

PART ONE

CLEARING

Freeing your life of unwanted feelings

Today there are special instruments that can find our exact location on the planet based on satellite signals. These special instruments—Global Positioning System, or GPS, units—tell us where we are, which way we’re going, and how far we’ve come from our starting point.

In our lives we all have our own inner topography based on our experiences. Often we need to take our own bearings to chart a course through not only the many obstacles but also the delicious options life gives us. In choosing our way, we can consult with our own versions of a GPS unit. The wonderful lesson to be learned is that the unit is already built into us—call it our internal compass—that’s based on our feelings. The combination of experience and these guiding feelings is extremely powerful.

Feelings are amazingly potent forces. They color our outlook and determine the character of our days. Feelings range from the sublime to the unbearable, from opaque darkness to bright light.

Much of the metaphysical literature says that a few seconds of pure, focused feeling creates an emotional environment that attracts a corresponding physical experience. We like to be generous and give the feelings a full minute to do their work. Understanding feelings, how-

ever—and clearing out unwanted ones—requires knowing what they are. Sounds simple, but like anything in life, it requires practice. In Part One, we invite you to begin focusing on the feelings that are already shaping your experience. The first step toward getting what you want in life is to get rid of *feelings* that you don't want. Part One will guide you through activities that help free your life of unwanted feelings.

Letting Go

I believe the very purpose of life is to achieve happiness.

—The Dalai Lama

Rebecca writes:

Immediately after Jordan and I discovered the benefit of intentionally focusing feelings on our own writing lives, we wanted to share it with other writers. We also wanted to teach what we'd learned while surrounded by nature. Being in a beautiful, peaceful setting had enhanced our own ability to absorb the first lessons of the power of attraction. We wanted others to experience this power as well.

We contacted our favorite retreat center on the beautiful Navarro River in Mendocino County. The place has fabulous meals, a quiet location ideally suited to creative work, and a view of a forested ridge with constantly changing, inspiring light. The retreat center had weekend space for a group of twenty or so in late May—just three months away.

We knew that three months wasn't a lot of lead time to get the word out, but we took a leap of faith and reserved the weekend. First we paid a deposit that would hold the

facility. Next we invited special presenters who we knew exemplified the writer's life. Finally, we prepared our own talks about the power of attraction. When we felt we had everything in place, we advertised the weekend.

Although we hadn't held such a retreat before, we focused our energy on an outcome in which a full complement of participants would share a weekend of retreat and writing with us. If, during the weekend, we could communicate how to Write Free to those participants, we'd feel we had succeeded. We kept our focus on a very specific, very positive outcome, because if we failed, we'd lose a lot of money and plenty of credibility.

Sign-ups for the weekend trickled in from around the state and across the country. Soon half the openings had filled. Then, just as quickly as they'd started ringing, the phones stopped. No more sign-ups showed up in our e-mail in-boxes and post office boxes. We were nowhere near critical mass and considered canceling the weekend. Then the two of us realized what had happened—we'd taken our focus off the weekend and let our energy flag. We'd allowed failure to become an option.

Jordan and I regrouped. Keeping our attention off any anxiety about numbers and shifting back to the success of the weekend itself, we also transformed our energy. Sign-ups resumed flowing in, all the way up until the day of the retreat.

When the two of us arrived at the retreat and heads had been counted, we had the number of participants we'd hoped for. We went on to share an astounding and transforming weekend in which the writers let themselves write their intentions as artists. The successes of everyone who participated are still being revealed and celebrated daily.



Feelings are the capital in which writers and other artists trade. We're often called to express emotion in our work, whether it's assigning the motive of anger to a fictional character or using paint to express joy on canvas. For any artist, conveying feelings in an identifiable way can make the difference between producing a piece that is simply well wrought and one that pulses with authentic life. Writers and other artists already know to engage their feelings as they touch pens to paper, brushes to easel, fingers to instruments, and feet to the studio floor.

Feelings are also foundational in working with principles of attraction, which tell us that as we feel, we attract. To get what we want in life, it's essential that we feel the sensations associated with already having it. It's like taking a walk to a favorite place. You have your destination in mind: maybe you're strolling to your favorite deli and you can already taste the sweet slices of tomato on the sandwich you'll order when you arrive. Or you're headed to a lake in a mountain clearing, and as you ramble among the fir and pine, you can imagine how it will feel to kick off your boots and dip your feet into the bracing water. Those sensations draw you forward on the path as surely as night follows day.

The guiding feeling on your journey, though, is to know you'll arrive. You set out with no doubts in your mind, you have your scribbled directions, and you're full of confidence that you'll reach your destination. You even arrive so soon you wish you'd savored the journey more fully. With a positive outlook steering your course, you can't help but choose the right path to reach your heart's desire.

In this chapter you'll experiment with the most basic building blocks in your creative toolkit—your feelings—and learn how they serve to get you where you're going. Although most people believe they know the difference between a positive and negative feeling, this chapter

will help you identify not only what you're feeling in the moment but also how to raise your bad feelings to good any time you're ready. You'll feel the sensation of turning rejection to triumph, fear to confidence, pain to joy, all while sitting anywhere—your writer's corner, your artist's studio, the local café—with pen in hand.

ACTIVITIES

Hard Times

Remember a time when you felt hurt, lost, or rejected? You may have received bad news, for example, or had an accident, or experienced conflict with a loved one. Your feelings at such times may have been anger, sorrow, guilt, or some other negative emotion. No doubt your impulse was to work through these feelings as quickly as possible to get them behind you. Pushing away bad feelings is a natural urge, but looking at hard times in your past can be instructive. We'll do it here just long enough to learn the value of understanding how we *felt* during these key past experiences.

I. Create two columns numbered 1 through 10 along the left side of a fresh page in your journal. Beside each number write a key phrase from a difficult time in your past. The negative events can be large or small.

Example: *Hard Times*

1. *When mom died*
2. *When our cat ran off*
3. *During my divorce*
4. *My bout with the flu last week*

II. In the right column, write the dominant negative feeling you can recall from hard time number 1. Stop after the first one!

Example: 1. *When mom died* *Lonely*

III. Now close your eyes and allow yourself a minute to remember how that time felt. Take a quick trip to the dark side. As writers, we're often reminded to show, not tell, how things feel. Show yourself the details of your hard time. Put yourself back in that dim room; recall the closed curtains. Is there a face with a hurt expression, a sad song on the radio that you'll never forget? Let yourself get into that old sensation, deep in the emotional center of your being. Try to stop at fifteen seconds, and definitely go no longer than thirty seconds.

IV. On the next page in your journal, in big letters, write possible antonyms for the dominant negative emotion. Start with "*I feel loved when I think of . . .*" or "*I feel better when I remember . . .*" You may reach back farther than the hard time to find a pleasurable emotion, you may remember something from just yesterday, or you may anticipate the future. This is your chance to dig for vocabulary. When you write a word that rings your positive-feeling bell, go directly into writing that builds on the emotion. Write for at least a minute without stopping, always moving the hand, until you feel a lift in your spirit for at least a minute.

Example: *Lonely*

Antonyms: *CONNECTED, TOGETHER, JOINED, UNITED, LOVED...DING!*

Freewrite: *I feel loved when I think of all the days my mother took care of me, holding me, listening to my stories, making her sympathetic face. I can still hear her voice when she read to me—she made me feel warm, connected, and protected. I have good memories of listening to records she bought me, sitting on the floor of the living room, my mother in the kitchen baking peanut butter cookies . . .*

V. Go back to your list and work through the remaining hard times, listing first the negative emotion and then writing the emotional context of the positive experience.

You may want to spend days doing this activity. Go at your own pace—delving into the feelings associated with hard times may take a while. Notice how you are able to pull yourself out of the painful feelings just by connecting your hand to the page and conjuring up opposite emotions. You don't have to leave your chair. It isn't necessary to travel around the world, find a new lover, or get a raise at work to feel better. Notice that you have the power to change a negative emotion to a positive one—on your own! Good feelings are ever available to you, as freely given as the oxygen in fresh air. To Write Free is to resonate in accordance with them, speeding them your way!

Some tips: It's important that you always end this game (and those that follow) on a positive note. The good feelings raise your vibration and attract more of the same. Remember to spend at least a minute in the positive emotion, enough time to align with similar good feelings in the atmosphere around you.

☞ The Circle of Lack

What is lack? It's the sense that we don't have enough of something. It's normal and natural to bemoan lack, but it's also good to remember that it's a feeling state that can be changed. For this game, we'll identify (1) what we believe we don't have enough of AND (2) what we want to have in greater quantities in our lives!

I. Draw a big circle in your notebook. This is your Circle of Lack. Divide it into eight equal sections, like the

slices of a pie cut to share with eight equally hungry guests. In the bottom four sections, write phrases to complete the sentence, “I don’t have . . .”

Example: *I don’t have . . .*

1. *Enough money*
2. *A boyfriend*
3. *Enough help around the house*
4. *A literary agent*

II. Outside the pie, or on the opposite page, scribble the reasons you believe you don’t have lack number one. When you come upon the belief that rings true for you, stop.

Example: *I don’t have...*

1. *Enough money*

I don’t have enough money because . . . money doesn’t grow on trees, the economy is terrible, my bank pays lousy interest, I need a better job, I need a raise at work, I’m not doing what I love to do and money isn’t flowing to me . . . Ding!

III. Write the reason in the top section of the pie, opposite lack number one.

Example: *I would have enough money if . . .*

1. *I was doing what I loved to do and money flowed to me.*

IV. Close your eyes and allow yourself at least a minute to feel the fullness of the emotion associated with HAVING that situation or thing on the top half of the pie.

Let your feelings run wild. Feel the sensation of making

all the money you need and want. Don't worry if it hasn't happened already; don't worry about taking the steps to make it happen. Just allow yourself to feel the sensation of taking a whopping big check to the bank, endorsing it with your favorite pen, and seeing your name on the line that follows "Pay to the Order of."

V. Go back to the remaining slices of the pie. Repeat the above steps for each slice of the Circle of Lack.

Some tips: This is your chance to explore the reasons you believe you experience lack. It's also your chance to turn a Circle of Lack into a big, juicy, scrumptious pie! As you dig into this game, let yourself feel the details of the opposite, positive experience for each of your lacks: the exercise in which you have everything your heart desires. Your writer's imagination can really help with the sensory experience associated with your desires. Your training in choosing just the right metaphor or setting the perfect scene will help you here. Explore your beliefs about lack with confidence. You won't need them much longer—you may allow them to fall away, as a lizard sheds its skin.

✍ My Favorite Things

It's often easier to focus on things you dislike than it is naming those you like. For example: Your child is having trouble at school with a group of unfriendly peers. It's easy to see the situation as all negative: you might recall your own difficulties at a similar age and remember your tormentors less than fondly. You might forget that, because of the discomfort of that time, you began keeping a daily journal that led to your becoming a writer.

We have a friend named Jimmy who, many years ago, left home to join the traveling circus at the age of fifteen. To fit in with his new, rough crowd, Jimmy quickly took up smoking cigarettes, drinking, and swearing like the carnival worker he'd become. He had to labor long hours to keep up with the more experienced carnies—they were hard muscled, opinionated specialists with no time to mentor a teenaged boy. Jimmy worked hard, for longer hours than he thought possible, because he wanted the experience of roaming the country with colorful, itinerant workers. He'd fled an ordinary suburban life and found himself among people who had better stories than he'd ever read in the books back home.

It was difficult at first, but with time Jimmy found his hands toughening to the work, his mind finding answers to challenges such as how to get the elephant tent up in a driving rainstorm with only one other worker to help, and his heart opening up to the sights, sounds, and smells of the carnival. In six months, after turning sixteen, he had become a crew chief, a specialist in entourage logistics.

At the age of twenty-one, Jimmy decided he'd had enough of the circus and made his way back home. His little suburb seemed as quiet as ever, but he no longer chafed at its tameness. He had experiences under his belt to last a lifetime—and a litany of stories to record. He opened an independent bookstore and took up writing, fed by the tales he'd lived while on the road. The night the fat lady couldn't get out the door of her trailer? Great fodder for a short story. The lost lions in the red rock country of northern Arizona? A wonderful children's book.

Jimmy is now a successful author, a happy entrepreneur in his hometown, and the father of two energetic preteen boys. Would he ever let them join the circus? No way, he says. But after thinking a while, he remembers

that as difficult as life was on the road, he grew into it and matured much faster than he ever could have at home. “It was worth the sacrifices,” he says. “The missed days at high school, the growing up too fast. The hardest times led to the richest memories. I suppose protecting my boys from everything keeps them from really living.”

In this game, you get to cite your least favorite things as a means of understanding how they lead to your favorite things.

I. Designate another two-column page in your notebook. Again, number the rows from 1 to 10 in both columns, this time filling the left column with some of your current least favorite things.

Example: *Least favorite things*

1. *Dad's diagnosis*
2. *Pinging noise in car engine*
3. *Bullies at school*
4. *Uninsured drivers*

II. In the right column, write the dominant feeling associated with least favorite thing number 1. Stop after the first one!

Example: *Least favorite things*

1. *Dad's diagnosis* *Helpless*

III. Now close your eyes and allow yourself a minute to feel the fullness of the emotion.

Lean into the feeling. Let yourself feel the details. Allow your writer's imagination to carry you as deep as it will. Try to stop after fifteen seconds of continuous feeling, and

definitely go no longer than thirty seconds.

IV. On the next page in your journal, complete as many of the following sentences as you can about the situation regarding your least favorite thing.

One good thing about...

The nicest thing I can say about...

*If I had to pick something I liked about _____,
it would be . . .*

My favorite thing about _____ is...

Example: *Least favorite things*

1. *Dad's diagnosis*

Helpless

One good thing about Dad's diagnosis is now we know why he's been in pain. The nicest thing I can say about Dad's diagnosis is that the doctors told us about it quickly. If I had to pick something I liked about Dad's diagnosis, it would be that he received the news when we could be with him. My favorite thing about Dad's diagnosis is that it's not as bad as we thought it would be.

V. When you finish playing with the first thing on your list, repeat it using a different least favorite thing.

Don't rush. Keep going until you feel your attitude shift from a negative to positive perspective and can hold it there for a minute.

VI. Go back and continue through the remaining least favorite things, taking them at your own speed and one at a time.

Some tips: It's important to note that, while you may not feel great about a situation, using these other techniques, you can begin to feel better. That's an important step to take toward feeling good. Again, take your time playing this game and, when you come to a positive emotion, remember to spend at least a minute feeling it. It's not the thought that counts; it's the feeling!