

Life Changes

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Acknowledgments

With Heartfelt Gratitude

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I acknowledge the work of Michael Lee, the founder of Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy. He created the model and practice structure for this program, which is included in this book. It's because of his determination, research, and commitment to the Phoenix Rising 8-week group model that I'm able to offer it to others as well as to present it in this particular format. I also acknowledge Karen Hasskarl and Elissa Cobb for their coherent and clear instruction. As co-directors of the school of Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, they have offered their wisdom, guidance, and encouragement in an incredibly supportive training environment. My deep appreciation goes to Elissa Cobb and the many hours she has given me as a mentor, bearing witness to my personal and professional growth. I'm also eternally thankful for the support of my family, friends, and colleagues as well as the inspiration provided by the many participants in the *Life Changes* program over the years.

Introduction

Getting Up to Speed

This is a very
incomplete book.

What am I going
to do with it?

If you take a moment to flip through the pages of this book, you'll immediately notice that many of them are blank. In fact, this is a very incomplete book. And there are reasons for that.

This is not a typical self-help book that gives you all the answers or inflated promises about a happy or successful life. This is something much more and also asks much more of you. This is more of a guidebook. It provides you a framework to support yourself as you learn to live life from a very real, very authentic place. This is a program for you to navigate and grow through. And during that process, you'll learn to turn to yourself for answers. They're all there – answers, guidance, wisdom – inside of you. Once you arrive at your own insights, you'll write them down and further explore them. That's why there are blank pages. You're going to complete the book. It's going to become *your* book.

For some people, living life from a place of authenticity doesn't sound like such a big deal. Admittedly for most people, it sure doesn't seem very attractive, exciting, or glitzy. I know because I was right there, hanging out with that crowd. There was a time when I wouldn't have given a single thought to a program like this.

And then something happened. I reached a point of "critical mass" in my life. Each morning I would wake up and find myself more and more trapped by my life. The spiral continued until my life didn't even feel like *my* life anymore. People who are in that kind of place can more easily get the allure of an authentic, real life. It's like finally being able to breathe.

I can honestly say that finally being able to breathe is really, really big stuff – way beyond any so-called attractiveness, excitement, or glitz. Okay – I've officially stepped down from my soap box!

The proof is in the pudding. If you earnestly commit to showing up and doing the practices in the *Life Changes* program found in this book, you'll soon find yourself in the midst of a very different, very authentic life.

Bare Essentials

Outside of your commitment to show up daily for the next eight weeks and prioritizing your schedule so you can actually show up, you'll need very little else. The following short list outlines the bare essentials to gather together before you start the program.

1. This book and its accompanying practice CDs. All the information you'll need to move through the program each day is contained in this book. The daily practice sessions are found on the four CDs.
2. CD player or MP3 player.
3. Yoga mat and blanket. You'll do your yoga postures on your mat. The blanket can be used if you get cool during meditation.
4. Chair or sitting cushion (zafu). For the seated meditations, you can sit on a traditional meditation cushion (known as a zafu in some circles). Alternatively, if you need to give your back or knees more support during meditation, you can use a straightback chair.
5. Watch with a timer and alarm. This will mainly be used during your walking meditation experiences.
6. Place in your home for your practice. This is an important part of your prep work. Be sure to choose a practice space that is quiet where you feel safe and where you won't be disturbed.

Expanding Horizons

There are a couple of new terms and concepts you're going to come in contact with during your practice sessions. The ones you need to be familiar with before you start are presented here so you can take some time to understand what they mean in the context of the *Life Changes* program.

Edge

This is that place in a pose where you feel heightened sensation. An edge generally has a range. For example, it may be a soft edge where a slight increase in sensation is present, or it may be a harder edge where you move towards a stronger sensation – though not physical pain. You determine each time what kind of edge you want to experience and how deeply you want to go into each of the poses.

The edge can also have a nonphysical expression. An example of this would be similar to what you experience when someone invades your personal space. Though they don't physically touch your body, you experience something on a nonphysical level. And this something usually makes you want to move away from the person and regain your personal space.

Sensation

When we hear the word sensation, we usually think of a physical sensation – a stretch, an itch, or a pain. But for our purposes, we're going to expand the definition of sensation to include emotions, feelings, memories, thoughts, images, and colors. In other words, we're considering just about everything that comes into the sphere of our experience as sensation.

Gaining Ground

Why are you here? That's the question I usually put to a new *Life Changes* group during our first meeting. It's also a good question for you to explore before you actually begin your eight-week individual *Life Changes* program. To that end, stop reading and find a pen or pencil. Then come back to this place in the book.

Now with pen or pencil in hand, take the next five minutes to write an answer in the blank space below to the following question: Why are you here about to start an eight-week journey into *Life Changes*?

NOTES:

Consider This

The *Life Changes* program is constructed around the element of witness. And one of the most important skills you learn is how to be a witness to yourself. Having someone act as witness, holding space for you through the eight-week program, can be instrumental. If you're interested in learning more about this before you start the program, turn to the Resource Section in the back of the book for more information.