



# The Gift

A Story for Little Me from Big Me

by Kristina Durante



Our connection to other people is the meaning of life. In order to authentically connect to others, we must first cultivate a deep connection to ourselves.

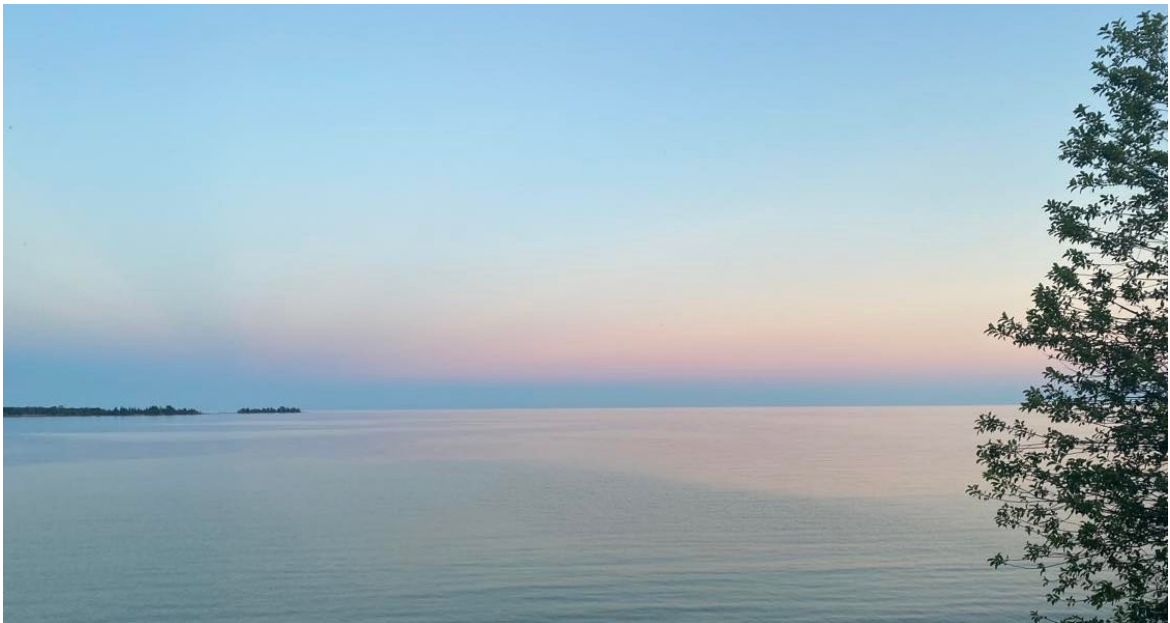


Relationships cannot thrive unless we come to love ourselves enough to feel worthy of love from another person.



When we do not love ourselves, we disconnect from ourselves and become focused on outcomes. We become addicted to the thrill of chasing a feeling. We throw ourselves into relationships, jobs, another city, or another project. Then, inevitably, we often find that we do not want the journey.

We live a disconnected life because we believe that our true self is not good. We transform into someone we believe others will see as outstanding. We learn what people want and we show up in the world as the perfect version of that person. We are characters acting in our own life every minute that we are not completely alone. Which is why many of us prefer to be alone. We can stop acting. This was how I lived my life.



Then, in 2017, on the cusp of divorce, I sat down with an intuitive energy healer. She and I sat together for a while in silence before she looked me dead in the eye and told me that my body was severely damaged. She told me I was a head without a body. She told me healing would be a long process for me because I had eviscerated my soul.





She proceeded to tell me about the life that my body wants. She told me I had to be outside every day. Not when I can, but every day. She told me to be near animals and to have a garden. She told me that music was central to my life and to my healing.



I started to do everything that was recommended to heal, including the garden. I got a dog which also gave me a commitment to being outside every day. I got a piano. It was a start. But I was not doing the work.



I was still repeating old patterns. Seeking conditional relationships instead of real ones. Hurting other people. Hurting myself.

I finally dedicated myself fully to healing in March 2019. Through therapy (equine and traditional) and my own daily spiritual practice, I began to pick up on signals from deep within myself. I kept listening.





I listened long enough to understand how damaged I really was. I learned about being highly sensitive to my surroundings and about being an empath, and the armor I used to protect my sensitive soul from pain. Not connecting authentically was armor.

I was a person who kept love out of my life. I craved it and I ran from it. The only panacea for disorganized love like mine is working every day to cover the hardwired program called “I’m not lovable” with 56,000 pounds of fully leaded self-love.

With hope for the future, I’m in repair.



The first step to becoming the love of your own life is to understand how you were programmed to love.

This involves taking a journey back to your early childhood and then advancing forward in time. The next pages include two short exercises you can use to get a glimpse of your true self.

Your true self is the little you that embodies the core of who you authentically are without the armor.

Recall three of your earliest memories from your childhood.

(1)

(2)

(3)

Our earliest memories give us some insight into how our parents treated us. For me, my earliest memory is being yelled at and spanked for eating cookie dough. I don't remember how I felt in the moment, but it gave me a clue that there was shame involved in my early life that is showing up in what feels normal for me in my adult love relationships.



Recall your feelings and behavior in past relationships. Did you change anything about who you are as a person within the relationship?

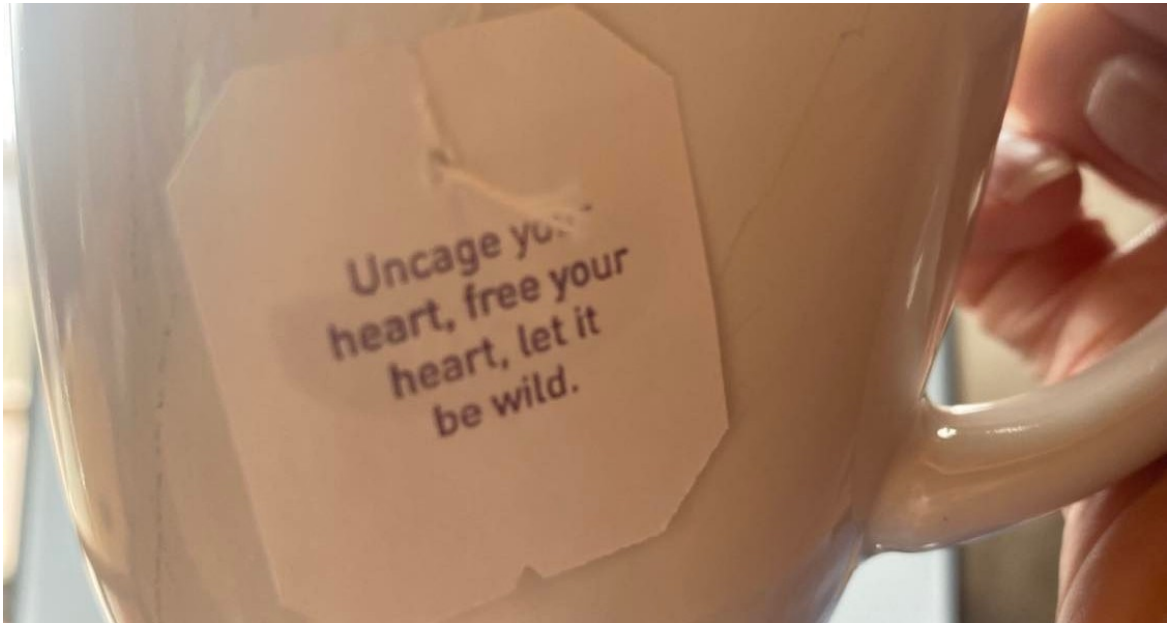
If yes, you have an old, and faulty, behavioral program playing out in your adult relationships.



We hide parts of ourselves or change our behavior in relationships because we fear not being enough for our partner. When we are not ourselves in relationships, love cannot grow because our partner is not connecting with who we truly are.

We cannot be everything to everyone. Most people walking the earth will not be good partners for us. We must be ourselves so that we can attract the person who is going to hold our heart in their hands as if it were the most fragile thing on earth.





THE GIFT was never another person. THE GIFT was always YOU.

Accept the journey to find yourself and love yourself fiercely.

# Love Epilogue

What follows is a love letter to myself. I write to myself first and then I leave a space for you to write a love letter to yourself.

To The Love of My Life,  
I love you. Let me tell you why.

Me:

(1) I love that you're a good mom.

(2) I love that you were married and tried to work it out until you took a risk and ended it so that you could become who you truly are.

You:

(1)

(2)

Me:

(3) I love that you had a mortgage, lugged around diaper bags, solved baby sleep schedule problems, packed lunches, and drove kids around.

(4) I love your love of music.

You:

(3)

(4)

Me:

(5) I love that you eat well, exercise, and have been doing the work to find yourself for the past four years.

(6) I love your humor and your sayings.

You:

(5)

(6)

Me:

(7) I love your mind.

(8) I love that you are smart and soulful.

You:

(7)

(8)

Me:

(9) I love that you help other people.

(10) I love how you love your children.

(11) I love how you love other people.

You:

(9)

(10)

(11)



Me:

(12) I love your hair, your dimples, and your skin.

(13) I love your face because I see my love when I look at you.

You:

(12)

(13)

Me:

(14) I love that you have had so many life experiences.

(15) I love that you have so many quirky traits (e.g., eating peanut butter with a spoon, low blood pressure and fainting, dimples, distaste for horror movies)

(16) I love that you grew up middle class in Wisconsin in the 80s.

You:

(14)

(15)

(16)

Me:

(17) I love your sense of self and understanding of what you need in love and life.

(18) I love your femininity, sexual appetite, and confidence.

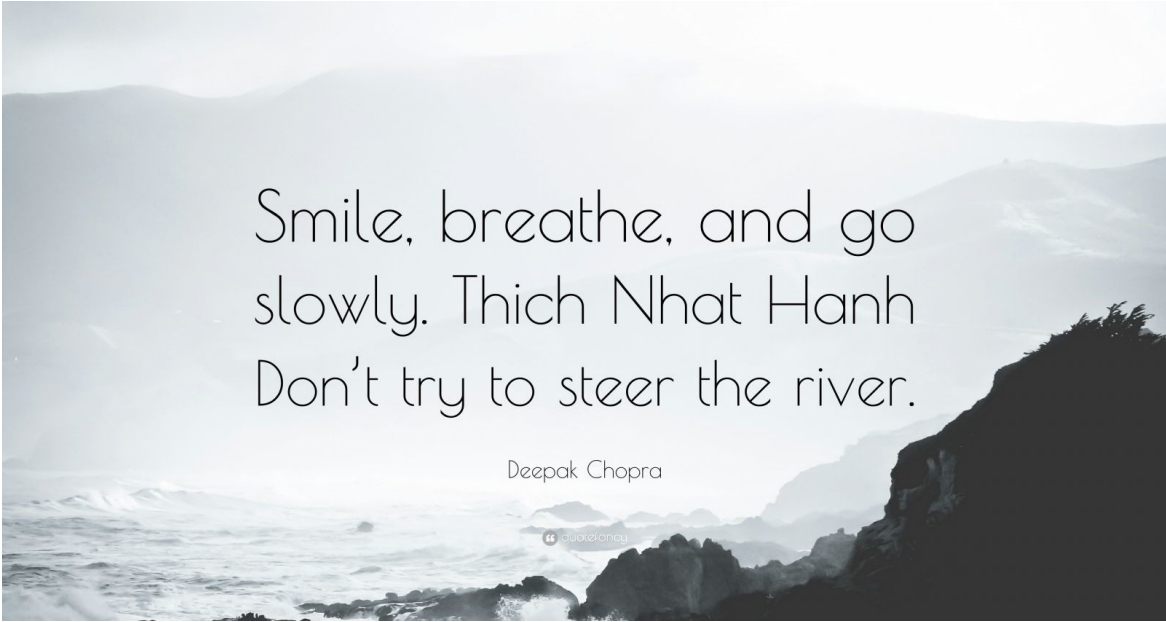
(19) I love the way you love. It is much more than words. It is mostly a behavior.

You:

(17)

(18)

(19)



Smile, breathe, and go  
slowly. Thich Nhat Hanh  
Don't try to steer the river.

Deepak Chopra

“quoteofandy”

(20) I love you.

I'm so grateful that I am you.

The remaining pages are yours.







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