

---

**Jumpstart**   
your **Journey**

---



KATHY IZARD

LIFE CALLS LISTEN

*Dear Fellow Traveler,*

---

Welcome to **your** life.

Thank you for taking the time to download this guide. If you have, it means you are taking those first scary steps toward change and that can be daunting. If you are like me, you aren't even sure what you want to change, but you just feel it is time for something different or something new to be added in to your life.

While I am not a professional counselor or therapist, I am a woman who is willing to be a friend and share what I learned from my decade-long (or really longer) search in hopes I can save you some time and maybe provide a few shortcuts.

**Jumpstart Your Journey** will get you going. I have no idea where your path will ultimately lead and that really, I think, is the point. No one but you knows how you grew up, the obstacles you faced, the defining moments as you see them. Remembering and reexamining those pieces you may have forgotten or purposefully discarded, are key to your future. I have come to believe that all our experiences, painful and wonderful, combine with our talents to make us perfectly suited for certain purposes and passions whether we think we want them or not. I didn't want homelessness as an issue but it found me, and the people I met because of it transformed me.

I don't know what's around the corner for you or me. But I have learned two things. One, there is no final destination. As soon as I think the road has ended it turns and invites me into the horizon. I don't know where it's taking me, but now I have faith to just keep listening and walking. Two, I believe there is an unexpected, unplanned life waiting for each us and it is infinitely richer and fuller than the ones we thought we could plan.

Keep listening and when you find your whisper, let me know!

Kathy



## Jumpstart your Journey

Everyone does their best thinking and reflection in different ways. To make the best use of the exercises in this guide, do what works best for you.



### If you are a writer:

Do your deep thinking in an old-school journal written in your handwriting, just for you. You can even doodle in the margins to create a custom love letter to yourself. If you can only think on a keyboard, create a folder on your computer with a title only you understand so the answers are yours alone. If you want you can insert photos with your text to personalize your pages. Some of these exercises take you new places so use your camera phone to document your journey and add later to your folder.



### If you are a mover:

Take each question one at a time and go on a walk with each one. Listen to music if that's how you think best, but walk in silence if you aren't a multi-tasker. Take a piece of paper and pen to jot down your most important thoughts if you think you will forget them. When you get home, write down all your most important takeaways in a journal or in a folder on your computer titled in a way that is meaningful to you.



### If you are an artist:

Create collages, drawings, or paintings that correspond to your answers or experiences so your works of art can be living messages to yourself. As suggested above, you could create a written record to go with your work and add photos of your masterpieces to your journal.



### If you are a talker:

Most phones have an app that records. Talk through your questions out loud like you would with a friend if you were having coffee or go on a walk taking your phone to capture your thoughts.

On iPhones, ask Siri to send you a text of your ideas and you will have reminders of your ideas when you get back to your desk. If you really want to transcribe exactly what you say there are apps like **TranscribeMe** or **D2U** that records your voice. You then pay for a transcriber to write them up and they download the file to you. The apps are free but the transcription of files will cost you.

All of these can be used in combination as well. Try answering a question in different ways.

See what happens when you sit still journaling with a question and then try walking with it or creating a collage or drawing around it. Take your question to your yoga class and make it your intention for the hour. The thoughts raised through the different experiences may surprise you.

One final piece of advice. I was in a study group with a great friend and we were completing a questionnaire with fairly probing questions that sought answers to experiences in our own lives. My friend who is incredibly thoughtful and wise was paralyzed about how to begin. She said, “It’s like a test! I always panic on tests!” I looked at her and said, “But on this one, there are no wrong answers!” We have laughed ever since about that because that was incredibly freeing for her.

These are the same type of questions and exercises. This is your life, your journey. No one has an answer key for this—there are no wrong answers!



No one has an answer key for this—there are no wrong answers!

---

10 EXERCISES TO

# Jumpstart your Journey

---

When I was trying to figure out my life, I experimented with a lot of things to find my way: books, classes, and retreats. Some things I did very consciously and others I stumbled into. In looking back at what worked, I realized there was a process that began with **Ask Why** and ended with **Say Yes**. The ten steps below outline some exercises to help you find what might work for you.

While I have laid out these steps in an order, by all means **wander**. Take them out of order if that feels right. Jump ahead if you are already so excited about something that you are ready to run. And if something turns out to be a dead end or a fork in the road, **Ask Why** and start from the beginning.

## EXERCISE 1

# Ask Why



*Think about why you wanted to download this guide.*

- Are you feeling a restlessness, and if so can you trace back when it started and why?
- If it wasn't a restlessness you felt, what was the feeling and how long have you had it?
- If you can't name a feeling, is there an event, circumstance, or even word you identified with that made you want to download this?

If you can distill it down to a word that has meaning for you write it on a sticky note and tape it to your bathroom mirror. If you don't know the answer or the word, simply write *Find out Why* and tape that to your mirror.





EXERCISE 2

## Be Still

*If you are feeling restless or uncomfortable, you have probably been doing a lot of moving to get away from that feeling.*

I find being very, very busy helps me avoid things I don't want to think about. But now you need to do the exact opposite. Start being comfortable with being very still.

When I was looking for my life, I think one of my best guideposts was found in Anne Lamott's essay "Becoming the Person You Were Meant to Be," published in *Oprah Magazine*, November 2009. As of this publication, it could still be found online [here](#).

I had seen it, printed it out, put it in the work folder that I still carry with me to this day. The wise Ms. Lamott advises that to discover who we are, we have to determine who we aren't. She writes:

“

**You have to make mistakes to find out who you aren't. You take the action, and the insight follows: You don't think your way into becoming yourself.**

I can't tell you what your next action will be, but mine involved a full stop. I had to stop living unconsciously, as if I had all the time in the world. The love and good and the wild and the peace and creation that are you will reveal themselves, but it is harder when they have to catch up to you in roadrunner mode. So one day I did stop. I began consciously to break the rules I learned in childhood: I wasted more time, as a radical act. I stared off into space more, into the middle distance, like a cat. This is when I have my best ideas, my deepest insights.”

I imagine you are very busy right now with work, home, maybe kids, pets, and responsibilities you said yes to when you wish you had said no. So adding one more thing feels impossible. But right now, go to your calendar, paper or electronic, and make an appointment with yourself that you **will not break**.

Make yourself find fifteen minutes and write the appointment down as: **Be Still**. Or write **Meeting With Myself**. Whatever feels more official. Just don't miss it. On that day and time (*make it this week don't procrastinate!*), put away your phone, shut the door, and sit in a comfortable space. You can even lie down and close your eyes if you want. Don't forget to take a piece of paper and a pen in with you—you will need to take good notes. Now, look at your watch, notice what time it is, and don't leave for the next fifteen minutes.

Just sit. ➤ Breathe. ➤ Think. ➤ About you.

~~—Not work.—~~

~~—Not the family.—~~

~~—Not your dog.—~~

~~—Not your To Do list.—~~

If you are thinking, “I feel incredibly silly” that's ok. Notice what comes next. Why do you feel silly? Is it because you never take time for yourself? Is it because you put everyone first? Is it because you can't remember the last time you did nothing? Is it because you never give yourself permission to do nothing? Why?

Take notes as you go or just sit. If you fall asleep the world won't stop, it will keep spinning. When your fifteen minutes is up, write down anything you noticed. Any feelings you had. Were you relieved? Why? Were you anxious? Why?

Open the door and rejoin the world. But first go to your calendar and make another appointment with yourself. Just fifteen minutes. Soon. You are going to need to keep practicing listening to your life. We are all really good at drowning it out.



## EXERCISE 3



# Feel Good

*If you have children or if you have ever watched a child on a playground, you know they run full-on with their feelings. A whoosh down a slide provokes unbridled joy or first-time fear in others.*

As we get older we have learned to carry our emotions tighter or maybe not show them at all. By the time we are adults with daily demands and pressures, it is easy to go through the day having allowed ourselves to feel only one thing: **stress**. Living like this it is more difficult to pay attention to what we actually feel or discover what we really want.

I know you probably have some way of making a To Do list—either in your head or like I do on paper. I have to track everything by writing a list and get enormous satisfaction in crossing chores off one by one. Sometimes, if I completed a task and it wasn't on my list, I add it to get the small rush of crossing it off.

So however you make your to do list, in the top corner of that list I want you to start a new system. This is a **To Feel** list. Every morning, your task is to **feel** something today and pick an emotion. So it would look like this on mine:

**To Feel Today**  
Joy



Then notice during the day whether you can accomplish that. Can you take pleasure in something simple? When you are looking for a pleasurable feeling, can you find it? By all means experiment and seek sadness or anger. But just notice what that does for your day when you choose to experience a feeling and actively seek to accomplish that. If you do have negative emotions let yourself experience them but if they start to feel overwhelming this would be a good time to seek professional counseling and therapy. Ask a friend, doctor, or minister for a good local person or **Psychology Today** can help you find a reputable therapist in your zip code.





## EXERCISE 4

# Simplify

*Whether you are twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or older, you have over your decades of life accumulated a lot of stuff.*

I have saved things I was sure I was going to want to want later—poems, pictures, mementos—and now I can't remember what box I put them in. I am still hoping I saved my grandfather's letters if I could only remember where I put them. But I also have drawers and closets full of things I know I don't need. This exercise is about symbolically making space. If it inspires you to clean out your house—go for it. But really what we are doing here is making space in your life for something new, by getting rid of at least one old thing.

This step can be as small and symbolic as you want or as large and drastic as you choose. Remember, there are **no wrong answers**. You are just trying to commit to looking at your world differently and removing clutter from your physical space to encourage you to remove clutter from your mental space. Just like you found fifteen minutes in exercise Two to **Be Still**, you can find one way to **Simplify**. Challenge yourself with one of the following or be an overachiever and do both:

➤ **No. 1**

### *Untangle a Drawer*

---

We all have it. That drawer or cabinet where we dump everything that doesn't have a place to be. Now that drawer is a mixture of odd utensils, power cords to old phones, junk mail, kid's papers, gum, and who knows what else. Today's the day—sort it and dump it. Give yourself one drawer of space for your new life. This drawer will now be where you can keep your favorite book, your new journal, your ideas, your drawings, your inspirational quotes. This is *your* dream drawer.



No. 2

## *Leave Behind Some Baggage*

Just like you have a drawer in your home cluttered with useless items you don't need, you have a space in your head filled with some useless emotions that are weighing you down. Maybe you are holding a grudge with an old friend, carrying rejection from a past relationship, burdened with a childhood hurt. Pick one thing that you need to release and resolve today to finally let it go. Create a small ceremony around it so you can really feel you have released it. You could

### **Hike it out**

Begin on a walk and carry a rock with you (as large or small as you like). As you walk, feel the weight of the rock; let it symbolize all that you have carried with your burden. Choose a place where you will leave your rock—in the water, at a tree, in a trashcan. Create a very conscience moment when you leave this rock, pause, say a prayer, say out loud what you are doing and why. As you leave it and walk or hike back, feel the lightness in your hands and hopefully, in your head and heart. Resolve to use this space for new feelings.



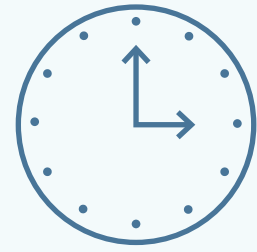
### **Burn it up**

On a piece of paper, write the emotion you have been holding onto: shame, sadness, anger, guilt, hurt. If you are an artist create a collage or a painting about it or write about what happened and why you feel the way you do. Let yourself sit with your drawing or feeling. Remember all the ways you have let yourself be consumed with this event or feeling. With a candle or in a fireplace, set fire to your old wound. Watch it crumble and disappear. As it does, say out loud how you feel, say a prayer for new beginnings.



If this exercise begins to bring up a lot of new emotions or feelings for you be sure not to ignore them—journal about them and figure out why things are shifting for you. If you have never seen a therapist or counselor about bigger issues you know you need to address, this is a good time to seek some professional perspective. Ask a friend, doctor, or minister for a good local person or **Psychology Today** can help you find a reputable therapist in your zip code.

## EXERCISE 5



# Get Free

*Now that you have some practice being still and letting go, you may be starting to feel or hear some new things you would like to explore.*

In order to try them, you are going to have to get free or find some time. Now before you say you have no time to give consider this great article written by Susie Moore, “How to stop feeling like you don’t have enough time.”

How frequently do the words “I don’t have time” pass your lips? Quite often, I’ll bet. But here’s some news for you: It’s a lie. We all have 24 hours in each day—you, me, Oprah. If you are alive, you have time. But how to allocate your time on this opportunity-rich Earth is up to you. . . Think about it: If you work eight hours per day and sleep eight hours per day, you have eight hours per day for everything else. Depending on your job, it could be a little less—maybe four or five hours per day. But that’s still plenty of time.

**The full article is worth a read. [Click here.](#)**

I understand time adds up on things like carpools, laundry, dishes, making dinner, homework. But if you took all the time you spend liking posts on Facebook or binge watching Olivia Pope’s life how much time would you have back to spend on your own?

This exercise is about actively choosing thirty minutes a day at least twice a week to spend on your new dreams. Just like you scheduled fifteen minutes of being still, write on your calendar two thirty-minute appointments with yourself to spend time on you. What you do with that time is up to you. If you need pampering, give yourself a facial. If you need a jolt of creativity, paint. If you need mental stimulation, spend thirty minutes reading. Just don’t allow yourself to mindlessly watch TV, surf the Internet, or multitask and fold laundry. That’s cheating. This is thirty minutes twice a week to let your self dream and think about your life. This is about choosing you.





EXERCISE 6

## People Pop-Ups

*Once you start thinking about new things you are interested in, you will be surprised who else is thinking too.*

This is where you have to do some active listening in the world and maybe even saying out loud some of the things you have been pondering in your still time and me time. I found two things happened once I started paying attention: some people I already knew were interested in some of the things I was, and some strangers were as well. Pay attention to both and find out more.

When I mentioned my work on a new mental health center, I found a friend in my book club actually worked for years in a clinic before we met and I had no idea. We went to coffee and found out so much more about each other than I ever would have otherwise. Throughout *The Hundred Story Home*, there are instances where I met people who were critical to building Moore Place but before this project we were strangers. The one huge lesson I learned was that if I keep hearing someone's name several times, listen. I call that **People Pop-Ups**. Whether you understand what the connection might be or not, just go have coffee, share your story and hear theirs. If the connection is not immediately clear, it will be. It took me almost two years to know why I should meet my now doctor and friend, Jane Harrell.

This exercise is ongoing but start this week. Make an effort to have coffee, lunch, or take a walk with someone you feel shares a similar story with you. It could be as simple as a friend you want to know better or reaching out to someone you admire. The important thing is this has to be in person not online. No virtual connections on this one, you have to step out into the real world.

## EXERCISE 7



# Dreamcheck

*Once you start making time for your dreams in the day, you are going to start thinking about them more at night as well.*

I know a lot of people say they don't remember their dreams but I have found that is only true when I don't actively try to reclaim them. This exercise is to help you practice paying attention to what your subconscious might be telling you. Often we are too scared to really admit what it is we might want. Paul Coelho wrote,

“

**There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure.”**

Tonight before you go to sleep do two things: One, put a piece of paper and pen by your bed and two, before you actually fall asleep spend five minutes with your eyes closed thinking about one thing you have been contemplating in your me time and still time. Maybe it is a job change. Maybe it is a project. Maybe it is a random act of kindness. Whatever it is, spend five minutes before you go to sleep visualizing yourself doing that.

Remind yourself that in the morning, you are not going to leap out of bed and get busy. When the alarm goes off or when you wake up, stay perfectly still with your eyes closed. Try to remember your dreams. Was there anything vivid you can capture? Don't analyze it just quietly remember it in your almost awake space. The colors, the feelings the images. If there are words, take note of them. If someone in your dream spoke what did he or she say? Did you know them?



When you are ready open your eyes and write it all down. Again, don't make sense of it, just transcribe it. Once you have captured it, you are ready to get out of bed. Come back to it later and see what sense you can make of it. Sometimes it feels like nonsense and that's fine. Not every thought we have is vital. But sometimes, my dreams bring a clarity I don't allow myself to have when awake. That fear of failure, that rationality, can drown out some really good ideas.

If you are really interested in this, there are lots of great books on dreams to learn more.







EXERCISE 8

## Step Out

*You've been challenging yourself mentally in some great ways, by creating your To Feel List and Simplifying. Now, try to challenge yourself physically.*

I think as we become adults and get older we forget to use muscles or believe we aren't as strong as we used to be. This exercise will be different for every one and you will have to be honest about what is a physical stretch for you. If you already run marathons, you will have to try something like a ballet class to use new muscles. If you haven't exercised in five years, walking in your local park might really be a push.

This challenge you design for yourself. What is something you could do to make yourself move your body in a way you haven't done in years? It could be simple like go to a park and swing on a swing (really swing), slide down the slide, go all the way across the monkey bars. Or if there is a rock-climbing wall, ropes course, or obstacle course in your town, sign up for a session. You could start with something as easy as the swing and use that to push you to really think outside the box. Trapeze class. All day hike. Kickboxing class. Break-dancing lessons.

The important thing is that you show up and **TRY**. Maybe it makes you feel deliriously happy—in that case, do it again and often! Maybe you felt ridiculous—but at the same time, aren't you proud you attempted and have a great war story to boot?

This is what I think you will find from pushing yourself whether you succeeded or failed, loved it or hated it: you survived. You are here to tell about it. You learned from it. You are somehow different from attempting it. And you will probably see you are stronger (or \_\_\_\_\_ er) than you thought.

## EXERCISE 9



# Step In

*Now that you have Stepped Out,  
the next exercise is to Step In.*

By that I mean try an act of service you have never done before. This does not mean volunteer to chair your child's school auction. I know so many often volunteer to do things out of guilt and your calendar is probably full of things you could not say *No* to. This is about saying *Yes* to something you really want to do.

Again, this can be as small or as big as you want to make it. It could be as simple as making the time to sit down and write a note of gratitude to a friend to let them know how much they mean to you. Or that teacher who changed your life. I had two friends this year who wrote a note every day for Lent. Or maybe you are a great baker. What if you took a dozen of your best cupcakes to your local kid's cancer ward either for the children or the dedicated staff who care for them? Or maybe you have a neighbor who has a hard time getting around. What if you offered to pick up her groceries or take down her trash cans?

Pick one thing and do it.  
Did you like how it made you feel?  
Do it again.





EXERCISE 10

## Say Yes

*Depending on how long it took you to get through these ten exercises and if you repeated them, you have spent a week, a month, or a year thinking a little differently and paying attention a lot more.*

You have made yourself be still and started making some conscious choices in your life. You have met some new people, maybe read some new books, and have a different perspective on yourself than before you started.

You may have started to hear a whisper of something you want to do—big or small. You may have paid attention or you may have pushed it aside. This step is to imagine Saying Yes and it is a three-day mental exercise.

### ► Day 1

---

On Day One you need to say to yourself, “I’m going to do that.” All day when you are at work or home folding laundry convince yourself that you have made the decision to take on that idea and actually *do it*. You will spend one whole day and night imagining that you have said yes.

What would it look like? What changes would you have to make? Would it really be disruptive or would you just have to make a little space? How does it make you feel—exhilarated, frustrated, terrified? Don’t spend energy talking yourself out of it; just imagine all it would take to do it. If it is a big idea, that might take a lot of imagining. If it is small, remind yourself how easy it is to accomplish. When you go to sleep tonight, use your dream strategy. Contemplate it before you fall asleep, have your pen and paper ready.

## ➤ Day 2

---

When you wake up, notice all you dreamed and take note. But this time after you write it all down, remind yourself it is still just a dream. Today is Day Two and you must spend all day, **not doing anything about it**. Today you imagine that you have said no, it is not possible and you are absolutely not doing it.

How does that make you feel? Are you relieved? Are you happy you have passed? Are you excited about other opportunities it allows you to consider? Does it make you grateful for the life you have exactly as it is? Again, tonight use your dream strategy: think before you go to sleep and record what you remember.

## ➤ Day 3

---

This is Day Three and today you remember what you felt both days. Day One when you said Yes and Day Two when you said No. Today think about both sets of feelings. Which felt better? Were you more excited about the new idea or more relieved to not actually be doing it? Are you glad it was just a dream or sad that you aren't going to try? Is there something new you can consider that allows you to have it both ways?

Whether you make a change, say yes or no to trying something new, keep listening. I don't think we are ever finished. The road never ends and we can always keep growing and learning. Above all, keep *Wonder* in your life. Ask yourself daily:

I wonder why that happened to me.

I wonder where I am needed.

I wonder if there is a different way.

Fill your days with awe and gratitude for the life you have and what it could be. When you are looking and listening, you will find your path. Just don't expect neon signs. It's going to take faith and failure to become the person you were meant to be.