



FOUND: Rediscovering Your Dreams, Your Voice, and Your Life
in 15 Minutes a Day
Excerpt by Lain Ehmann

CH. 1: THE BACKGROUND

“Get real.”
“Be yourself.”
“Show the real 'you.'”
“Honesty sells.”
“Live your truth.”

You've heard all the quotes, advice, and pithy suggestions about the latest buzz word, authenticity. It all sounds good and strikes a chord deep within. But when it comes to defining exactly what authenticity is and how you can use it to your advantage in your personal and professional life, things get tough.

- Does authenticity mean sharing all your innermost feelings on Facebook, sharing with the world every nuance of your life from having horrible PMS to getting in a fight with your mother?
- Does it mean speaking up every time someone says or does something you disagree with, whether it's the dude in front of you in line at CVS or the mom sitting next to you in the bleachers at the softball game?
- Does it mean refusing to bend to the cultural norms that say what it is you can and can't do, and letting your crazy fly high and wide?
- Does it mean letting go of responsibilities and relationships that “cramp your style” and roaming free?
- And what the heck do you do if you don't have the slightest idea what “your truth” is?

As a child and young adult, I had no sense of what it meant to listen to my own voice. I grew up as “the good girl,” driven to make others happy and keep the peace in an often tumultuous household. I didn't know what I wanted except to be as perfect as possible so everyone around me would be happy and stay calm. As a result, when I hit adulthood, I had no idea what I wanted. I'd always done what others wanted and couldn't even begin to figure out where I fit in.

It took me a long time to find my way back to myself. I read hundreds of books, went to counseling, worked with a life coach, journaled, went to seminars, researched, and even became trained as a personal and life coach myself. After a lot of effort, successes – and failures! – I have a good sense of who I am. Whether people read my books, hear my audios, watch me on video, or meet me in person, my goal is that they feel they know me – that I'm the same in one medium as I am in another.

I've spent most of my adult life trying to figure out what it means to live an authentic life, and I've done so with more success at some times than at others. The one thing I know for sure is that becoming authentic is a PROCESS, one that looks different for each one of us. And while I'm in complete support of figuring out your unique take on the world, I do suggest doing so while paying attention to personal hygiene. Being “real” doesn't have to mean looking (and smelling) like the bride of Grizzly Adams, or quitting your 9-to-5 just because you feel like you have to.

In fact, living an authentic life is more about awareness than it is about any particular behavior. There are times, for instance, that someone close to me says something that I am diametrically opposed to – for instance, that Starbucks coffee is totally better than Dunkin' Donuts – and I choose to let it go. Because of the situation, the size of the hurt, or the perceived intent of the comment, I may let it wash over me like a wave of slightly smelly yet ultimately harmless water. I'm not denying my feelings or caving to external pressure; I'm making an informed decision to allow something to pass by.

It's like being in a crowded supermarket (do you see how so many of my examples have to do with retail therapy? Yeah, I noticed that too...). Someone rams into your bupkus on aisle 4, just as you were bending down to get a container of Chobani. Incensed, you turn around and notice that the guilty party, an octogenarian wearing a muu-muu and Jackie O sunglasses, can barely see over her cart, heaped as it is with Feline Friskies and extra-large size bottles of prune juice. Do you grab her by her scrawny throat, throw her up against the side of the cooler, and threaten her with death by a thousand reruns of “Golden Girls” if she ever dares to touch your booty again? Or do you give her a raised eyebrow (that she probably doesn't see) and go on about your day?

I certainly hope you went with Option B. Because if you make it a regular habit to accost every little old lady who dares to step on your foot, cut in front of you in line, or otherwise invade your personal space, you're wasting a lot of energy – energy that could be better spent on the important things in life, like alphabetizing your spice rack or trimming your gerbil's cuticles.

By choosing to overlook this perceived slight, you aren't being inauthentic or fake. You're not demeaning yourself or saying that you don't deserve "respect." Instead, you are making decisions based on your personal values and choosing to focus on the more important stuff.

To me, that's what authenticity is – knowing who you are and what is important to you, and having a core that doesn't change, no matter what the situation. It means coming to life with a quiet strength born of an inner knowledge. And when you have that knowledge and strength, you don't have to flex your muscles all the time. You know who you are, so it doesn't matter if someone else has a different opinion. It truly just slides right past you, and your life is better as a result.

That's what we're going to be discussing – how to make our lives better. This book is not intended as a substitute for therapy (in fact, if you find yourself regularly grabbing old ladies in the supermarket, you just might want to contact a mental health professional and investigate some anger management treatment). It is, however, intended to give you practical and actionable information and advice as to how you can begin living in accordance with your values, how you can handle blow-back from others who don't see the world quite the same way you do and wish you'd just go back to being a wimpy suffer-in-silence type, and how your world will start to change for the better when you start figuring out what exactly you're here to do – and not do.

Through my own exploration, training, education and research, I've discovered some great stuff on the topic of authenticity that I'm excited to share with you. I've already shared a lot of this information with my coaching clients and audience through my classes, speaking, videos, blog posts, and more, and I'm excited to pass it on to you as well.

If you're ready to start living your life a little louder, with a little more clarity, energy, and excitement, then let's get this show on the road. After all, time, tide, and the Nordstrom half-yearly sale wait for no woman.

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