

INTRODUCTION

"Mistakes in business and science are costly and deplorable, but mistakes in the way we live our lives may endanger life itself."

Alfred Adler

This book is written from the view at the top of the mountain, the place where I never thought I'd be: an enthusiastic, alert, active person, who has raised children, been a teacher, gone back to school, become licensed as a psychotherapist, and lived a life.

It seems there has always been a mountain to climb. Along the way I experienced the death of my father when I was nine, the death of my mother when I was 31, and the death of my twin sisters who were 8 years younger than me. Regrettably, my mother and father and my sisters missed knowing their granddaughters/nieces all the way to young womanhood.

I had a hip replacement that required restructuring three times, and a lipo-sarcoma of the upper right arm that entailed surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. Other issues included a bald headed year, every tissue in my body ultra-sensitive and impacted, wigs for 10 months, and finally a bumper crop of curls.

During these challenges, I received an unbelievable outpouring of love and caring from friends, with hundreds of beautiful cards, letters, e-mails and calls. There were CDs and videos of classical music from my children, and one friend who kept fresh flowers from her garden in my home during the entire course of treatment. I am grateful for the gift of love from my family, who spent their entire 2002 Memorial Day weekend with me at UCLA while I was recovering from surgery.

Healing, love and caring, and some new thoughts about living this life are what I want to share with you, finding myself at the top of the

mountain. I want to tell you about these observations, and also let you know that it has been worth a lifetime of experiences to get where I am now. I don't have all the answers to what life sends me. What I do know is that, if I keep my life in balance and remain open and curious to new experiences, and nurture my sense of humor, most things turn out all right.

So far life has dealt me a wonderful husband of 52 years, two accomplished daughters, three delightful granddaughters, two wonderful sons-in-law, three major careers, and flowers blooming in the back yard.

Let me share a story from my teenage years. I worked as a soda jerk in a small drug store in San Clemente while I went to Capistrano Union High School in San Juan Capistrano. During the summer, many families came to San Clemente to vacation, and most of them would take walks in the afternoon and early evening. Many of the families would walk into this corner drugstore to get a soda or a sundae or a coke.

I watched these young families with and their children. They seemed so sophisticated and together, and the parents appeared to be about thirty years old. I decided that from what I observed, the magic age to know everything about how to live your life must be the age of thirty. Surely, by then, all the secrets of work, home and family would be revealed to me and I too would be wise.

Well, one day I got to thirty, and there were so many unanswered questions I decided that surely the magic age for wisdom must be thirty-one. Today I'm still waiting for the time that I know all the things I need to know.

I will continue learning and growing as long as there is breath in me. There is not 'an age of wisdom' there is a life-long search for the meaning and purpose of life, and the journey, not the destination, complete with detours, is the important part.

Today I learn, tomorrow I will learn more, and my life continues to be richer each day in friendships, love, and appreciation of all the things this world has to offer. As you will see in the chapters of this book, the goal of working toward balance in each day can be achieved and enjoyed. It doesn't require a descriptive round of "major surgery" to your life, merely some "minor tune-ups" to bring things into balance. You are leading your own particular parade of events, rather than sitting on the sidelines and feeling helpless, hopeless, and left out.

All learning, indeed all of life, is but a series of way stations on the journey to wholeness. It is a privilege as well as a great responsibility to be allowed to be part of my own life and the lives of other people.

In my psychotherapy practice, I compliment each patient for having the courage to want a better life, and for the willingness to be open to change. It is not easy to make change. It is necessary to say, "I want a specific part of my life to be different."

A benefit of therapy and self-growth is the increasing ability to look at life as it is and to think about change, a sense of hope, an enduring belief that things can be better.

I embark on a book of collected wisdom from my own experience both as a psychotherapist and as a "personal-journey mountain climber". To be invited into the lives of individuals, couples and families, has been a valued trust, and in the process I have been able to modify and enhance my own belief system. The journey has been filled with insights and humor and life-enriching experiences.

Seeing the growth and unique humanity of each person, it is possible to enter the life of an individual, a couple, or a family and actually assist in shifting the balance for people toward a more personally satisfying way of being. The information I can share with you is a starting point for establishing balance in your life.