



The Greatest
Love
of All

You and Your Heart

Joy Weston

This book is dedicated to Every Woman (and man) with
a Heart...worth Loving into Good Health.



**The Heart Pillow on the cover was my first “love” after surgery~
given to me by the hospital to help me heal, in all ways....

“Love never dies a natural death. It dies because we don’t know how to replenish its source. It dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings.”

—Anaïs Nin

When this marvelous quote was written, I suspect that the author was more than likely coming out of yet another love affair with some man or woman that went from good to bad, and now retrospectively was ruminating over all the reasons why. Yet each time I reread it, it resonated with a deeper truth and a more profound implication that goes way beyond just a romantic assignation. Granted, where I am in my life these days everything seems to mean more than it did before, but now this quote feels like a more accurate description of what happens when you choose not to see, pretend you don’t know, or seem to have forgotten how important it is to honor and *love yourself* enough to “replenish its source.” Finding and keeping *the Greatest Love of All*, first and foremost, starts with You Loving YOU enough ~and taking care of yourself accordingly~ to offer to the world a woman (or man) who is in the best mental and physical health. If you want to attract or keep a great guy or gal, then YOU have to be worthy of what you desire. Being in pristine health in all areas is an excellent beginning.

Many individuals are really terrific at articulating and expounding on how important it is to take care of the body, similar to the importance of properly taking care of an expensive car, home or various other material possessions. They speak intelligently on the benefits of feeding the body with healthy foods, exercising daily and utilizing positive affirmations that can lead to right actions that lessen and possibly eliminate negativity and toxic behaviors. Some even brilliantly pontificate on the rewards in creating a true connection with the universal energy to enjoy an abundant, healthy, and prosperous life.

Yet day after day in a simple interaction with a friend, client or even a new acquaintance I experience the wisdom of this knowledge casually being pushed aside by some external demand or request involving work, a family member or a personal desire. Somewhere between here and there, some outer directed calling seem to carry more importance, more value, is even considered more worthy and necessary than caring for oneself as your “number one priority.”

Silly nonsensical words like “selfish” or “self-centered” are put into play around the idea that *no matter what* taking good care of your health, in all areas of your life, matters the most. In that moment when you have chosen something or someone else over what you intuitively know is so important ~ like loving yourself first and foremost ~ is the moment that you begin to stop your heart from “having a natural death.” Your inner wisdom and intuitive knowing about “replenishing its source” is casually put on the back burner, and your heart slowly begins to “die of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings.”

But that doesn't have to be your story, and I know that to be true from personal experience. Our story can be one that inspires and empowers every woman we know or have yet to meet on the benefits of doing whatever is necessary to *Love Yourself into Good Health*. Together we can spark a global conscious awareness for taking full responsibility for the thoughts, words and actions that affect our mind, body and spirit. Once you "get it" and then share the message and information of this book with everyone you know, you and I can forward the process of becoming the change we all want to see. This sweet little book can be just the motivation so many women need to help design a life and lifestyle that reflects a joyful happy age-defying healthy life. An awakening to what should be *The Greatest Love of All: You and Your Heart*.

In the pages that follow, I have chosen not to bore you with all the statistics validating the seriousness of heart disease in women, specifically because this is meant to be a story of Love not fear. Besides, anyone who isn't living under a rock knows that heart disease has become the #1 lady killer of women all over the world, with one out of three women dying of a heart related disease. Sadly, in my opinion, all the shocking claims haven't made much of an impact in creating change, since one out of seven women denies they could ever have a heart problem—*and that included me!*

So instead of filling the pages with a bunch of scary facts, I have chosen to share proven research from female experts in the scientific and medical fields, combined with my personal experienced wisdom on how to Love You and Your Heart into good health. My intention is to show women how to joyfully maintain a healthy mind and body for a good long life, while creating the love and life of their dreams. Once you have read and shared this book with every woman-and man- you know, YOU also will play a part in this grand miraculous change.

For many years now my work has been focused on turning the ordinary into the Extraordinary by using the mind over "whatever" is the matter. To insure my commitment to consistently walk my talk, I have put the care of my Mind, Body and Spirit at the top of my daily priority list, and for the record, Having Pleasure and Making a Difference are right behind them. Throughout the day I check-in to make sure that I have touched on each of these areas to enhance my well-being. I've found it to be a wonderful way to complete each day feeling accountable for the outcome of my life. I relax into a good night's sleep and wake with excitement about what the new day will bring. But I never realized or appreciated the importance of these actions more, than when "invincible Joy" was given the gift of having Emergency Open Heart Surgery.

Now I am sure to some, maybe even quite a few, calling open heart surgery "a gift" sounds a bit far-fetched. But truly if I have learned anything on this amazing journey called My Life, it is that by actively choosing to see *all* my experiences and circumstances as positive life-altering learning lessons, I am

capable of coloring *whatever* with the brush of right attitude and supportive beliefs that positively change the outcome. This has become such a constant in my life. When I was reviewing the activities of the previous year on my way to celebrate the New Year, starting with the bad, it honestly didn't dawn on me to include my heart issue on the bad side...as it continues to bring great gifts!

One of my "JOY Habits" is to reinforce my gratitude and positive expectations by repeatedly reinforcing my mantra as my absolute truth, especially when a difficult experience insists that I better start searching for the rainbow in the storm. It definitely helps to bring me peace and keep me centered while going through the challenging times, and to make the good times even better!

"Everything has a Reason for Being...Everything Always Works Out in Your Favor...Because You are Blessed."

Once you believe this to be your truth as I do, magic and miracles begin to show up everywhere! So please feel free to use this mantra for your own peace of mind~ as I know it to be the truth for everyone!

Making a difference and spreading joy, in a world that desperately needs help in reversing the toxic energy that we all are susceptible to, has been my guiding North Star for many years now. I am always searching for (and finding) signs of proof positive that my mantra is the truth. One of the many on this particular journey was revealed by a lovely nurse who first wheeled me out of surgery.

Nurse Lucille said...

"Joy, for the first time in 20 + years that I have been a surgical nurse, you were the only person I have ever heard speaking so upbeat and positive coming out of surgery! With tubes in your mouth, anesthesia pouring out of every pore, coming out of one of the most serious operations anyone can have, you told me what a gift this was and that you were going to do something~ like write a book~ to help women love themselves into good health so they won't have to deal with heart disease!"

Side-note: I actually met Lucille for what I thought was the first time in a workshop I conduct called Own Your Magnificence. During the opening introductions, she stood up and told the other participants what she did and who she was ~especially in context to me. Lucille said that she came to the workshop because "she just knew she just had to learn the secrets of someone who expressed such joy and positivity after experiencing one of the most challenging experiences!" How cool is that?

Bottom-line:

What I know for sure, is that finding and keeping *The Greatest Love of All*, while enjoying a healthy happy JOY-filled life, *always* begins and ends by acknowledging your own worthiness and your absolute Mind~ Body~ Spirit connection. The moment that you take on a dedicated willingness to be consciously aware of what you are thinking and what actions you are taking according to your health in all areas of your life, is the moment you will begin to experience all the abundance, prosperity and love offered in this lifetime. I truly believe this is the real secret for continuously receiving your heart's desire.

~Welcome to Your New Best Life~

*"A negative thinker sees a difficulty in every opportunity.
A positive thinker sees an opportunity in every difficulty."
— Zig Ziglar*

Hello “Sisters of the Soul.” Women of all ages, sizes, colors, education and religious backgrounds, lifestyle or financial status- everyone who really cares about learning how to *Love Yourself into Good Health*-and getting your heart’s desire. Welcome to the manifestation of my hospital bed outcry~ a dream come true; a story of love that just might save another life! Just the idea that at this very minute there are women I know, women I might never have met or even possibly never will~ are about to read and enjoy this book, and it could actually change the quality of her life and positively affects someone in her life, makes me literally, jump for JOY!

I titled this book *The Greatest Love of All~ You and Your Heart*, because historically, most women are programmed to love and care for others much more than themselves. It could be a special man or woman, the extended family, pets, a dear friend or even a material possession or their job. Whatever or whomever makes their heart skip a beat. But very few ever really consider their own unique magnificent self and their incredibly hardworking heart as what should be considered The Greatest Love of All.

Probably, without too much effort, you are capable of gushing over an object or telling someone else how much you love them. But to tell yourself without much effort, or even more preposterous saying out-loud with all seriousness, “I love you Joy (use your name here) and your amazing heart centered body” seems, well, preposterous! But as we all know only too well, if you don’t love yourself first, who will? If you want the best, YOU need to be The Best.

To be The Best that you can be is definitely a state of being that changes each and every day and requires a consistent focused practice. But like so many other good things we want and get in life, well worth the effort. I was surprised at how much I still had to learn about loving myself into good health. But the results have been amazing once I followed my researched advice!

On that fateful day when my crazy world came crashing to a halt and I went from literally dancing in the street to lying face up on a white sheeted table having emergency open-heart surgery, was definitely a game changer! Even in this compromising position during an unplanned adventure, somewhere deep within my subconscious I somehow knew that what was happening to me wasn't some sort of a punishment. It was just another way the universe chose to get my attention~ informing me that my life assignment had been upgraded.

“My job” of spreading JOY has been my highest commitment for years and has personally brought me great pleasure. But I know now that the universe had bigger plans for me and I needed to do more. “My promotion” didn't come with a list of the commandments to honor, a guidebook or treasure map to follow, just loud whispers inside my head directing me to teach by example. If I wanted to do more I needed to up my game and find out how to truly love myself into good health. Making yourself and your precious heart *The Greatest Love of All*, I believe is the secret to having it all. Being Your Best is a magnetic force that will attract The Best to you. (Money Back Guarantee on that one!)

Bottom-Line:

Life is an exciting adventure under all circumstances. Doing whatever you can to find the joy in each and every moment, is the most important work you will ever do. This journey called Life is brief and this moment that has just passed can never be reclaimed. So it is your job to make sure that you create the foundation for the life of your dreams with building blocks of moments filled with happiness and learned life lessons. Even when life throws you yet another curve ball, looking for the positive in all situations is a great way to transform almost anything. As with the grandest structures like the Taj Mahal, created to express love, one joy-filled block placed on top of another, eventually will create a monument to your life that all will gaze upon with admiration.

*“If you ask me what I came into this life to do, I will tell you:
I came to live out-loud.”* —Émile Zola

~It's a New Day~

“You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe deserve your love and affection.” —Buddha

“What? Who are you talking to? Who needs to go have immediate Emergency Open Heart Surgery? Not me. I am here for a simple cardiac catheterization with special X-rays that will get me home by tomorrow and out to dinner with friends the next night. There has got to be a mistake, a Big Mistake. I was dancing into the night just weeks ago! I am one of the healthiest women you could ever know! This is impossible. OMG!”

Life was going good...really good and I was loving every minute of it. I had just released my latest “best seller”, and plans for it to go viral around the world were in the works. I had a number of presentations and book signings scheduled. On-going Own Your Magnificence courses, workshops and consulting jobs that were being received by a very enthusiastic audience, and my relationships were all healthy and doing quite well. I was feeling ageless and unstoppable! The only *tiny little thing* that was of any concern were these constricting pains in my chest that seemed to keep getting stronger by the day and migrating to various parts of my upper body and down my left arm.

These “*tiny little things*” that I chose to see as possibly from stress, anxiety, maybe acid reflux, came and went. So their importance was easy to ignore. (For the record, when signs come and go it means something is more serious *not* less!) Though I was never prone to panic attacks, I was even willing to surrender to that possibility, but certainly nothing more serious than that. The idea that the pains could be life threatening, for such a “perfectly healthy, invincible, age-defying specimen of a woman,” Nay, Never, Impossible!

Every moment of every day you receive another opportunity to experience your personal growth. Some come as if on a little red train designed to simply move you along. While others are bigger and brighter, spilling over with grist for your mill while creating a deeper sense of conscious awareness and inner wisdom. But every now and then, when you least expect it, a huge dark mother of a life-changer comes barreling down and literally stops you right in your tracks. Something that alters your life in such an undeniable way you just know it is the beginning of your next level of evolution.

In the years I have been a communications relationship expert, mentor and coach, I have seen many women determined to prove that they are and can be super women all the time. Having a successful career, being a caring mother, aunt, sister, friend, daughter and a loving significant partner who also gives back to the community-in of course excellent physical shape-is, of course, part and parcel of their perfect package. At what cost? It doesn't seem to matter... only the end-results that are measurable. (By the way...no matter what anyone says, You Can Have It All...just Not All at the same time!)

Then there are women such as myself, who have been granted the title *Emerita* for their extended tenure at the University of Life. One of many proud women that are determined to be "living proof" that circumstances and age should never be used to define the outcome of any of our life experiences. It certainly shouldn't be a factor in living a healthy vibrant life! For many decades now this philosophy has been the impetus and driving force behind many of my life choices and a way of living my life that I fully and joyfully embrace.

So from the very first time and for too many times afterwards when I felt this pressure in my chest, tightness in my jaw, pains going up my neck and down my arm~ as so many other women with heart issues have shared~ I was in absolute denial of its seriousness or importance. My first and only response was, "Are you kidding? I am fine. I am Dr. Oz's poster child for living with conscious care." Trust me when I say, denial (the Nile) is not just a river in Egypt!"

As each week ran into the next, no matter how many different ways I tried to reframe my thoughts or mentally work with my feelings, the pain just kept getting stronger and coming on more frequently. My friends began noticing the difference in my behavior (stopping in the middle of a dance rubbing my chest, slowing down during a beach walk, etc.) and finally insisted that I see a doctor and go through the full regalia; a physical, EKG, stress-test, etc. After a few weeks I finally agreed to "quiet their concerns." I wasn't in a rush. It had been years since I needed to see a doctor, as I was never sick. But no matter how "youthful" one might think they look or feel, admittedly after so many years even a well-kept Rolls Royce needs to be checked out for an overhaul!

So I began with my Internist who noted that my EKG showed a slight change and suggested that I get a stress test, so I agreed to do so. That evening while leading my master Own Your Magnificence group I shared my results. Marie, a senior nurse for forty years at Manatee Memorial Hospital and later my dear advocate during my catheterization, asked Darlene, a nurse in the Intensive Cardiac Unit at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, to recommend the very best Cardiologist to me~ as nurses always know the best~ "just in case she needs an intervention." *She* did, but typical of one in denial, I waited two weeks before setting up an appointment.

By then the pains were coming more often and at different times, and I fully expected that they were going to find something. So when the stress test did in fact show some sort of blockage and the doctor set up an appointment for me to go into the hospital to have a cardiac cauterization, I was OK. Maybe it's nothing or maybe they needed to put in a stent in one of my arteries, which is very easy and normal these days. I even told my kids and my nurse friend Marie when she insisted she'd be there as my medical advocate, "not to bother to even come to the hospital~ I'll be home early tomorrow." Fortunately, no one listened to me!

Apparently, I had some sort of a "melt-down" (more like a "*you have got to be kidding you crazy man*" kind of response) when sweet Dr. Schriebman came to tell me that after trying everything he could *twice*, that there would be no stent for this cutie. I had 95% blockage on "the widow-maker" side and 75% on the other. My next trip was definitely not going to be to Paris, but upstairs to the cardio surgeon for Immediate Emergency Open Heart Surgery!

And then the fun began....

~ AIN'T LIFE GRAND?~

"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living. It's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."

— Dr. Seuss

And then my mind went on its own fantasy trip...

"Where am I? What's going on? Everything is so bright and white, yet I can't really see anyone or anything. Did I die and go to Heaven? Is this the light at the end of the tunnel they speak about? Oh No. I have so much more to do and so many more lives I want to Joyify! No, please, I am not ready to leave my earth body yet...I have so much more I want to experience...especially to know my great love! If 'anyone' (preferably God) is listening...Please don't bring me home yet. I have big dreams yet to be realized, and I know that there is so much more I can do in a world that needs more love and joy.

Wait a minute what is that sound I am hearing and what am I seeing? Is that Ellen DeGeneres, surrounded in energetic vibrations, singing and dancing around me in a white suit! Did she die too and I didn't read about it?" What a shame that would be, she is such an inspiration to so many. But if so, maybe we can become BFF's here in Heaven. That would be really cool! But I am sensing that she's come with an important message. That these waves of energetic love are to remind me that if I make Joy herself the greatest love of all, I will finally discover the secret of true love.

I get it...I Really Get It! But what am I supposed to do with this information now that my life on earth as I knew it is over, and I am on "the other side?" Do we never stop learning "life lessons" even in Heaven? Wow, this is definitely not what I expected!"

Joy, Joy can you hear me? It's Darlene. You are in the Intensive Care Unit and I am going to take really good care of you. The doctor said you got here just in time. But you are Ok now and are going to be as good as new...probably even better very soon! You are truly a blessed woman.

"What the heck? Is that really my friend Darlene and Ellen was only a dream?
Or is Darlene a dream and Ellen and I are now dancing through the Universe?"

*Joy, are you comfortable? Do you need anything...are you in pain?
Would you like another pillow or some water?*

"Water, pillows...they are real things offered on earth... I don't think they have a need for them in Heaven. OMG, maybe I didn't die! Maybe visiting Heaven was a dream! If so, how truly blessed am I? Thank you God, Thank you God, THANK YOU GOD... it's just what I have always believed! You do have bigger plans for me! And as soon as I can clear my head I am sure it will all become perfectly clear.

But what's up with the spirit of my heavenly BFF Ellen? Oh Well, I am sure I will understand it all soon enough. But for now I am alive (Yippee!), and *according to Hoyle* another 20 plus years added to my body's odometer, and I can't wait to begin to enjoy every single moment!"

As I was informed by Dr. Jeffrey Sell, my cardiothoracic surgeon and Chief of Cardiovascular Surgery at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, I have hereditary heart disease. Defective genes that have been with me since birth and the reason so many women and men die from undetected heart problems. Finally a piece of plaque had broken through an artery and created blockage on the left side of the heart called the Widow-maker (named for a blockage that has killed many men leaving many women widows) as well as blockage to the right side of my heart. Because I was getting the barest minimal amount of blood and oxygen, he said that people who come to the hospital in my condition are usually dead!

I believe that because I don't smoke and do lots of cardio activities, and have an "uber-positive" mind-set, I didn't have a heart attack. But none of that got me off scot-free. I did need a triple bypass to get things flowing again. So when I was blessed with more life to live, a life I had never thought could potentially be wiped out within seconds anywhere in the near future, I took the gift of more life very seriously. I knew that the message sent via my angel Ellen, a true lover of life, was intentional and not to be taken lightly and did need to be taken to heart. Literally and figuratively!

Like so many other women, I have often read parts of my story within the pages of the greatest romance novels. I have enjoyed tasting the luscious fruits and sipped delicious wines made in the name of love. I've danced to the songs created in Love's name under the stars and moon with the smell of night jasmine in the air. YET through all the adventures and wonderful memories I have stockpiled in my mind, I was still left with an aching feeling for a kind of love I somehow felt up until now had eluded me. Something I desperately wanted and was now ready to receive.

"Everything has a reason for being... Everything always works out in Your favor...Because You are blessed" was to be realized yet once again.

~YOU and YOUR GORGEOUS HUNK OF A HEART~

“There is only one corner of the universe that you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self.”

— Aldous Huxley

When you are young you truly think that you are immortal and invincible. You believe that nothing you do to yourself will have any long lasting negative effects and you will continue happily skipping down memory lane. You can work through the day and night with very little sleep, drinking for hours till you get stinking drunk, eating way too much crap, smoking and partying in one form or another all night long and still get back in the saddle come the morning. Regardless of what the next day payment will be. Exercise is more about the visual effects it will produce for the buns, abs and belly. Without any real regard to any long term heart healthy benefits or what the consequences will be for not doing some sort of daily cardio or eating healthy foods. You let one day roll into the next.

I know this story only too well, as I have lived some form of that life for many years. Taking good care of Joy was always a very selective and short-lived game plan...lasting only until the next distraction took me over. I would only begin caring for myself after the effects of playing started to show, or as in this case, stopped me in my tracks and “insisted” I take another path, or else.

As the weeks went by and with a lot more time for introspection, I came to see the importance of loving and taking care of yourself and the numerous rewards that are often under-valued or overlooked. You “play” at taking care of yourself until “something” grabs you in mid-flight and insists you satisfy this need at any cost. Often the demands of your job, family members or personal desires can create a distraction that allows you to justify your less than caring actions that eventually cause serious damage if ignored.

But sooner or later life forces you to grow up, insisting that you finally admit to what no longer serves you and eliminating, or at the very least reducing, your destructive behavior. Becoming more diligent at taking care of the most important person and what should be your Greatest Love of All~ YOU and your gorgeous “hunk” of a Heart~ becomes the challenge and opportunity. As Mae West said, *“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.”*

So I choose to see “this gift” of open heart surgery as another way to learn as much as I could about the mind, body and spirit connection. To take on this opportunity to overcome any obstacles in my knowing true Love and to find a way to really support myself and others in continued good health, became a passion. Since I am always working on my mind and connecting with spirit, I decided it was time to get to know my body better, specifically my heart.

What was so special about this particular muscle in your body and why does it deserve your love and attention? Well, as it turns out, quite a bit.

To begin with, did you know...

- The human heart is not on the left side of the body- it's in the middle~ in-between your lungs. But it does tilt slightly to the left!
- Your heart is about the size of two hands clasped and a normal heart valve is the size of a half dollar. Bigger is not better~Lean and efficient is!
- The “thump-thump” of a heartbeat is the sound made by the four valves of the heart closing!
- The heart begins beating about 22 days after conception, and ends when you do. A human heart can beat up to 3.5 billion times during a lifetime!
- Your heart is a coordinated machine. The right side pumps blood into your lungs, while the left side pumps blood back into your body!
- Though weighing only 11 ounces on average, a healthy heart pumps 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels each day!
- An adult has about five quarts of blood in circulation, which the heart pumps to all the tissues and to and from the lungs in about one minute!
- The average man's larger heart has 70 beats per minute. A woman has 78 beats per minute~ which makes up for the woman's smaller heart!
- 75 trillion cells receive blood pumped from the heart~ except the corneas!
- Every day, the heart creates enough energy to drive a truck 20 miles. In a lifetime, that is equivalent to driving to the moon and back!
- A faucet would need to be turned on all the way for at least 45 years to equal the amount of blood pumped by the heart in an average lifetime!
- 5% of blood supplies the heart, 15-20% goes to the brain and central nervous system, 22% goes to the kidneys to create urine/filtered waste!
- Hearts can break, literally. Losing a loved one and the stress of bereavement, depression and anger can even bring on a heart attack!

- Your heart can separate from your body and keep pumping because it has its own electrical impulse!
- Your heart beat mimics and changes with the music you listen to!
- Enjoying an orgasm three times a week can cut in half the likelihood of a coronary heart attack, and masturbation will do the trick as well!
- Owning a cat can reduce the risk of heart attacks/strokes by one third!
- Plant based dieters are 30% Less likely to die of a heart attack!
- Eating 70% dark chocolate reduces the risk of a heart attack by a third!
- People who work an 11 hour day are 67% more likely to have a heart attack than people who work 8 hour or less who have some play time!
- Heart disease was found in a 3000 year old mummy (before cholesterol clogging Twinkies) with plaque formation in very young children!
- Stress may only be bad for you if you believe that it is. Using your Mind over Matter- Having a Positive Attitude- is the game changer!
- The heart does more physical work than any other muscle during a lifetime and needs your love to do its best job!

Bottom-line:

The heart contains a little brain in its own right, composed of about 40,000 neurons that can sense, feel, learn and remember. The heart brain sends messages to the head brain about how the body feels and back through your body within sixteen seconds! This amazing muscle called your Heart is so spectacular with all its specialized functions and talents, it deserves your Love and commitment to keep it in good health. And because you all are my soul sisters, I intend to show you exactly how to do just that! Just keep reading and you will learn how to truly *Love Yourself into Good Health!*

~KNOWLEDGE IS POWER~

“You have powers you never dreamed of. You can do things you never thought you could do. There are no limitations in what you can do except the limitations of your own mind”. —Darwin P. Kingsle

Let's start with the Mind and what's Love got to do with it.

Somewhere around 458 B.C., Plato theorized that reasoning originated with the brain, but that passion originated in the “fiery” heart. The term “heartfelt” originated from Aristotle’s philosophy that the heart collected sensory input from the peripheral organs through the blood vessels. From those perceived thoughts emotions arose. He believed that the heart was the body’s source of heat~ a type of “lamp” fueled by blood from the liver and fanned into a loving spirited flame by air from the lungs. The brain merely served to cool the blood, which is considered a living tissue made up of liquid and solids.

Aristotle’s theory has since been modified by various scientific research studies, and experts in the medical field are now beginning to embrace the connection between the mind, body and spirit. For example, it’s been proven that when the body is at rest it takes only six seconds for the blood to go from the heart to the lungs and back. Only eight seconds for it to go to the brain and back, and only sixteen seconds for it to reach the toes and travel all the way back to the heart. These instantaneous actions also carry your emotions with them and have the same healing or damaging affect as healthy or toxic blood. With every emotional thought you have, positive or negative, you are affecting the various organs, cells, tissues and muscles within mere seconds.

Stop and ponder that idea for a moment. From as far back as Aristotle’s time till this day it has been proven that you and you alone, through the power you wield over the thoughts you think and the words you speak, your actions and reactions to the various circumstances and the events in your life and your core belief system, is what is hugely responsible for maintaining, damaging or healing your body and it’s functions. Pretty awesome, don’t you think?

“The heart's more than a pump — it actually sends messages to the brain”

Until the 1990s, scientists and the medical community assumed that it was only the brain that sent information and issued commands to the heart, but we now know that’s not completely true. Neuroscientists have discovered that the heart has its own complex independent nervous system referred to as the “brain in the heart.” With at least as many neurons (nerve cells) in the heart, the heart brain has the ability to relay information back to the brain, creating a two-way communication system where the brain not only understands the messages but also obeys them.

In fact, a recent medical report stated, “the heart sends more information to the brain than the brain sends to the heart! The heart is in a constant two-way dialogue with the brain — our emotions change the signals the brain sends to the heart and then the heart responds in complex ways.”

Way before I experienced what I call my “Heart Epiphany” I have been using what I fondly call *The Formula for the Art of Living Well* as the foundation to manifesting a truly extraordinary life. *By the thoughts you think, the words you speak, your actions and reactions and whether or not you believe you deserve to have what you want...is how you create the quality of your life.* Garnered from the wisdom of a premonition come true, I realized that by becoming consciously aware of whether your thoughts and actions are positive or negative can help you direct and define your life through your intentions, wishes and desires. It’s also the most accurate measurement to whether you are aligning yourself with a high positive or low negative vibrational energy.

I recently read a study performed at the Heart Math Institute showing that each human heart emits an electromagnetic field, the largest generated by any part of the human body, and extends up to several feet away from the body in 360-degree radius. An individual’s heart communicates with the hearts of others in its immediate vicinity through the emotional information encoded in its electromagnetic field and then travels throughout the world via the electromagnetic pulses associated with each heartbeat which moves at the speed of sound. In other words, not only will your mental and physical attitude affect your relationship with everyone you interact with, but will also affect and align with others in the world on the same wave length either positively or negatively~ similar to the belief in prayer circles or worldwide meditation.

We have seen how practicing the art of conscious awareness can drastically change your life and really make a difference in the lives of others. We now know that feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, fear or negative stressful thoughts can hurt you and block your ability to think clearly. These emotions create a chain reaction in the body — stress hormone levels increase, blood vessels constrict, blood pressure rises and the immune system is weakened. The presence of these negative emotions creates chaos in your nervous system.

If you are consistently experiencing negative emotions it will put a strain on your heart and other organs, eventually leading to serious health problems. Just think about the pervasively damaging affects you can experience with just a casual random toxic thought or word and the opposite results you can have with thoughts of joy, happiness and love. Certainly worth noting, don’t ya think?

Research has also shown that when we experience heart-felt emotions such as love, caring, joy, appreciation and compassion, the heart produces a very different rhythm. In this case it is a smooth pattern that looks like gently rolling hills. Harmonious heart rhythms, which reflect good positive emotions, are considered to be indicators of cardiovascular efficiency and the nervous system balance. This lets the brain know that the heart feels good and then creates a gentle warm feeling in the area of the heart. Knowing all of this, which emotions do you want to be responsible for sending to your heart?

So ladies, the real message here and not to be missed is that it is your precious heart running the show, and *tout suite* you need to learn how to reframe any stressful negative emotion into a more affirming heartfelt emotion as soon as possible! Now that you know how powerful positive thinking is to your “heart brain”, as well as your cardiovascular system and your overall health, the only question about changing any of your behavior is...If Not Now When, and If Not YOU, Then Who?

Once I started to become consciously aware of what thoughts were constantly swirling around inside my head (a practice I highly recommend cultivating) it didn't take me very long to see that I had rented space to “my devil monkey mind” and I needed to get the No Vacancy sign up ASAP! Now I know that my heart relays information back to the brain via a 2-way communication system that enables both to be a part of my decision-making and thinking processing. Encouraging the brain to obey the heart's command with its memory and data retrieval capabilities, plus its own intelligent system, is now at the very top of my daily To Do List!

Here are a few tools I utilize and recommend to get into a Heart Loving space.

- **Listen for what Your Heart is telling you.** How do you really feel about what you are doing and who you are doing it with? If it is right you will *hear and feel* vibrational sensations of happiness and joy. Your energetic body will vibrate in a happy loving way which others will sense and respond to accordingly, almost as if you are sending out waves of a magnetic welcoming light. Your heart will also let you know if any actions or person is wrong or harmful to you. Your heart will “speak” to your mind and your body will feel the dis-ease of the negative energy as if a dark black cloud is hovering over you~ pushing away all the love and joy you deserve. Your job is to honestly stop and listen to what messages are coming from your heart and find the courage to take right action.

Unfortunately, en-mass we all tend to ignore so many of the signals, especially if they contradict our seemingly well laid plans. But once you start to *really listen* and take notice of *all* your feelings and emotions~ the delicious good ones and the ones that scream STOP~PAY ATTENTION ~THIS DOES NOT SERVE YOU~ you open yourself up to the gifts of your inner wisdom that is always woven within each message. In fact, more times than not, that negative experience was exactly what was necessary to lead you to a more positive solution for an issue you have until now only seen as painful or problematic.

- **Ask your Heart, what would be the most effective response** to this situation to bring you more joy, happiness and minimize future negative stress or further emotional pain? Create your own private place where you can experience some quiet time to hear and focus in on the answers that your inner wisdom will provide. I have found that whether it is in the morning during my beach walk to “commune with the Source” or at the end of the day in soothing lavender salt baths, going to a private place for the answers always leaves me feeling calmer and more centered.

Learning to trust your own inner guidance system to serve you well is very important. It doesn't matter how you do it, where you do it or what others think. All that matters is that you find your way to your own inner wisdom and stoke the fire to align with your highest vibrations. It is this fire and energy that will feed your healthy gorgeous heart so you can love and live the extraordinary life you desire and deserve!

- **Choose Your Heart's message over what your “devil mind”** repeatedly spews out in the form of negative thoughts...then follow the direction of your loving heart to the real truth. Any thought that make you feel bad about anything~ yourself or a particular situation~ will only send some form of a toxicity to your precious heart and then throughout your body. This “devil mind,” as it's been called, is definitely not your wiser higher self. It's only a projection of a negative perception about your past or future that you have chosen to believe and perpetuate.

Everything in life is perception. Your attitude and point of view are your own creation. Why not choose to only listen to the voice that empowers you, the one that always has an instant access to your inner wisdom? At any moment you can go within and confront your devil mind with the question, “Is this really the truth?” “Do I know for sure that my past or negative predictions are absolutely going to affect this day or my future?”

If your answer is “NO, I don’t know it to be the truth, and in this moment it is only a story I made up about what it all means,” then try to really remember that in most cases the worst was never as bad as you thought and rarely ever even comes to fruition. Instead, just follow the whispers of your loving heart and choose to perceive the very best in everything and everyone while enjoying your own personal novella.

- **Clear Out Your Head by expressing your thoughts** for a happy healthy heart. All day long every single one of you has multiple thousands of repeated thoughts dancing in your head. Most of those thoughts are like the air circulating in an airplane, same stale air same stale thoughts. Sadly, similar to the stale air, many of those thoughts create dis-ease and make your heart work harder to stay happy and healthy, and harder to draw *The Greatest Love of All* to you. In order to love your heart into good health you need to find an outlet for all this insane rambling. One of the best ways I have found to get out of your own way is to write down and speak these thoughts out-loud to just yourself. Anywhere and any way that gives you the opportunity to “talk” your way through made up stories to the truth. Just by giving yourself the permission to examine and expose your true feeling, will often times let you experience the emotional release you need and desire.
- **Using the Power of Meditation can no Longer be denied**, even though I have. I’ve tried and failed in the conventional ways, but the time has come to take this on. Especially since so many of the people we all admire and respect, swear by meditation (mind stillness) as their way to clarity and personal love. For your edification, the reason that I haven’t jumped in with both feet up until now is that for most of my life I have effectively utilized various ways to open my heart and mind to the messages sent from the universe and have experienced much success with my own practices~ such as taking long walking meditation where I converse with the Source of it all. Until now, that has been enough.

But apparently the “default mode network” is activated when your mind is at rest and not focusing on the outside world. This is when the silent but active brain begins to undergo physical changes while improving memory, self-awareness and goal setting. Stress, blood pressure, and fear actually show a decrease in gray matter. Heart and respiration rates are reduced and blood pressure is lowered, and “they say” meditators look younger, happier and more refreshed after surrendering their minds to this silent space. (Well, they got me on with that one!)

My friend and spiritual guide Wayne Dyer said, “*Mediation is not making the mind think it is meditating, but literally is the embodiment of truth and trust. It is knowing that you can confront yourself in the spirit of serenity and what you seek will be attracted to you.*”

Using the power of the combined wisdom of your heart and mind to heal your physical and emotional issues is definitely the first step on the road to loving yourself into good health~ and to attract and magnetize all the blessings that come from experiencing *The Greatest Love of All*. I suggest you and I start today by trying to find the time for just a two minute meditation, focusing on our breathing and utilizing a word that will help to keep us on track. Shalom is a good one, as it brings in the power of the AAAHH sound often used within the name for the Source of creation, and OOOMM. that represents gratitude and thankfulness for the gifts you have or will receive. Once you are comfortable with that practice you can try to go for a longer period of still time by listening to guided meditations or creating you own. I will at least give it a try, because as Lao Tzu said, “*To the mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders.*”

Bottom-line:

The combination of the heart brain and your mind have so much power over the conditions and circumstances of your life, and you alone have complete control over what goes into them. Listening to what your body and heart are telling you and actually asking your inner wisdom for the proper response to all situations, is an excellent beginning. Dialoging with your brain through the written, spoken and mental connection, becoming consciously aware of who is actually leading the parade is an excellent way to own your magnificence. Many wise and great masters say practices such as quieting the mind with stillness are Priceless. Anything that is considered “Priceless” is certainly worth the effort to obtain. Now this writer and You the reader can no longer pretend we don't know. SHAAAA...LOOOM!

~Oh My Beautiful Body~

"I have always been delighted at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning."

— J. B. Priestly

It has always amused me, for lack of a better word, when there are clear differences between one thing and another and naturally because of those differences, we treat them differently. Yet when it comes to the human species, men and women to be exact, for some ungodly reason much of the medical community won't acknowledge the differences and still use the same standard of testing and drugs on both sexes. Putting all rounded beauties in the same square male box~ regardless of the obvious that they will get completely different results~ doesn't seem to matter. But there is no denying it or saying it ain't so: women and men are different! Not just in the way we look, think and act, but in the various ways our bodies are designed and respond to things. Sadly, nowhere does this misguided behavior show up more dangerously than around heart disease symptoms for women.

Women's Symptoms *are* different...

Before I share all the data that I have collected and documented to support the scientific and medical facts, I want to share one very important observation that I have personally observed: No One...and I truly mean No One...knows for sure what is the absolute cause of heart disease or what prevents experiencing some form of heart disease in the future. The very best any cardiologist, doctor, surgeon or expert can ever do is compare all the collected data on the various symptoms that surround this (or any) disease, and from that data surmise and conclude that these particular issues are the reason for contracting or healing a disease. Even though my intentions for this book are to encourage you to want to *love yourself* into good health, not scare you into better care, I must remind you that in the USA 30,000 women died of breast cancer yet 600,000 die of heart related disease- and 17.3 million people worldwide. Your personal care must be taken seriously if you truly want to live a long healthy fun life!

Many of these professional experts claim that their way of preventing or curing a disease is the only way, and many of us blindly follow their advice without challenging our own inner wisdom. That said "their way" may have validity and be a factor in keeping you healthy, but it's not necessarily "The Be All End All." No one, and again I repeat NO ONE, but the Source of it all knows for sure what is going on inside your body at any given time.

The best anyone can do is to check things out and then follow your gut instincts about which is the right form of action to keep you healthy, happy and joyful as you embrace this amazing experience called life.

Because *knowledge is power*, as you go forward I strongly suggest that you use what you will learn to lead you to *your* right path for living a heart healthy life. Always remembering that when you do take the time to stop and listen to what your heart directed inner wisdom is telling you...follow your intuition and then take the right action...you will be the most effective in assisting yourself to the mental, physical and spiritual healing and good health you desire.

Sometimes taking right action includes NOT listening to “an expert opinion” as to what to do or that there is nothing wrong with you...especially if your body is screaming that there is. You need to be your own advocate and insist that whenever a doctor says you “must do something or that there is nothing wrong”...either check with yet another doctor or at least keep pressing for another test or another form of examination which takes into consideration the differences between the sexes. Why? Because it has been proven in many cases that stubbornness or insistence on what intuitively was felt and known was the one thing that saved a life and that life saved could be yours.

A perfect example is when a woman feels as if something is wrong and goes to the ER to get tested. She gets what seems like a clean bill of health in the form of a normal angiogram, even when she has ischemic heart disease~ which is insufficient blood supply to the heart muscle. Because many of the symptoms women have are so different than a man's, she has been judged under the same guidelines as men. Yet women are often treated as if they are merely under a lot of stress, sent home to rest, and their real problem goes undetected. Then at a later date that same woman experiences a sudden severe blockage of a coronary artery that leads to a heart attack...or her death.

Because of this truth, every woman needs to know how a potential heart problem or attack looks and feels different from a man, and be prepared to express the severity of her issues. In my personal experience the undeniable chest pains weren't the kind men describe as if “an elephant is sitting on your chest.” Mine felt more like an accelerating levels of what I thought intense stress or anxiety would feel like. Yes I did have 1. **Chest pains** that felt like a corset was being tightened and squeezing the various parts of my chest. 2. **Arm, back, neck and jaw pain** that sometimes came gradually, and at other times would suddenly come and then go before ever becoming intense. 3. **Sweating** that made me feel as if I was breaking out in a cold clammy sweat without warning. All that I foolishly wrote off to anxiety and stress! I did not experience, but many others have **Stomach pains, Shortness of breath, Nausea, Lightheadedness** and **Fatigue**.

A lot of women say they felt as if they had just run a marathon while barely making a move. The point here is that not every woman will experience the same symptoms while having heart issue. Many of those symptoms can come on when you are being active, and then subside when you're at rest. But each and every one must be seriously considered. These symptoms can increase in intensity over days or weeks, as in my case, and these various symptoms can come and go. This coming and going isn't because the problem isn't real or all in your mind as I thought. But more than likely it is your amazing heart trying to muster up all its strength to continue its vital work...which is Much More Serious! In most cases the blood flow and oxygen are being constricted and cut off for various reasons.

So the message here is that if you have any chest discomfort, especially if you also have one or more of the other signs and they feel intense, please call 911 immediately. Don't try to drive yourself to the hospital if you think you are having a heart attack. Put an aspirin under your tongue and sit down to wait for the paramedics to arrive (don't lie down.) If you are still concerned but don't think you are having a heart attack, at the very least, go get yourself checked out ASAP!

In my case, I had just published and launched my latest book~ *LIFE~LUST and LOVE-The Secret Memoirs of an Ordinary Woman Living an Extraordinary Life* and I was frantically trying to meet my deadlines and set appointments, etc. So "the pressure" that went down my left arm into my hand and at other times went up my neck to my jaw felt like intense stress from overwork or a serious case of acid-reflux, as most of my friends suggested. As I mentioned, the common symptoms for women, that include shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and extreme fatigue weren't present, so I mistakenly had no thoughts at all that it was anything more serious. Nada. No way. It just goes to show.

Bottom-line:

Women *are* From Venus...and Men *are* from Mars, and therefore our minds and bodies respond to various things very differently. Once you know that, as you do now, make it your personal responsibility to do what you need to do to be your own advocate, especially if you feel something might not be right. Don't you be that "good friend" that wants to make you feel better and therefore will make excuses for your bodies reactions or behavior that is not right or serving you. Instead take right action by going to be checked out by your doctor. If she/he says nothing is wrong and yet your intuitive says "something is wrong here," go to another doctor, and even another, until you really feel sure you have gotten the right answers. It could literally save your life.

~STRESS OUT~

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another. —Wm. James

Stress is often used as a “catch all” for heart issues with women, especially when taken to the ER with similar symptoms. Too often women are sent home to only return days later with more serious chest pains, or worse, to be found dead by a loved one. Historically, women have been told that it was in their head. In fact, Barbra Streisand, an ambassador in the female heart prevention forum, actually said on the Dr. Oz’s TV show, “Any woman that ends up in the ER with potential heart problems should describe all symptoms as if they are exactly the same as what a man would be having. Then you will have a chance that the medical team will at least take your concerns seriously!” How sad is that in the 21st century? Very Sad, but true!

That said, I don’t want you to ignore the fact that negative stress is a serious problem and can seriously hurt you and lead to a heart attack. When you feel stressed out your body releases adrenaline~ a hormone secreted by the adrenal glands which increases rates of blood circulation, breathing and carbohydrate metabolism. This action prepares muscles for exertion, which in turn increases your breathing, heart rate and blood pressure~ making the hormone cortisol surge and releasing sugars into the bloodstream and suppressing functions not essential in a “fight or flight” situation. “This kind of stress is one of the greatest things that lead to inflammation, which in turn plays a role in the clogging of arteries,” according to the Harvard Heart Letter. If the stress is constant, overexposure to cortisol can cause damage. In a study published in 2010, researchers in Israel found that cortisol levels in hair — a marker of chronic stress — were a stronger predictor of heart attacks than cholesterol level or weight.

But stress can also be a good thing, especially if you chose to see it that way. In fact how you think about stress really matters. If you are the kind of person who experiences a lot of stress and see it as a normal by-product of living life, you move past it without any residual problems. You’ve learned how to use stress as a fuel that made you stronger for even greater challenges. When your internal dialogue says that your body is helping you rise to this new challenge, then this kind of stress will be helpful in preparing you for action by sending more oxygen to the brain. But those who believe stress will make them sick and unhealthy, even potentially kill them, will more than likely be part of the 30% that end up dying from stress related issues. Just the thought of it makes their heart rate goes up and their blood vessels constrict as they prepare for battle. There’s that Mind over Matter business again. Take it seriously!

So the “take home” message here is that your body will always respond by what you believe to be true...there is no “reality” here. What you think and say about any situation is what will design your actions and reactions- and that is the only reality worth noting. When you view stress as helpful your blood vessels send sensations of joy and courage that help you rise to this new challenge. When you become aware of the difference you can make stress your friend. Use it to love yourself into good health. As Bronnie Ware said, *“The more we can follow our heart, the louder it speaks.”*

One more thought on this subject. Your heart has receptors to Oxytocin, which is fondly called the “cuddle drug.” This stress hormone strengthens your heart by “demanding” you reach out to others for loving support and it is often the driving force behind many infatuations and lustful relationships~ as it is a mechanism for stress resilience through creating human connection. But Oxytocin is also a natural anti-inflammatory that acts on your body as a protector for your cardio-vascular system from bad stress. It helps your blood vessels stay relaxed, helps heart cells regenerate and heal all the time, helping to strengthen your heart. All you need to do to activate this natural drug is to let yourself be loved (and hugged) by others and give the same kind of love and hugs to others in return. A win-win as far as I am concerned!

Here are a few of my favorite Stress Busters, but feel free to develop your own:

- **Slow Down and Smell the Roses!**

In our fast-paced society it is hard not to find someone who hasn’t said that they are “stressed out.” But stressing out over potentially negative outcomes (note the word potentially as most never happen) can seriously stress your heart as well. We can’t eliminate all stress, in fact some stress, called eustress, is actually good for you. Exercise, planning a wedding, studying for an exam, delivering a prepared speech for your business, etc., these kinds of stressors can help to improve your life. Stopping for just a brief moment to appreciate all the beauty around you and acknowledging gratitude for your blessed life, or even the good reason behind the stress you are feeling, can literally be a life saver! Slow Down and take a moment to smell the roses.

- **Move Your Body...Take a Walk or Go Dancing!**

When you need a break from a stressful situation or your home life feels like you are living in the middle of an insane asylum, just slip out the door and let your feet take you somewhere, anywhere else. Not only will walking give you the opportunity to clear your head and take a break from a hectic situation, you will be engaging in what is considered the perfect cardio exercise. I love to take beach walks and turn them into walking meditations, but my personal favorite stress releaser is dancing~ for a multitude of reasons.

Combining the up-spirited energy of the music with fast paced movements brings enormous pleasure and joy. Plus it's been proven the tactile touch experienced in ballroom dancing is excellent for the heart! Details to follow!

All the experts say it's important to move throughout the day. Park farther away from the office, take a few short walks throughout the day and develop some sort of daily exercise program you enjoy so you will stick with it! Also, don't sit for too long. Research has suggested that staying seated for long periods of time is bad for your health no matter how much exercise you get. Sitting for long periods of time (especially when traveling) increases your risk of deep vein thrombosis (a blood clot). So whether at work or home, make sure you literally "get up" at least 32 times during the day. This is a great tip from Dr. Northrup for also keeping your female parts in good shape!

- **Call a Good Friend!**

Almost nothing is a better stress buster than being able to talk to a dear friend who really cares. Often times a conversation with a good buddy will begin with your venting about a particular stressful problem or issue. Often times after they have soothed you, they go on to about theirs stuff which helps to get you out of your crazy monkey head. By having someone listen to your venting, care enough to find a solution, tell you a funny story or make you feel happy just because you don't have their problems helps. Whatever, they will more than likely calm you down and even put a smile on your face. So reach out and give a friend a call, even for a few minutes. Seriously, isn't that what friends are for?

- **Write It Down!**

I have found that by honestly expressing your true feelings by putting a pen to paper, opening a word document or filling up a blank email with your true feelings, is one of the best ways to deal with stress. Some like to keep a journal to capture their feelings at that moment. But I personally like my negative feelings to be more disposable. Onto paper, out of my system and then erased or crumple up and thrown away...hopefully for good! No one is to read this but you. So don't worry about others opinions, just "pen-vent." By the time you're done I bet those stress producing feelings will be just a fleeting memory.

- **Do Something Fun!**

The ideas and ways are limitless. If you really want to have some fun figure out what that would look like to you and either do it alone or invite someone to join you! Dancing is always my first thought. But going to a concert or the theater, cooking something special and sharing it, taking a day trip to a spa or a weekend getaway, trying a new activity like meditation or yoga, are all

great things to do to take your mind off of a stressful situation and recalibrate. Enjoying this moment in time is always a win-win...my favorite outcome.

- **Enjoy a Scented Warm Salt Bath!**

No matter what time of the day or night, as I often do this after a late night of high heels dancing, taking lavender scented Epsom salts baths does wonders for the mind, body and soul. The Epsom salts soothe the over-worked muscles for a non-aching night's sleep. Plus it adds magnesium into your body~ which is a macro-mineral that unlike trace minerals is needed by the body in large amounts. It will initially give your body a kick, which in turn will give your mind a kick – so both are slowed down stress-free. A rubber ducky is optional.

- **Get a Good Night's Sleep!**

All my suggestions should help you accomplish this most important piece for loving yourself into good health~ getting a good night's sleep. Over and over we are told how important getting 6-8 hours solid sleep is, especially since it has been proven that people who are chronically sleep-deprived increase their likelihood of developing heart disease. A great trick for getting a good night's sleep is to go to bed when you are tired. Duh. Now that may sound silly or redundant to some, but often times our minds and bodies aren't quite ready to shut down at the time we think it should. SO if that is the case I suggest turning off things that stimulate~ the television, computer, lights, cell phone, etc. and then pick up a book. Reading done at night often tires your eyes and makes you sleepy and there you go. Try not to worry about not getting sleep, as worrying will only stress you out while focusing on what you don't want! Just remember ladies, take all your make-up off beforehand for ageless skin.

Always Remember...

- **How you think and feel will change your experience!**

Listen to your inner wisdom and trust your feelings about what thoughts or actions *feel* good and what *feels* bad in your body. This advice will greatly help you to create the biology of resilience and courage necessary to handle life's challenges. When you feel as if life and all its unplanned experiences will work out in your favor... when you welcome stress as access to your true feelings and compassionate heart...you can then develop the right action, strength, desire and delight in loving yourself into good health with true love. It may be a surprise to you that excessive alcohol intake can seriously weaken your heart, a drug of choice for many under stress. So please keep that in mind as you reach for the second and third glass of wine to help calm you down.

- **Your Family History Matters!**

Knowing what your grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, brothers or sisters major illnesses were just might save your life. Especially if they had a heart attack or died from a heart related disease before they were fifty-five or sixty. As it turns out I have a huge history of deaths from heart disease related issues in my family, and yet I “chose” to completely block out such important information, simply because it didn’t fit into my vision of being invincible. A rather dangerous way to go through life and I truly hope you won’t be as foolish and let that be your story, as it could possibly kill you! What I learned retrospectively is that if heart disease runs throughout your family, early detection won’t necessarily stop you from experiencing some form of it, but with that knowledge comes the power of choice.

- **Prehab (Prevention) Works!**

As much as 80 to 90 percent of the time death by heart disease is preventable if it is diagnosed soon enough. If you show early signs you may be able to avoid open heart surgery, a heart attack or dying of a related issue. Even though it has been proven that women and men start to develop plaque at a very young age, the right prehab-preventive measures can stop the plaque in your arteries from becoming too great or too unstable. The right protocol can help keep your blood pressure and sugar levels from causing problems in the arteries and even ferret out and reverse heart disease while it is still in its developmental stages. Knowing your numbers; Total Cholesterol-LDL and HDL, plus non-HDL Cholesterol, Triglycerides, LDL-P Blood Pressure, etc. is very important, and will give you a great base-line and valuable information.

Here is where the phrase “maintenance is the name of the game” can really make a difference. A diet consisting of what we know to be healthy foods and drinks, a positive mental and emotional attitude, some form of daily cardio muscle building exercises, plus a sincere focus on loving yourself and others, can make You one of the three women that will Not Die of heart related disease!

- **No Smoking, Please!**

What is one of the most important things you can do to improve your heart health? Don’t Smoke. And if you already do, Stop Smoking Now! Smoking hardens the arteries, compromises the ability of the blood to carry oxygen to the cells, raises blood pressure and causes an irregular heartbeat. I know that it can be addictive and kicking the habit is hard to do. But honestly, besides really making a difference to your heart and your general health by eliminating toxic smoke from going into your heart and veins you can change the quality and color of your skin plus greatly increase your level of energy! So Worth It!

- **Avoid Second Hand Smoke-Like The Plague!**

Because the chemicals emitted from cigarette smoke promotes the development of plaque buildup in the arteries, the risk of developing heart disease is about 25 to 30 percent higher for people who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work. According to the American Heart Association, exposure to tobacco smoke contributes to about 34,000 premature heart disease deaths and 7,300 lung cancer deaths each year. And nonsmokers who have high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol have an even greater risk of developing heart disease when they're exposed to secondhand smoke! So do whatever you need to do keep you and your children away from secondhand smoke~ it's a killer!

Obesity and Diabetes is a Serious Issue!

As shocking as it is, nearly 70% of American adults are either overweight or obese, and being obese puts you at a higher risk for health problems such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and more! So exactly what defines obesity? Simply having too much body fat. Your body is made up of water, fat, protein, carbohydrate and various vitamins and minerals. So if you have too much fat — especially around your waist — you're at higher risk for health problems, including high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, gallstones, osteoarthritis and diabetes...which makes other factors much worse. In fact, the danger of a heart attack is especially high for these people.

But when your body is healthy your body more efficiently circulates blood... your fluid levels are more easily managed...and you are less likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers and sleep apnea. So this portion of the book should be used as a wake-up call if being over-weight is your issue. Since clearly the downside of lugging around lots of extra pounds is far more serious than just not fitting into sexy jeans or attracting a new love interest. Putting yourself on a heart healthy diet can be the perfect answer for finally realizing *The Greatest Love of All* in every respect.

- **Take Action Now!**

It's never too late to start a new exercise program, improve your diet and love yourself into good health. Doctors see the difference all the time between people who live in a victim mentality from others who have chosen to live a healthy lifestyle. Many dentists now claim that there may even be a correlation between gum disease and cardiovascular diseases, so while waiting for the findings on this research, be proactive. It certainly can't hurt to have healthy gums and teeth that create a pretty smile! In every respect if you take control of your life and change the habits that no longer serve you, you don't necessarily have to be a victim of family history or even a lifetime of neglect. Your health can be managed by making smart lifestyle changes. Disease is not imminent.

- **Assume You are at Risk!**

Even though the data shows that 1 out of 3 women will die of heart disease... 1 out of 7 are in denial or choose to completely ignore their history as I did! Ischaemic heart disease—including strokes, heart disease and heart failure—Claims More Lives in The World Than Any Other Illness (followed by Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease), and smoking, a no-no for heart health, accounts for as many as 8 out of 10 COPD-related deaths...just saying.

None of us really know what is going on inside this precious mysterious machinery called our bodies, but what we do know is that every single person reading this book will die of something. I am personally striving for closing my eyes at some ripe old age in good health in total gratitude for the wonderful life I have lived. So learning to love YOU into good health, so you can know *The Greatest Love of All*, is a great plan and lifetime goal under all circumstances.

Assuming that you are at risk of something doesn't have to be a burden. You can use it to help empower you to be proactive in doing right action while taking the very best care of yourself. Researchers have proven that individuals who participated in a Prehab group that exercise three times a week, add more plant protein to their diet, stop smoking, practiced relaxation techniques, and acknowledge the body, mind and spirit connection, saw amazing results before and after all kinds of operations~ compared to a studied group that did none or very little of the above.

If you do become a candidate for some sort of surgery, it's been proven that the more you prep your *body before you go into surgery* the better off you will be. I truly believe that my rehab went so smoothly because I live my life in a state of constant preparation for a long healthy life. Even with very limited oxygen and blood flow I didn't have a heart attack. Surgery is a major event. Think of it as a marathon. As with any major event you need to be prepared.

Bottom-line:

Knowledge Is Power, and now that you have the facts and what numbers and personal things you need to find out about~ Family history of heart disease or diabetes, your numbers for cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure, etc.~ you can begin to be proactive in loving yourself into good health. It is probably the very best thing you will ever do for yourself in your lifetime. Not only will it make you much more confident and therefore much more attractive to others, but it certainly will make your journey a lot more enjoyable! *“Everything worth having costs something, and the price of true love is self-knowledge.”*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

~The Gift of a Loving Relationship with Your Heart~

“Don’t ever change just to impress someone. Change because it makes you a better person and leads you to a better future.” — Rumi

Learning to fall in love with YOU, Yourself, first and foremost is the most important thing you will ever do. I have been working on how to love myself unconditionally for much of my life. There have been many times when that was easier said than done, especially when my “fault and flaw finder” was in play and unconsciously I was leading my life from a low energy vibration.

Even after years of studying with some of the most gifted masters, there were many days when I would “forget” the importance of unconditionally loving me, and having enough compassion to keep myself in the flow of the universal high energy. I now know that it takes practice, lots and lots of practice to surrender to this age old wisdom, but the rewards for the effort is so worth it!

The idea of making my own heart *The Greatest Love of All*, having a loving relationship with my heart as one would have with another human being, was a new but exciting concept. During my on-going research to learn more about how to embrace this intriguing adventure, I came across a fantastic article that totally resonated with me by the beautiful Dr. Tara Narula, a board certified Cardiologist, professor of Cardiovascular medicine, Associate Director of the Cardiac Care unit at Lenox Hill Hospital, as well as a popular CBS correspondent and contributor to Oprah’s O Magazine. With her gracious permission I am thrilled to be able to share the following piece she wrote for the Huffington Post.

“People often ask me why I chose the field of cardiology, and I always answer that to me the heart is fascinating. Coupled with the incredible complexity of its structure and abilities is the pure simplicity of the silent way it supports us every day. Beat after beat it works tirelessly to sustain us from the womb to our very last breath. It gives us so much and it asks only one thing of us in return: love. However, too few of us truly love our hearts. We take for granted that it will serve us dutifully and we don't give it the care, kindness and adoration it deserves. But as with every great love in life it must be nourished, understood and shown compassion. We must work to make the relationship long lasting and that means taking the time and energy to devote to the simple steps of prevention. By focusing on prevention, we are laying a solid foundation for our relationship with our heart that will help us steer clear of future problems.

I truly believe the same keys to a wonderful personal relationship also make for the best ways to support a heart healthy relationship. Here are 9 steps that I believe make for a great start!

- Empowerment: love yourself enough to want to take care of your heart.
- Communicate effectively: get to know your heart by learning your risk and your family history.
- Create date nights: treat your heart to fresh veggies, fruits, nuts, whole grains, fish and a glass of red wine.
- Share fun activities: get your heart pumping with activities to build endurance, foster bonding and teamwork.
- Be vulnerable: listen to your heart and make seeking medical care for symptoms a priority.
- Show commitment: prioritize your heart by monitoring blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and blood sugar.
- Protect: keep your heart safe by taking prescribed medications and avoiding tobacco.
- Radiate positivity: train your mind to speak kindly to your heart, de-stress and express gratitude.
- Demonstrate trust: believe in your heart's devotion to you.

Focusing on these small investments every day can help keep the bond with your heart strong. I have always been dedicated to healing through teaching my patients to understand the power they have to control their future. Through their everyday choices they can paint the picture of what their future cardiovascular health will look like. It's never too late I explain to them. Now that I am also a mother I am immensely aware that it is also never too early. Each day I marvel at the miracle of my 2.5 year old, and I hope to instill in her the value of respecting her heart as one of the most important relationships she will have. I know the earlier she incorporates heart healthy behaviors into her life the easier it will be to continue them down the road. As in one of my favorite movies, "The Princess Bride" where it is said: "true love is the greatest thing in the world." I propose that we all fall in LOVE again with our beautiful and sacred hearts."

These words of wisdom are also great advice for finding true love in every part of your life. Thank you so much Dr. Narula, I truly couldn't have said it better!

~ATTITUDE AND GRATITUDE~

Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves to recognize how good things really are. — Marianne Williamson

Falling in love with yourself, another, and especially your hard-working heart is first and foremost *always* a mind over matter thing. When you recognize how good things are, you can also consciously focus on having a good attitude and being in a state of constant gratitude. In fact, *attitude and gratitude* are my fav “go to cosmetics” to help me feel beautifully healthy every single day. Just the realization of how blessed I am to be alive with another day to learn, love and maybe even make a difference, fills me with overflowing joy and gratitude that creates a positive attitude in almost every situation. Believing this to be so has served me very well over the years, and nowhere was that more obvious than in the weeks of healing following my surgery.

Seeking out the rainbow hidden behind the dark clouds even while still in the middle of the storm-taking the high road whenever possible- is the way I have chosen to live my life. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind, nor of the IT nurse, doctors, and cardiologists that have added their thoughts, that having a positive attitude is definitely one of the most important factors in helping to get through any surgery with a quicker and less painful recovery. Being grateful for every life lesson (good or bad) is the key to a long happy and healthy life.

So it was no surprise when I read a report by the American Psychological Association stating that “Gratitude doesn’t just warm your heart, it may also lead to a healthier one. Patients with asymptomatic heart failure showed decreased levels of inflammatory biomarkers in the body, which are related to an improved cardiac health. It seems that a more grateful heart is indeed a more healthy heart, and that gratitude journaling is an easy way to support cardiac health.” Similar studies have also found that gratitude contributed to spiritual well-being which is associated with improved moods and a better night sleep to help rebuild your semi-resting heart. There you go, the perfect sleeping pill in the form of a simple Thank You! I love it.

This isn't the first time researchers have discovered a positive association between thankfulness and an improved heart. A 1995 study published in the American Journal of Cardiology found that positive emotions and appreciation are linked to changes in heart rate variability, especially those with an Attitude of Gratitude. Research has shown that thankfulness can increase optimism, strengthen your relationships, improve your immune system and even offset the effects of materialism! Lovely thoughts that I am grateful to learn!

One of the things that I am most grateful for are all the increased studies that now show definitive proof of the mind/body/spirit connection in helping to improve life and decrease deaths. A recent one stated, “When the mind and emotions are brought into coherent alignment, the heart and brain operate synergistically. By understanding and utilizing your heart intelligence, you activate and control your synergy to face your challenges in a creative and intuitive way to prevent stress-producing emotions and enhance your mental clarity.” So just by actively having a conscious awareness of your spiritual connection and what you are putting into your mind, can positively affect the quality of your life. Could it get any better?

I don’t know for sure if I am doing that or even if I know exactly how to “actively control my synergy.” But what I do know is that when I allow my heart to lead the dance and my mind to be the follower, the synergy between the two is magical! Within that time and space there is very little room for stressful negative emotions, and when you experience genuine feelings like appreciation, gratitude and compassion, your heart’s coherence increases.

So whether you are just walking through another precious day or are challenged with a condition you have inherited or created on your own, how you choose to think about it, talk about it, what actions you take and reactions you have to various things...and whether or not you believe you deserve to enjoy a robust healthy lifestyle, will all greatly affect the quality of your life.

Having Gratitude and an Attitude of Positivity about every opportunity that comes your way has been shown to be equally as important as the medicine, skills and talents of the doctors, nurses and people that take care of you. It has been proven that there is a higher vibrating energy that naturally fuels your body when your mind is consumed with gratitude and a positive attitude about the outcome. Even if the thought only last seconds, if it is real and true for you, that higher vibrational energy will stay with you for hours. Having some more thoughts a bit later? The energy will multiply exponentially!

A great tool for “stoking the coals of your internal high vibrational fire” is to simply recall a time when you felt true joy and sincere appreciation for something, and recreate the emotion associated with that memory in your mind today. By repeatedly doing this simple act, you can increase your heart rhythm coherence, reduce your emotional stress and improve your health.

Now it’s important to emphasize that it is not just the mental image of the memory that creates a shift in your heart rhythm, but rather the *feelings* you associated with the memory. This exercise of recreating peak experiences has been documented as the way actualized women and men utilize their emotions to help them move forward in challenging times and to a happy successful life. It certainly helped get me through some dark times to a more blissful place.

~A Positive Attitude can Be Your Game Changer~

I must admit that when I first came out of surgery, and in the weeks that followed, I wasn't a very happy camper. I don't know what I expected, but the ongoing "discomfort" and acute vulnerability I experienced by not being able to do so many of the little things I took for granted, made rising to my higher joyful self a bit more challenging...to say the least. But as one day folded into the next, bit by bit my mind and body began to heal. I started by taking one small slow step in each area of my life, that day by day turned into a quicker and steadier longer stride. As I was on the road to recovery I was determined to make a concentrated effort to embrace a positive attitude for what was so, no matter what. If this was indeed part of my new assignment, being a role-model for women of all ages by taking on life's challenges with a trusting open heart, then I needed to embrace each and every part of the process with love.

Apparently, having a positive attitude focused on a speedy recovery is not quite as natural or even as normal as one would imagine. So many seem hell-bent on seeing themselves as a victim of circumstances, and "no matter what" to stay with their damaging lifestyles. It honestly boggles my mind. It's one thing to know that *you should* be taking better care of what goes into your mind and body and *choosing not to take better care* because you don't think you have a real problem. *But to choose not to change* your behavior and take better care of yourself once you have definitive proof that you have an issue... well that's just plain crazy.

Sadly, not wanting to change on-going bad habits even when the proof of its damaging effects is messing with your health is quite common. So much so, my wonderful cardiologist Doc David Schreibman was so impressed with my "positive attitude, amazing recovery and commitment to help others," he insisted I meet with one of his partners in the Heart Specialist of Sarasota practice~ Dr. Chippy Nalluri, Board Certified in Cardiovascular Diseases and Nuclear Cardiology. A jewel of a doctor with a passion for understanding and managing the unique issues women have around heart disease.

Dr. Chippy Nalluri is also the Medical Director for the Dr Dean Ornish Heart Reversal Plan being implemented at the Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Because of her encouragement, I am now enjoying the benefits of a plant-based diet and have upped my level of more fun cardio exercises. Dr. Nalluri is also a devotee of having "a positive attitude for a better recovery."

So how appropriate is it to share the thoughts from one of the best on how to Love Yourself into Good Health? Read on...and be impressed!

“Disease is not the natural process of aging. We should die in health.”

“Many aspects of cardiology are measurable. You have a defined problem, we have a defined answer. An answer derived by testing hundreds of thousands of patients in a randomized, controlled trials and reported in peer-reviewed journals, and then there are guidelines that outline the severity of an illness and then creates a specific algorithm towards management and treatment.

These algorithms are also applied in predicting surgical risk. If you are a certain age, your risk is a predefined percentage. The higher the age or presence or absence of concomitant disease processes increases or decreases this risk. So when my 89-year-old patient developed severe aortic valve stenosis her risks of surgical intervention were carefully outlined. She had a stenosis, or tightening of a valve that regulated the flow of blood out of her heart. Each step was an effort. Every breath she took even at rest was labored. She sought the advice of a surgeon, who saw her calculated risk as astronomical. She was recommended "medical management."

She was told to live out her life and let the natural process of her disease run its course. She was heartbroken. She loved life. She was always surrounded by family and friends. Her days have been filled with laughter and love. She was not ready to just let it be. She sought a second opinion. Another surgeon agreed to take this "high risk" case. All the listed "high risks" as far as she was concerned, were not options. In fact she told me these statistically derived complication rates never entered her mind. Whatever the outcome, she was incredibly grateful for the life she lived. She came out of the OR brilliantly and of this writing, is still enjoying life at 97 years young.

A much younger patient also presented with a severely insufficient valve had all the blood pumped out of the heart was just leaking back in and it increased the workload of the heart, enlarged it and caused a steady deterioration of heart function. He came to me as a nervous bundle of energy. Every word was met with fear, doom and gloom. Yet his calculated score of major events such as stroke, length of hospitalization or death were well within the confines of a "low risk" operation. Yet he walked out of my office, drove to his house and collapsed in the driveway. His heart never even gave us a chance at repair.

Many of our patients defy the odds, both positively and negatively. Why did a 67 year-old die with severe complications after a "routine" open heart bypass surgery? Why do some patients with markedly elevated surgical morbidity and mortality rates survive with great outcomes?

Perhaps the answer really is in the unmeasurable details. What is their zest for life? How much love and support surrounds their existence? What is the level of gratitude and positive thinking that makes up these individuals? I have no data for these questions, just experiences given to me by brave souls who unmarred by fear and risks had a determination to survive.

The medical and scientific community can no longer deny the research on the positive combined efforts of Mind, Body and Soul on long term health. When your beliefs and actions support the best positive outcome, over and over again we are witnessing amazing results. Having a positive attitude even against the odds might not be the miracle cure, but it certainly will help.”

Well said Dr. Nalluri, and obviously I am in total agreement! Thank goodness for a living example such as yourself. Someone who truly walks their talk!

~From a Critical Cardiac Care RN's Point of View~

To really bring home the message of how much credo is now being placed on a positive attitude by the medical community, I have included a letter by Darlene Marks, BSN, Critical Care RN, CCRN-CSC in the IT Cardiac Unit at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. I was blessed to have this skilled nurse take care of me during the first 48 hours post-surgery. Even though I hesitated in sharing her letter as it is way too complimentary, the point she makes about the direct correlation between your mind, body and spirit and how you choose to think and deal with life's unexpected twists and turns has so much merit.

“Hello all you fabulous women out there! I have been a cardiothoracic nurse working in open heart recovery intensive care for over 27 years. In all my years of taking care of patients coming straight from the operating room to me, I have never seen anyone recover quite as easily and quickly as my great friend Joy Weston.

What was so different about her? ... Everything! She went in for a routine heart catheterization to see if she had any blockages and proceeded on to emergency open heart surgery within hours. I saw her after her procedure and even though she was surprised (shocked) that she needed surgery she put her usual philosophy to it... *“Everything has a reason for being~ Everything works out in my favor~ Because I am blessed!”* She went into the surgery believing and knowing that all would be well...and sure enough it did!

Why do some people do so well after heart surgery and others ...well, not so much? There are many factors. Some that can be modified and some that can't. Joy had always treated her body like a temple. She ate everything in moderation, exercised daily doing something that was good for both her mind, body and spirit...walking on the beach talking to the Source of it all, swimming, dancing and always keeping a positive attitude~ all of which minimized the stress from everyday living. She did all of these because they were positive steps for keeping her healthy. What she couldn't do anything about was her family history of heart disease of which she was unaware until after she herself was diagnosed.

I have taken care of many women and men after surgery. I can easily predict before I even see the patient how they will fair post op just by reading their medical history. Do they smoke or drink or both? Do they exercise on a daily basis to some degree or are they overweight or obese? What the history doesn't tell me is their stress level and attitude going in to surgery. These I can also easily figure out as soon as the anesthesia starts to wear off. Attitude is everything... if everything else is against you a positive attitude can make all the difference in your recovery both immediately after surgery and in the weeks to follow.

The moral of the story is to take care of your heart you must take care of you...all of you. You must find out about your family history and risk factors. You must treat your body as a temple by eating right, being active and taking steps to reduce the stress in your life. Had Joy not already been doing these things on an ongoing basis all her life she most likely would have died of a heart attack before she made it to surgery, and if she had made it through surgery she most certainly would not have come through it as fabulously as she did!! She made my job easy during her post-operative period as she was already doing all things right. She insisted that she learn all she could about heart disease, her surgery and what she could do to prevent any further complications in the future for herself and others. Her surgeon told her, as did I, that she should continue doing everything the same as she had been, as this is what saved her life.”

Aw Shucks. It's hard for me to be acknowledged for simply living my life the way I believe we are all meant to: Honoring and taking care of this amazing machine we are given to ride around in during our lifetime...but I'll manage... Lol!

Bottom-Line:

Doing *whatever* it takes for you to have a positive attitude about everything, living in a constant state of gratitude for all the many blessings that have been bestowed upon you in your lifetime~ even for the ones that you need to reframe a bit to truly appreciate the gifts that they are~ is the best medicine (and chick or dude magnet) anyone can have for a happy healthy life. And since this has been scientifically documented to be one of the undefinable and unexplainable, yet proven forces utilized by happy successful people, it sure seems like sound brilliant advice to me!

~MOVE IT OR LOSE IT~

“Exercise should be regarded as tribute to the heart.” — unknown

Just in case for some reason or another you haven't quite gotten the core message within the pages of this book, please let me expound a bit: YOU are the most precious and unique example of YOU that will ever be created. YOU are more beautiful than you know, stronger than YOU think and YOU deserve only the best. It is YOUR personal responsibility to do whatever YOU need to do, to honor and properly take care of YOU in order to have a happy health life.

Your cardiovascular system is powered by the body's hardest-working organ~ your heart. So in my humble opinion, the best use of your exercise time should always first serve this largest most important muscle of all. Not only will you be sending a positive affirming message to your heart brain, but equally important you will be facilitating the free flow of oxygen and blood throughout the system that is responsible for transporting oxygen, cellular waste products, nutrients and hormones throughout the body. So even though the visual benefits of doing daily exercise definitely has its perks ~I mean who doesn't want a tighter stomach or firm butt~ building and maintaining the strength of your muscles and bones should always have top priority.

Effective exercise doesn't require hours in the gym and shouldn't be thought of as torture or a major interference in your life. It should just be another way to love YOU into good health while having fun. Recent scientific studies have shown that small lifestyle changes done with a fun mentality are all it takes to improve your health drastically. In fact, it's been proven that if you were to take a ten minute fast paced walk or go up and down steps for the same amount of time, four times during the day, it is *almost* as good as taking a forty minute walk all at once! So for all you beauties that say you don't have the time or desire yet are eager to be attractive to yourself or a love interest, I think this factoid should at least give you pause to rethink your reasoning for not making daily heart and body improving exercises a priority in your life.

Investing your time in various forms of cardio activities that will help to build a strong heart that can possibly prevent a heart attack is vital. Some of my favorites include a walk on the beach or at a park, dancing, swimming and hiking. Activities that all my doctors believe saved me from arriving at the hospital with a damaged heart and helped me heal from my surgery more quickly. Strength training by adding weights, resistance bands or your own body weight (yoga, for instance) is also important. Add these two or three times a week, letting your muscles recover for a day between sessions after you have done some targeted gentle stretches does the trick. Spot targeted movements may make your body look tighter and more defined, something I strive for as well, but for real heart strengthening, cardio movements are where it's at!

Recent studies have found that interval training (alternating between high- and moderate-intensity bursts of activity) can double and possibly even triple the heart-protecting benefits you'd get from moderate cardio sessions—even when you exercise for less time. Experts agree, short cardio bursts make your heart work harder and pump more blood with each beat, which strengthens your entire cardiovascular system. High-intensity exercise will also prompt your muscles to develop more mitochondria, tiny energy-making units within cells that use sugar and fat for fuel. The more mitochondria you have the better your muscles become at utilizing carbohydrates and improving the body's insulin sensitivity. The result: less sugar floats around in your blood which lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes, a major precursor to heart disease.

As I've mentioned before, my favorite way to get that same moderate-intense bursts of activity is through dancing, which I do as often as possible. Whether you chose to dance to your favorite band at a club or restaurant, join a dance studio for lessons and dance parties or put on your favorite music and dance around your house, it's a wonderful way to show love to you and your heart.

The combination of the natural high you feel from music and moving your body to the beat is truly “youthifying” in more ways than one! The brain rewires itself by activating neurons with new information. So if you are learning a new step or style of dance you are helping to protect yourself from Alzheimer's and other brain deteriorating diseases as well! The more time you spend on the dance floor, the more you train your brain to open up the floodgates to those yummy feelings —and the more you'll start to amp up your overall well-being.

Plus it's been found that people with cardiac issues who dance for just 20 minutes three times a week, saw their heart health improve significantly more than those who stuck to traditional cardio workouts. Not to mention how vital the touch factor is in partner-dancing to improve your emotions and mood. I fondly call it safe sex, with no long term committed relationship required. It's the positive casual human contact that stimulates the release of oxytocin, the hormone responsible for a powerful impact on moods and social behavior that makes everyone more generous, trusting, empathetic and compassionate! As Bruce Lipton said, “*The body heals with play... The mind heals with laughter ...and the spirit heals with joy.*”

It's never too late to start exercising and you don't have to be an athlete. Your heart is a muscle and it gets stronger and healthier if you lead an active life. Conversely, it has been proven that people who don't exercise are almost twice as likely to get various diseases and die from them as people who are active! Please don't let laziness or aging be your reason to not enjoy a long healthy life. Regular exercise helps to put a glow on your face, burn extra calories for weight loss, lower the "bad" and boost the "good" cholesterol... as well as give you a youthful fit bod...and that's a very good thing!

Bottom-Line:

Taking care of your mind and body has much deeper implications than the inner and outward visual results. It really is a statement about how much you value yourself and the other people in your life. If you don't care enough to love yourself into good health over your lifetime, why would anyone willingly want to be burdened by another (family member, friend or life partner) who cares so little about themselves *not* to take their personal care seriously? Certainly not *The Greatest Love of All*, be it You and Your Heart or a special guy or gal.

Moving fast enough to raise your heart rate while still being able to talk to someone while you're doing it~ is perfect. If you have joint problems, choose a low-impact activity, like swimming or walking a bit slower. But please, don't use that as an excuse not to do some form of exercise. Similar to the metaphor of your body being like a "Rolls-Royce" it occasionally needs to be checked out. Your Rolls Royce of a body will stop working properly if left sitting unused. No one you would be interested in will be interested in something you consider worthless. Use it or lose it as the expression goes. Or as Albert Einstein once said, "*Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.*"

* Just don't forget to check in with your doctor if you will be drastically upping your activity level. They will make sure you're ready for whatever activities you have in mind and let you know if there are any limitations on what you can or cannot do.

~Feeding Your Heart with Love~

“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.”
—Leonardo da Vinci

As crazy as it might seem, this section was truly the hardest one for me to write. To begin with I am a foodie at heart. So having to drastically alter my adventurous appetite because various ingredients might be detrimental to my long term good health, was not-is not- something I welcomed with open arms. Also, because I live with a moral obligation to walk my talk if I am ever going to inspire and empower anyone to love themselves into good health, uncovering so many contradictory viewpoints and opinions on what is “The Only Way” to eat and drink, while others vehemently disagree, has been both disturbing and enlightening. But what I do know is Thomas Edison was right when he said, *“The doctors of the future will no longer treat the human frame with drugs, but rather will cure and prevent disease with nutrition,”* and the future is now.

Because nutrition has been proven to be so important for long term good health, I encourage each of you to exercise due diligence and take the time to research, analyze and question everything available affecting your health. Your particular diet must be a personal decision based on facts matched with your core beliefs if you are ever going to stay with it. Once enhanced with your inner wisdom and gut reaction, you can design the best course of action for you to love yourself into excellent good health in all areas of your life.

With that intention in mind, I am going to share with you the why, what and how I am now eating, including the modifications and adjustments that I felt necessary for me to stay healthy and enjoy my life. In full disclosure, the impetus to willingly give up some of my absolute favorite foods was honestly directed by fear~ not some altruistic evolved place. I knew that if I continued to eat whatever whenever, eventually I would clog up my new set of free flowing “pipes” and potentially experience another or more devastating episode. That idea was just too frightening. And as I have said before, “Once you know~ you can no longer pretend that you don’t know,” and nowhere was that truth more applicable than in analyzing the damage done by my former eating habits.

No longer could I deny the hard facts that when I was happily indulging in a juicy cheeseburger and greasy French fries or crispy fried chicken with gravy smothered buttery mashed potatoes, not to mention my all-time favorite Foie Gras or any decadent chocolate confection that smiled at me, that they were unhealthy choices. Because I look fit and trim, enjoy cardio activities and most of the time have a fairly healthy diet, it was easy *to pretend* that I would never have to pay the fiddler for my folly. But clearly my heart wasn’t on the same page. Certainly not enough to help me avoid open heart surgery!

Fortunately I have the privilege of coaching some of the finest and brightest doctors in their field, who have also become dear friends. So I get to engage in spirited debates over the pros and cons about all the data that is swirling around the subject of life-changing diets. My first foray into my new eating lifestyle originally came from my beautiful cardiologist who is a great proponent of a plant-based diet. She told me, “This is not an antibiotic that you take for five days and you’re finished. This is a long-term change in dietary patterns that includes eating more fruits and vegetables, more fiber-rich whole grains and legumes.” She then “sweetened the pot” by telling me that if I was willing to go this route I could possibly be off all meds within a year. Yippee! Halleluiah! That was enough for me to say “au revoir” foie gras and French pastries, “ta ta” fatty meats and fried foods, and “ciao bella” to cheesy pizzas and creamy Tiramisu.

Once I got on board with the idea of being more youthfully healthy, it became great fun and rather empowering to find recipes and create delicious meals from the freshest ingredients. I also noticed that it raised my level of self-worth as I shopped and prepared heart healthy meals for a Very Important Person~ ME! (If I have piqued your interest and losing weight is also something you have wanted to do, I also lost 7 pounds in two weeks and have kept it off!)

Then out of nowhere, my doctor suggested I go on a new drug that drastically lowers cholesterol in the form of two shots monthly. But since there was no data proving I had a cholesterol problem, and I truly believe in supporting the body with natural healing, my response was Whoa! Like seriously WHOA! No Way Jose!

Until my triple bypass “gift” I was considered a rather healthy woman. I never took any medicines, exercised daily and went dancing at least three times a week. I carried no excess body weight, didn’t smoke, drank very little, and lived with a positive thought mentality. In other words I was the perfect example of what experts suggest you do to prevent most diseases! So based on their accumulated data on heart disease, the only other conclusion was that I must have a cholesterol issue and she wanted to make sure I stayed really healthy and alive for a very long time.

But before I would let myself be thrown into the mouth of the drug wolf, and being a rebel at heart, I reverted to my “I’ll show you attitude.” The next day I put myself on a “boot camp and beyond Vegan” program~ specifically to prove just how unnecessary this serious drug approach was for me. So for almost 6 weeks I diligently followed the prodigal of Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn and Dr. Dean Ornish programs to reverse heart disease. Their similar diets had very specific rigid rules that were a complete reversal from my former (or anyone I knew) eating habits. Such as...

- You are Not to Eat Anything that has a face or mother. You Cannot Ingest, Cook or eat Any Products that have Any Oil in them (even all the supposedly great and good for you oils. Nada) No Dairy in Any Form~ cheeses, butter, milk, regular yogurt, sour cream, etc. No coconut or coconut products, No nuts, No products made with enriched white flour or refined foods. No cane sugar, fructose, etc. No processed products with trans or saturated fats, etc.

Besides Ice Cubes what I could eat was...

- Any vegetables (except for Avocados, because of their high fat content) All forms of legumes. All fruits (in moderation because of their sugar content). Whole-wheat and natural grains in all forms including breads, wraps, pastas and products, etc. All spices. Pure maple syrup, raw local honey or Agave nectar, in moderation, in lieu of cane sugar. Soy, rice, oat or various unsweetened nut milks and non-fat Greek yogurt. Plus a glass of wine or alcohol a day if I so desired.

Some of the suggested substitutes I was allowed to indulge in are...

- Instead of milk chocolate ~ 70 % or higher chocolate (sparingly). Instead of ice cream or frozen yogurts~ sorbets made with natural sweeteners. Instead of mayo~ No-oil hummus or non-fat Greek yogurt. Instead of diet sodas~ Seltzer with slice of lime & a shot of cranberry. Instead of red or white meat~ Organic Tofu, Tempeh or Portabella mushrooms. Instead of hamburger or hot dogs~ veggie burgers or veggie hot dogs with all the trimmings. Instead of a typical pizza~ Whole grain pizza crusts with lots of veggies & a no-oil tomato sauce. Cookies or cakes were replaced with healthy fruit bars, frozen fruits or soy based desserts.

After five weeks I made an appointment to have all the blood work required for my cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar levels etc, and a few days later I made an appointment to discuss the results with my adored doctor. Just imagine the smugness on my face when we meet and the report revealed ... drum roll here please....that my total cholesterol was 139! Any number that is under 200 is considered good. Plus all the other good numbers were "goodier" and the bad numbers were way far away from being bad. So the diet worked!

Now if you are thinking, "Ok Joy, I also want to be proactive and continue to live a youthful healthy life, but Vegan boot camp is definitely not my thing"... I get it and I completely understand. It's like aging- it's not for the faint of heart. But that said, both of these issues can be embraced with a positive outlook in order to have positive results. As William Faulkner said, *"Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don't bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself."*

After trying “The Only Way” diet program to reverse heart disease with the best intentions, I found it almost impossible to maintain their diets for an extended period of time. They were just too restrictive for my lifestyle. And truly, whether it is a diet, exercise plan, spiritual practice or anything else of importance in your life, maintenance is the name of the game. But the exercise was far from futile. It taught me so much about why and what foods are really good and bad for you whether you have a known heart condition or not. Plus it gave me a foundation for the lifestyle diet I now enjoy and sense of pride in my own self-care.

For Joy, there is no denying that I do have a cardiac issue and needed to up my healthcare game if I wanted to potentially reverse my heart disease, enjoy long-term good health and continue to age beautifully! So for me the idea of making minor alterations in my lifestyle was a slam-dunk. Plus there are lots of healthy gorgeous smart women that I greatly admire who credit their good health and youthful good looks to eating a plant based diet combined with regular mind body exercises, and I want to be considered one of them. If you are feeling the same way, trust me when I say, the extra effort has proven once again, to be so worth it!

Bottom line:

If you still are on the fence about seriously altering the way you have been eating over your lifetime, even though in the depths of your heart you know it hasn't served you, *at the very least* do some research on ways to improve your present diet within your comfort zone. Please do not forget the data that shows 7 out of 10 patients with heart disease are greatly overweight (obese) and/or have diabetes. Both are diet related issues.

If long term good health isn't that important to you, than how about the idea of today, right now, looking and feeling better and younger as your impetus to try something new? Vanity can be a very good thing if it helps to keep you in better shape, especially if you have loved ones who want you to be a part of their lives for many years to come.

“Beauty isn't just about having a pretty face...It's about having a pretty mind, a pretty heart and a pretty soul.” —Author Unknown

~Healthy Tips for Eating What & Why~

“Food for the body is not enough...we must feed the soul.”

—Dorothy Day

In the spirit of complete disclosure, I have to admit that a bit of vanity many times has been the impetus for taking care of myself, and nowhere has this shown up more than around my desire to be a living example of heart healthy woman. After all, as cliché as it may sound, you are what you eat, and when it comes to beauty, it all begins with what you put into your mind and body. Now that I fully understood the correlation between the intake of various foods and the positive visual results, I am totally in.

Being healthy and fit isn't a trend, it's a lifestyle. A lifestyle that will give you the quality of life you have always wanted and intended for yourself. I went on a very restrictive limited diet to “prove a point,” but it turned out to give me a great foundation for truly loving myself into good health. So much resonated with me intuitively as to the right and correct course for continued good health, I could no longer deny its validity. Each week after I began “the boot camp diet” I began to slowly modify my eating habits with various food and drink choices I felt best serve my desire for continued good health, while still being able to satisfy the foodie spirit still alive within me. I did this by drastically reducing the intake of things that I believed would be harmful for someone with my condition, while allowing myself the occasional treat of certain foods as a side dish to my vegan/vegetarian diet. Now I enjoy tiny little tastes of various foods that I always enjoyed or are just too special to ignore~ totally guilt-free.

As I go forward to share with you some of the research and reasons behind my food choices I strongly suggest you do the same. Make your own decisions on what modifications or changes in the way you are eating today would best serve you. As always, let your inner wisdom and gut be your personal guide. Remember the vision I have for this book, is for YOU to love Yourself into Good Health by making YOU and YOUR HEART *The Greatest Love of All!*

Let's start with the research done on the idea of **Not Ingesting Any Oils.**

Out of all the restrictions I found the most difficult to follow, was the idea of not ingesting *any* oil in liquid form or products with a large content of oil in it, ~ yet the one that resonated the most with me as being valid. Forever, I adding olive oil and coconut oil to my cooking and salads as a delicious and necessary addition, and apparently many chefs in varied cuisines agree. I also believed that it was a healthy way to keep my body naturally lubricated inside and out. I have continued to use oils to enhance my outer beauty, but my gut, and later intense research, convinced me that this rule *Not to Ingest Oils* was the most important to obey~ especially if you want to reverse or prevent heart disease.

The big convincer was a study I read that was done by Dr. Robert Vogel of the University of Maryland done in 2000 that was designed around various data accumulated from the Lyon Heart Study. Based on the Mediterranean Diet, Doctor Vogel wanted to see how olive oil, fish oil and canola oil actually affect the blood vessels. Using the brachial artery tourniquet test he had a large group of healthy volunteers with normal cholesterol levels ingest 50 grams of fat in the form of olive oil & bread, canola oil & bread and fresh salmon.

Measuring their arterial blood flow before and after each meal, Vogel could tell whether or not a meal was causing damage to the endothelial lining of the brachial artery based on how the blood was flowing through the artery after the meal was eaten. The results were rather surprising. They saw that Olive oil constricted blood flow by a whopping 31% after the meal; Canola oil constricted it by 10%; and the salmon constricted it by only 2% (which is why I now have modified my personal diet to use wild caught Salmon cooked *without oil* as one of “my cheat” when I go out.) Many later studies have seen similar results. So this isn't just a one-hit wonder.

Why is this important and why should you care if at the moment you haven't shown any heart disease? Because it has been proven that as early as 5 years of age our bodies begin to trigger plaque build-up or atherosclerosis and if this plaque is pushed through your arteries it can cause death or the need for a similar kind of surgery that I experienced. When the arteries constrict the endothelium (the vessel's lining) is injured. All Oils and other forms of foods with a high fat content (such as dairy products) can constrict blood vessels and block the endothelium's ability to produce that all important NITRIC OXIDE~ which is critical to preserving the tone and health of our blood vessels. These various oils can then push the existing plaque out through the walls of your veins and arteries causing a blockage that in many cases are fatal.

Now that I know and believe that to be true, it's impossible for me to enjoy a salad or any foods swimming in a pool of oil or butter. I much prefer to add the benefits of fat into my body in much healthier ways. Eating foods rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat can improve blood cholesterol levels and lower your risk of heart disease, and unsaturated fats are considered “good” fats and are encouraged as part of a healthy diet. These good fats come in many various nuts, seeds, olives and avocados, as well as wild caught fish and non GMO sources of Tofu and Soy products. These are just a sampling of what I have added in moderation to keep my insides and outsides moist and glowing. These fats may also benefit insulin levels and controlling blood sugar, which can be especially helpful if you have type 2 Diabetes.

Since I know many of you still believe that adding quality oils on and in your foods really is a good thing, let's look at some of the facts and research on oils and how this new knowledge might affect your personal usage and decisions.

Oil is not a whole food-it's the fatty part of what was a whole food. Oils are extremely dense in calories: while vegetables typically have around 100 calories per pound and fruits 300 calories per pound (except for an avocado which has 750 calories). Unrefined complex carbohydrates, all potatoes, whole grains and legumes- 400-600 calories per pound. Refined complex carbohydrates -1,200 calories per pound, Sugar -1,800 calories per pound, Nuts and seeds - 2,800 calories per pound. **Oil -has 4,000 calories per pound.** Yet even with all those calories, oil contains little in the way of micro-nutrition, sometimes valuable omega-3 fatty acids, but virtually nothing else.

So for individuals aiming to lose weight and intending to avoid heart disease, this is huge. The more calorically dense any food is the less room it takes up in your stomach. So you'll need to eat more calories before you feel full. And yes, I do understand that nobody in their right mind ingests a pound of oil in one meal, but how much do you think you consume throughout the day if you are eating as I was before? Surprisingly, much more than you would imagined. Various oils in some form or another are in or on almost everything you eat. For me, beside the point demonstrated on how poorly oil fits in with foods that truly are whole — it's almost 50% more calorically dense than good foods like nuts and the seeds, the next closest foods to top the list—the potentially damaging effects are all too great to ignore.

To be fair, there are many other experts who do believe that having some healthy unsaturated fats can lower your risk of heart disease and stroke by lowering your LDL (bad) cholesterol. Those who believe that consider Olive oil to be the best. Flaxseed Oil, Coconut Oil, Canola oil and Peanut oil are on their good list as well. In fact, in yet another landmark study (so many conflicting studies you really must let your inner wisdom and gut be your guide) people at high risk for heart disease who followed the Mediterranean diet ~high in grains, vegetables, fruits that were supplemented by nuts and at least 4 tablespoons a day of olive oil- reduced their risk of heart attacks, strokes, and dying by 30%. Olives themselves—both green and black, Greek or Italian—are another source of "good" fat. BUT, this study did not include individuals who have proven to have cardiac disease issues as I do, and many of these studies were shown to have been produced by Olive oil companies! Just saying...

Regardless of your thoughts on ingesting oil, all agree that saturated fat found in lard, stick margarines, butter, high fat dairy products, high fat meats, fried foods, cream sauces, and gravies are simply not good for anyone. There is just so much supportive data that the intake of these kinds of fats should be reduced, if not eliminated. All respected authorities agree that whether you are trying to reverse heart disease or attempting to alter your personal DNA/Genes, it will probably require making some changes. It definitely does take more to reverse a problem than prevent it, so why not start right now to change your habits and behavior in order to have your best possible shot at having the healthy energetic youthful long life you desire? You know you are worth it.

Bottom line:

Our health problems are largely the result of chronic over-nutrition. Whole foods that have been processed or refined as little as possible and are free from additives or other artificial substances are really the best for you. Whole animal products are calorically dense, partial and processed foods are definitely not. Too many empty calories are bad for you and the more (micro) nutrients you can get in the fewest number of calories while eating whole foods, the healthier you'll be. That is why a lower calorie vegetarian diet is easier on the digestive system than a diet with animal protein (largely due to the meat being cooked.)

So if staying fit, trim and in good heart health really matters to you, taking this subject seriously is worth your extra thought and research. That way you can make the right decision for what works and feels right to you. In almost every situation, moderation is *always* the best course of action in everything!

~Critics Choice on The Red Carpet of Food~

What resonated as the truth for me after hours of research is that there are certain foods that have undeniable qualities for enhancing my continued good health and many others that do not. If I truly want to love myself into good health and stay as beautifully health as possible, then I needed to take this part of caring for myself very seriously. Because there are so many “Absolutely Be-All- End-All Diets” being touted these days, it’s important to create the proper protocol for you. A way of eating that you can live with the rest of your life must combine your own research, inner wisdom and gut reactions.

For Joy, dining on foods that serve my desires and my body 85% of the time, and indulging in “safe cheats” such as wild caught Salmon and small portions of lean organic meats or organic veggies that have been cooked in the least amounts of oil, plus a little bite or two of a yummy dessert, has really worked. Enjoying “safe cheats” as a side dish next to your main plate filled with various healthy veggies, legumes and grains, allows you to stay committed to a healthy lifestyle while enjoying a fun-filled dining out life as well.

Personally, I don’t think many of us get enough veggies and fruit in our diet. It’s been proven that most Americans are using the need for more protein in their diet as the reason for eating less amounts of fruits and vegetables and more meats that we should. Realistically, if you are getting enough calories, which most do, the probability of getting more than enough protein is very high. In fact studies have proven that most of us are getting twice the amount of protein we need and don’t need any animal protein at all! Proteins are a combination of 20 different amino acids and many vegetables have a good amount of different amino acids. Animal protein contains a higher proportion of these amino acids and a lot more than we need. That is why eating a variety of vegetables with or without an occasional cheat of an organic fish or meat will more than meet your protein needs perfectly! For the record, that’s true whether you are eating your veggies raw or ones cooked properly.

Before I went deeper into my research and observing how my gut was really responding, I truly believed that my body metabolized meats perfectly. I was even convinced it was the reason I had so much energy while staying relatively fit and trim. But now I never feel like I have a bloated belly and I am being repeatedly told that how well I look, with energy that women decades younger are envying, I think I was actually doing myself a great disservice! Ah, living and learning ...could there be anything more fun?

So in support of helping you make the right dietary changes, I have put together a list of what is considered “The Best” and “The Worst” List to help you make your best choices to love yourself into good health! Now you can become your own top-notch stylist looking good!

~Beauty Benefits from eating The BEST Foods~

If looking good is the reason for positively altering your diet...whatever it takes works for me! Starting with the thought that you are doing wondrous things for all parts of your body, and the perks are that you will receive from eating healthier, can only result in a more confident joyful human being! Health and beauty benefits, seriously, what more could anyone ask for?

There are definitely an abundance of fruit and vegetables that are good for your heart and many of them will also become part of your beauty arsenal once you learn more about their amazing benefits. Eating fresh looking and smelling produce or veggies that are frozen at the height of their freshness, will soon provide the cornerstone for a heart-healthy diet. "From asparagus to sweet potatoes to a good robust cabernet~ every bite or sip of heart-healthy food delivers a powerful dose of phytonutrients that prevents and repairs damaged cells and that is the essence of preventing heart disease! You can definitely enhance your outer beauty and reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease by eating these foods every day," so said doctors Roseanne and Darcy Santos. Everyone's looking for that one magic food, but heart-healthy is not only about eating just one thing or another. You need to look for different ways to get all the different nutrients. Variety will definitely help you stick to a heart-healthy lifestyle longer.

There may not be "one magic food," but many of them do have magical qualities if looking and feel healthier, more beautiful and strong is your thing. **Green vegetables and fruits, especially dark leafy greens** are a good place to start. Their color comes from Chlorophyll, and is known to help repair and renew your skin by helping to wipe out those free radicals in the blood stream. Veggies like Brussel Sprouts, Swiss Chard, Broccoli, Spinach, Cabbage, Kale and Asparagus, also give an extra boost to your heart and increased blood flow. They're loaded with fiber, beta carotene, and powerful antioxidants with lutein, potassium and folate~ a vital nutrient for DNA repair, which helps to keep your skin more elastic and youthfully glowing. They are loaded with a natural source of Vitamin E- essential for building muscle and tissue and keeping skin firm while helping to restore skin cells. So if you have a damaged area (a sore or scratch) eating foods with high vitamin E content may help reduce or heal the problem area faster, and that's a good thing.

Because these nutritive green vegetables are very low in calories and packed with many essential vitamins and minerals, and are high in fiber and iron, these leafy greens improve metabolic activity (weight loss) by helping the red blood cells transport required nutrients throughout the body and are a great energy booster! Truly...really...these emerald jewels are worth more than their weight in gold. A gift from the garden that keeps on giving!

Avocados, which are ranked by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's most nutritious fruit, are not only rich in Vitamins A, C, E and K but also boast "healthy" fats that make them both heart healthy and great for your hair and skin. (Research has even shown that avocados can help with serious skin issues like eczema.) Avocado stands alone for providing the heart and body with healthy fats. *But*, like olive oil are rich in the monounsaturated fats, which some experts see as a problem. But I have chosen to listen to the experts who believe Avocados may lower heart disease risk factors, such as cholesterol, because they are high in antioxidants and potassium. So I now enjoy smaller amounts as an occasional treat. Remembering, everything in moderation.

Avocados also work their beauty magic when applied topically. Ketsy, my mom, had the most beautiful skin and hair. She swore by an Avocado mask made at home for keeping her skin plumped up with amazing hydration and her hair shiny with great body. Ketsy would mix a piece of ripe avocado with an egg yolk, a tablespoon of olive oil, plus a teaspoon of cider vinegar. She would then apply the same mixture to her face and her hair. She covered her hair with a plastic cap for 30 minutes before rinsing both off and shampooing and conditioning her hair. This can be a bit messy but the results can be beautiful!

Colored Fruit and Veggies come in a rainbow of red, orange, yellow, blue and purple, including peppers, potatoes, plus various fruits such as blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, raspberries and pomegranates. All are potent in lots of different antioxidants, beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); plus essential vitamins and minerals such as potassium, vitamin A, vitamin C and folate.

Beets, for example, are a "beauty food" that can help minimize blemishes and keep your skin moisturized and free from fine lines. Red cabbage has high amounts of iodine and sulfur in every serving that cleanses your insides while giving your skin that radiant glow. Red peppers are one of the best sources of vitamin C, which is instrumental in enhancing the growth of white blood cells that limit the number of bacteria and germs in your body. Furthermore, red bell pepper has been linked with wrinkle-free skin because of its high amounts of vitamin C that stimulates collagen production, which is key to achieving young-looking skin.

If that's not enough to convince you to run out and buy up the entire farmers market, did you know that compound in these fruits and vegetables also helps to keep your eyes sparkling and your immune system healthier while limiting your risk for urinary tract infections? Well it does! In fact according to a recent study, women who ate more than three servings of bright colored veggies plus fruits like blueberries and strawberries a week, had a 32% lower risk of heart attack compared with those who ate less. The benefits are from the flavonoids (antioxidants) that help to limit the damage to your cells by free radicals, while staving off hardening of the arteries by dilating blood vessels.

Tomatoes are low in calories and sugar, contain beta-and alpha-carotene, lycopene- which is great for your skin and reduces your chance of developing prostate, colorectal and stomach cancer and have a considerable amount of calcium, Vitamin K, Vitamin B and potassium. Thanks again to their rich lycopene supply, tomatoes can help protect our bodies against the effects of toxins, especially aflatoxins (a type of mold often found in peanuts and peanut butter) and cadmium, which is found in cigarette smoke, second-hand smoke and frequently in air pollution.

All of these nutrients are essential in strengthening and performing minor repairs on the bones and the bone tissue, while helping to maintain strong bones and help to repair damage caused by smoking. No seriously, eating tomatoes is the most recent fad to help you quit smoking! The claim is that tomatoes can reduce the amount of damage done to your body from smoking cigarettes because they contain coumaric acid and chlorogenic acid that work to protect the body from carcinogens that are produced from cigarette smoke.

Tomatoes are great for you for lots of reasons. Not only does the lycopene in them reduce risk of chronic diseases and keep your teeth and gums healthy with antibacterial and antifungal properties, but it also strengthen skin by inhibiting the activity of collagenases —enzymes involved in the breakdown of collagen in the skin. Collagen helps ensure the firmness and elasticity of your skin and prevents wrinkling! Did I mention that tomatoes also work to keep your hair shiny and strong as well? Yep, that too!

White vegetables such as garlic and various kinds of white potatoes are very often considered and even looked at as a "bad" starch. But they're not, as long as they're not deep fried. In fact they can be really good for your heart! Their color comes from polyphenol compounds with antioxidant properties. They are very rich in potassium and high in fiber which can help lower blood pressure and the risk for heart disease. Potatoes are also a good source of vitamin C, folate, niacin and riboflavin, beta-alpha-carotene, lycopene and lutein. Clearly they are definitely *not* junk food or a refined carbohydrate and have a lot of health benefits! Roast or mash with a bit of almond milk-Yum! If you simply peel and slice a potato in wedges, place them in a cool washcloth and let them sit over your eyes for 20 minutes, you will have a safe and natural way to brighten up dark circles. White is good!

Legumes refer not only to the species of plants, but also to any fruit that grows seeds lined up in a pod. Also known as pulses, legumes include beans, lentils, soybeans, peas, peanuts, snap beans and any edible pod such as green beans, pole beans and okra. These adorable little guys are full of protein and fiber and are a low-glycemic-index food even though most of their calories come from carbohydrates.

Because legumes are a starch it is easy to make them part of your meals with or in place of pasta, rice or potatoes. And the coolest thing about legumes is the more you eat the lower your risk for heart disease! Research shows that having legumes four or more times per week reduced the risk of heart disease by 22%. That's huge!

Other research trials found that when pasta meals included legumes it leads to lower post-meal blood glucose levels than just pasta alone. This also means that snacking on legumes can make you feel more satisfied and appears to be especially true when you have them for an in-between meal snack. So bring on edamame and roasted peanuts (in moderation) instead of the chips and pretzels if you want to do something good for your body that is also an excellent source of protein without a lot of unhealthy fat!

Grains & Brown Rice are some of the best sources of fiber, and fiber is the best natural sweeper the body can ever have. A diet rich in fiber shows that fiber protects your heart by lowering triglycerides and cholesterol, decreasing blood pressure and helping regulate blood sugar levels. Whole grains contain zinc, which repairs skin damage, maintains smoothness and suppleness, and regulates sebum production. The B-vitamin biotin found in all whole grains assists skin cells in processing fats, without which skin becomes dry and scaly. All that while providing a sensation of fullness following a meal which is great for weight management as it helps promote regular digestion.

Every time you go to the supermarket you will find a myriad of products touting “whole-wheat,” “whole-grain,” or “12-grain,” just to name a few. But what do these labels really mean and which grains should you be buying and eating to help protect your heart? Let me tell you...

Whole grains are made up of three different parts: The bran, which is the outer layer and full of fiber; the endosperm, or smooth middle area and the germ, the inner nutrient-rich area, whole grain products are comprised of exactly that — the whole grain, with all three components of the grain and all of the fiber and nutrients intact. So the smoother texture you get from refined or processed grains (leaving just the endosperm) have lost a lot nutrients and fiber in the process...which is very important to your good health.

According to the American Heart Association, a high-fiber diet is considered to be 25 grams or more of fiber per day. If you incorporate whole grains into your diet throughout the day, starting with oatmeal or quinoa and fruit, plus eating whole-wheat bread for toast and sandwiches you will be almost there! Look for breads with 3 grams of fiber or more to support your good health.

Also make sure that you ingest lots of water and other calorie-free drinks to help aid good digestion. Adding extra fiber to your diet slowly, over a period of a few weeks, will also help to avoid gas and bloating.

Ground Flaxseed as well as the **Chia seeds**- favored by the ultra-health conscious- are high in Omega-3 fatty acids and have high fiber content. Studies suggest these seeds lower the risk of blood clots, stroke, and help get rid of toxins. They also help lower total and LDL "bad" cholesterol, triglycerides and even blood pressure. Just make sure to ground the seeds so you will get more health and beauty benefits, than add them to heart healthy foods or drinks. Healthy skin cells and tissues= Glowing skin less wrinkles!

Oatmeal is high in soluble fiber and complex carbohydrates. It acts like a sponge in the digestive tract and soaks up the cholesterol so it is eliminated from the body and not absorbed into the bloodstream. It is also high in iron, magnesium, Vitamins B and E, and silicon, which is crucial for healthy skin to maintain collagen levels. I don't recommend instant, as it has too much sugar. But Old Fashion oatmeal is good, and Steel Cut is even better!

Fish eaten two or three times a week is a great way to improve your heart and enhance the appearance of your skin, thanks to its Omega-3 fatty acids and phytoestrogens. Yes, they do have natural oils and not part of the "Be All End All diets." But in my personal opinion, indulging in occasional small portions of wild caught and sockeye Salmon, Trout, Tuna, Herring, Mackerel, Anchovies, Oysters, and line-caught Lake Trout are all wonderful choices.

Fresh, frozen or canned? From a grocery store or a fish market? Farm-raised fish or wild-caught fish? The nutritionists and doctors I spoke to said that it really doesn't matter~ even though my research supports wild caught as the most pure. They say you just need to use common sense. The most important thing is to enjoy the type of fish you buy or else it's going to be a one-time thing, and a proper diet cannot work if any part of it is a one-time thing. Plus you won't enjoy the luster to your hair or strengthening of your nails!

Nuts including almonds, walnuts, pistachios, peanuts and Brazilian nuts, all contain good-for-your-heart healthy fiber. They also contain vitamin E, which helps lower bad cholesterol even though high in Omega-3 fatty acids. So you do want to practice moderation as many prevention diets avoid nuts because they're higher in fat. But my research has shown that people who consume some amounts of nuts daily are leaner than people who don't and leaner people are at a lower risk for heart problems. Healthy and trim-Yea!

A glass of alcohol could improve "good" HDL cholesterol. *But* too much, more than a drink or two a day can actually increase risk. While some say the polyphenol or resveratrol found in red wine gives that beverage an added benefit, research suggests that any type of alcohol in moderation can help to lower heart disease risks. But none of these properties are a reason to start drinking alcohol if you are or could be addicted to it. You can also get some resveratrol from non-alcohol sources, like natural peanut butter and grapes.

Soy products, including tofu and soy milk are also a good way to add protein to your diet without unhealthy fats, as they contain high levels of vitamins, good polyunsaturated fats, fiber, and minerals. The isoflavones in soy are often touted for their ability to help skin look younger, and the vitamin E in soy lipids can help skin regenerate damaged tissue. There is also great evidence showing that soybeans and soy products prevent not just heart disease but cancer too. Still, there has been great controversy about how much Soy intake is too much and whether large amounts might increase the risk of cancer in women. But as yet, no research has supported that with definitive proof. In fact a recent research trial showed that people eating the most beans had 65% fewer colon polyps and 50% fewer colon cancers. Just eat in moderation.

Dark chocolate is Loving Good Health. But what is it about chocolate that could possibly lead to such a claim? It's the compounds in the cocoa that researchers are most interested in. It's the natural occurring plant substance called flavonoids that help keep platelets less sticky and decreasing your risk for heart attack or stroke from a clot. Flavonols are antioxidants that help your skin protect itself from UV damage (hello, fewer wrinkles) fight free radicals (so long, sun spots), help reduce stress hormones and increase blood flow which means less collagen breakdown and...a more glowing skin!

But choose 70% or higher cocoa content, as even dark chocolate covered candy bars have too much sugar which turns to fat in unbecoming places. When you are enjoying this wonderful treat, just remember that the Heart Foundation concluded that habitual chocolate eaters had a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and strokes, compared to people who didn't eat chocolate.

Water is Really Critical for your heart health. If you're well hydrated, your heart doesn't have to work as hard and for most people water is the proven best thing to drink to stay hydrated. Keeping the body hydrated helps the heart muscle pump blood more easily through the blood vessels to the other muscles, which helps them work much more efficiently. Think of watering your "inner garden" to enhance the beauty of your inner self with foods that contain a high percentage of water, such as radishes, cucumbers, iceberg lettuce, tomatoes, colored peppers and watermelon.

What does being well hydrated mean? Well, the amount of water a person needs depends on many different factors. Certain medicines, such as the ones used for diabetes or heart disease, can act as a diuretic and may mean you need to drink more water. A person who perspires heavily will need to drink more than someone who doesn't and a person who doesn't perspire at all after dancing or doing serious cardio yet is thirsty, probably is already dehydrated. How do you know, besides sweating- by the color of your urine. If it is Pale and clear it means you're well hydrated. If it's dark, drink more!

Teas and Coffee are both rich in antioxidants and provide a healthy addition to water for your beverage options, so choose whichever you prefer -or drink both! Both are rich in the plant compounds called polyphenols, and within the group of polyphenols are flavonoids, which contain catechins, that have been shown to positively impact a number of illnesses and conditions such as as diabetes, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

If coffee is your choice, the healthiest version is black. Why? Because “they say” proteins from the added milk may bind to neutralize the antioxidants in the coffee. But the jury is still out on that one, so keep checking.

Even though black tea is a rich source of tannins, with potent antioxidant properties that significantly reduces blood pressure and lowers cholesterol, Green tea is my favorite. Why? Because it is a richer source of catechins that besides positive impact on various diseases, helps the blood flow more easily and the amino acid to cross the blood-brain barrier with its psychoactive properties, as it relaxes the arteries. I consider green tea my own storehouse of benefits for the skin. Specifically because of all the antioxidants which are extremely effective against free radicals which account for much premature aging-which is the last thing I personally want to happen to my skin!

Regardless of variety, black and green tea (as well as oolong, dark, and white teas) they all come from the same plant-an evergreen called *Camellia sinensis*. It is the processing method and degree of oxidization (exposure to oxygen) that creates the different tea types. While black tea is oxidized, green tea is not oxidized at all after the leaves are harvested. It's believed that this minimal oxidation may help to keep the beneficial antioxidants in green tea intact.

For just beauty sake, there are so many ways you can use Green tea. I've created a soothing spritzer by simply steeping the tea in mineral water for an hour I can use the liquid for its refreshing antiseptic properties or as a chilled compress for tired eyes. It also helps to prevent bad breath. Mix the infused water with baking soda-brush your teeth and enjoy the prevention of plaque forming microbes as well!

** If you seem to have a problem with consuming caffeine after a certain time of day, all coffee and teas that are not clearly marked decaffeinated will contain caffeine. If that is an issue, as it is for me, I suggest only enjoying decaf coffee or non-caffeinated teas from late afternoon into the evening.

***To boost the benefits of green tea, add a squirt of lemon juice to your cup. Research has proven citrus juice increased available catechin levels by more than five times, causing 80 percent of tea's catechins to remain bioavailable!

Eggs were in then out then in again, but why and how did they get to be so controversial in the first place? I have to assume it's about cholesterol. One large egg contains about 185 mg of cholesterol, and since the American Heart Association recommends a limit of 300 mg per day, eggs could cause you to exceed your limit. BUT data has since proven that the cholesterol you eat has very little impact on how much cholesterol is in your blood. In fact, when you eat more cholesterol from foods *like eggs*, your body produces less of it. When you eat less cholesterol from whole foods your body produces more. Cholesterol isn't bad for you, it happens to be one of the most important nutrients in your body. It's in every cell membrane (outer layer). It's a requirement for growth in infants and adults, and it's required for the production of many hormones. The bottom-line is the egg paranoia is based on an old assumption that the medical community has been very slow to acknowledge- not surprising.

Even with all the good food and drinks discussed, I believe most women need to add a few extra goodies to up their game.

Vitamin B-12, **Folic Acid** and **vitamin B-6** are involved in everything from cognitive function and mood to energy production and heart health. Amounts~ 800 mcg of folic acid, 1000 mcg of vitamin B12, and 75 mg of vitamin B6.

Vitamins C is an antioxidant that protect cells from free radical damage and is an essential building block of collagen, the structural material for bone, skin, blood vessels and other tissue. Suggested 200 mg Am and PM.

Magnesium, which I get by taking my fave Epsom Salt baths to sooth my seriously exercised dancing legs before bed. It's an excellent way for women to get Magnesium into our bodies. Or you can take 800 mg daily supplements.

Vitamin D is best from as much natural light as possible for 15-20 minutes. But if that's not possible...1000 mg in pill form will do just fine. Just make sure your body gets this very important addition...in moderation.

Calcium that I take in the form of Tums, as it settles your tummy and gives you the right amount of calcium recommended. Plus it's good for your bones. For women, 1,200-1,500 mg of calcium daily and 700 mg for men.

CoQ10 generates energy for every cell, tissue and organ in the body, enabling them to perform at their peak. CoQ10 is an antioxidant, so you want to get the highest quality, liquid capsules with 200 mgs of bio-available.

Curcumin Bioactive Compounds have proven to have beneficial effects on keeping the heart healthy. It improves the function of the endothelium and is a potent anti-inflammatory agent and antioxidant. 100 to 200 mg AM

Cinnamon helped reduce heart damaging triglycerides by about 30%.

Now that you know all the foods and drinks that can help to keep you looking beautiful and in good health, allow me to open your mind as to what food you should really try to avoid. I found this research eye-opening to say the least...

~WORST DRESSED" FOODS~...and Why...

French Fries...OMG...one of my favorite foods turns out to be the worst! As it was explained, it's like taking a pure chunk of fat absorbing carbohydrate, soaking it (frying it) in oil, adding lots of salt/sodium onto it, and then sending it forth to coagulate in your arteries and veins! (Now of course fresh or frozen potatoes baked in the oven with no oil~ are a very different good story.)

Fried Foods in general have the same problems associated with French fries. But some nutritionist say that if you use the right oils (like grapeseed that has a higher heat cooking factor) with the temp at 360 degrees-no higher or lower-you will eliminate a lot of the fat absorption problem and can enjoy various foods in moderation. (Without a definitive on the cooking temp-I prefer to pass)

Bacon, Sausages, Salami, deli meats are associated with a higher risk of heart disease issues because they have a lot of the bad kind of fat. Plus processed meat contains nitrates. Preservatives that, when absorbed by the human body, convert into N-nitroso, a compound that research says cause cancer, chronic pulmonary disease, heart failure and strokes. Yikes!

Potato and corn chips are packed with bad carbs, often high in trans-fats, and, worst of all, swimming in sodium. Not to mention a slew of calories that pretty much will show up as a roll around your waist, hips, belly and buns-and not in a good way!

Regular and Diet Sodas are really bad for you, they really are. There is 50 and 60 grams of sugar in a standard soda. And that's processed sugar! Diet sodas with aspartame really mess with your kidneys, your metabolism and dehydrate you. Leaving you with a brain fog craving more junk sweets! So not worth it!

Chinese Food... the sodium levels in most Chinese food were concerning enough to merit an American Heart Association guide restriction! This is definitely worth noting and supporting a restaurant that lists sodium amounts.

Pizza, another one of my favs, but it's like you're being clobbered with large amounts of three really "Bads." The crust is high in carbs and sodium. Then, depending on the cheeses, it will have a fair amount of fat and sodium, and the sauce is usually prepared with lots of oil and also is high in sodium. And that's not even considering whatever extra meats or oil smothered ingredients you put on it! BUT you can still enjoy this dish and undo a lot of the damage by having whole-wheat crust with lots of organic veggies not cooked in oil, and a lite or oil-free organic tomato sauce. I do frequently and enjoy every bite!

Canned Soup....those tiny cans of Campbell's that Andy Warhol worshipped can contain 600-800mg of sodium apiece...plus lots of oil or dairy products. While we're at it, canned veggies and the store-prepared meals from the market are potent sodium-bombs as well. Read all labels so you can choose wisely.

Butter, Mayo, Sour Cream, whole milk and cream...are all particularly high in saturated fat and bad cholesterol to consider, as well. Nut Milks are a great substitute for milk and cream and non-fat Greek Yogurt is a great substitute for many dishes when seasoned to fool your taste buds. There are also some great vegan and vegetarian substitutes in the market these days for each of these condiments. Just make sure you read all labels so you can pick the ones with the least amount of saturated fats and cholesterol. There is no reason to feel deprived of what you have always enjoyed, just another way of doing it.

Excess alcohol... is linked to a greater risk of high blood pressure, high levels of blood fats and heart failure. In addition, the extra calories can lead to weight gain and a threat to heart health. One glass a day is more than OK, in fact, it's been proven very beneficial. Two is OK for special occasions, but no more than two and not frequently. Just enough to keep you in the foodie club!

Meat is something I have purposely put at the end, specifically because there is so much debate in many studies on whether red meat, pork or chicken is really bad for you. The Con's say that the considerable amount of cholesterol and saturated fat, as well as another terror called L-carnitine are the problem. The theory is that bacteria digests L-carnitine and then turns it into a compound called TMAO ~trimethylamine-N-oxide~ cause atherosclerosis~ a disease process that can lead to cholesterol-clogged arteries and heart attacks.

A knowledgeable nutritionist said, *"It's may not be protective—and healthier dietary choices may exist—but major harms have also not been proven or seen"* and that includes meat, pork and chicken! The advocates say studies suggest they have great benefits. Proof being, that lots of veggies have the "dreaded" L-carnitine in them as well, with no proven side effects. So since there is no definitive proof that meats are truly bad for you, I have chosen to enjoy very small portions~ very occasionally~ of lean grain and organic free-range meats in addition to my plant-based diet. That way I am still being consciously aware of taking care of myself, while still enjoying one of my favorite sports~ eating!

So *now you know* and the choice is yours to continue, add or eliminate eating and drinking from either list. All I know is that *now that I know* what so many of my fav's potentially did or could do to me, they are just not worth the health cost. Loving yourself enough to consciously care of how you feed and take care of your body mind and spirit needs to be your number one priority. That's how much YOU matter in the scheme of it all. *"Create the highest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe."* Oprah Winfrey

~Loving You & Your Heart for a life of Good Health~

True health is only possible when we understand the unity of our minds, emotions, spirits, and physical bodies and stop striving for perfection.”

— Christiane Northrup, MD

One of the things that really made my heart smile as I was researching and writing this book, is that each doctor in their own way said the same thing: *“It is completely possible to die disease free in your sleep when it is your time.”* “Happy healthy dead” says Christiane Northrup, M.D. A visionary pioneer, leading authority and advocate in the field of women’s health and wellness, who always embraces the unity of mind, body and spirit~ and is my personal *Shero!* Dr. Northrup is a board-certified OB/GYN physician and was also an assistant clinical professor of OB/GYN at Maine Medical Center for 20 years. In her latest Bestseller: *Goddesses Never Age: The Secret Prescription for Radiance, Vitality, and Well-being* (Hay House 2015) she shared brilliant advice on loving you and your heart, and graciously has allowed me to share it with you.

~HOW TO LOVE YOUR HEART~

~ Appreciate that your heart is the energetic center of your body. Like the Sun that is the center of our solar system, your heart is the central “sun” that fuels every system in your body.

~Recognize that your heart always wins. When there’s conflict between what you think and what you feel, what you feel wins--every time. If you don’t listen to your heart trying to express its feelings, it may take an illness to get you to pay attention. That phrase “her heart just wasn’t in it” when a relationship, job, or life dies is the truth. If your heart’s not in it, why are you in it?

~Forgive yourself and others. Forgiveness is powerful physical medicine. Research has shown that resentment and hostility are very substantial risk factors for heart attacks. On the other hand, that old phrase, “a merry heart doeth good like medicine, is also true. Holding onto resentments and anger will age you. Forgiveness is not about the other person. It is about calling back your own worthiness from whomever or whatever hurt you and freeing yourself from the entrapment of the past.

Focus on what you love and what you find beautiful in order to calm your fight or flight reaction. Research by leading neuroscientist Dr. Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin has shown, via functional MRI scans of healthy brains that a structure called the fusiform gyrus on the underside of the brain works in counterpoint to the amygdala, the primitive center that signals danger and the fight or flight response, The fusiform gyrus recognizes things we love and appreciate. The more we focus on what we love and value, the more enhanced the function of the fusiform gyrus and the calmer the amygdala. We become rewired for love, not fear.

~Create cardiac coherence, Cardio coherence comes when you smooth out erratic patterns of your heart rate so that your heart doesn't shift quickly from a relaxed state to beating quickly in response to perceived danger when there's no real threat to your safety. You can train yourself to be less reactive to emotional stressors so you don't regularly experience the fight or flight responses in everyday life. One way for achieving cardio coherence and an optimum heart rate variability (HRV) is by using a biofeedback device such as emWave from the Institute of HeartMath. You can also meditate, practice proactive mindful breathing, or, as I said, regularly think about what you value and love. Watch movies and listen to music that makes you feel loving and loved. Spend time looking at pictures of things you value: your kids, puppies, sleeping babies, fine art, nature scenes, or whatever. Over time, you can learn how to create this healthy heart state at will simply by tuning in to the exalted emotions associated with things you love.

~Listen to what is truly in your heart. Change or release old thought patterns and beliefs that no longer serve you. My chest pain is healed and so is my heart. I'm perfectly comfortable and happy with my life right now because I have learned the Divine first~ not a man. Getting to this point has been, quite frankly, harder than medical school, harder than enduring several lawsuits, and harder than going through a divorce. It has also been infinitely more rewarding and exhilarating ~~and it's been the work for which I was born. I have finally succeeded in creating the sacred marriage of male and female within myself—the *hieros gamos*. You, too, have a heart that was designed to be whole, complete, and healed, and this has nothing to do with whether or not you have a partner. Once your pain has transformed and you have a solid connection with the Divine Beloved within, you'll find that joy and optimism are your natural state of being. Then ageless living is natural.

~Eat quality food, especially vegetables, and also healthy fats to support a healthy heart and express love to it, but don't obsess about what is on your plate. Avoid processed foods, refined sugar, and trans fats (hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils, often found in snack foods and packaged desserts) as much as possible. In the last 70 years, we have increased the amount of foods in our diets while decreasing the amount of plant rich in antioxidants. This dietary change coincides with the rise in heart disease. The trans fats and sugars cause oxidative stress that's toxic to the endothelial lining of blood vessels unless you have enough antioxidants in your system to counteract them.

~Experience the exalted emotions! Schedule pleasurable activities into your life regularly, as this will open your heart and help keep it fit. Dancing, going to movies and concerts, eating out with friends, giving or receiving massages, playing with your dog or cat~ whatever makes you feel great, do it regularly. We tend to eat too much sugar or drink too much alcohol to quell painful emotions because of their opiate effect. Seeking pleasure and comfort is the pathway out. We humans are hardwired that way. However, importing chemical "pleasure" is not sustainable, it's addictive. Instead, treat yourself to activities that are inherently pleasurable.

~Move, and enjoy moving. This body is designed to move so that your blood, lymph fluid, and oxygen can all circulate. Exercise promotes a healthy heart, but pleasurable movement is especially good for the heart. And remember, simply standing up 32 times a day if you sit at a computer can work wonders for preventing toxins from building up and cells from becoming damaged.

~Connect with Divine Love. Your heart is fueled by this more than any other factor. Simply ask the Divine to help you feel your connection~~and then, listen. Say, “Divine Love now manifests in my heart. And now fuels my life.”

Thank you so much Dr. Northrup for your wonderful suggestions, backed by solid facts. The perfect message on how and why it is so important to love you and your heart into a place of good health! But how could I, or anyone else, not love a woman who lives to “Take the pain of all women and turn it into JOY!” Thanks again doc.

~Wrap up Notes on Loving Yourself into Good Health~

If finding and keeping *The Greatest Love of All* is what you have always wanted, then nothing...and I mean nothing...is more important than seriously taking on the job of loving yourself into good health. Once you make YOU and Your Heart your top priorities, you will be sending out a positive high energy vibration that attracts *the best* of everything you could ever want in your life. The Law of Attraction and Allowing is most powerful when YOU authentically Love You- and that can't be faked.

This is a book about Love. Loving yourself into being beautifully healthy so that you can fully enjoy and love the life you are living, and one day be said to be the "happy healthy dead." That is the vision I held while writing this book. To help YOU remember Your Own Magnificence and the personal power YOU have over the quality of your life. *Now you know* how important it is to properly feed and care for your precious mind, body and spirit, as well as all the risk factors in not taking good care of yourself. *Now you know* how important it is to protect your heart and your entire body from being polluted with negative low energy. *Now you know* that it is within your power to choose, direct and take control over the foods and quality of what you put into your body and mind to assist your on-going mental, physical, emotional and spiritual good health.

Now you know that within the pages of this book is the knowledge and tools to change, enhance and create a beautiful healthy body and heart brain. *Now you know* of your responsibility in caring for your one of a kind unique being and are aware of the opportunities to use this information. *Now you know* that the real secret for creating and attracting the quality of life and people in your life comes down to making You and Your Heart Your Greatest Love of All. *Now that you know, you can no longer pretend that you don't know* or easily ignore *anything* that doesn't support continuously loving yourself into good health!

Now that You Know that your heart is listening and responding to everything that is being sent its way, the last burning question is: how do you monitor or protect yourself from random damaging thoughts or actions? How can you create a loving supportive environment? By repeatedly asking yourself a very simple question, "Are my thoughts, words or actions coming from Love or fear?"

This is the most important question you can ever ask yourself, no matter what the circumstances, because your answer will affect everything you do. Always choosing to come from Love no matter what, is the secret to a happy healthy life. When you indulge in anything that *you know* isn't really good for you, when you make self-care low on your priority list, when negative thoughts are leading your actions; fear not Love is controlling your "joystick." Anything that makes you feel bad in anyway, is bad for you. Now you know.

When you can stop and pause for just a moment and listen and feel what your emotional body is telling you, your inner wisdom will always guide you to the best decisions. This is how you create authentic power, and creating authentic power always depends on your right choices. *"Choosing fear almost always happens unconsciously. Choosing love always happens consciously."*

My initial suggestion of listening to your body for signals has been proven to be right on, on so many levels. But it takes more than just listening. Loving your heart into good health demands continuous actions that support, validate or eliminate what is the real cause of any kind of discomfort~ and then doing something about it! Love yourself enough to live a healthy lifestyle. *"Self-Love is making your mental, physical and emotional health a priority."*

Yes, that will include taking more responsible for yourself and the thoughts you think, the words you speak, your actions and reactions and taking the time to continuously question whether or not you believe you deserve to have the Best Life Ever! Once you make the choice to become more responsible for how you take care of your mind, body and soul and consciously choose to reduce the intake of whatever doesn't serve you, you've now become an active participant in loving You and Your Heart into good health. Remember; Your Heart brain sees and feels all, and always responds accordingly.

Take care of yourself like a valued Rolls Royce. Don't leave your beautiful "vehicle" unprotected day and night, or watch your engine slowly loss its power by not "driving it." Lovingly cherish your valuable piece of machinery. Put in only the best and purest of products. Buff carefully this very precious machine called your body with only positive loving empowering thoughts. Trust me when I say, the pleasure you will get from experiencing a well-tuned smoother ride through life will definitely be a lot more enjoyable and appreciated!

I hope that you have found this book as informative, enlightening and empowering as I intended, and that you will now eagerly spread *the Love* by sending forth this important life changing gift to Every female (or male) friend, relative, neighbor, social or business associate you know! You can change the statistics of this major "Lady Killer" (and other diseases) just by sharing the link with all your Facebook friends, email lists, address book, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter and Google+, in every city, state and country!!

Just imagine the difference our combined efforts can make. Incredible, is the first word that comes to mind! Together we just might save lots of lives, or at the very least, make them a whole lot better. When YOU become responsibility for loving yourself into good health, being living proof will become the example others will follow to do the same. Knowledge Is Power, and *Now That You Know*, you also know... The Best is yet to come!

xoxo *JOY*

“When you are really truly in love there is a feeling that permeates your entire being that doesn’t come and go according to circumstances, another person or some sort of temporary proof. It is there in your heart, a huge part of your heart, and is pumped through your blood to every single cell, bone, nerve, muscle and organ in your body, until it has changed the way you think, act and talk. Sometimes, often, the heart sees what is invisible to the eye.” — Author unknown.

Some last thoughts on Loving YOU into Optimal Good Health!

- *Keep your heart open and let the love shine through. Look beyond the masks people wear to protect themselves and see the beauty within.
- *Begin and end each day with thoughts of Gratitude. Learn to appreciate every experience, even the challenges that can turn into incredible opportunities.
- *End each day by relaxing every muscle in your body. Start at your scalp and allow each hair follicle to breathe. Go slowly throughout your body...ending with your ankles and your toes. Allow every part of your body to soften.
- *Begin and stay with a whole foods diet. The outward visual and internal benefits will be seen and felt, as you will enjoy the pride in your personal care.
- *Allow a certain amount of time in each day for stillness. Meditate, pray, reflect and feel deep appreciation. Breathe deeply and be quiet with yourself.
- *Affirm your inner and outer beauty. Honor your uniqueness and own your magnificence. Think and say words of affirmation...and truly BELIEVE them. Tell yourself I love you every day and how grateful you are to be YOU!
- *Be Generous, with yourself and others. Being in service helps illuminate the bright shiny light within you when you care and show love to you and others.
- *Exercise at least 30-40 minutes each day. Walk around the block, dance in your house or take a Zumba class. Anything that will get your juices pumping helps ground you and quiet the mind, tone the body, and nurture the spirit.
- *Release judgments and criticisms. Accept that each of us is doing the best we can with what we have and know today...imperfect though our actions may be. Everyone is their own creation. Honor everyone’s right to free expression.
- *Let your creativity flow in all areas of your life. Freely express yourself. “What others think of you is none of your business.” Tend the creative spark within you. Walk on the stage of life with confidence, knowing “you’re really good!”
- * Don’t ever let your age, your race, your past or another diminish your worth.

*Smile often. Laugh out loud. Enjoy each and every moment. Not only will it benefit your health, but it will encourage others to do the same. Be the change you want to see! ~

*Make love to YOU. Lovingly embrace all your bits and pieces. Have orgasms. Often and as regularly as possible. With or without a partner. Feel the glow!

*Pamper yourself in all areas of your life as often as possible. Massages, facials, soak in a warm tub filled with lavender bath salts, read a good book into the night, binge on a TV special with guilt-free foods. Just en-JOY!

*Be authentic. Tell the truth to yourself and others. Until you can acknowledge all your assets and shortcomings, you will never really be authentically you...or be the best YOU, you can be.

*Love the work you do or find a way to love the work you do. Remember, your attitude and perception will determine the end-result. It's all up to you.

*Notice how your body feels. If there is pain from outside sources-what your body is telling you is that's not love...it's fear. Never let fear guide you to any of your life choices. If that happens by mistake-Change your actions asap!

*Continuously connect with Spirit. Hold the expectation of receiving guidance, and then start to look for the visible signs that will show up everywhere!

*Find many things to be grateful for all day every day~ even the littlest ordinary things matter. See the bigger picture and when frustrated say..."at least"...

*Don't make a big deal out of trivial things. Always know there is more to the story. Read between the lines with empathy and compassion. Assume the good.

*Hug and kiss with no boundaries. Take the time to share a loving thought or gesture with another as often as possible. BE Love with no exceptions.

* Listen and Pay attention to what really matters. Everyone needs to be seen and validated. Give away more of what you also want~ Life becomes magical!

*Let music into your soul. Travel and experience the world outside your front door. Try new foods. Meet new people. LIVE YOUR LIFE FULL OUT!!

*Every single day from this day forth...consciously...do what it takes to Love Yourself into Good Health. Be today, tomorrow and forever, a role-model to others as an example of knowing *The Greatest Love of All-You and Your Heart!*

En-JOY!

Well Deserved Acknowledgments

I have read that it takes a village to raise a child- meaning none of us can do anything that really matters alone. With that said, let me say that it also took a small village to do what it took to get this gift of love to you! Projects from the heart need lots of help from others who care enough and want to further your vision of making a difference in the world. I am so blessed to have a list of caring generous people to thank.

One of the lessons I have had to learn the hard way by authoring other books is that many times the written word doesn't always reflect exactly what you had intended. It could be the wrong tense, sentence structure or a little s left off or added by mistake that changes everything. So if any writer worth their weight in salt cares enough that the reader gets their message, they will enlist a great editor. In my case, I needed many. Why? Not because their skills were lacking, but because I just can't keep stop changing things once I get the revisions-once again! *Now you Know.*

So with total respect and gratitude let me begin by thanking my team of incredible editors. The savvy Lynne Strong, the fabulous Patti Tebo and the amazing "Editor at Large" Melinda Lee, for their willingness to help my book "read" better by adding their wonderful remarks and corrections. Thanks to their excellent suggestions I was able to deliver my vision in the best way I had intended. I so appreciate their generosity of time, efforts and friendship. I truly could not have done it without my girls!

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Thank you so much my adored friend and exceptional hair stylist Erin Dawson of Inspirational Salon and Spa in Sarasota, for bringing to me the fabulously talented photographer Jeff, at www.JeffCarlson.smugmug.com. Between his experienced skilled eye and efforts beyond the call of duty, plus Erin's amazing styling efforts, I got exactly the look and feeling I wanted for the book cover...which brings me great Joy. Thank you both so so much!

~70~

Thank You So Much Jim Lampl and Jill DeLano, owner and GM of WSRQ Talk Radio-106.9FM 1220AM in Sarasota Florida, for availing your top-notch skilled and 'go for the gold' production expert~ Eric Hillje~ plus your extremely well equipped studio. Now my gift is accessible as a MP3 downloadable audio to women all over the world, and I couldn't be happier!

Any book is only as good as its contents, and that certainly goes for this one as well. Without the open-hearted generosity of my contributing writers it wouldn't have been the same. Thank you so so much Dr. Christiane Northrup, Dr. Chippy Nalluri, Dr. Tara Narula and Darlene Marks RN, accomplished and brilliant medical professionals, each with wonderful and life changing points of view. Everyone who reads this book cannot help but benefit from your insights. You are all truly my *Sheros* and my gratitude is overflowing.

Lastly, Thank YOU my cherished reader, who was curious enough to open up this book or download the MP3, and found it interesting enough to get to this point. Without YOU, none of this would matter. Without YOU helping to share this message with every woman you know you, the realized fruition of this gift making a difference around the world could never happen. SO Thank YOU from the bottom, middle and whole of my heart for realizing this dream and vision as it is now coming true. I send YOU my deeply heartfelt Love.

Now paying it forward in truly making a difference in other women's lives, if you have a story to tell about how you have gone on to loving yourself into good health...or a tip or hint discovered on your journey on how to implement some suggestions, please add your thoughts to the message board on the web page...

www.TheGreatestLoveofAll-YouandYourHeart.org

Also check out the...*You Tube* channel ***Love Yourself into Good Health.***

It will be filled with lots of empowering mind, body and spiritual messages. Please let me know what you think. I will so look forward to your messages and feedback.

Until we speak again, stay happy and healthy, knowing that my warmest thoughts will be with you.

Loy

