from myself and the world.

Sometimes, you need to experience a breakdown to experience a breakthrough. Sometimes you will get scratches, scars, or wounds, but the truth is, beauty and hope for a better future lie in those setbacks.

REFLECTING ON THE PAST

Think about your dreams from when you were younger. What did you hope to achieve? What were your heart's desires, dreams, and wishes? How did you want to make the world a better place? What was your light bulb? Set this book aside for a couple of minutes and complete the activity below to set your intentions for the rest of the time you will be investing in yourself as you go through the following chapters.

EXERCISE

Get a piece of paper and answer the following questions. Don't answer with what you know you "should" write down—answer from your heart, from the place you keep your dreams, your inner desires. This is a heart exercise, not a head exercise:

1. What did you dream of becoming when you were younger?
2. What about that dream made you think it would create happiness?
3. What elements of that dream do you continue to carry with you today?
4. What elements of that dream continue to provide hope?

Many of us did not become the person we imagined in our dreams, but the elements of our "younger dreams" stay in our hearts as we grow. In writing your answers, think about your dreams and how they helped you believe they would create happiness. Though the dream may not have been realized, your search for happiness continued. Though you might not have become the astronaut, pop singer, movie star, etc. you dreamt about when you were five, the ambition to think you could do amazing things is still in your heart.

The journey *restarts* now. The journey to believing in yourself again, just like you did when you were younger carrying around incredible dreams, restarts today. It is a journey of hope, healing, and success, and it starts now.

Accomplishment takes work. The light bulb was not invented on the first try. After others had tried for nearly eighty years, it still took Edison hundreds upon hundreds of attempts to develop the long-lasting, high-resistance carbon filament that made the light bulb commercially viable and lit up the world. So, put on your thinking pants, start believing you can do it, and get ready to do the work!

SHINING LIGHT ON YOUR PAST

Continuing along the road of shining light on your past, it's time to start healing old wounds. You carry coping skills that helped you get through challenging times. They probably served you well or you would not have used them. As you grew, those same coping skills may have become outdated and caused more damage than healing. Many continue to use outdated coping skills because they worked before, and believe they will continue to work, not realizing the exact opposite is true.

What worked when you were younger just does not work now because your situation has changed. Your environment, your developmental stage, and your intellectual ability have all changed, altering the effectiveness of past coping skills. Just as you mature as you live life, so should your coping skills mature. You no longer used a sippy cup once you learned how to drink from a regular glass. Part of this journey is realizing it is time to update the ways you look at and approach life. It is time to update

and deepen the coping skills that will help you achieve success and the goals you set for yourself.

You have probably gone through some truly difficult trials with family, friends, and/or loved ones. Maybe you were divorced. Maybe you were mistreated by those meant to protect you. You may have had to take care of the people who were supposed to take care of you. You might have been a victim of a crime, abuse, or neglect. Maybe you faced an affair, a death, or heartache. No one is untouched by pain if they live long enough. Pain visits everyone occasionally, and it will decide now is your time more than once. As you continue to reflect, answer the following questions:

1. Which hurts are you holding on to that no longer serve you?
2. Where has anger gotten in the way of success, of reaching your goals, of believing there is hope for accomplishing the things you have always wanted to achieve?
3. What is the ultimate roadblock to taking the next step? What is keeping you from taking the first step toward doing the thing or things you know will bring you hope in your everyday life?

These can be tough questions, but you must answer them to heal your heart and the hurt you carry, which blocks you from achieving the things you desire. Give yourself time to reflect on the above questions. Make a safe space in your thoughts to explore your answers. Take precious time to sit in silence and reflect on the thoughts flowing through your mind. If you can give these thoughts space and time, you will help your body heal from the thoughts that have held you back.

Answers can come in silence. When you keep yourself too busy, you have no time for self-reflection, which can hinder the healing process. It

is difficult to sit with your thoughts, especially those that bring up hurt, but trust in this process. Be kind to yourself and go where your thoughts lead. And when beneficial, pause for a moment; take a break.

WALKING THE JOURNEY

Some journeys are not meant to be walked alone. Some weights are not meant to be carried by just one person. When the journey seems dark and the weight seems too heavy, it is time to consciously decide to search for light. When you are feeling the heaviness of your situation, and it is becoming overwhelming, your body and mind will try to motivate you to find someone to help carry the burden. Sometimes carrying the burden is as easy as finding someone who will just listen to you talk about your struggle. Reaching out could mean calling a close friend or talking to family. Other times, you may need something more consistent, like the kind of support found in regularly scheduled professional counseling.

No one is untouched by hurt. When we are in the dark too long, reaching for help is reaching for light, and the light is where hope lives. It's like asking someone to bring sunshine into your darkness. Don't be afraid to ask when you need the sunshine. Be concerned if your thoughts are telling you not to ask. Light makes our concerns lighter. Don't let the darkness trick you into believing you are all alone. When you ask someone to share their light, you will be surprised at how many people are standing beside you—people you never noticed because the dark was telling you that you were alone. In reality, you were on a journey toward the light.

THE PRESENT

As Wendell Phillips said, “The heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the harvest of the future.” When you feel you have been buried by all life’s dirt and it feels like the present is hopeless, realize you have a decision to make. This moment can be one of the most powerful in your life. You have the power to decide to stay in the dirt like a seed that never grows. You can choose to remain in your current situation, deciding it is good enough. You can choose to live this life and be okay. But in thinking about yourself as a seed, begin to realize that in the dirt, you can also begin to grow. This could be the moment you decide to start growing. This could be the moment you decide staying in the dirt is no longer enough. This could be the moment you decide to change the rest of your life by choosing to act, invest in yourself, and take the second step to becoming the person you know you can be. You have already taken the first step by investing your time and energy in reading this book. This action alone has started your journey to finding more light in your world. You are already on your way. The time is now. Embrace your path!

You will evolve your own being as you go through life. Just like the light bulb was not invented on the first round of attempts—it had to evolve to find success—so you will have to make the journey to find success. How you define success will be different than how others define it. Most people incorporate happiness in their definition of success, but each person defines happiness differently. To continue your journey, answer the following questions about your *present* to help identify what’s going well for you right now and what you would like to work on.

EXERCISE

1. Free write—let your thoughts go where they take you. Spend some time writing and journaling about your idea of success. How do you define it presently? How do you experience it? How have you been finding it and interacting with it? Do you find it more easily in some places than others? Is it achieving professional goals? Family goals? Do you find it in a hobby? Do you find it through service?
2. Develop a list of all the things you are currently happy about. It can be things that provide happiness and/or things you create and invest in that equate to greater happiness.

Your answers to the above questions are your strengths. As you continue, remember those answers. Go back to what you wrote when you feel weak. Put some of your answers on a sticky note and post it somewhere you will see it every morning. Personal growth does not always come without some confronting hurt. In those times, being able to go back to what makes you happy and helps you find and create joy can be the light your journey needs. When your journey is getting dim, go back to the things you wrote above and learn to pull strength from those items. Those things you listed are your sunshine, your light. They are your strength. Draw near to them.

FINDING GREATER LIGHT

As you continue down this road to finding greater light, remember to invest in the light you already have. The exercise above helped you identify the light in your life. As you go through this journey, don't neglect the things that currently give you strength. Do not lose them. Invest time,

effort, and energy into them. Did you list a friend? Give them a call and schedule a lunch. Spend time with them; grow that light. Did you list an activity or hobby that helps you feel the light? Schedule more time to do that activity. Maybe you listed quiet time, alone time, or silence as things that bring you light. These are essential times, especially for introverts. If you identify as an introvert, invest time in yourself. Schedule a self-date, a night where you pick up dinner, read a book, or get tea alone to recharge your battery.

More than anything else, whatever you listed above, spend time maintaining, growing, and investing in those things.

CALL TO ACTION

Choose one thing from the above list and intentionally invest in it this week. It doesn't have to be a financial commitment. Offer a time commitment. Not all investments revolve around money. Get creative. Investing in one of these things is not only investing in that item; it is investing in strengthening your light, your source of power, your source of energy. It is true that if you are not ensuring your health, it is very difficult to ensure those around you are healthy. Like on a plane, put your oxygen mask on first. If you pass out, you can't help anyone. Take care of yourself so you can help others feel good too.

Making sure you are healthy, strong, and successful is also a blessing to those around you. When you are all those things, you set an example to those around you. It helps inspire them, shows them it can be done, and provides hope. Investing in yourself is an investment in those around you. Investing in your happiness inspires others. When you see

a mentor succeed, someone who has really influenced you, it shows you that you can do it. Investing in yourself has the same effect on those who look up to you. They will see your success, your happiness, and your accomplishments and believe they can find those things too. You make the world around you better when you make yourself better—you bring much needed light into the world. Don't fear finding the light. Don't stay in the darkness. Now is your moment. Act now.

THE FUTURE

Here you go. The time is now. You have come a long way! You have looked at your past and present, and now it's time to do some fun work by dreaming about the future. The future is about your wishes, your desires, and your hopes. The future is about the light you want in your life. You can accomplish so much more than you ever thought. If something is humanly possible, you can accomplish it. Those who have done great things are no different than you. Accomplishment involves hard work, dedication, and ambition. You must be willing to put in the work, time, effort, dedication, and passion. You've got this! You can do it. Let's begin.

Think five years into the future. Take a moment to visualize where you are. What about ten years from now? What about even twenty years? Don't think practically; dream big. What do you hope to accomplish in the next five, ten, and twenty years? Where do you see your happiness? Where do you see your light? What successes do you want? What do you want to accomplish? As you think through these questions, what pictures come to mind? Dreams are fun to think about, but challenging to accomplish. The difference between those who live their dreams and

those who don't is ambition and hard work. Remember, you already made the decision—now is the time to act!

EXERCISE

1. List the main things you would like to accomplish.
2. Next to the above list, break each goal down into one-, five-, ten-, and twenty-year goals. Write one, five, ten, or twenty beside each as the timeline for achieving that goal.
3. Think about the next twelve months and write out the steps you would need to take to:
 - a. Accomplish one-year goals.
 - b. Begin working on your five-year goals.
 - c. Continue to plan your ten- and twenty-year goals.

Create a list based on the second question above. Save this list somewhere you can revisit it every year. One suggestion is revisiting your list in either December or January of every year so you can set intentions for the upcoming year based on these goals. Create a calendar reminder and have it repeat every year. Each year, look at that reminder with your goals incorporated in the description. Review what you have accomplished, and update what you would like to do the following year. Keep track of your successes so you can see how far you have come.

When you set goals, it is important to know that goals change. You do not want the same things today you wanted when you were five. Allow your goals to be fluid, but not forgotten. Allow them to shift with your shifting needs. Maintain your intention to continue to accomplish set goals. Keep

the desire to continue to find happiness and light. Just like the light bulb continued to evolve, allow yourself to do the same. Along the way, you may set aside some goals. Others you will work diligently to achieve. You might hit your mark early, or you might get delayed. Either way, don't stop until you have accomplished the things you know will serve you and your life well. They will create happiness within and around you. Find the light!

EXPECTING CHANGE

You will change. Change is expected, and it is a necessary part of development, no matter what age you are. Don't get stagnant. Continue to learn. Continue to grow. As I said, the coping skills you used when you were five should not be the same skills you use today. This last activity will help you invest in future coping skills.

1. List a coping skill or skills you no longer need and describe why. Journal about new coping skills you could use that would be better suited for your current circumstances.
2. List three coping skills you can use on your journey that will drive you closer to success, happiness, and light.
3. Next, describe *why* you chose these three skills.
4. Finally, journal about the "how." How do you see these three coping skills brightening your path as you achieve your goals?

SUMMARY

Congratulations! You are well on your way to finding more peace among your pieces. We all have broken parts. What makes the biggest difference is what we choose to do with the pieces. If you decide to mend after hurt and find value in the pieces you carry, it will bring you light. I believe in you and in the pieces you carry. Though you may have scratches and scars, you are more valuable than you think. Taking the time to invest in yourself will create light in your life.

Believe in yourself as you believe in others. Give light to yourself just as you have given and shared your light with others. No one can get through life alone. Though at times being alone is valuable and necessary, don't live there. Don't live in the darkness. The light is waiting and wants to shine on you. Take advantage of this opportunity to truly invest in yourself.