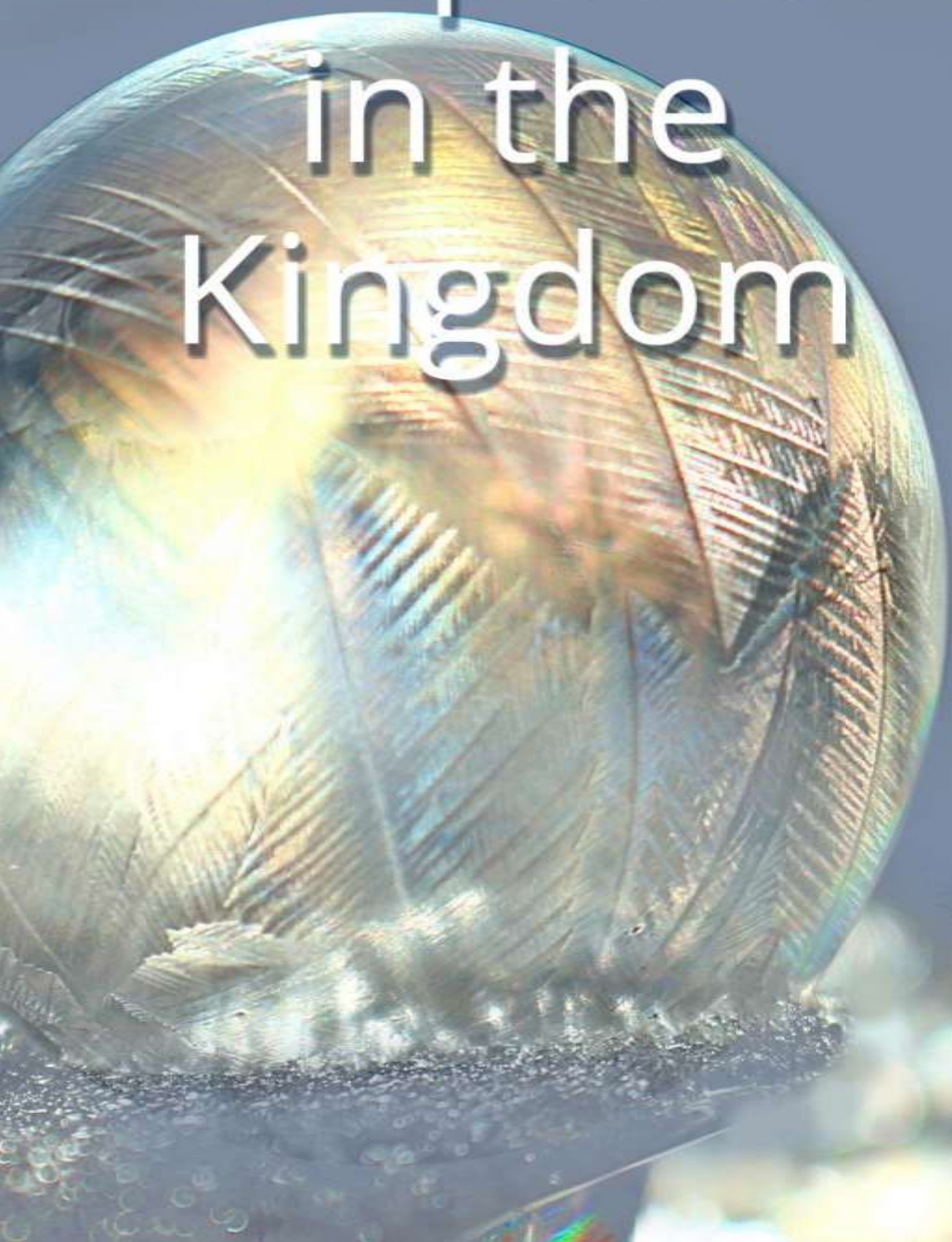


Emporer in the Kingdom



Emperor in the Kingdom

My path through it

Jeroen van Buuren

7 July 2018

also from Jeroen Arnold:

Suicide – you'll be back on earth before you know it

Divinefulness – Pilgrimage to the soul

Divinefulness – into the world live your mission

cover photo: Rihaij

To contribute to a world in which the Divine has a prominent place

Why does everyone in the world love a good story?

Millions and millions of stories are presented to other people through a constant stream of books written and published annually.

When I read Jeroen van Buuren's "The Emperor in the Kingdom" and got to page 12, I sent him an e-mail saying: "Jeroen, this is you!"

I have known Jeroen for more than four years.

He and his family live in the Netherlands.

Me and my family live in Canada.

We Skype each other for at least an hour every week.

He came to visit me and my wife in Paris.

He came to visit me in Canada for a week.

We have been involved in several projects together.

We have our differences and yet share a deep respect for each other.

We share a common spiritual path.

When I think of Jeroen, the word 'authentic' comes to mind.

Authentic: genuine, truthful, reliable, trustworthy, respectable, honest, factual.

He would add 'confrontational'.

I don't know how many people you know or have known who you would call "authentic"?

But if you want to meet one, to get to know his story, his life experiences, his setbacks and trials and his successes, clear, pure, simple, read this book.

You'll be glad you did, and you'll have a new friend in your portfolio who can educate and inspire you. He did that to me!

Ernie Tadla

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Foreword

For many years I have resolved to write about the wonderful things I have experienced in my life. And now the time has come.

The journey I've made so far spans just over 54 years. I have always known that there is something that gives my life direction. I call it God. Many people don't like this term and replace it with something else like Light, the Universe, Love or Allah. I don't care. The point is that there is a force that is greater than me, that knows more than I do, is better able to guide me than I can ever find my own path. To show this, I made a chronological list of events in my life, based on an idea to write a book in 28 days. I have no idea what the book is going to look like, but I surrender it to the Divine.

This is a good point to take a moment to consider the difference between following religion and following God. Religion is a set of rules that people have developed together in order to bring structure and recognizability to everyday life. The Divine is just the opposite. It is THAT which you can follow to obtain the best result for everyone involved in a situation. But it has no structure, no recognizable logic. That's the tricky thing about accepting this leadership. It is very rare that the result is immediately visible. You don't know what a certain action will bring. Whether it's what you want.

That's a good thing. At the moment I regularly give lectures for groups of ten people. That's easy for me. I am now looking forward to standing in front of larger groups, of about sixty

people. But as you will read, there was a time when the mere thought of a lecture made me sweat in fear. If someone had told me earlier that I would be standing in front of groups, I would probably have cringed and never done anything in that direction. Am I so perfect that I always follow all my promptings? No, definitely not. I, too, shy away from an idea or thought. Gradually, however, I learn that this doesn't get me any further, keeps me walking around in a circle. And so, I decide to take another step and I see the miracle unfold again.

I hope this book may inspire you to follow your path as well. Of course you already do, just look back at what happened on your way. Your path has brought you to where you are today and has made you the beautiful person you are.

Jeroen Arnold

A Loving Universe

As you can see from the above, I believe in a loving universe. One where you can relax and know that you are being taken care of in the most perfect way and that everything that happens in your life is part of the growth process that everyone is in. Everything happens for a reason; everything has a cause and effect. Of course, you can see this differently. After all, not everything seems to be perfectly arranged on this earth. Maybe you are having real hard time.

For me, any other choice comes down to a world in which there is no order at all. In which I am at the mercy of a mixture of prosperity and adversity over which no one can exert any influence.

Why "the Kingdom"?

Before I start my story, I want to say something about why I chose the title. The term the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God is mentioned a number of times in the Bible as a statement of Jesus. It is a metaphor for living from a state of consciousness in which you know that there is nothing to fear and that everything is exactly as it should be. That all your needs are taken care of. This is because you live and act in complete harmony with the intelligent life that shapes the universe.

Sometimes it is said that this is not human, that reaching for this Divine state is futile, because it is not going to happen anyway. Over the years, I have come to see that these kinds of thoughts, beliefs, get you stuck in your own beliefs. You erect a wall, as it were, so that nothing else can happen. In this case, you remain human. I don't want that to happen. I want to grow into the Divine being that I am at the core of my being.

Until I was fifty, things went well for me. Of course, I've had my share of adversity, but there was always a new twist, someone who contributed something. And because I'm crazy enough to follow most of them, I was doing alright. The problem was that I wasn't aware of it. I thought that this was how life was supposed to be. In fact, if something new did not occur within a reasonable period of time, I became restless, even reproachful towards the Divine. I felt that I *had to* be taken care of.

And so, in 2014, a few months after I turned fifty, the bottom fell out of my life for the second time. The first time was when I was 28 and had completely overworked myself. According to

astrology, after the age of fifty, you encounter many of your life themes for the second time. The intention is to go through the same series of events again, but this time consciously and acting instead of playing the victim.

The past four years have taught me that the Divine always takes care of everyone, but in a rhythm that is good for everyone involved. That requires me to be able to relax when things are quiet in my life, knowing that there is something beautiful waiting to be delivered at the right time.

I have also come to see that everything I think or do has an impact on my life. Because I really want to live in the Kingdom, I want to become more and more aware of what I think and do. Are my thoughts in line with Love? Am I doing what contributes to the highest good of everyone?

Maybe it sounds like a herculean task. Something you have to sacrifice a lot for to achieve. The good thing is that the opposite is the case. The more I embrace this intention, the more I will experience how wonderful it is to do 'good'. To see others as just as valuable as myself, as hardworking to get the best out of themselves. How painful it is for my being (and my body) to reject or belittle others.

Understanding each other is a miracle

A nice revelation for me was a one-day NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) training. For me, NLP had always been something you could use to influence others. I participate in the training, because I hear from someone that this is a completely wrong image,

What really dawned on me during this day is that everyone has a whole set of filters with which the world is interpreted. Everyone has their unique set of beliefs, thoughts about how the world works and how you should behave. In addition, these thoughts are also transformed into feelings that are different for everyone.

To make things even more complicated, NLP distinguishes six different levels from which a person can communicate. The first is the terrestrial plane. A person who speaks from this level mainly names what is tangible and visible. So, for example, the items offered in a particular store and what they cost. The sixth level is based on a mission: what is it that you want to give to the world. Someone who talks from this level can hold a dissertation in the same store about where the items come from and what their impact is on the environment.

It dawned on me then that it's an incredible miracle that we can work together, when you consider that everyone has a unique way of interpreting what comes to them!

Me and you

The chapters that follow all have the same structure. First, I'll describe an episode. In the description I talk about myself as much as possible, this is what I can say something about. I don't go into my origin or family situation, only when that is important for the story, I mention it. I do this because I believe that it best reflects the essence, the help that is there for everyone.

Then comes the lesson that speaks to me from the event. In it, I use a mixture of you and me. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, I would like to invite you to relate the information to yourself. What applies to me may also apply to you. In addition, I want to prevent these pieces from becoming a kind of I, I, I story.

I invite you to read the pieces with an open mind. Perhaps certain parts evoke a lot of resistance or rejection. That's good, because it shows that something in you is being triggered.

I don't do 'must'

What immediately comes to mind after writing this piece is the comment of many people that 'they don't do "must"', meaning 'they have freedom to choose what to do'. I look at it differently. There are simply things in life that need to be done. Breathing is the most obvious example. If you stop breathing, your life will eventually end. And so, it is with living according to the spiritual laws. Some things just *need to* be done. Here's the most obvious one: meditation. In doing so, you open your being to receiving guidance, and it becomes easier to control your ego. For me it is also essential, a must, to be involved with

spirituality every day. My friend Ernie, whom I will introduce to you later, calls this spiritually toothbrushing. Ensuring that your mind is cleansed of all the mis-thoughts that have formed.

My Arrival

On June 13, 1964, just as the sun begins to rise, I decide to begin my earthly journey. My mother remembers that she was asleep and woke up because she felt that she was going to give birth. Not a quiet beginning, with a contraction here and a contraction there. No, boom, she clearly felt it, this was a contraction. And so, she nudged my father awake, reported that she had to give birth NOW and that the doctor had to be called. My father didn't believe any of it. But not much later I plopped into the world. I continually cried for three days. I was inconsolable.

There are two reasons why I cried so much. The first earthly, the second spiritual.

When I was just a small clump of eggs, I experienced a shocking event. My mother was so happy that she was pregnant again, that she enthusiastically jumped on the moped to go for a ride. She loved that moped, the feeling of security that the round tank gave her. At the same time, it stirred something in her. She often drove too fast, too rashly. As a result, she saw the car coming towards her too late. But not so late that she couldn't realize in a flash that, with the blow that awaited her, she might lose her newly acquired miracle. She died a thousand deaths at once.

After the collision, she was taken to the hospital in an ambulance, where she was subjected to the necessary tests. However, when it was suggested to take an X-ray to make sure her hip wasn't torn, she refused, because she didn't want to lose me. This was the first time I was miraculously kept on this earth.

It may sound like a strange idea: so small and already gaining experience. I believe that everything that lives has consciousness, so even the single-celled amoeba that can move around in the water is aware of its surroundings. So, I too, a few weeks old, have experienced what my mother experienced. That fear had to come out when I was born.

The other reason for my intense grief stems from the way my past life ended. You can read how that works in the booklet 'Suicide – You'll be back on earth before you know it'

You choose your parents

Everything in life is aimed at bringing you to full maturity. To do this, you choose the parents who can stimulate you the most. This means choosing those parents who touch exactly what you need to grow.

For example, I have seen and learned things from my parents that I find very important and that I want to pass on to my children. And also, things that I find 'bad' or even 'unacceptable' and that I never want to do to my children. It's nice to see that I go too far in the things I want to do differently and sit too close to my children or give them far too much freedom. And that my children sometimes don't like what I do or say. Yet I know that in this way everyone is getting closer and closer to their own unique core.

Do you choose your parents, or are you forced by life? My starting point is that everyone has free will. The will to do exactly what seems best in a given situation. You are also free to choose parents. Do you choose a place where you grow up in harmony or somewhere where you have to constantly fight for your space. Both give a different start. Now, if you have a difficult family

situation, know that this was your choice. And that all the help is available to you, if you are willing to accept it.

Fear of others

One of the things I've suffered from my whole life is anxiety. A deep-seated feeling that 'it's not safe here'. One of the results of this fear is that for a long time I was afraid of being put down, of being made a fool of, of being the outsider.

I felt like I didn't belong, that people thought I was weird. The book you are reading now is the fourth version. There have already been a couple that I have started that I have thrown away as being unacceptable. Especially for you as a reader. Again, I'm at the same point. About a year and a half ago I started working on this document. And when I opened it a few days ago, I didn't like it at all. I especially disliked the fact that I wrote my own insights at the end of each piece. Still, I choose to persevere now. Often when I sit and talk to people about things I have experienced, I notice that the events are a source of inspiration to look at life differently.

And so, I take a deep breath and decide to work out a piece every day. And to do a family constellation with a good friend to look at the age-old fear of being condemned as a heretic.

Fear may be there, but don't let it stop you

Somewhere I read this sentence, and it has become a motto for me. No matter how terrifying something looks, if it comes your way, it very likely means that you have something to do with it. The longer you put it off, the greater the challenge and probably the fear becomes.

Am I saying that you should just do everything? No, it could be that something evokes so much fear that I completely get stuck. In such a case, I really let it go for a while. And look for ways to look at the fear differently.

Coma

On a winter's day in February 1966, the next chapter in my history takes place. In the guest room of our flat there is a folding bed on the side. There is a bar at the top, which unlocks the bed by pulling it forward. As it lowers, the rod comes forward to form a bed leg along the entire length of the bed.

On that particular afternoon, I am alone in the room, together with the very large bed. Is the bar not properly secured, have I been able to pull it forward? I don't know. What I do know is that at some point the bed starts to tip over and the bar lands on my throat. I can't breathe.

Meanwhile, my mom is cooking in the kitchen. Somehow, she feels that something is not right. Is it too quiet, is she missing someone? Be that as it may, she goes looking for me, finds me under the bed. And immediately starts applying mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The fact that she knows how to do this is another incredible miracle. She had seen it on television the day before. Nothing special? Yes, it is!

Let's go back in time for a moment. To the time when owning a television was like it is now to be a millionaire. Not entirely unattainable but only for a small group of people. Now the fact is that the neighbors in the flat had just been given access to a small fortune and therefore owned a television. As it was in those days, if there was a broadcast a few times a week, the whole neighborhood would watch. And just the day before, my mother watched a broadcast explaining mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

With a little man in her arms, she runs to the pharmacy to find the doctor. When it is found, they race to the hospital in the doctor's personal car. When I got there, I sank into a coma. Two days later I wake up again.

To the outside world, I was only away for 48 hours. As my life continues to unfold, I discover that in that time I have made quite a journey into a world between this and the afterlife.

Give space when someone is in a hurry

You can imagine that the doctor was speeding when he took me to the hospital. It was a ride against time. My mother told me that there were people who were apparently annoyed by these road pirates and deliberately drove slowly in front of them to reduce their speed. People even blocked the tram track to make sure it couldn't be used.

I always remember this story when I see someone doing breakneck tricks with a car. I don't know what could have happened that caused this person to drive so fast. That's why I try to find the place in my heart where I can look at them with love and ask for a safe arrival for the person.

You don't belong here

We live in a new housing estate where an mobile supermarket car (called SRV) drives around. Very handy to get the groceries delivered to the door. Because we as children are at home more often during the day than our parents, we are regularly asked to 'get something from the SRV man'. That's no problem, you listen to the horn, walk down the garden path and pick up what's on the list.

One day I miss the horn. That doesn't cause much stress either, because after his tour of the neighborhood, the car is parked in one of the garage boxes a few blocks away from our house. I grab a shopping bag, throw in the list and walk through the streets at high speed.

At the intersection, just in front of the garage, someone suddenly stands in front of me. It's really like he's appeared out of nowhere. The person standing in front of me towers over me and wears a black full-face helmet with a black mirrored visor. I can't see who's behind the glass.

A dark voice can be heard from behind the lid: "You don't belong here!". The helmet distorts the sound. I'm shocked. At the same time, I want to keep going because I forgot to get the groceries, and this is the only way to get anything without money (the man writes the groceries on a note that is paid once in a while).

"YOU DON'T BELONG HERE!" the person yells again. In blind fear, I run back home.

Shot from behind

From that time on, I walk around with a strange feeling in my back. At times I think that there is someone walking around, with a gun, who is targeting me. I can feel the point burning in my back and can also imagine the bullet coming out at my plexus. It's not a pleasant image.

Don't Judge

I carry the feeling of being shot at with me for years. I keep asking myself how I got this feeling. There doesn't seem to be any connection with anyone threatening me and this fear. The normal reaction to a story like this is that there is a perpetrator, the boy with the full-face helmet, and a victim. In this case, that's me. I believe that every contact has a reason and arises from attracting exactly those people or things that are necessary for that contact. There is no longer a perpetrator and victim, only a contact, where a lesson can be learned.

Often it is not at all clear what that lesson is when you are still in the middle of the mess when the contact grows into a confrontation. My attitude is to not judge and to hold on to the knowing that there is order and regularity in the universe. It is only forty years later that it becomes clear which path this incident will open up for me.

E 50: sailboat for sale

My parents have a second home, a farm in Friesland. They bought it from an inheritance from my father's grandmother. I spent many weekends there.

A second home is a wonderful possession, but for me it was also a curse. The whole family goes there almost every weekend, which means that I have little connection with friends from class.

After all, they often go out on the weekends to do fun things, but going with them is difficult. The outings last a few hours, a day at most. And staying at home is not an option.

"Then take someone with you," it is often said. But it's the same for my friends. Joining means a whole weekend away, not a few hours. Moreover, many children think it's crazy, far away to Friesland, they prefer to stay in Amsterdam.

Of course, there are also a lot of fun things that happen on the farm. For example, I learn step by step how to renovate a house, fires can be lit and we float around in the ditch in a rubber boat.

Sometimes we empty the (fridge) cupboard and make tasty snacks with the neighbor children that we then sell on the road. Most of our customers are our respective parents. We make some money that way. Our parents continue to find it strange: taking food out of cupboards and then selling it to the people whose owned the stuff in the first place.

One day we are going from Friesland to Urk. We look at the boats and see how the fishermen are mending nets on the quay. My father explains that all boats have a number, which is preceded by the letter of the village or town. That's why all boats in Urk have a number that starts with U-

A few days later we are going to make boats out of a clog. We paint clogs that have become too small for us, drill a hole in the bottom in which a mast with a small sail attached to it will be placed. I proudly paint E-50 on my clog, because our farm is close to a village whose name starts with an E. "Look, Mom," I say proudly, "the E-50." My mother replies in a dull voice: "You're not going to ask for money for that boat, are you?" (I think she heard 'look mom, one fifty')

My heart shrinks. Although it was not my intention to sell the boat at all, I draw the conclusion that what I make is not worth it. It's a thought that will play a big role in my life for a very long time.

Don't believe everything you believe

The thought 'what I make is not worth it' has bothered me for more than forty years. He has always been intertwined with my mother's remark that I was always so 'Joony'. The term comes from my shortened name Joen, which is used in the family. I don't know why it ever became Joony, maybe I've always misunderstood. Anyway, Joony indicates that it's a bit cobbled together, at least not recognizable to the outside world.

Now, after working in many different ways to let go of this belief, I have finally come to see that Joony is exactly what describes me catchily. I always see different solutions to challenges than other people, I never take anything at face value, but always ask questions. You'll understand what I mean as you progress through this book.

I have also come to see that what I make is definitely worth it. It's more a question of finding the people who can appreciate and use it. And the nice thing is that the more I realize that, the more people I meet who appreciate what I do.

The Cunning Potter

I grew up in a family where religion was not an issue. My parents say that Jesus was a man with a message. He stood on a rock and proclaimed what he thought needed to be said. That's what a church is supposed to be, a place where you come together and share insights with each other.

I spent the first years of my school career at the Waldorf school, but at the age of nine I moved to the local Christian primary school. I don't remember many strict Christian customs or feasts from that school either.

One of the highlights is the annual performance of the Xmas play. Every year a real play is performed, which deals with the theme of Christmas, without falling into the standard story of Joseph and Mary on the donkey to Bethlehem.

In the year it is my class's turn to perform the play, a play is chosen starring a cunning potter. I have the honor of playing it.

The potter finds all the commotion around the stable where Jesus was born so attractive. He decides to work hard through the night to make lots of cups with a beautiful image and a catchy text underneath. He sees the potential in selling them the next day to all the people who come to see meet the new king.

The next day he is ready early with his stall. He displays all his wares for everyone to admire. (I vividly remember that I displayed white plastic cups, on which something is drawn with a blue marker and think 'how strange that people in the

audience don't think it's weird that there are no real cups') The potter has animated conversations with his wife and other people who arrive. "Yes, maybe we'll come back and have a look at what you have to offer."

The strange thing is that, when the people come back from the stable, they are quiet and just nod politely to the merchant and walk on. They are no longer interested in his merchandise. Somewhat disgruntled, the merchant decides to go inside himself. He won't earn much here if everyone comes out so quietly. His wife can look after the stall for a while.

When he returns from the stable, the potter is also silent. Without words, he starts stacking the cups again and putting them in boxes. "Come, let's go home," he says to his wife. When surprised to ask why, the potter says, "It's not about trading and outsmarting others, it's about loving people and taking care of each other."

A World of Peace and Love

For a long time, we have been dreaming of a world of peace and love. A world where there can be peace and everyone lives in harmony. I do that too. History teaches, or seems to teach, that this state of bliss is unattainable. But is that so?

I believe that it is certainly possible to come to a world where there is love and peace. The mistake that is made is to think that it will arise out of its own. That if we wait long enough, something or someone will intervene, and we will be taken to this beautiful place.

Nothing could be further from the truth. A world of Love and Peace can only come into being if we all work very hard for it. It starts with admitting that everything we've tried so far doesn't work. And then to come to see that there is an intelligence that does know. By connecting with it, listening and acting on the guidance given, we can shape this world. We will have to take the first step ourselves; the rest will follow.

A school trip

My school career continues with a final cito test with a recommendation for Atheneum and the associated transition to a secondary school in the area. This, too, I now realize, is a Christian school.

Just like in primary school, I find it difficult to adapt to the culture that prevails at school. Raised in a free-spirited family, where you were given little guidance on what was or wasn't acceptable, I walk around in red overalls and wear a T-shirt over a long-sleeved blouse. Just because I like it.

As a result, I have few real friends and am regularly the target of bullying and many a scuffle. Whether it had anything to do with it or not, I don't know, but in the third grade, I end up in a class nicknamed "the disaster class." The kind of class that gives many a teacher a sweat and of which everyone knows that if something was going on at school, someone from that class did it.

As a result, when the time came to make preparations for the farewell camp for the lower grades, it was decided that our class was not eligible. 'That can never go well,' is the argument. Deeply disappointed, I come home and think about this, in my view, unjust treatment. "We can at least go away for a weekend," comes to mind. Give my brain an idea and pieces immediately start falling down.

My parents have a farm, which can accommodate at least twelve people. But behind the house is a large barn with a loft, where another ten or fifteen people can easily sleep. If I, and maybe a few more students, sleep in a tent, there are enough places so that everyone can spend the night.

And so, I continue, point by point:

- Transport: if one in four parents is willing to drive, that is solved,
- Program: a large part of the two days fills themselves in, entry, lunch, dinner (macaroni with sauce), breakfast the next day, cleaning up and leaving. I think that of course there should be a night dropping, letting people out in an unknown spot and have them find their way back. I immediately know a route. You can drive around the farm in a large square, so you drive around for at least twenty minutes and still end up very close to the farm.
- The rest of the day will come naturally
- Small problem: we do need a bus for the drop. So it has to be rented.
- The class: if my idea has the slightest chance of success, I will have to present the whole plan to the class and tell them that the only way to achieve it is to stop doing bad things.

I put the whole story in a large folder with an image of my big idol at the time: Blondie on the front. Together with my parents, I make a budget. We come up with an amount that we think is affordable for everyone.

After informing the class about my idea, which is received with mixed reactions, I go to the rector to present my plan. He is impressed by the material I have put together, but resolutely dismisses it. This class didn't and won't go to camp, not even a weekend!

Never caught in the middle of it, I think that if it doesn't work out that way, I can try to win over some teachers, who I know are well disposed towards the class, for the plan. And it works. First the German teacher, then the math teacher and also the biology

teacher all find the plan I have forged interesting. I have no idea how they convinced the rector, but they succeeded.

Before we leave, my father comes to address the whole class. He portrays himself as a bit of an ogre. That he expects everything to be left exactly as it was and that he gives us the benefit of the doubt and does not want to be disappointed.

The weekend is great. Everyone behaves in an exemplary manner. It seems like I'm out and about with a different group of people. The dropping is also a great success. Because we didn't turn left four times, but took some extra turns here and there, everyone is completely disoriented. The last team doesn't arrive until half past four.

Go for your dreams!

Often it seems that what you want is too difficult, too far away or that you have no idea how to get there. A comparison that really appeals to me is that of going for your dreams with driving a car on an unlit bumpy road. The lights of the car are also set too far down. As a result, you can only see a very small part of the road. The only thing you see is an illuminated tower, somewhere very far away: your goal.

This leaves you with two choices. Or you put the car on the side and do nothing. Or you can choose to drive, a tiny bit ahead. By driving a little bit forward, you can see the next part of the road and you can go a little further forward. You may come to an intersection after a while. Again, you can only choose the exit that *seems* to bring you closer to your goal. You don't know if that's the case, but again, doing nothing won't get you anywhere.

If you move forward step by step, bit by bit, you will notice that you are getting closer and closer to your goal, without knowing in advance exactly what it would take.

Cycling in France

The first three years of my high school are filled with the necessary bumps. The biggest problem is that I am dyslexic and therefore I am treated to a big fail on every test in a foreign language. At first to my surprise, but gradually I get used to it. No matter how well I prepare the words, there is always an s that is in the wrong place, or a k that should have been a c. At that time, dyslexia was still an unknown phenomenon. I have done my entire school career without it being recognized.

In the third grade, I fail all the languages I have to take, English, French and German. Because I don't dare to give the report to my parents, I pack it as a Sinterklaas surprise. My parents are not happy with me!

The transition to the fourth grade is a tricky issue. Because, of course, my grades for foreign languages have not improved and you can't pass with two fours and a five.

I don't see the problem. If I go to the fourth grade, I drop these subjects and only the five for English remains. In fact, if I have to repeat the third grade again, I am sure that the situation will not improve.

It's not that I didn't do anything for the courses. My brain just isn't able to remember the right combinations of letters. In the end, an exception is made for me and I am allowed to continue to the fourth grade.

From there, it's smooth sailing. I don't have to do much for my schoolwork, most of it sticks because of what a teacher tells me and the homework I do next.

Sounds very cool, but of course there are still my two languages that I have left: Dutch and English. Just before the May holidays in the last year, I have my final exam in oral Dutch. The intention is that I have read about fifteen books and can tell a thing or two about them. Because reading one book is already quite a task, I have glanced over the excerpts of a large number of books. Because they also contain a lot of words.

The result of this oral test of my abilities can be guessed. A D is all I get. So, I walk out of the school library, somewhat depressed. When I arrive downstairs, my eye falls on the central hall that is full of bicycles. A man with a big cigar looks at the bikes one by one and comments:

"This paddle set is loose; These wheels have to be aligned, because if you go down so hard, you can get into a standing vibration" etc. I, as a cycling fanatic, immediately go and have a look and ask one of the people what is going on. The bikes are inspected for a cycling holiday in France with the fifth class. The Dutch teacher, who took my exam, asks me why I'm not going along. My answer is that I didn't dare to make a decision with all my school examinations that I still had to do. But since those are over now and neither the teacher nor my parents see any objections, I go along.

It will be a holiday to remember. With a whole bunch of boys and a few girls, we first drive for a few days over the fairly flat country in France, while we keep catching a glimpse of the mountain that only in the area requires a view of the landscape: the Mont Ventoux. The goal is to get to this mountain after circling around the mountain to get some fitness.



After a week the time has come and we climb the mountain that is actually still closed, but a French boy lowers the chain for us so that we can conquer the col.

Not everyone can do what you can

During the holidays, everyone is supposed to cook for the group in pairs. There is no fixed plan, each team can decide for itself what to cook, as long as it fits within the set budget. Cooking was something I learned at home. Not only does my father love to cook, but we children are often expected to prepare the meal for the evening. Not only do I easily put together a meal together with my fellow chef, it also pushes me to expect others to be able to do the same. Scornfully, I said to someone who hadn't taken his heart out of the lettuce: "You don't put lettuce on the table like that!" Looking back, I can see how harsh this has been. Never expect anyone to do something with the same ease that you can do it with.

A passing grade for English

Back in the Netherlands, the reality of the day hits hard. It turns out that, while I have been having a great time cycling in France, the rest of the class has received instructions on how best to handle the exams. That's a shame!

Here and there I ask some people what are the most important things they have heard. I don't get much more out of it than contradictory messages and things that don't mean anything to me. What's left is to go into the exams unprepared, there was nothing else to do.

I don't have to worry about most subjects. I did well in the school examinations. Of course, there are two problems: Dutch and English. The biggest challenge is going to be English. For that I will have to write a text of a lot of words. I really don't remember how many, but for someone who, at the time, made a mistake with almost every word he wrote, this seemed like an impossible task.

Someone comes up with a bright idea: write a text on a very general theme, have it corrected and learn it completely by heart. I'm going to reproduce this in the exam. The trick is, with as few words as possible, to bend the given subject so that my standard text fits it.

It's quite an undertaking. I first write a text; my grandmother, who is very good at English, corrects it. Then I transcribe it, my grandmother checks it again. It's one big red sea of stripes. So, I copy it again and grandma checks it again.

After the red sea has calmed down, I start again. This time I'm not copying it, but I'm producing, from memory, the text that I can start dreaming. Again, to my great disappointment, the same red sea appears as before. The number of dashes is really uncountable.

After an initial 'I'm not doing this, this will never work', I continue to write down the text and have it checked. After an infinite number of times of copying the text, I can literally dream every word.

The day of the English exam arrives. I have mixed feelings about things to come. On the one hand, I am curious about the subject that has been chosen, but at the same time I am also afraid of it. Suppose they have chosen something that does not fit at all with the text I have come up with. In addition, it also feels like cheating, almost like I can get caught.

Fortunately, the chosen topic is not very specific, something to do with holidays. In two paragraphs I write an introduction to the text that I can dream. In no time at all, I finish the assignment and I am one of the first to leave the room. The look at the other students, who are bent over the tables, is satisfying. Now we have to wait and see how the end result turns out.

I get a 5.3 for the text. It's disappointing to me. For all the work I've put in, it seems like an unfair score. But when I look at the paper, I understand. The first two paragraphs show the well-known red sea of dashes. After that, it calms down in the text. Here and there a dash or a word in the margin. Indeed, the number of errors I made in the first two paragraphs is so great that four whole points are taken out of ten. The rest takes care of the descent to the 5.3. If I hadn't memorized the text, I would have been guaranteed to get a 1 for my essay and I would have to redo the class. Now, together with my grades for the school examination, I still end up with a 6 average.

There is always a solution

There is a solution for everything in life. Sometimes it's not immediately visible, sometimes it's never even been thought of before. I firmly believe this. By looking at the world with these eyes, the solutions also become visible. That doesn't mean that all solutions come from me, or that I come up with them all, certainly not. It's about being open to the information that comes to you and responding to it at the right time, which usually means immediately.

America

At the end of high school, I still don't know what I want to study. Nothing really appeals to me. A lecturer advises me to visit the study advisor. He has a small office at the very back of the school building. It's actually strange that such a person is so hidden.

When I walk into the office, there is no one there. A bright blue poster catches my eye: Youth For Understanding. The organization still exists. On their website I now read: 'YFU offers you THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME. An adventure that brings out the best in you and in which you make friendships that change your view of the world forever.'

I don't remember if that was exactly what it said on the poster at the time, but the text evokes the same feeling I got then. Something like 'this is the adventure I've always been looking for'.

I come home enthusiastic and keep yapping about what I have come up with to do after my high school: a year in America, go to school there and then think about what I am going to study. It seems like the perfect idea. I don't know how I got my parents to be so crazy. But in the end, almost 10,000 guilders are raised to make my big dream come true.

Before that happens, I have to go to YFU meetings a number of times to get training. One of them is about the extent to which you are willing to adapt to a culture. I remember being asked, "If you were asked to get a different haircut, will you do it?" I replied that I would consider it. Well, that wasn't the intention, you just had to hold on to your self-esteem. At the end of the day, I feel very confused. After all, what does it mean to respect the culture, but to stay true to yourself?

In the middle of summer, just eighteen, I leave. The first flight is very nice, because we travel with a whole group who are all going on the same adventure as me. Then I have to transfer to another plane and another and another. The planes are getting smaller and smaller, the number of people that fit in them is decreasing. Until I'm in a two-propeller plane with a few people, where my luggage takes up a disproportionate amount of space and I directly see as do the pilots where we're flying. That while I had thought I would go to Washington, a rather large city in the United States.

It turns out that I'm not going to the Washington suburb called Oroville, but to the hamlet of Oroville, in Washington state, all the way on the West Coast. Quite different from what I had imagined.

American culture is also very different from what I thought. I've been to America twice before, with my parents. The image I have remember out of that is of an always hospitable, happy population. And that was true, only I had never realized that this is not an innate quality of the population, but a mask that many keep on. And that I am also expected to keep this same mask on. It means that you are not unhappy, certainly not outdoors, but preferably not indoors either: 'Just put on a happy face' is the winged saying. For someone who comes from a family where emotions and feelings are seen as very valuable, this is a very difficult task.

What makes the stay even more difficult is that I am very good at seeing connections quickly. Usually, I only need half a word to understand what something is about. The result, together with the fact that I have of course had several years of English education and, as I said, have been to America twice before, the impression arises that I understand people much better

than I do. I'm bluffing my way through the events a bit. Instead of seeing the uncertainty, one interprets it as conceited. To top it all off, it is highly desirable, from an American point of view, to mingle with the right people.

People of a lower social standing are seen as a negative influence. You don't deal with them. To me this sounds very strange, especially because the people who are seen as 'lower' are generally those people who show real interest in where I come from and what life is like in the Netherlands. Because really, in the early eighties, people didn't know anything about Europe, let alone the Netherlands.

Anyway, I could write a whole book just about all the things that happened in this one year. I'm not going to do that now, because I want to show you how the finger of God can be seen in everything that has taken place in my life.

Put on the spot

For six months I more or less follow my own lifestyle. I'm not always happy at school and keep in touch with 'them of the lower classes'. Then I meet someone who has a very un-American way of life. He has worked very hard for years to set up a burger bar. Now he lives quietly, comes to the office once a week to make adjustments. The rest of the week he works on his house and continues to ride horses. One day he takes me on a horseback ride through the mountains. What an experience! I think it would be wonderful to live with his family. So, I contact YFU and inquire about the possibility of making a switch. In the Netherlands I have been told that there is such a possibility.

Then all hell breaks loose. It turns out that the people I live with now see my action as a vote of no confidence. My stay with them must and will be a success. In addition, the

representative of YFU in this village is a good friend of the family. Besides with the coach of the wrestling team is also invited. I started wrestling in America, where it's a big and important sport. He is invited under the guise of 'that there is someone who can support me'. At the same time, I am told that if I don't cooperate, my secret will be told to the coach. That secret is that I continued to smoke, even though this is not allowed for members of the wrestling team. If he hears this, I will be kicked out of the team, something that will be very painful for me.

In the end, I'm sitting across from a council of four people. It's a shocking experience. I clam up completely. The announcement is as simple as it is startling: 'Either I just act normal, or I can fly back to the Netherlands at my own expense.' At that time, a ticket to the Netherlands cost about three thousand guilders. Of course, I don't want my parents to incur more costs and that's why I decide to adapt.

For six months, I live like a real American, always smile, behave in an exemplary manner, hang out with the "right" people and participate in math competitions.

When I get home, I notice the difference. I have completely lost myself and my way of dealing with life. It took me several years to learn to cry again and really feel.

Radicalization is not strange at all

This experience has taught me something very valuable: it is very easy to adapt from one moment to the next to a culture that is very different from what you are normally used to. All that is needed is that there is enough emotional pressure on you.

That's why I don't look funny at people who, from my perspective, do strange things. As I mentioned earlier, everyone has their own unique way of processing and responding to information. It is understandable that people believe that it is good to belittle others, or even to take their own lives. This is caused by the frame of reference they use. And that can be changed at any time. The great thing is that this works both ways. People can also suddenly come to see that love is the norm.

A shooting incident

Another event that made a big impression on me was something that occurred in the American Law class that I took as one of my electives in America.

In this course it will be explained how the American legal system works. The choice of a jury and the accompanying winged words 'beyond a reasonable doubt' which means that if there is even a reasonable doubt that someone is not the perpetrator, then he should be acquitted. In class we also watched the movie 'twelve angry man'. It shows how eleven of the twelve jurors actually don't feel like doing their task at all (jurors are randomly selected from the population register and refusal is not allowed) and want to quickly convict a boy who is accused of murdering his father. After a number of rounds of voting, in which it slowly becomes clear that everyone has their own reason for wanting to convict the boy, the jury unanimously comes to the verdict 'innocent'.

In one of the lessons, someone suddenly comes in, pulls a gun and shoots at the teacher and disappears. The teacher turns out not to be injured and almost immediately everyone realizes that it was an alarm gun. In the cacophony of excited conversations, the teacher speaks: "There is indeed nothing wrong with me. Take a blank sheet of paper, give as clear a description as possible of the perpetrator. Consultation with others is not permitted. I want it to be as quiet as a mouse."

For the next few minutes, everyone is busy writing. I'm doing my best, too. Was it a man, a woman? What kind of clothes was he wearing. I'm guessing it must have been an inconspicuous pair of jeans with a, I'm guessing again, a dark shirt. I don't get much further.

All papers are collected. The outcome is shocking. Blue, brown, white pants. As many colors as the rainbow of outerwear. Half of the class is sure that the perpetrator was wearing a hat.

Then there's a knock on the door and Mike steps in. Mike is one of the school's most popular guys. He's in basketball, everyone knows him and looks up to him. He is wearing blue jeans, above which is a sweater with the school's logo. Really a very striking sweater! It is true that he wears a cap. It is surprising to everyone that no one has recognized him. He really is so well known to everyone.

Reminders are not reliable, but they are useful

We've all been through a lot. We store all these events in our memory. In that storage, much of what we have seen, heard, and felt is distorted by our own beliefs. When reminiscing, the same thing happens again. In doing so, it may well be that our beliefs have changed over time. We color the memories with our attitude of today. This means that what I'm writing now probably only describes a few percent of what actually took place in my life.

Still, I can use the memories. They help me to see what, in my experience, has taken place. Even more important than this is that it shows me what I have learned and how I have grown over the years.

It is therefore not about whether a story is true. It's your story and that serves to get rid of what no longer serves you.

Studying

Another important reason that my life is being moved to America for a year has to do with my further education. I'm going to America because I don't know what I want to do as a follow-up study. I really don't have a clue.

In October, my father calls. Calling from the Netherlands is at that time a very expensive affair. A minute's call costs many guilders. And yet I get a call with this question. "I don't know," is my answer. My father explains that I have to know what I want before 1st of December, because that is the closing date for registration. For now, he's just enrolling me in a medical degree, which is in line with what he studied. And I was always good at biology.

Computers

One day, I walk into a classroom after school. Going home is simply not the most attractive option. There is a small green screen with a flashing block. Underneath is a small keyboard and to the left of it is a square box with a round button attached to it. I look in amazement at what I see.

Then a lady comes in, whom I recognize as the school's study advisor. In America, every student takes different courses at least twice a year. A number of these are compulsory, and there is also a wide range of freely selectable subjects. And all these choices need to be merged into one workable schedule. The woman explains to me that she often spent weeks puzzling before she could produce a more or less workable version of the schedule. "This one," she says, pointing to the screen, "calculates a very good variant in about three days."

She says that when I come back in two days, I can see how the schedules for every student and every teacher will come out of the box, which she calls printer. I was immediately grabbed. What a miracle, I want to know and learn more about this. Two days later I come back and see how indeed line by line (that's how it was done back then) the schedules are printed.

The next time my dad calls, I'll tell him enthusiastically about what I've found to go to college: computers. The tricky thing about this is that in 1982 computers were not yet established at all. They are used here and there to do very complicated calculations, using a lot of mathematics. And math isn't exactly the subject I'm interested in. In addition, they take up entire rooms. For me, it's mainly about this small, so-called, personal computer. My dad says he's going to look and calls a few weeks later.

He has found three places where they are going to do something with computers next school year. I choose Enschede because neither Amsterdam, I don't want to study in the same place where my parents live, nor Eindhoven, far too far, seems like something to me. Back home, it turns out that Enschede is much further away than Eindhoven.

I have amazing parents!

My relationship with my parents is okay. I don't put them on a pedestal, but I do love them very much. However, something completely changed the moment I realized how much time and energy my father invested in making sure I could continue on my path after I had come back from my American trip. It's probably a good read, and that's how I experienced it at the time: my father called again with the next set of questions

about my choice of study. But it was only later that I saw how he persevered and took the time to visit places and find out information in addition to his busy job. Here, too, times have changed. Downloading a brochure was not an option in those days. You often had to call several times and sometimes even go to the location to get the necessary information.

When I started looking back on my life in this way, in addition to all the things that I thought 'that could have been done differently', I suddenly saw how important certain actions were that my parents took. **And** how I have sometimes made life very difficult for them.

Holding myself hostage

For a few days now, the writing of my book has been at a standstill. For writing I use a technique that I found a while ago. The idea is to first define the structure of the book and then fill in any part of the book. After all, you know what each section is about.

That's how I went about it. I've written my introduction, made a list of events and am now filling it in. Still, it stalls. Is that because there are many other things that require my attention right now? Sounds plausible. However, I know from experience that that is not the point. It's all about intention, another lesson I've learned. If I commit to writing my book for one hour a day, then that hour is there. If necessary, I get up an hour earlier.

To find out what's going on, I 'pitch a tent'. This means that you put the question down with an invitation to know what something is about. And, sure enough, this afternoon the answer is suddenly there. It's about the piece I want to write after I've finished the previous chapter. Because 'if my father has had such an impact on my life, where is my mother's impact,' I wondered immediately after the last sentence. The answer is right there. An event when I was about thirteen or fourteen years old. The problem is that it doesn't fit into the format I've set up, everything chronologically, as I promised in the introduction. So why not rewrite the introduction? That doesn't feel right either. And here's the problem. I have forgotten the most important sentence from the introduction: 'and surrender it further to the Divine'. Once again, I leave no

room for the unexpected.

Set up a tent

I learned this method during the time that I am working on workshops from 'A Course In Miracles'. Sometimes it happens that you don't get any further in a process because that which lies in the subconscious is stored so deep that you get stuck. The metaphor you can then use is to imagine that there is a thick wall within yourself. Behind the wall is the story you need to progress in your quest. There is a door in the wall (in my image it always has a round arch) that is locked tight.

In your mind, you set up a tent in front of the door and resolve to sit by the door until an answer comes. It helps to know that your subconscious likes to be helpful and therefore wants to tell the story, but that there is often an earlier decision not to do so based on the conscious thought that it is better to forget about this.

You'll see, over time, the answer just pops up in your mind.

I'm a beautiful person, and so, are you

The story that came to me, after I had written about my father, is about when I was thirteen or fourteen years old and told my mother that I was nothing. She takes me to the mirror and asks me to look in the mirror. "You're a beautiful person." That's what she says to me. "And if you don't see that, maybe you should start saying that to yourself very often."

I think it's just a weird thing. To start telling myself that I am a beautiful person. Yet the alternative is not attractive either. Seeing myself as a big loser. That's why I decide to try it for just a few days.

While brushing my teeth, I look at myself. Ugly face, full of pimples, not accepted at all in class. "You're a beautiful person," I say to myself and laugh. This really makes no sense at all. The following days I still have to laugh, but slowly the laughter turns into laughing at myself. And also about everything that is so difficult in my life. That doesn't change at all. But my attitude does.

To this day, I believe I am a beautiful person. And with me all the people on this earth. And I owe that, in large part, to my mother.

Computer science

Studying at university is a revelation for me, but in a negative way. I passed high school with very little effort. Languages were always a stumbling block for me, dyslexic as I was. For the other subjects, glancing through the material was usually sufficient. In addition, I often easily compensated for a test that I had not learned with practical assignments.

The level and pace of academic education is very different. Moreover, the study originated from the mathematics program, which means that a lot of this field has been incorporated into the curriculum. And let that be one of the subjects in which I am certainly not strong. Especially when it becomes three, four and even more dimensional. I also find a subject like theoretical computer science really incomprehensible. Fortunately, I have a study buddy who understands it well and drags me through those courses.

After the first year of my studies, I'm not in a good position. There are actually too many courses that I didn't pass. I am 'summoned' to the study counsellor. He suggests that I continue my studies somewhere else: at a college of applied sciences.

Although I am very disappointed, in myself but also in the study program that I feel is putting me out on the street without any mercy, I am going to investigate. Soon I discover that there is a college in Enschede that offers technical information. A beautiful field where the control of machines is the focus. There is one 'but' associated with choosing a college education, at that time. Dutch, English and even gymnastics are compulsory subjects.

The thought of being back in the struggle with languages and physical education makes me lose heart. I really don't want this.

And so, I return to the study advisor. "Isn't there a possibility to continue studying at the university," I ask him. He makes a diagram on a sheet of paper. Nine subjects failed. In the last trimester pass all three resits, then in the resit period just before the holidays another three resits and also pass all of them. That leaves three courses that are still open at the beginning of the year. With three open courses, they still want to give me a chance.

It feels a bit like choosing between two evils. Studying very hard and a lot, with a considerable chance that I will not pass one subject and then have to say goodbye to university, or back in school because that's how the transition to college education feels to me. I choose to study, there's little to lose except missing some parties. Pretty important if you're a first-year student.

In the first period, I pass two of the three courses. It depends, again, on probability. I just can't seem to master that subject. Still, I don't give up, and sign up for a resit for the third time. There are now four courses on the list for the period before the holidays, but nothing ventured nothing gained. My study buddy helps me to describe as many different types of problems as possible and how to solve them. It becomes a kind of jukebox. Put in the quarter, choose a number and then turn, but with problems. If a problem looks like this, then apply such and such steps and generate an answer. I'm becoming half a computer myself. At the front a question comes in, at the back the answer comes out. The end result is a 5.6 for the course, which rounded up is the pass I need.

My hard work and perseverance are paying off, I still have three courses at the beginning of the second year that I have to resit. I can continue with my education!

Four years later, in 1988, I successfully completed my computer science studies.

Research

For me, it has become a habit to put a question mark behind everything; to investigate things first before drawing a conclusion. I often see it done differently. I hear a lot of statements like 'but that's way too expensive', 'they're never going to do that anyway'. When I ask how expensive something is, people often don't know. Or is it simply assumed that something is not possible.

Of course, it can be difficult or frightening to gather information, to ask for people's time to answer your questions. And, as long as you haven't asked, you can't be sure if you really can't. In this way, you are fooling yourself, as it were.

Love in France

While I'm busy getting my university life in order, I am approached by the mother of a cousin of mine. He's not someone I really know. He is more the son of.

Her question is whether I would like to go with him to France to take care of the bicycle rental with him for a few weeks at a campsite, run by Dutchmen. He has already promised that he will go but doesn't really feel like it. If I go along now, it supports him enormously. I'm holding off the boat. I still have to study. A few weeks later I get another call and again a week later. It seems like it's very important that I go along. Moreover, I now hear, one of his nieces is traveling with me to France, someone I know better and also like. And so, I agree. It's a beautiful time. It turns out that the organization provides well-organized cycling holidays. Every Saturday a new team of people arrives. For us, it is quite a job every Friday evening to select the available bicycles and assign them to the newcomers. They all have to be checked and on Saturday morning everyone gets his or her bike. This is neatly adjusted to height, after which the group leaves. Peace and quiet in the tent.

The work for the rest of the week consists of chasing people who have problems with their bicycles. Flat tire, chain run off or a gear that no longer works. There is an old Audi 100, with an engine that is way too big, with which it is wonderful to tear over the winding French mountain roads. In addition, we

provide all kinds of manual services at the campsite.

The earnings are meagre. A stay at a campsite, the extensive dinner that the guests also get every evening and one of the seven days off. In my case, Monday.

Now it just so happens that someone else has a day off on Monday. A girl, or rather a young woman. Well, I'm someone who doesn't like to do things on my own. That's why I thought it might be fun to do something together. Since we both have a bicycle, a bike ride seems the most obvious choice. One problem with the place where the campsite is located is that it is located at the top of a mountain. This means that after a day of cycling you are always treated to a steep climb, really one that makes you lose heart. And so, I arranged my cousin's bus, with the idea of driving somewhere and taking a bike ride from there.

Strangely enough, there is no response to my idea. Later I heard that she had just decided not to start anything with the opposite sex anymore and to do things on her own. On Sunday evenings I say, "I'll leave at nine o'clock, if you want to come with me." To my surprise, the next morning she is ready with her bike to go with me.

The reason this story is in my book is that this woman has become my wife. Why? Because during the dinner we had that night I said that I like that she is not skin and bones. I said what I thought, she couldn't believe it. This created the opening for a relationship to develop.

A fantastic collaboration

Much of what you will read in this book will give the impression that I did everything on my own. That is certainly not the case. My wife is my greatest support, anchor and provider of information at the right time. She just doesn't want her to be part of my book, a wish I like to respect. If you read 'suddenly', 'there was in the newspaper' or 'someone pointed me out' in the future, that may very well indicate her, although that is not always the case.

If there's a knock at your door, open it.

Life knows exactly what you need. It lays it out in front of your door and then knocks. All you have to do is open the door and see what's on the sidewalk. Sounds simple, right? And it is. The challenge is to hear that there is a knock on the door and then get past your disbelief that you can do that, what is asked of you. What that requires is a lot of practice, guts, but above all the willingness to fall and get up again. Over and over again. A famous quote from my father: "You learn by trial and error. I know a lot. Then you know how many times I've fallen." Many of us have forgotten that skill, have come to believe that it has to be right the first time.

If we had had these thoughts when we were a little kid, we would never have learned to walk, talk, write, or ride a bike. All these things you have learned by practicing a lot and making a lot of mistakes. Just look at a child who wants to walk. It gets up, falls, but immediately gets up to tries again. The child experiences an irrepressible will within itself to master walking.

Search within yourself. What is it that you really want so badly, but that you have come to believe that you are not allowed to do, that you are too old, too imperfect or not smart enough? Light the fire underneath it again. This is what you wanted! Go for it. And beware, from this intention, things will come your way. Certainly not all easy. That's because part of what you'll be going through is transforming your own disbelief!

Spreadsheet Teaching

I hear through the grapevine that someone is being sought to teach the use of spreadsheets. Teaching is something that suits me. I discovered this in the years that I was a student assistant at the University. Spreadsheets are a different story. My father is adept at making calculations in the program. I didn't really look over his shoulder more than once. It looks impressive with all kinds of formulas and lots of texts in curly braces like {ctrl}{end}{down}.

Having just graduated, with no clear idea of how I am going to get money after my scholarship, I seize the opportunity with both hands. "Of course, I can teach spreadsheets. What do people want to learn?" Fortunately, these are people who want to try to put part of their calculations in Lotus-123. You have to start at the very beginning. As you can imagine, I'm relieved, it means that I just have to make sure I stay one step ahead of the group.

After two days of intensive training for a group of six people, everyone is very satisfied, and I am invited to come again.

A few days later, I get a call from the person who gave me this assignment. He has heard enthusiastic stories about me and would like me to come and work in his company. The computer science machine is running at full speed, and they are looking for a teacher. Someone who can do something with programming is also very welcome. Although they are looking for someone who is available full-time, and I could do that, I decide to work no more than four days. I want to have time to do other things. I don't have to do it for the salary. Compared to my meagre student income, this seems like the jackpot!

Business is booming. The company I work for is growing and

growing. One employee after another male colleague is hired. And the number of square meters we occupy as a company is also increasing.

Once again, the demand for training is greater than we can handle with the team of now five people. That's why one more person is hired, this time a woman. For the story, it is useful to know that the owner is of Surinamese descent. It means that the people who are hired also belong to this population group. Often, just like me, they come in through the grapevine.

After a few days, the brand-new colleague asks me: "What is it like to work with a Surinamese woman?". I look at her as if I see water burning, I don't understand the question. "It has to be different, a woman in front of you, right?" she insists. This example is indicative of how I look at people: as beings with the same potential, perhaps outwardly different, but no less valuable.

Sell an idea, not a product

One of the most important lessons I've learned while working at this company is that you don't have to have a complete product to go out and market with it. This was done all the time when selling training courses. An estimate was made of what was needed for a particular application. This was used to write a table of contents and often a start for the first chapter.

With this material, the client was approached to gauge whether there was interest. This was not always the case. If a contract was awarded, it only meant that a number of days had to be worked very hard to complete the first chapters. The rest would come if the course followed. Actually, the same method that I had applied for my first assignment.

Farm with my cousin

We live in Amsterdam, in a beautiful upstairs apartment. We got it through home exchange. From a very small two-room apartment to an upstairs apartment with a large living room, side room, bedroom, separate kitchen, balcony and another room in the attic. We couldn't believe our luck. Yet slowly but surely it becomes clear why the person wanted to leave this paradise. There is a considerable price tag attached to the house, which is increased by percentages every year. That's why we're looking for alternatives. The most obvious is buying a house.

On one of our bike rides we are on our way to visit my cousin, his girlfriend and two children who live in Hoorn. As we fly with the wind in our backs towards our destination, the idea spontaneously arises to 'buy a large farm, together with others'. A nice plan, because then the possibility, at least in our dreams, arises to buy much more land and living space. But with whom? When we share the idea with my cousin, the response is enthusiastic. What an idea!

The plan is forged to look for a suitable location together, something that seems to be more difficult than expected. Because a house twice as big doesn't cost twice, but usually three or four times as much as two small houses.

One day, my cousin gets a call from a father of one of his students (he is a guitar teacher). He tells him that the farm next door will be sold by auction by the municipality. We immediately get to work, take a look, walk around the yard and make plans right away. We also visit the father who tipped

us off.

He's less enthusiastic than we are. "Be aware that a farm like this is twenty meters long and eight meters wide. Replacing a gutter is a bit different than replacing it on a terraced house. Be careful what you do for the bid." He knows a contractor who would like to walk around the building with us to point out the worst defects.

This viewing is an adventure in itself. The man knows the farm like his back pocket and knows all kinds of old stories to share. I still think the most beautiful remark he utters about a piece of wall that shows a clear crack: "That will hang for another hundred years, out of habit".

Eventually, the big day arrives and we can make an offer. We put the bid form in the envelope with a bid of 150,000 guilders. It seems far too little to us, but we have budgeted that we will both have 65,000 guilders left over to build two small palaces in the ruins.

Sometimes you (don't) get what you want

To our great surprise, a few days later we are informed that we have made the highest bid. We can't believe our luck.

The euphoria is short-lived. At the first meeting with my cousin's mortgage specialist, who already owns a home, it turns out that he will have to pay a fine of 25,000 guilders if he sells his house. He has bought a house with a defined contribution scheme. This means that he was able to buy the house cheaply, but that an expiring penalty has to be paid for 10 years when selling. Our budget is falling apart.

With hanging legs, we go to the municipality. "Unfortunately, we can't keep our offer because we overlooked a fine," we say with shame on our cheeks. The official does not blink nor blushes. "Then we'll make 125,000 guilders out of the bid." And with that, we can get back to work.

We make drawings. Let's first fill in the ground floor. After all, it is four times as much surface area as a normal single-family home. The garden is also divided.

Yet one unsolvable problem remains. Who owns the property? For the municipality, that's us, two couples. Then, once the property has been purchased, it can be split. Then one couple owns the front half, the other couple owns the back. Absolutely right.

Unfortunately, the mortgage lenders really see it differently. They want there to be two separate objects first. A front part that becomes the property of one couple and a back part that belongs to the other couple. They want the property to be split before it is sold. According to the municipality, this is not possible, because in order to be able to split something, it must first be someone's property

After many attempts to get it done one way or the other, we give up. Again, we go to the municipality and with pain in our hearts we withdraw the offer. In the farm there are already all kinds of things of ours, including a complete toilet that we found somewhere.

And the Universe knows better

A few months later, in a conversation, someone remarked, "You know what I'm wondering right now, why didn't you two buy the property. You could easily have borrowed 125,000 guilders. Then you would have owned it, then split it up and sold half of it to your nephew." How stupid we felt. Why hadn't anyone thought of this simple solution before?

The answer came six months later when it turned out that my cousin's wife would be seriously ill for a long time. The care that both they and the children needed could never have been given in a good way if they had lived in a ruin.

The bubble bursts

The computer company where I work is doing well. There is a constant demand for training, new computers and networks. The combination of training and immigrant pupils who have not completed their school education is well received by municipalities.

It means that there is plenty of budget to research new things. With my education in computer science, I am the right person to research these innovations. For example, I build programs for exporters of cars to West Africa, and I design a system to protect computer systems against burglary, by calling back from the central computer to a fixed telephone number to ensure that only the right people can log in. When I write it down like that, it sounds blankly old-fashioned, but at the time this was the cream of the crop. I come up with the name Smaug for it, the name of the dragon that guards the ring of the Lord of the Rings.

The beginning of 1991 heralded a downturn. Two things are happening at the same time. First, the demand for new computers suddenly begins to decline sharply. After an initial hurrah in which everyone believed that computers would solve all a company's problems immediately, skepticism is now starting to take over. Actually, everyone thinks that enough computers have been purchased.

Without new computers, no new workplaces, the budget for training will dry up fairly quickly and all the great new innovations will suddenly only cost a lot of money, instead of the promise of great earnings that they represented a few months earlier.

In addition to all these developments, a large display company contacts the company's management. They indicate that the name we use sounds too much the same as their name, especially since they are in the same industry. The owners have been made aware of this by the Chamber of Commerce. They had to add Amsterdam Inc. to the name everywhere. However, the display company called a number of times and never heard this addition. They demand that the name of the company be changed and threaten lawyers and going to court.

After three months, it becomes clear that very soon there will be no money left to pay anyone and that the only solution is to fire everyone. The two owners will continue together to see if they can still generate enough work to live on.

It's your fault

A few weeks after we were told this, a letter from my employer arrived. It states that the company is going bankrupt and that the biggest cause of this is my person. The innovative work has cost so much money that the chance of survival has become minimal. It hurts to read it. It feels like everything is being blamed on me, while I had no responsibility for this.

Looking back, I can see that someone had to be blamed. When I was younger, in my family we used to call it the game of 'it's your fault'. Often, it's easier to point the finger at someone as "the culprit" than to look at your own contribution.

Schellinkhout

Six months after our adventure with the farm, my cousin calls me. It's Sunday afternoon. He has just read in the local newspaper that there is a house for sale in Schellinkhout. A cute little house, really something for us. A telephone number is mentioned in the text that accompanies it. My cousin went to have a look and would buy it right away. The thing is, it's Sunday and it's already getting towards evening. In fact, you're not to make a phone call. At the same time, it seems like a great opportunity. And so, despite all the objections, I take the plunge and pick up the receiver with the words: "If it's a regular real estate agent, then he won't hear the phone. A private individual will be happy that I call him now." There appears to be a third possibility: a real estate agent with a home office. The man is very friendly. Of course we can visit the house. We should know that there is a lot of interest in the house and a number of appointments have already been made. The first is tomorrow, Monday, at two o'clock. I indicate that I would also like to come on Monday. "Then it will be at one o'clock or three o'clock," says the agent. Of course, I choose the option to go and have a look before the first viewing. The only problem that remains is that I can't ask if I can get time off until Monday morning, but I'll take that risk.

We are sold the first moment we step into the house. A picturesque house, with blue beams, a rickety but oh so appealing old-fashioned kitchen. A wobbly spiral staircase takes you to a large bedroom, with a mega dormer window overlooking the IJsselmeer. The disadvantage is that there is no real shower; in an outshed a place has been created where a small boiler is used to make hot water that you can use to

clean yourself. Ten liters is really very little, but oh well, a knee-jerk who pays attention to that.

The asking price is slightly above our budget. Between the requested 148,000 and our maximum amount of 125,000 there is, as any mathematician can calculate, a gap of 23,000.

We indicate that we are interested in the house. "What's an offer you'd like to consider?" I ask in a pinch. "We definitely want to consider anything from 141,000," is the answer. And so, we drive home like crazy (again: different times, no mobile phones) to ask my parents if they are willing to lend us 15,000. We'll just have to scrape together the other thousand.

My parents, completely taken by surprise, (which won't be the last time) quickly agree. Fortunately, we know that after making an offer, you still have six weeks to get your financing in place. In that time, we will see how the finances can be arranged. We call the broker and make an offer of 141,500. That evening we receive a phone call with congratulations, we are the proud new owner of a dike house in Schellinkhout.

Only later will you see the reason

In this story I see very nicely how things, which at first seem to go wrong, provide the information to make the right decision later on. When we drove back home on Monday, we were able to decide very quickly whether we wanted to buy the house. It was less than a kilometer away from the farm that we were going to buy with my cousin. We had already considered all the decisions about the place in relation to work, shops, friends and family at a greater distance. We knew we wanted to live in that area. That's why we were able to decide in less than an hour.

Appraiser inventory

After the IT bubble burst, I can't find any work. Suddenly, I went from being 'someone with the solution to every problem' to 'someone who had no education'. Yes, very nice computers, but what did I study for? It's really shocking to be told by everyone that my entire study is nothing.

I participate in a training reorientation on your career. Insurance sounds like something to me. There is good money to be made in this and the first steps are also being taken to do calculations using computers. I also have a conversation with our local advisor to find out what the pros and cons of the profession are. It's great that you can organize your own time. What disappoints me most is that a lot of conversations take place in the evening. If there's one thing I'm not, it's an evening person.

In the end, I have no choice but to retrain. And so, I'll start at the beginning: insurance A. As in any basic course, there is a lot of material in it that makes you wonder why you need to know this. With little effort, I get my diploma. Then comes part B. This is hard work, it really requires me to study this.

In the meantime, I'm applying for a job. It's not easy to keep my spirits up. Then I see a curious advertisement in the newspaper: wanted appraiser inventory. From the description, I gather that it is about visiting companies to determine what is present for insurance. Insurance A and B are requested, or the willingness to achieve them. Because I have passed part A and there is also a company car on offer, I decide to apply.

To my delight, I am invited for an interview. Fortunately, I have already had a number of conversations and am reasonably prepared. Yet it is different. I'm applying for something I've never done before, so I have to pull out all the stops to be able to answer the questions at all.

At the very end of the interview, I am asked how I feel about the job. "I'm really looking forward to it," I answer enthusiastically. A week later I am hired as an inventory appraiser.

Be positive

A few months later, I speak to the director of the appraisal company. The usual conversation to get to know a new employee a little better. Laughing, he asks me: "Do you know why you got the job? The other candidate we invited was much more qualified than you. But he replied to my last question something like "Well, we'll have to wait and see". Your answer was so nice and positive."

Spontaneous regression

During the time that I was working on the farm with my cousin, I discovered tarot cards. They lie on a table with the back facing up. Somehow, I know I have a thing for these cards.

When I turn them over, I see images that I immediately know what they mean. The figures and symbols on the cards seem to speak a familiar language. They talk about happiness, setbacks, thinking yourself to death and a new beginning. It's amazing how well I can tell a thing or two without any clues.

I'm fascinated by the cards. I buy myself a set, a book, then another and another. For each incident I draw a number of cards, place them in one of the many patterns and read from them what 'the answer to the question is'. I'm totally immersed in it.

One day I wake up feeling anxious. As you know by now, fear is quite a thing in my life, but this is different. I'm really, really scared. I prefer to stay at home, to not come into contact with people. There is also an image in my head, of a green meadow on the edge of a forest. The forest runs somewhat circularly around the meadow. I know that behind me, where I stand, is a house, where I live.

In panic, I call my cousin's wife. Now it 'just so happens' that she has just completed her first year as a regression therapist. She knows right away what's going on. I see something from a previous incarnation. For me, it's all still abracadabra, whatever it is, I don't want to keep walking around with it. The same day she comes to me and descends with me into the memory.

A story emerges in which I, as a Tarotist, live in the woods so as not to be found by the church. I give people advice on how to deal with the challenges they face. The work I do is forbidden, but people are grateful to me for listening and giving them advice.

One day, a man comes to the door with strange questions. They're different, it doesn't feel right from the start. Still, I go against my gut and tell the man what I see in the cards. When he leaves, I know it's not right. This man comes from the wrong camp. This is exactly where I am in my memory. I know something is going to happen that is not going to end well. Together we investigate how the story continues.

The next day, two men come to my house and take me away. I am thrown into a dungeon and a few days later I am brought before the council. Four men are standing in front of a long table, I am on my knees in front of them. The purpose of the conversation is for me to admit that I have acted wrongly. After all, I have worked with the powers of the devil. Every time I deny, I get kicked and punched. In the end, I decide to admit that what I did was wrong. A statement that I paid for with my life.

In the months that follow, I go to another hypnotherapist and work on processing the feeling of injustice and powerlessness that has arisen from this event.

There is no good and bad

When using tarot cards, certain cards are often labeled as good and others as bad. I don't believe in that. Each card has a side that contributes (to happiness, togetherness, connection) and one that takes down.

Take a card like the Devil as an example. This card is associated with the ego and therefore with selfish and coercive. The positive side of the ego is indicating boundaries and what you need yourself, without *demanding* that you are giving it unconditionally.

One card that, as strange as it may sound, is closely related to this card is the Lovers. This card is often seen as the ultimate goal, to love someone or preferably everyone. Yet there is a dark side to this: soft healers make stinking wounds. If it is not indicated where boundaries are and that you have to stick to them, a state of chaos quickly arises.

Burnout

Life seems to be going well. We both have jobs; we are busy making renovation plans for the house. We enjoy the good life. Yet there is more to it than meets the eye.

I enjoy my job as an inventory appraiser. The work means that I drive to companies and register all the inventory that is available. It feels a bit like I'm the king. I walk into a company and want to look everywhere, really everywhere. So also in the spaces where most companies would rather you not look. I come across companies with beautiful entrances with a mess at the back that every normal person would be ashamed of. And always my answer is: "Well, I have to look there too, because I have to record everything."

This recording is done with a small voice recorder. Walking through the building, I speak in what I see. "Sixteen lamps, simple model, ten tables from Sears with sixty bucket seats. One coffee machine with four flavors, forty cups with matching spoons, a tabletop refrigerator, under a self-made shelf." So that was the cafeteria. On to the next room, while I dictate what I see in the hall.

My recorded tapes go to the administration where two diligently working employees type all my gibberish into a word processor. I find the printouts on my desk when I'm back in the office. The idea is that I now put a price on everything I've seen. There are a number of catalogues of large warehouse chains in the office in which I can look up prices. The prices I can find with this are only a small part of everything I see. How to find prices of other pieces will be taught to me by my two

colleagues. The small problem with this is that the company is growing so fast that they are up to their ears in work. They often fill in prices from memory before they move on to the next company. And if they're even in the office, they're preoccupied with calling companies to find out prices or consulting with management.

At the end of the day, I can't get any further with determining prices and so, I go out again to take the next inventory. It doesn't occur to me to say it's not possible, or to sit in the office until someone helps me look up prices.

The employees in the office are very helpful to me. They help me again and again to figure out easy sites so that I have the least amount of trouble. Nevertheless, the reports, which still contain a number of things without a price, are piling up steadily.

Then the Universe turns up the sound knob a bit. Because that's what it does when there's a lesson to be learned that you don't want to take to heart, in my case saying I can't do this. An urgent order arrives: a discotheque has to be recorded. Both other appraisers are working for important clients and so, the office decides that I should go to the discotheque.

It seems amazing to me! I've always messed around with amplifiers, music and light. Walking around in a discotheque, while no one is there. I can already see all the mixing consoles and light boards in front of me. What I forget for a moment is that I don't go there for fun, but to take inventory. My heart sinks when I step into the dimly lit room. Lamps, cords, switches, cabinets everywhere. Ninety percent I don't know

what it is, what it's called. In panic, I try to ask someone if the cables should also be recorded.

I get a taste of my own dough (I always felt like the king): "You're the expert here, aren't you?" As best I can, I dictate what I see. Lots of numbers and codes on the backs of devices, hoping that I can still look something up in the office. Somehow, I know this is hopeless, but I know how to keep up appearances until I get home.

The next day, I drag myself to the office. I have to hand in the tape from the discotheque to be worked out. In addition, it has been indicated that the reports are very long overdue and that I have to start to complete the reports of the first companies. I remember turning over the stack in my inbox to get the oldest report on top. I open the report and can't remember what it looked like in that company, let alone what the special things were that I didn't get to give a value. I quickly take the second one, hoping for more success. But here too, a suit of the same cloth. I don't know what I meant by the descriptions that seemed so obvious a few months ago. A blind panic takes hold of me. To make sure that enough is enough, one of the office employees comes to me with the announcement that my recording of yesterday is really very difficult to understand and that she wonders if she can type this out.

I leave the building in tears.

I sit at home for days. I feel completely empty, I can't take anything, I sleep a lot and I can't finish a single thought. This is the turning point in my life. I start to investigate how the world works, why I'm doing so badly.

We're rushing ourselves

One of the most important books I have read during this time is 'Lessons of Burn-out' by A. van Bergen. She describes how, as a journalist, she is going to investigate the strange phenomenon of overwork and burnout from the idea that it is all nonsense. Much to her dismay, she ends up herself in a crisis that is diagnosed as a burnout. It is very instructive to read that with this disease it is impossible to predict how long the recovery will take, in fact that every attempt to speed up the healing only increases the recovery time.

I also read that it doesn't hurt to say no. Everyone tries to sell as much work as possible to someone else in order to be able to focus on what is really considered important. Someone who answers 'yes' to everything is very nice. Because that's where you can take everything you don't want to do yourself. The one who answers yes thinks, because it is asked, that the answer must be affirmative.

She describes how, after coaching people from her own experience, she teaches a secretary to say yes twice, no once, no matter what the question is. To the secretary's surprise, it only happens once in a while that someone really stands up for himself and wants her to do it anyway. Solution: then next time twice no, once yes. It really works.

What van Bergen also discovers is that a large part of the corporate culture that we suffer from so much as employees is caused by ourselves. Here's how:

Investors look for companies that are lucrative. They do this by looking at three factors: the profit made, the number of permanent employees, and the equity. The more profit, the more equity and the fewer permanent employees, the more

interesting the company is. To be of interest to investors, companies have a short-term vision, which immediately generates a lot of profit and contributes to a large amount of equity. To employ as few permanent employees as possible, they like to hire temporary workers. Also nice and flexible. The question is: how do investors get their capital? To a large extent, this capital is raised by employees who, whether or not compulsorily, save for their retirement or hope for a large return through investment projects without having to do much for it. In this way, a lot of money ends up in the hands of a small group of people, the investors. They then produce the corporate culture that these employees suffer from so much.

Sickness benefit

The tricky thing about overwork and burnout is that you can't set any timeline for recovery. The more you try to stick to something for a while, the more the stress increases. At the same time, overwork stems from the fact that you want to be in control of everything and "saying I can't" is not an option. The motto for recovery is therefore, let go of all musts, return to yourself and work on a different way of dealing with the world.

The outside world looks at it very differently, it has a timeline and procedures for dealing with someone who is ill. And so, after a few weeks, someone calls to find out how I'm doing and if I'm planning to return to work soon. On the advice of the therapist who assists me, I resolutely refrain from giving any hint that goes in such direction. But after a number of phone calls, I am told that the boss of the appraisal company will delight me with a visit home. The conversation is going in the direction I expected. After the obligatory inquiring about my state of mind and progress, the word comes out. It's really time for me to decide to come back. I have been at home for several months now and the annual contract will not be renewed if I stay at home any longer.

Shocked, I am left behind. I know that going back to work now is not an option. But the other choice doesn't seem very tempting either. After a year, I will be called for an interview about the transition from the sickness benefit to the disability department. Whether I will be admitted there remains to be seen. Then the only station left seems to be that of welfare, something I'm not really looking forward to.

Despite all the doubts, I still choose to go for a good recovery, and I tell my employer that I will not return.

In the months that follow, I will continue my spiritual quest. I discover Pathwork which is based on lectures given by Eva Pierrakos. From the collaboration of this woman and a body-oriented therapist, a beautiful form of therapy has emerged. Following the therapy helps me to be more in touch with myself and make a first contact with my body, something that I didn't do at all until then.

The same therapist introduces child work to me. A form of therapy in which you learn to make contact with the part of yourself that has remained a child. This part often looks anxiously at the grown-up world, causing you to react as if you were still small. In therapy, I learn to communicate with this part, to take its wishes seriously and at the same time develop my adult self so that I can respond firmly when necessary.

Time flies by and before I know it, the letter from the benefits agency arrives with an invitation for an initial interview. The year is already over. In the days leading up to the interview, all kinds of scenarios go through my head, none of them very appealing. On the day of the meeting, I don't feel happy at all. Still, I tell my inner child to go and play behind my back, while I will have the conversation with the gentleman.

The conversation takes a very unexpected turn. The examining physician explains that given the qualities I have, a transition to the camp of disability is impossible. There is too much work I can still do. At the same time, he understands from my story that I'm not ready to go to work yet. And so, as he closes my file, he says, "I'll sign you up for disability. The official mills do not turn so fast here and that gives you at least another six months to work on your recovery. It does mean that you will be called up a number of times for interviews, but that is better than going on welfare."

You don't know

We often think we know exactly what is going to happen in a certain situation. Because someone has been through the same thing and ended up somewhere in those circumstances, the assumption is immediately that this is the case for everyone. The beauty of life is that every person is unique and therefore the interaction between each person is different. Where one person gets a hard NO, it may just be that someone else in the same situation gets the benefit of the doubt from the same person.

Often the approach is to decide in advance how a certain situation will unfold and also to set a fix that 'if this happens, I will absolutely not go along with it.'

However, what you have in your head determines to a large extent how you act and in doing so, you set the tone for exactly what you fear to happen. Because most of the time, what you have in mind is what you don't want to happen. By fixing what you absolutely are not going to do, you also limit the possibilities for what is good to unfold.

Sounding

Another method that I discover during this time is the use of your voice to sing intuitively. I am put on the track by a horoscope reading in which I am told to use my voice to help people discover their spirituality. The astrologer mentions Borg Diem, someone who sings in overtones. This doesn't really appeal to me. In the search that follows, I come into contact with someone who uses this form of singing, or rather sounding, in a group.

Her approach is to let everyone sound at the same time and then pay attention to who takes the lead, who tries to create harmony (i.e. me) and who continues to do their own thing. After a round of sounding, everyone is instructed to do exactly the opposite of what has just been done: the harmonious may be disharmonious, the leader may follow. After a year, the supervisors leave for France. I never met anyone who works this way after that.

After she leaves, I search in vain for other supervisors. Nothing resembles what she did. And so, I'll leave it for what it is.

The Inner Critic

Voice is a beautiful way to get in touch with your inner critic. Singing is defined in many cultures as a very small group of people who are able to produce sounds within an agreed framework. The interesting thing about this is that as you travel from one culture to another, or from one era to another, the context for which the label 'beautiful' applies is constantly changing. Even different music genres have different frameworks. For example, opera is not really appreciated by rock lovers.

This fact means that almost everyone has a blockade with regard to singing. Those who 'can't sing' immediately clam up when you ask or want to produce something of sound. These people have all been told that it is better to sing softer, at the back, or not at all. The small group that can 'sing' within the frame is so conditioned to sing correctly that a request to sing spontaneously sets all alarm bells ringing.

Intuitive singing is not about whether you can sing within the lines, but whether you can allow yourself to let what lives inside of you come out in the form of sounds. The moment you do that, an inner voice, the critic, emerges in almost everyone. It constantly and often loudly comments on the sounds that are produced. It is also decided very quickly that it is impossible to continue singing. Tickling in your throat, becoming emotional or a feeling of discomfort causes you to stop. On the other hand, singing about what you experience in your body is very relaxing and healing.

When someone sounds from their deepest being, it is very vulnerable. The combination of hearing the sounds and experiencing the vulnerability of the person makes this a very special experience to be present at. In addition, it is very liberating for the person to finally give the soul permission to make itself heard.

Woodlice infestation

In the meantime, we have discovered that our idyllic house on the IJsselmeer is a bit less solid than we had thought. Because the walls are starting to turn gray here and there, we remove a small piece of wall. Directly behind the plaster is a layer of glass wool, which serves as insulation, but looks disturbingly wet. When the glass wool is removed, a wall appears that is literally black from all the woodlice that have found a wonderfully damp home there. There is also the shower with the ten-liter boiler, which really needs to be addressed. Because now it's important to take a shower very quickly.

All kinds of wild plans are devised to make the house bigger. I've always loved houses with a mansard roof. Or roofs where the dormers have a crooked tiled roof. All ideas are immediately consigned to the trash can by the municipality with the announcement that the house is part of a protected village view and that therefore the front view of the building must remain the same. We continue to search and search, much to the dismay of the local official who does not understand that his proposal to put a second house behind our house is not a good idea. In the end, the plan to extend the roof further up is accepted and we can start making drawings.

There's something weird going on with making drawings. The budget available for the renovation is not large. That's why it seems like a good idea to make the drawings myself. In my youth, I once met a neighbor who was an architect.

I vividly remember that, when I asked what an architect would entail, it was explained to me how he made drawings of new buildings. To my answer that I thought it would be much fun, drawing, I was told: "Oh well, you can't even draw the beginning of a line." Later I learned that architects draw with rotating pens and noticed how difficult it is to draw evenly with these pens.

Now that I'm writing, I realize that this comment didn't stop me from making the drawings for the renovation. In fact, the remark that I couldn't draw a line only made me more determined to make the drawings myself. My inventive mind figured out that you could also make drawings with a computer, which also had the advantage that adjustments were easy to make. How amazing that one comment paralyzes you and the other encourages you to take action. I thought: 'You won't stop me!'

The plan that is drawn consists of raising the roof, so that there will be three bedrooms and a bathroom with a real staircase to the top. Downstairs there will be a toilet, an open kitchen and large living room and another small office.

While the plans are being inspected and commented on, I contact the local contractor. I have been told that the installation of a roof can only be done by a licensed contractor. The purchase of concrete and the very long beams needed for the new roof is also reserved for contractors. After the plans are finally approved, I draw up a list of all the necessary materials. An impressive list, to which an impressive amount is also attached by the contractor.

Miraculously, there appears to be a subsidy scheme for home improvement that reimburses the costs of materials, costs of labor have to be paid yourself. Let it be the case that we want to do a large part ourselves, with a lot of help from friends. This means that we can submit almost the entire cost of the renovation to the municipality.

Perfect, or is livable good enough

I start renovating the house with the attitude 'it has to be perfect'. I have seen how beautifully a house can be renovated and I want to match that, if not do it even better. In the beginning of the renovation, this setting is not really an issue. After all, everything is about structural work and things that disappear behind the carpentry.

Gradually, I notice how difficult it is to do something perfectly. Because there is always something that has been sawn off just too short, a knot in a ticking bar or a layer of paint that has just not been rolled out well enough. I notice that I am starting to pay attention to everything. Not only in myself, but also in others, I see where perfection has been missed. It's shocking and liberating at the same time. Where I thought the large, beautiful houses were perfectly finished, it turns out to be quite disappointing. If I look closely, I can see something everywhere. The liberation comes when I decide for myself that perfection doesn't exist at all and that livable is a much better starting point.

Taking the roof down

For the construction of the roof, together with the contractor, we set a Monday on which the work will start and set the delivery date of beams and sheet material on the Friday before.

At four o'clock on the Friday in question, however, no beam, plate or potholders have been delivered. Somewhat annoyed, I call the contractor. Where are the materials? We are to start on Monday aren't we! Does he realize that people have been specifically asked to take time off to help? The reaction I get leaves me in amazement: "If I think I can react like this, then he certainly won't come to help, and I'll just have to see how I get my house built!"

We let the auxiliaries know that there will probably be no work on Monday and have a very unpleasant weekend. Monday in the course of the morning the truck arrives, fully loaded with our order. Apologies, but it could not be delivered on Friday. There is little choice but to start building the roof ourself. Fortunately, there is some experience from the old farmhouse that my parents bought 27 years ago and renovated to their heart's content, together with us as children and many friends. And so, together with my father, I determine the angle of the roof and, with some apprehension, put the circular saw in the first seven-meter-long beam. On a very high staircase, borrowed from the neighbor, we put the first two beams together. And so, two more follow, and two more. It's all incredibly wobbly, until we screw on the first plate. After a few days of work, there is a new roof on our house.

Apologizing works wonders

After installing the roof, I realize that I am in a rather awkward position. Without a contractor, it will not only be difficult to order some materials and get good advice on certain matters, we also live in a small village where everyone knows everyone and has an opinion about situations. But perhaps the most important reason is that I find it so annoying to be at odds with someone. That's why I want to try to restore the relationship. Now the story goes around that West Frisians can be stubborn, but the contractor seems to be in a class of his own. Once in disagreement, this means that it will be so for the rest of his life. And so, I have a problem.

So, one day, I take the plunge and cycle to his house, where he also has his workshop. When I find him there, I approach him and immediately apologize. I say how sorry I was that I questioned his expertise, that I should have just waited for the material to be delivered and that I would have liked to build the roof with him, but then saw no way to contact him. A single "Oh, is that so" is what I get as a response. But after a week, it becomes clear through the local 'gossip' that this weird guy from Amsterdam has done something that has never been seen before: he has apologized. From that moment on, there is a workable relationship with the contractor again, the air is cleared.

Stairs that don't fit

We have already done a lot of renovations to our new house. A lot had to be done, and a lot of the work we did ourselves. For example, we drill the old concrete floor out of the house ourselves. While doing this, my father almost touches the supply cable of the electricity, because it is in a curl under the floor and not, as we naturally assumed, straight forward from the road to the meter cupboard.

We also weave a reinforcement for the new floor to be poured. This must be inspected by an official of the municipality. We dread this inspection like crazy. We've been told that you have to make the connections in a special way, that the distance has to be quite accurate and that the load-bearing capacity is also tested. We are particularly concerned about the latter. The whole wickerwork seems to dance way too much to us when we're standing in the middle.

The afternoon of the inspection, we are expectantly awaiting the arrival of the municipal official. He arrives, gets out of his car, walks to the open side door, looks inside and says, "Contractor B, right? Well, looks great". Full of amazement we look at the car that has already left before we realize it.

We also choose the do-it-yourself option for the stairs. Ordering a staircase as a kit means that you can put all the steps in the back of a car and only have to transport the stair spindle, the part around which all the steps turn, as it were, on the roof of the car. Not a big trailer and also a few hundred guilders in wages saved. That's a nice bonus. And so, in good spirits, I load a package of numbered boards into my car.

Then comes the day when the stair has to be assembled. The

stair maker told me that I have to start with the bottom step. First apply the bulkhead (this is the part under the step), then the first step. Then continue with bulkhead board two and the second step, until there are enough steps that you reach the corner of the stairs. Then attach the sideboard and finish by applying the rest of the boards and steps and attaching the second sideboard. A child can do the laundry and the best part is, you don't even need nails.

Something weird is going on at the first bulkhead board. The slot in the stair spindle where the first board has to go in is too small. So, I shave off a little piece to make it fit. The weird thing is that the first step and the second bulkhead board are also a bit too big. I immediately think that the staircase builder didn't know his job, but something tells me that if all the bulkheads and all the steps are a bit too big, I might have to admit that I'm the one who doesn't know the job. And so, I call the man and ask him if he can come and see what's going wrong.

Once there, he opens his toolbox, takes out a large wooden mallet, places the first board and rams it violently into the stair spindle. And so, he continues with the first step, until step twenty is in the spindle and there is a real staircase on the ground.

Help from the neighbor

During the first phase of the renovation, we live in a caravan for nine months. We store all our belongings in the small room that is located on the ground floor. A lot of banana boxes are stuffed with everything we hold dear. Then the room is filled to the brim with stacked boxes. Heavy things at the bottom, the lighter ones on top.

For a few weeks, the house has no roof. Only the first floor is still on the house, and we have covered it with a number of large tarps. Even after the roof has been installed, the left and right sides of the house will remain open for a number of months. My brother-in-law, who comes to visit us one evening to see how we are doing, even saves the day by reattaching the tarps in the pouring rain, while we are unsuspectingly drinking tea at my cousin's house.

After all these months crammed into the small caravan, the renovation of the house has progressed enough so that we can move into a room on the new upper floor. It is no more than two walls against the sloping wall with a door in it, which make a separate whole, but we feel like kings.

On a beautiful sunny day, we decide that the time is right to free the boxes from the small room and finally give a few of our precious things a place again. We take the boxes out through the window and put them on the grass at the back of the house. Soon we notice a somewhat strange smell and also see that certain boxes show some damp spots. The more boxes we take out of the room, the more humid the boxes become. It goes without saying that the content will not exactly be fresh and unblemished either.

Defeated, we sit at the explosion of boxes. What should have been a joyful reunion with our possessions turns into a minor tragedy. A lot of precious things, including photos that were at the very bottom because they were so heavy, have been ruined.

Then a neighbor walks over the dike where our house is located. He asks what's going on. With tears in our eyes, we tell them what we have just found. He is very resolute. "When you're done like this, you'll come to our house, see it is over there. Then I'll give you a towel, take a shower and I'll make sure there's a meal for you." What an angel! And how wonderful that he didn't ask if he could do something, or that we might want to take a shower, but just took matters into his own hands.

Life insurance

You could say that finances are the challenge in my life. We have never been poor, but the inflow of money has great peaks and also very deep troughs. During the peak due to working at my first employer with a second income, I also took out life insurance. A nice way to have a pleasant extra income later, when we are old and bowed, as it is called in my family. It is interesting to invest a lot in the beginning, so that a lot of return can be made quickly.

I am now almost at the end of my unemployment benefit. As expected, I was rejected for the sake of being rejected and I was sent back to the country of workers to look for a job. But I have no idea what I want. If the benefit stops, the next station is welfare, which means that the house has to be sold. With assets, no assistance.

My inventive mind thinks that there must be a nice amount of money in the life insurance pot. Better to live now than later, is my thought. It turns out to be true, there is almost ten thousand guilders in the insurance. I am only reluctantly told that amount by our insurance man, who believes that such insurance is really for life after retirement. I understand that, for him it is both an unusual idea and continuing a policy makes him money.

When I indicate that I intend to terminate the policy, which will give me access to the money, he tells me that I will lose a lot of money. I don't let myself be led astray and ask him what a lot of money is. After some insistence, I am told that he assumes one third of the amount, so 3,333 guilders. "A lot of money," he says triumphantly.

I look at it differently. Of course, more than three thousand guilders is a lot of money, but when I terminate the policy, we receive an amount of 6,666 guilders. With great reluctance, the advisor fills out the necessary paperwork. It will take a few more months before we receive the amount. The new year has just started, and we will receive the amount in time to be able to compensate for the loss of my unemployment benefit. When filling in my income tax return for that year, it turns out that paying a third in tax only applies if you have had income. Because I had little income for that year, the income tax doesn't apply and it turns out that we can use the full 10,000 guilders!

What is a lot?

People often speak in general terms: "That's very expensive" or "That's impossible to do". My attitude has become more and more to ask if someone can clarify their statement, indicate how much money, time or effort their statement requires. Then it turns out that it is not at all clear what investment is needed. And what is a lot of money or effort for one person can be a piece of cake for another.

Tarot

In between all the vicissitudes around the house, I also try to find a job, without much success. I'm still the guy with no education, but at the same time I'm university-educated. The responses to most of the jobs I apply for can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, there's the "That function is way too simple for you, you'll get bored and be gone in no time". And the other one is, "But you don't have any qualifications for that at all."

My understanding of tarot cards has grown to the point where I'm starting to do readings for people. It's wonderful to discover that the cards open up a channel in me. I see the images and a stream of words starts. I decide to focus my attention on the tarot, both in individual consultations and in workshops about the cards. On January 4, 1995, I registered with the Chamber of Commerce as a tarot reader. Added together, the figures for this date add up to 2000, something that rarely happens.

It may sound like a repetitive record player, but again I am miraculously pointed out the existence of a Tarotist training. I register immediately and then drive from Hoorn to Nijmegen every two weeks. I get to know beautiful people, but I also notice that learning the meaning of all the symbols, colors and poses of people on the cards takes me away from the intuitive line I have upwards.

In the training I discover a completely new idea: each day is connected to one particular card from the tarot. This card is calculated by adding the numbers of day, month, and year. The card says something about the energy of that day and

therefore also something about people who were born on that day. It describes some of their character traits. I like it and look at my family, friends and acquaintances with the date of birth in hand. There are many traits that I recognize, but at the same time I find dividing everyone into 22 categories as very generalizing.

As I delve deeper into numerology, which is the basis of this line of thought, I notice something. It's about combining two cards. It's hard to explain, so I'll start with an example. The tarot has the card three, the Empress, and four, the Emperor. Three plus four equals seven. The card that goes with it is the Chariot. This card is about going out into the world and creating things. In addition, the card tells us, it is important to balance the male and female intention: not only action and decisiveness, but also laying a good foundation, rest and reflection. The first two attributes belong to the Emperor, the other three to the Empress. In short: if you combine two cards, Emperor and Empress, the description of the card you are then given, the Chariot, is the combined story of the two previous cards. This combination applies to every two cards. I apply the idea of combining cards to the fact that everyone is born under a certain zodiac sign. There is a tarot card that corresponds to each astrological sign. Now I have three cards that describe someone, the card under which he was born, the card that corresponds to his zodiac sign and the combination of these. I see more and more combinations and eventually come up with a system of nine cards, with which I can give a catchy description of someone. I also remember that every year on someone's birthday the energy is different and develop an annual horoscope from there.

Even if you don't understand it, act

Just before summer, I stand in front of the side door of our house and look out over the piece of land behind our garden. In the distance is a dilapidated house. I also see the road of the dike, which merges in the distance with the road that comes from the village. Suddenly, the thought lands in my head: 'You have to quit the training.'

I stare into the distance in amazement and try to debunk my thought. Well, the training is a bit less loose than I thought and I can think of some other reasons why I shall not continue with the training. But to be honest, I don't see why I don't just finish the second year, after which I can call myself a Tarotist.

The voice in my head and the feeling that goes with it remain, despite all my objections, 'Stop the training'. Although I don't understand why, I call the training and tell them that I have decided not to finish the training.

A few months later, the announcement comes that our first child is on the way. We need every minute to get the house ready for a newcomer to arrive and live in it.

A car in the front façade

One day in March, the weather decides that it will be very cold again and has decided to provide the world with a small layer of white in the morning. Usually a happy surprise. This time, however, this decision gives rise to a somewhat less pleasant experience.

Because I'm building up my tarot practice, I'm at home a lot. The house has a certain condition of being finished which is very pleasant. The upstairs bathroom is finished, the kitchen is starting to take shape and all walls are plastered with clay plaster. A wonderful material that regulates moisture and also provides a very nice energy in the house.

What is not yet functioning properly is the heating. A boiler has been installed at the top of the ridge and the first pipes have been laid, but only in the summer, when the central heating can be switched off, will we continue to install all the radiators. The result of this is that the house heats up slowly. That's why I often sit against the radiator, which stands on two bricks in front of two of the three front windows.

On the day in question, I can't find my way on the hard concrete floor over which wood is going to be laid. That's why I decide to go upstairs and lie down on the bed for a while. Less than five minutes later, I hear a loud bang.

My first thought is that the radiator I had been sitting against has fallen over. I rush downstairs to assess the damage and make sure that not gallons of water squirt out of the system. What I find is beyond my wildest dreams.

Two windows protrude about twenty inches and behind the glass the hood of a black car can be seen. When I get outside, I see how the car apparently came off the dike and got into a skid. He slid, through the bushes separating the house from the road, on beams that lay in front of the house and drilled into the façade.

As if in a dream, I behold what happens next. The neighbor, who is a farmer, walks up and consults with the person standing next to the car. It is clear that they know each other, what else would you expect in a village. He walks away and arrives a little later with his tractor. A chain is thrown around the towbar of the car, the tractor is turned around and the car is pulled off the beams in no time. After a wave of hands to the neighbor, the fat BMW disappears from sight. The road is still white and the man drives away at high speed. I rush to the contractor to get stamps to prop up the floor and grab a tarp from the shed to make sure it doesn't get wet inside when it rains.

This is not the end of the Kafkaesque adventure. Someone from the insurance company shows up, assesses the damage, and explains that essentially very little is broken. The window frames may be a bit dismayed, but that should be fixable. And if that is not possible, then surely the double glazing can be reused. Then new window frames have to be made around those glasses. He also claims that quite a couple of other stones can be used in the front façade, so that the entire front does not have to be renewed.

The contractor makes mincemeat of his whole story. If the front is hit, it is important to remove the entire front and use

new material to ensure that the construction wears well again. The appraiser is not open to any reason. He persists. Our argument that in the event of a scorch mark in a rug the entire rug is also replaced, is not heard by him. The costs made for the shoring are also not eligible for reimbursement, because I do not have a receipt for the tarp and other materials and the fact that the upper floor has never been in danger.

The squabbling continues for two months. The appraiser stands by his position and I'm about to give up. But again, there is something that makes us persevere and we find the insurance ombudsman. He looks at the case and comes up with a damning verdict. The result is that a few weeks later we are sitting at the table with a sulking appraiser. He has been told that the contractor can draw up a quote and that, if we agree, he must sign it. It's a curious display.

The end of the story is that we repair the façade together with the contractor and do not have to pay a nice amount of wages. Again, money is coming to us.

Sowing and reaping

Sometimes life comes up with things that you don't understand where they come from. With everything I've been through, I can't help but know that everyone has been on this earth multiple times. I am also convinced that as you sow, you will reap. And so, it may be that things come your way that are the result of events that have taken place in another life. That means you can dig and dig but still have no idea where something came from.

For me, it works better to accept that something comes your way because it is part of your sowing. In other words, whatever happens in your life has its origin in something you have done. Many people see this as punishment or condemnation. I don't see it that way. The law of sowing and reaping also works the other way. If you support, you will be supported, if you give, you will receive.

In addition, I believe that you can learn something from everything that happens in your life. The question is not 'Why is this happening to me?' but 'What can I learn from this?'

'A Course In Miracles'

For a number of years, I have been looking for 'how does life work'. For a while I follow the texts and methods of Pathwork. To my dismay, I read somewhere in the third book that homophily is a disease that can be cured. For me, this is a bridge too far and I resolutely put the book aside. This is not a strange action for me. I'm very much a 'one-thing' guy. My attention is drawn to something and then I go all out. For a number of years, I was only busy with knitting. I learned to knit every pattern; I was able to make whole images in sweaters with different colors. And from one day to the next, I let it go. I had researched everything.

At the same time, I feel unhinged, I'm still very much searching. Then someone arrives with a small book entitled 'Listening to Your Inner Voice' by Lee Coit. In the booklet, the author says that, although he is a very successful advertising creator, he is not very satisfied with his life. He decides to spend six months travelling through a country where he doesn't speak the language, in his case France. His desire is to learn to listen to his inner voice.

The book tells a beautiful story about how he first acts out of fear and ends up at a campsite where he is treated like some kind of alien and feels very alone. The next day he keeps going from campsite to campsite because he still has the feeling that he hasn't found the right place. It's already starting to get dark. When he finally chooses a campsite, he is warmly welcomed, people do their utmost to understand him, and he is served a delicious meal.

At the back of the booklet, it says that the author was inspired by reading one particular book: 'A Course In Miracles'. When I talk about the book at home, I almost immediately get a magazine in my hands, which contains an interview with one of the translators of the book. I call this person to ask for information. I get his wife on the phone, who says she will pass on my question.

A few days later, a package falls through the mailbox containing a book. It is the book 'A Course In Miracles', together with information about meetings and an episode of the newsletter. There is also a bill for almost seventy guilders. I call again and get the translator on the line. "I thought: you need that book. See when you're able to afford the book, you'll be fine," I'm told.

The book is put on my path in this miraculous way, just before a four-week holiday. I flip through the book and see that there are 31 chapters in it. With four weeks and an extra weekend at the beginning, I get to 30 days. If I start the day before we leave, I can read the whole book during my vacation, that's my thought. The holiday will consist of a lot of beach and reading because we have just heard that 'we' are pregnant for the second time.

Reading the book is very disappointing. The English is very difficult and even if I did understand the language completely, there are sentences that come one after the other, but don't seem to have any connection to each other.

Still, I stubbornly read on. Because I do this, I get more of a feeling of the book than I understand everything in detail. It's like listening to the radio while you're doing something else. You listen to the beautiful music and suddenly you hear a

snippet of the texts in a song, for example "She is so beautiful to me". Reading the texts in this way gives me a deep inner connection with the book.

The great thing about the book is that there is a well-organized association around it. It means that every month a meeting is organized where readers of the book come together and that there are reading groups all over the country. Finally, I find a group I can join.

I need do nothing

One of the most beautiful passages in the book is about the need to do nothing. The way it was translated into Dutch, suggests that you can sit on the couch and wait for everything to come to you. It's a discussion that often recurs at meetings.

My feeling is that action is also needed to achieve a result.

For me, the answer lies in the English text. It says 'I need do nothing'. 'Need do' refers to something like 'it is necessary to' or 'it is essential that'. The phrase thus indicates that it is necessary to be able to do nothing, to be able to step aside and allow the Divine to unfold what is necessary for your well-being. I don't think that means you don't have to do anything. Action is needed, but only when the time is right, not before.

Accountant

The adventure with the tarot takes a new turn with the landing of a blue envelope: the tax return for the previous year. It's still a paper version and I'm struggling through the explanation. Until now I've always been employed, and it was easy, this is my pay, I spent that on mortgage, so I get so much back.

Now it turns out that, because I work as an entrepreneur, I have to provide all kinds of things: an accounting, a profit and loss account and some other such things. I've never looked into this. I simply thought: I earn something and I will have to pay taxes on it.

I can't figure out what is asked of me. That's why I call the tax authorities and ask if I can be helped. That turns out to be possible and a few weeks later I'm sitting at the table with someone with my notes about what I've done and what I've earned.

Together we calculate the total of the earnings. It's an amazingly large amount. Not enough to live on, but high enough to have to pay a large part to the tax authorities. Something I didn't take into account, of course. The tax man looks at me and says with a smile: "But I do think you've spent more than three days a week on all this. This makes you eligible for a special deduction and the assessment will lapse." When I tell this story to my old school friend, he looks at me as if he sees water burning. He is an accountant and asks if I haven't looked into what it means to have a business; what the tax consequences are. He gives me a book and advises me to read a number of other books, so that I am better prepared.

I read the books that have been recommended to me. It soon dawns on me that all the examples in these books are for large companies. If one wants to invest one million, with a workforce of more than ten employees and so, on. While I am looking for answers to the question 'How does it work if you are both an employee and an employer?'

To answer this question, I start writing down how the regulations work out if you have a small business. I call the man from the tax office and ask him for advice as well.

The search yields an impressive number of notes. When I show them to my friend, he encourages me to work them out. It is information that could be useful to more people.

It's a fascinating project. I sit in front of the computer for days to describe my insights. When I tell them what I'm doing in one of the tarot courses I teach, someone asks me, "Is that also about accounting?" When I answer in the affirmative, she continues with the story that she has a complete course in accounting at home, which she does not use. "My boyfriend has money like water. He asked me the other day what I wanted to do, and I thought bookkeeping sounded fun. I ordered the entire correspondence course in one go. But I opened the first page and saw that it wasn't for me. Do you want it?"

It's exactly what I need. By studying the material and doing the exercises, I understand much better how an accounting system is set up and I can also look at this aspect from the perspective of the small practice owner. The end result is impressive, eighty Letter sheets about all the ins and outs of running your own practice.

I think it would be a good idea to offer what I have selected to training institutes. I choose the ones that focus on alternative treatment methods because that's what I'm interested in. I collect addresses from all kinds of training guides, yes the internet is still in its infancy, and send out more than a hundred letters.

Exactly two institutes respond, far fewer than I had hoped for. One wants me to give an afternoon workshop in a few weeks. Someone else would like to see what I've made. With a folder with my whole story in it, I drive to Amsterdam where this person looks at it page by page. I feel like I'm waiting there for an eternity. Then he speaks briefly. He is an accountant himself, gives a course and is impressed by my book. He will use it every year in his training.

Can you help me

After this conversation and the first workshop I give, I feel more confident in what I have to offer. I start to offer the course in several ways, meet people who have their own practice and are looking for an accountant, just on the street and at the trainings where I give the workshop. In a number of years, I build up a successful accounting practice. The name I come up with for it is 'Ace of Pentacles'. It's both a reminder of where it all started, and an indication of the alternative I'm focusing on. In addition, the meaning of the card Ace of Pentacles is the helping hand on the material plane.

Something valuable I learn during that time is that asking for help is really almost impossible for the majority of people. The set-up I choose for my guidance is that the practice owner does a lot himself. Entering receipts and storing them neatly

is something that most people can do. It is also easy to check whether someone has paid their invoice. This allows me to focus on what remains, check whether everything has been entered correctly, assess the content of the figures and make a good estimate of how much tax is due. Because the latter is the point where things often go wrong with most small practices.

In the intake interview and also in the manual I write, I emphasize the importance of sounding the alarm immediately if there is something you do not understand. At one point I even put it as a footer under every page: 'if you have any doubts, ask, that's what I'm here for'.

It's amazing how often I get results that I can't do anything with. Amounts have been placed in strange places and the bank's details are incorrect. When I ask why they didn't call, they often say, "I thought I'll try it myself."

Asking for help is often experienced as very difficult. I know all about it, I myself got into the sickness benefit because of it. It seems like you're admitting that you're weak because you don't know something. I see it this way now: there are people in this world who know more than I do about a lot of subjects. If I have the opportunity to enlist their help, I do it. Not only does it make your life easier, almost everyone loves to assist someone.

Selling Schellinkhout

While this is all happening, the three of us live in our now house at the IJsselmeer. Our toddler likes to walk around on his own. In a ribbon village where there is no sidewalk, there is little space to do so. In addition, the dike on which we live is a popular route for motorcycle clubs to tour on weekends. Because we live at the end of the road that leads to the dike, the motorbikes often pass twice, first over the dike, turning off and then swinging back through the village or just the other way around. The idyllicity is a bit gone. One day, almost at the same time, we say to each other, "Maybe this isn't the best place to live anymore."

Now that the truth has been uttered, it's time to start looking at what the next step might be. The house is not finished yet, there is another room downstairs that has not been touched and upstairs everything still needs to be finished. The decision to leave is really fixed and we contact a real estate agent.

For the first time, the term "real estate agent's paint" is heard. The term refers to making a house you want to sell look visually pleasing. Ceilings and walls with a layer of paint, a leftover carpet on the floor. Even the room that is not finished just decorate it as if it were usable. And then pictures are taken, and the sign is put into the garden.

What happens next surpasses all our wildest dreams. It seems as if there is a golden egg in our garden, so many cars braking to drive slowly past our house. Someone even rings the doorbell who: 'Wants to buy the house NOW!'. I'm so glad I hired a real estate agent. This does not apply to the gentleman at the door, who thinks the comment "You can contact the real

estate agent" is nonsense. He wants to buy it from me and is willing to pay anything I want.

The agent has done this before. It is a sought-after place and that is why there are many candidates who would like to have it. He also knows that in the madness, people bid amounts that they then can't pay. If you go with someone like that, there is a good chance that you will lose other buyers, who are wealthy but bid less, because they feel they have been treated rudely.

The agent will talk to some of the bidders. One of them is the confident man who has been at the door. There is also a skipper who has fallen in love with the house because it has a self-built wooden kitchen as well as a bathroom that is completely paneled with wood. "It reminds me of the ships I sail on, especially with the view of the lake from the bedroom," we hear through the broker.

In the meantime, we have another house in mind. It's a curious story. Someone has bought a new-build house and will not be able to deliver the house in little less than a year. He is looking for safety and wants to sell the house now.

It's an attractive possibility. It is a corner house with a garage, in which I can build a practice space. Because the date of transfer is very far in the future, there is a lot of room to negotiate the price. Moreover, the great interest makes it possible to ask such a price for our house on the dike that we can afford the new home.

Together with the broker, we determine what we need and ask all bidders to consider this price. Two parties remain: the skipper and the blowhard. We award the house to the skipper, who will live in it with incredible pleasure for many years to come.

Go for the impossible

In the meantime, we do have a problem. Our house has been sold; the new house is far from being completed. It seems to me that the simple solution is to go to the housing association and inquire about available housing.

There are available homes. What interests the person behind the counter most is the income we have. There is a small problem there, because there is no fixed income. The response of the desk clerk is: "That it will not take place." I counter with the question whether it is not possible to pay the rent a year in advance. He looks at me incredulously.

I stubbornly insist and state that income is meant to have certainty about whether the rent will be paid. So, if I pay the rent for the whole period now, there's no problem, right? In the end he disappears with a "I really need to discuss this" and later comes back with that this is very unusual, but if I pay three months' rent in advance and then pay the rent neatly every month, there is no reason not to register us. "But you don't get any interest on that payment, you know." A few weeks later we are offered a house that is less than five hundred meters away from where we will eventually live.

A car for us

Cars are a separate chapter in my life. My father discovered that driving on LPG in the Netherlands is very economical. Most people think that if you drive on LPG, you have to pay twice as much road tax. This is not the case, as long as you have a certain type of installation installed.

I quickly skip the first car I buy. This car is falling apart from misery, I don't dare to talk to the seller about it and he goes straight to the scrapyard. Seven hundred guilders go up in smoke.

The first real car is in the corner at the garage where my parents' car is in maintenance. It's a little blue car, from the Citroën brand, a brand I've always had a soft spot for. They build cars with a quirky character and apply innovations that no one else comes up with. Sounds familiar by now, doesn't it?

When I ask what the car would cost, the garage owner looks at me in amazement. If I want to take him for a few hundred guilders, that's fine as far as he's concerned. He just traded it in and doesn't really know what to do with it.

And so, we drive one old car after another. Every year at the annual inspection, it's make or break. If there are high costs of repairs to get it through the inspection or if it is expected that they will come soon, then it is the end of the story, and we will look for a new second-hand one.

As the family grows, there are now four of us, the small ballons we drive around with so far are becoming a bit on the small side. That's why I'm looking for a different type of Citroën, one with hydraulic suspension. Ever since I first saw this technique, I have dreamed of owning such a car. After starting the engine, the car

slowly lifts upwards because the suspension is pressurized. It is a sought-after type and the prices are accordingly.

After a long search, I suddenly find one for an amount that is within our budget. Not that there isn't more money, we just sold our house and basically have some savings. To make sure that we can live on that money for many months to come, I decide to go for this opportunity.

I'm going to take a look, take a test drive and agree to the price. Of course, I stipulate that the car is properly inspected before I buy it. "No problem," the two somewhat scruffy-looking men reply. It will be ready next week.

The following week I come to pick up the car. However, he's not done yet. When I ask why, Frick and Frack look at each other and one says "This part, it had to come from France and it hasn't come there yet." The other nods. After a few weeks I get the keys to the new acquisition, together with the car papers and proof that the car has been properly inspected.

Six months later, I take the car to the garage where I always go. I feel a little guilty for not going to him for another car but step over that. What's done is done and therefore there is no point in feeling guilty.

The garage owner is just friendly to me. I briefly discuss the purchase, but he replies that he is happy with the maintenance of the car. I get my bike out of the car and drive home, a little lighter.

Not much later, a phone call is made. It's the garage owner. He tells me that the car I'm driving is a hazard on the road. The beams that support the engine are stuffed with aluminum foil and then sealed with a layer of tectyl. One very hard brake and you can get the whole engine in your face. How it is possible that

this car passed the inspection is a mystery to him. However, there is nothing he can do about it, because I only came to him after six months. "You won't get the car back from me, it's a driving death car." With these words, he puts down the receiver. The atmosphere in the house is at an all-time low. I've been sick for a week because I have a throat infection that just won't go away. Ideally, I want my body to fight the disease itself, by letting the Divine healing power, which I believe in, do its work. I also know how strongly my body reacts to antibiotics. In addition, we have just moved and have a newborn and a two-year-old child at home, which causes a lot of stress and very little sleep. And I need the car to drive to the locations where I give my training.

The next day, the garage owner calls again. He has just received a second-hand car. It's a twin version of our car. Same type, same color, also on LPG. The only downside is that the car will cost 7,000 guilders. I tell him resolutely that I don't have the money.

A few days later, I have taken antibiotics, and our son is staying with friends for a few days, the garage owner calls again. He feels like the car is really for me. I try to explain to him that the money that would be needed for a new car is in a savings account to live on.

In the conversation I do inquire about the condition of the car. Because of all the purchases, I know pretty much what I can ask for: battery, brakes, major service, LPG installation, inspection. I go through the entire list and get a "Completely checked and in order" on everything. Only the tires, they have to be replaced before it can pass inspection. I thank him for his time but end the conversation with "I'd rather eat bread than tires."

Again a few days later. The garage owner on the line. Whether I've thought about the car. Not really, I have to admit. Not that the situation hasn't crossed my mind, but I live in the firm belief that buying such an expensive car is not a good step. All the cars we purchased for this purpose cost less than half the amount that is now being asked. "What if I add four new tires?" It's clear to me that SOMETHING is trying to indicate that this car is meant for us. We buy the car and enjoy it for many years to come. The garage owner was right: this car was meant for us.

Three times is

A frequently heard saying is 'when in doubt, don't overtake'. A good starting point because if you don't feel an immediate YES to something, it's better not to act. At the same time, I believe that the universe knows what's good for you much better than you do. IT DOESN'T act like us humans, who are quick to respond with "Well, if you don't want to, then you don't." The universe continues to lovingly offer the suggestion to you. My experience is that with each subsequent offer, the volume is increased slightly.

When I have doubts, but things come my way again and again, I know that what is offered to me is for me. Three times is enough, as we say: a charm.

Teaching in Arnhem

The moment I no longer expect it, a training institute from Arnhem contacts me in response to the mailing with the question if I can provide a one-day workshop. Of course I can. Although I arrive much too late the first time, the owner of the institute is very satisfied. All students have the feeling that they are well prepared if they want to set up their own practice. It is also a fruitful day for me, three students want me to do their administration.

This first time turns out to be meant as a test of my abilities. The institute provides even more trainings, and I am called in to initiate each group into the wonderful world of entrepreneurship.

Many times I make the journey from Hoorn to Arnhem and enjoy the trip through the woods. If possible, in terms of time, I drive over the Enkhuizen-Lelystad dike and from there on to Harderwijk and the Veluwe. How I love the woods.

Listen to the message, not the words

Arnhem is a beautiful city, but the traffic situation is very special, you can only go around the center in one direction. Missing one turn means you'll have to drive around the entire city again. The result of this is that the first time I arrive much too late at the parking lot near the location. I quickly look around and see to my relief that there is no need to pay on Sundays. Along the streets I only see a small spot where I will have a hard time getting my car into.

Then my eye falls on a large area where there is an abundance of parking spaces. There I park my car, put the boxes of readers that I always carry with me on a cart and make my way to my first acquaintance with a hurry. Not a really good start. Someone shouts at me in a very loud voice: "Hey jerk, don't you know that you are not allowed to park there at all." In situations like this, I'm at my worst. I go into a kind of panicked running mode and only want one thing and that is to be at the location already. Moreover, I am called an jerk here and this person tells me that I am not allowed to park there, What does he know!

Something inside of me is holding me back. "Why is someone yelling at me, you don't do that for fun, do you?" comes to mind. I stop the hurried pass I started and look around. A large sign stares at me, hanging from the fence around the many free parking spaces: parking here only for permit holders. Had I left my car at home, I would certainly have been treated to a parking ticket.

Dagaz: spiritual center

At the end of one of the workshops, the owner tells me that she doesn't know if there will be any training next year. She explains that the place where we work now has been sold to Lundia, who has a shop underneath the space and is in need of storage space. So far, the search for another space has not yielded any satisfactory results. She has also considered buying something, but doesn't know where to start and she is also very dreading the renovation that will probably be necessary.

I jokingly suggest: "We can set something up together. I know a lot about mortgages, finances and also renovating suits me." After initially being hard to get, the idea is taken more and more seriously.

After some searching, we find a building, close to the center, easily accessible by public transport, plenty of parking space. The building itself is large, has a basement with toilet where a lunchroom can very well be made. Not only this property is for sale, the upstairs apartment can also be purchased.

The property is exactly what we are looking for, only the upstairs apartment worries my partner. What if it is sold to someone with children. Then the peace and quiet needed for the center is over. There are two options: either insulate the floor for noise, or also buy the upstairs apartment. Whether the latter option can be considered at all depends on funding. To my great surprise, after a few weeks the news arrives that two people have been found who have a warm heart for the trainings and both have more than a hundred thousand guilders that they want to make available interest-free.

Suddenly, the realization of the plan is within reach, including the purchase of the upstairs apartment. The rest of the required capital is financed by a mortgage on the income that will come from the courses.

Throughout the summer, we both work our butts off. My father is called in, who in turn has an acquaintance who is good at applying sprayed plaster. We install a partition wall in the building, creating a large workspace and a small wardrobe. In the basement there will be a kitchen with tables and chairs from Ikea. One of the tenants who came along from the other building sews meters of fabric together into curtains, valances and cushion covers. We baptize the center Dagaz, a name that designates a rune stone meaning day, or balance between opposites.

God is always there

On one of the many days of working on the building, someone comes for the electricity. I know enough about installing electricity, but there is something strange going on with the installation and that is why we hired a professional for advice. I explain what I've already researched and where I think the problem is in the installation. It makes the man who has arrived, look at me with different eyes and we start talking. The conversation we have starts about renovating, but soon we move on to spiritual topics.

The conversation turns to the topic of God. He says that he was taught in his upbringing that God is far away and that He is not at all interested in humanity. Since the fall from paradise, he has been disgruntled and is waiting for us to finally come to our senses. He talks about how he feels that

this image is not correct. Somehow, he believes that God is easy to reach. I agree with him. A Course In Miracles depicts a picture of a God lovingly awaiting the return of his beloved children.

While we're having this conversation, he's been looking at what's going on with the electrical installation. There is nothing wrong at all, the only point is a circuit that can turn on a point of light at three points, (something that almost never is used) which has caused the necessary confusion,. He leaves with a smile on his face and says, "Then I was apparently here to hear that God is always there."

Heading East

Although we have done a lot of work, the center is far from finished. Everywhere there are still details that need to be finished. The upstairs apartment where my business partner is moving in is also calling for attention on all sides. I try to spend as much time as possible to smooth out all the bumps, but I still live in the west of the country and drive a lot of miles. I am so happy with my car on LPG! Nevertheless, the situation is becoming increasingly untenable. Driving up and down takes three-and-a-half to four hours at a time.

It has also been clear for a long time that we really want to live near the woods. If there is a moment of free time, we invariably choose to put the bikes on the back of the car and drive over the famous Enkhuizen-Lelystad dike to Harderwijk to go cycling there. The Utrechtseheuvrug is also a place we like to go to.

Now that a lot of my work takes place in and around Arnhem, the urge to move is only increasing. A small problem is that the houses in this region are a lot more expensive. Also, all our friends and family live in the west. When my parents offer to make us a donation, we take the plunge and start looking for a home near Arnhem.

It will be a long and arduous search. Not only because the internet is still in its infancy and we therefore have to travel back and forth very often to be able to find houses and assess their potential. The housing market is also experiencing an unprecedented rebound. Houses are sold by auction and are usually gone before we have been able to look, the distance really plays tricks on us.

In this raging madness of sales and rising prices, a very large house appears. It was built under architecture and consists of houses built into each other using all half floors. It is a special house, but it is dark and smells musty and of smoke everywhere. The walls look brown from the nicotine stains. A practice has been built in the garage underneath the house, but without light coming in.

There's something that draws us toward the house: it's the playfulness. You can get lost in the house by just walking up three half flights of stairs. Hard to explain in words, but many a mechanic has looked at me in amazement after checking the boiler and asking: "How do I get back down?"

The darkness in the house and also the energy that feels very low and negative makes us doubt. We decide to look further. That's quite a gamble because, as already mentioned, the market is overheated and anything that even remotely could be a good shot will be gone in no time. Anyway, you know, when in doubt, don't overtake.

We continue our search, also in the same district. Most homes are small or unaffordable. At houses in Arnhem and Wageningen, we always miss out because we simply can't respond in time.

And while we search and search, this one house just keeps being for sale. At one point, the selling agent calls to inform us that the house is now being offered to Vitesse. This football club - with enough money, it is emphatically said - is always looking for suitable accommodation for starting players. If we still want the house, we really need to take action now. But yes, we're still not sure.

Set a boundary

When we finally decide to buy this property, we run into the problem that it seems impossible to come to an agreement with the selling party. It seems as if the difference between the asking price and what we want to offer is unbridgeable.

Someone who hears us say this, suggest the following:

"Sit down and decide what the ultimate price is that you want to pay. Ask for guidance to set the right price, a price that matches your intent to want to live there. Ask yourself how far you're willing to go financially. Then you bid that price and wait. If the offer is rejected, you know that you're not meant to live there."

It sounds like a good, but also exciting idea. Because how do you know what the ultimate limit is? It's amazing how quickly we know the price that's right for us. It doesn't take more than five minutes. We report the price to the broker and it stays quiet for a while. Then comes the redeeming "The selling party agrees to your offer."

The curtain falls

In the meantime, my business partner lives in an upstairs apartment on a busy street where the first bus passes through at half past six and the last bus at half past one in the morning. Before this, she lived in a very small, quiet village. There is little sleep left. In addition, she lives above the center and goes to have a look every time it is used and then hears the same complaints over and over again about things that do not yet function properly.

After six months in this, in her experience, cacophony of noise, human contact and complaints for which she feels powerless to do anything about it, she falls into a deep hole: she can't take it anymore.

We have to pull out all the stops to get everything done that needs to be fixed. Fortunately, I have now moved to Arnhem and I can take over many tasks from her, except for the training courses that she provides herself. After a few months, she takes the plunge and indicates that she cannot continue in this way, she wants to sell the center again.

For me, a dream is shattered. A spiritual center has always been something I wanted to be a part of. Because we have a reasonable number of permanent tenants, I make a plan to continue the center with these people. Of the 36,000 guilders needed to cover the operating costs, 30,000 will be raised by all tenants. So there is a gap of 6,000 that has to be paid by new tenants. With forty rentable weeks per year, this amounts to one hundred and fifty guilders or one and a half days per week of rental.

I'm organizing a meeting with five of the largest tenants. The plan is that everyone continues to rent, everyone looks for new tenants and if more than the one and a half day is rented, these tenants will receive a discount on their rent. The only thing in return is that they guarantee for a thousand guilders per person. I will also guarantee the same amount. The amount does not have to be paid, only if things go completely wrong and no new tenant is found, this amount can be requested. The chance of that seems to me to be nil.

I tell the story with verve; the reaction is amazing. No one sees anything in the plan and chooses to look for a space elsewhere, which will not be easy, and drop the beautifully decorated space. I'm perplexed.

Now that it is clear that there will be no follow-up to the center, it must be sold as soon as possible. It is difficult to move from words to deeds. Not only emotionally, but also practically, it is not easy. There is the step of taking a broker in hand. With a building that will yield around 750.000, the commission will be somewhere around fifteen thousand guilders. An amount that we will probably desperately need to pay all the bills that are still there and will arrive in the coming months.

On a whim, we walk upstairs and print in large letters FOR SALE and a phone number. When we get downstairs, we stick these prints on the windows at the front. It hangs there for a few days and then we take them away again. No one responds and it's probably better to leave it to a professional anyway.

Gratitude

Imagine our surprise when the phone rings two days later. An enthusiastic, somewhat fast-talking, man tells us that he has seen that the phone number he wrote down a few days ago has suddenly disappeared. Has the property already been sold? Because he really wants to buy it.

He goes on to say that he is a candidate civil-law notary and wants to be one of the first to settle freely in the Netherlands. He wants to make the notarial profession cheaper and easier to reach for people. And he continues, if that doesn't work out, his wife also wants to start something for herself. And how fantastic that the upper floor is also for sale, because he had already wondered where he could live.

The speed with which this gentleman speaks and thinks gives us good hope and makes us aim high on the selling price. We ask for eight hundred thousand guilders. In the end, the property is sold for a good price and after all the bills have been paid, we are left with an amount of ten thousand guilders.

That's really a miracle, starting a business always costs a lot of money in the beginning. Only the fact that the housing market is still hugely overstrained means that there is money left over. Something I am incredibly grateful for.

The Awakening

One day I get a call from someone with an English accent. He tries to explain something in very poor Dutch. Actually, I'm already trying to hang up the phone when A Course In Miracles (ACIM) sounds somewhere. I suggest we continue in English.

It turns out that the caller, named Paul, found my details on the ACIM site, where all the reading groups are listed. He explains that he is from Canada. His parents emigrated from the Netherlands. He gives trainings based on the book and Gestalt therapy. He asks if I would be interested in coming to an information evening. Of course I have, everything that has to do with the Course has my interest.

The meeting is rather Band-Aid. In broken Dutch interspersed with lilting English from his Canadian partner, it is explained how we color everything we do from past experiences. All very theoretical. Until Paul takes an example. He tells how he was annoyed today by something his partner said.

He starts by expressing his irritation and within a few minutes ends up in a completely different world. He tells how, by expressing what lives inside him, a feeling arises that brings him to a memory as the youngest boy in a family with only girls and a mother. His father was very absent. And this 'ladies' gang' never took him seriously. He was always the sweet little guy who would give you a pat on the head and a treat and then get on with what you were doing. He has never remembered this so clearly and is able to turn the beliefs he had planted in his youth, namely that he is not taken seriously by women, into a positive one. It's beautiful to

see.

I follow several of the workshops that are given, and I am increasingly involved in the content of the organization. There are more and more workshops. At some point, the plan arises to bring the first year of the program, as it is taught in Canada, to the Netherlands. Initially, I am very enthusiastic and want to participate in the training myself. However, there is so much uncertainty about what is needed, who is going to arrange what and how the financial settlement will go, that I decide to stop organizing.

Anger.

Something I've struggled with all my life is the fact that I could get really angry, apparently out of the blue. (It's something that, looking back, I can still feel very guilty about that this happened). It also happens in one of the workshops. I've been working all day to arrange and fix everything and someone makes a, in my opinion, unfair remark. I'm freaking out.

After I have cooled down a bit, I apologize. Instead of going into what happened, the person suggests going through the process that we follow in all the workshops. From my annoyance towards the person who posted the comment, I quickly end up with a deep anger towards my father. He could, just like I do now, get very angry. I felt like it came out of nowhere. Suddenly, there was the eruption. The hardest part was that he also shouted very loudly that he cared about me very much!

I feel angry. Underneath that, I feel powerless. There's nothing I can do to calm the storm. Everything I say only fuels the fire.

"What would you like to happen?" the person in front of me asks. "That he's leaving." As the words come out of my mouth, I realize that this is not what I want. 'That it stops'. No, it isn't. I see now that it's also nice that my father is there. As curious as it may be, this "contact" is better than feeling like you don't have a real connection. Then what really comes to mind is what I really want: 'That you just tell me you love me, without screaming'.

In the remainder of the process, I clear up a number of deep-seated beliefs, including "I have to raise my voice to be heard" and "My father doesn't care about me." From that moment on, it is easier for me to react more calmly to situations that affect me.

Beliefs: but I was wrong

The process I learned during this time is called the clearing process. The underlying idea is that behind every irritation or anger there is a hidden feeling. You feel the anger because you don't want to feel or acknowledge that feeling. By expressing the anger, without responding to it, space is created. Space for the feeling to come up and experience it.

The feeling, in turn, is linked to a memory. The feeling arises because the situation you are in now brings something from the past to mind. That's what you're reacting to, not what's happening right now. The simple question 'Just like when...' very often easily recalls what it's all about.

In this past, you've come up with something. Something happened at that moment that you experienced as shocking or threatening and there was no one to help you look at it. That's why you drew your own conclusion: that's how the world works. It is not surprising that this conclusion is not based on the truth. Thoughts like 'Mothers never listen', 'Men can't be trusted', 'I'll never be able to do anything', 'My creativity sucks' are all caused by events in the past.

The tricky thing is that beliefs make us look at the world in a certain way. It is the glasses we wear to look at the world. As a result, beliefs cause us to color situations to fit our beliefs. Take, for example, someone who believes that "Men are not to be trusted." If such a person encounters a friendly male who offers to lend a hand, this gesture is immediately labeled as "trying to deceive me." The offer is declined. On the other hand, a man who does sandbag this woman is immediately added to the archive of evidence. "See!" This completes the circle. You have a belief, and through your selective perception you see it constantly confirmed.

The beauty of these beliefs is that none of them are true. They are just thoughts that a person has that make the world look exactly as the thoughts are. With this information, you can change your beliefs. The next step is to see that the belief is based on a mistake by saying: but I was mistaken.

That sounds easier than it is. A winged remark that was often heard during this step: "It's simple, but not easy". A whole life can be built on a belief and all the evidence that goes with it. To admit to yourself that you have made a selection of reality in order to maintain your own idea can be very confronting. Yet it is the way out of the vicious circle you are in.

The final step in the process is to choose a new belief. One that applies to everyone and is formulated without denials. In this example, "Men have my best interests at heart" is a possible alternative.

Workshop being born again

Once again, a newspaper clipping lands on my desk. A workshop to be born again. For me, life on this earth is always difficult. I remember one time that we were standing on the dike at our house in Schellinkhout. It was a gray, gray day, and the sky blended seamlessly into the equally colorless waters of the lake. I pointed my finger at that transition of air and water and said, "That's where I want to go." (I don't realize until much later how painful this must have been for my wife who was standing next to me). I had an unclear desire to be on the other side. Something I couldn't pinpoint. Maybe this workshop is a way to choose life again, I thought. It is also the thrust of the newspaper article: 'If you feel that you don't want to be here, then this is a way to really choose life'.

The workshop is very well put together. It includes an intake interview, a private session and a whole weekend in which during the first day we work on why you don't want to be here and making the decision to be born again. The next day is spent on the ritual to perpetuate your choice. You stay during the night so that the energy that has been built up does not disappear due to contact with the outside world.

After the intake, I will receive a list of questions to answer, in preparation for the individual session and the workshop. One of the assignments is to start a conversation with my mother about my birth. Questions such as 'what do you remember about the birth', 'was I wanted', 'was my father present' etc. are discussed. And so, I make an appointment to go through the questionnaire with my mother. Two surprises await me in this conversation.

First, my mother tells me that I was the most wanted of all three children. My brother had been the reason why they got married, my sister was the third. Of course they were happy with all three of us, but my arrival was very deliberate, and both my father and my mother had been looking forward to my arrival. The image doesn't match the idea in my head at all. That I have come in-between things and hang on the wagon as a fifth wheel.

The second rabbit out of the hat comes when my mother says, "I got you twice, once when you were born and once when you came out of your coma." When I look at her as if I see water burning, she says, "But you knew that didn't you?" Well, I don't! She tells me about my accident when I was eighteen months old. How I came back after two days, went through all the stages that a baby goes through at a rapid pace and then still knew how to play with a peg, something I did at the time. Fingers together, squeeze open, fingers loose, peg closed. I could do that for hours in a row. For her it was such a relief because she knew that everything was still working well in my brain. Her thought was that if I could still remember how to play with a peg, the rest was intact too.

In the workshop we do all kinds of exercises to make more contact with other participants and with the earth. We are also building a kind of tunnel from cloths, blankets and sleeping bags, which will serve as a womb. At the end is a narrow passage. The idea is that you start at the back, lie there until you feel like you want to be on this earth. Then you crawl out through the narrow corridor, and you are lovingly received by the other participants.

There, a song of their own choice is played.

This is where I panic. As is often the case, I apparently did not read the information that was given carefully enough. Because I did choose a song, 'Feel' by Robbie Williams, but I didn't understand that I had to provide a CD on which this song is burned. Going home to burn a CD is not an option, after all, we all sleep together on location. Again, salvation is at hand and one of the participants ensures that a CD with the song in question is delivered. How well I am taken care of.

Regression to the perpetrator role

In the individual session I talk about my regression experience and how difficult it is for me to keep being handed the victim role in life. The therapist doesn't go along with my drama. Everyone lives different lives, with different roles. We play everything out, so that we can experience the pros and cons of everything. She thinks it would be a good idea to look for a different kind of life for me.

She chooses irritation as an entrance. Irritation about my victim role and how I hate it. I hit a pillow, express my anger. The anger ignites and leads me to a memory of a life as a Viking. With brute force I march in a large crowd through Northern Europe and do everything that God has forbidden. It is staggering and disconcerting to experience. This too I have been, I too have done this.

Quitting bookkeeping: 9,000 euros

It has been ten years since I took my first steps as a financial advisor and accountant. I have a thriving practice that provides enough income to make ends meet.

Yet there is a problem. I started guiding people because I wanted to help them to have a thriving practice, to grow further and further and thus to give more people who get stuck in this hectic society the opportunity to look at life differently.

Because I look at people's profit figures more and more often, I discover patterns. Looking at results becomes like reading intentions: I see how someone ends up with almost the same amount of profit year after year. Or how a lot is invested in advertising but that this does not lead to more revenue. Even if someone cheats with dirty money, I'm start to see it in the numbers. When I try to discuss what I see with people, the reaction is generally that they are okay with it this way and that I should mainly do my job as an accountant. Or I discuss it, but don't see any change after three months.

My feeling is that I have become a glorified calculator. People send in their receipts and expenses and the only thing they care about is 'How much have I earned and how much of that goes to taxes?'. This is not what I want.

I resolutely decide that I'm going to stop. It is not clear to me what I want, but it cannot go on like this. And so, I pull the plug on almost all my relations, with a message that this is the last year that I will do bookkeeping. People are surprised, but almost all of them look for another accountant without a response. There I am with a good feeling because I have

chosen for myself, but again without income.

Because I work less, I spend more time in the living room and listening to the radio. There is regularly an advertisement about 'How advantageous it is to refinance your mortgage.' Although I work a lot with numbers and also mortgages, it has never been clear to me why that can be so advantageous. I have the idea that it is a lucrative business, especially for advisors and notaries.

When, for the umpteenth time, I have heard this advertisement blaring out of all the others, I pick up the phone and call the company where my mortgage is placed. They refer me to my advisor, who I didn't even know I had.

I call the person and get a very calm man on the line. "Do you know how Excel works?" he asks me and if the answer is in the affirmative, he tells me exactly what I need to enter into a spreadsheet to see what the advantage of refinancing is for me. It is true, although this person and the notary earn a nice pocket money with it, there is also a nice amount of money to save for us.

Another advantage is that with refinancing we can pay back my parents and have everything in one mortgage. When we bought the house, in addition to my parents' donation, we borrowed another 33,000 guilders (almost 15,000 euros) to obtain the financing.

After some careful consideration, it is decided to go for refinancing the mortgage. I call the advisor to tell him that we have decided this. The man on the other end of the line has the same voice, but he is no longer recognizable by anything. He is agitated and short, hardly knows who I am anymore and only says 'That he will email me a few things'.

The paperwork is immense, which is partly because I'm an entrepreneur. After I have sent in everything, a few weeks later a proposal from the bank arrives. There is an amount of 3,000 euros to be paid in fines for early refinancing, but on the other hand an amount of around 6,000 euros is to be received. The refinancing will bring us 3,000 euros, an amount that we can put to good use.

Then it becomes deafeningly quiet. I call and hear 'That it's being worked on'. I decide to leave it, I'll see when the time is right, I think. I did learn my lesson with the contractor. Week after week passes and happens nothing, except that interest rates rise by a few tenths of a percent every few weeks.

When my parents come to visit us, we tell them that they can expect to receive back the amount we borrowed from them. They can do fun things with it. In the conversation, I also tell my father that we have to determine how much interest is still due for this year, because we normally pay the interest once a year.

My mom looks at my dad and says, "Are those kids paying interest on that loan? I didn't know that." My father sputters that it is quite normal that you receive interest on money you lend. "We'll talk about that in the car."

This marks the end of the matter. A few days later, my father calls. Of the 15,000 euros, we get to keep 3,000 euros, which is the interest we have paid over the years.

It is only a few months later that we can finally go to the notary. For reasons that remain unclear, the file has been left lying around for a very long time. When checking the deed, it

turns out that the penalty we have to pay for refinancing early has dropped to a few hundred euros, because the interest rate is now at almost the same level as when we took out our mortgage.

The end result of this action is that we receive 6,000 + 3,000 euros.

There's no coincidence, things co-incide

This incident shows that things always work out. In fact, after this amount had come to us, I bumped into someone I had known for some time from a spiritual training. He does re-integration work for entrepreneurs and through him I can finish a number of projects for someone who no longer wants to do the work and that way I have an income again.

You can argue that this is all a coincidence. If you look more closely, you will see that I have acted on a number of occasions. Like with the commercial and just waiting when I know that everything is settled. There is no such thing as coincidence, everything co-incides for you, if you have the guts to act when you are called.

Peacemaker

I've been studying one book for almost eight years. Apparently, that's how I am. I do one thing and then I do it completely. So it was with knitting, bookkeeping and also with the book *A Course in Miracles*. This book is divided into three parts. The middle part contains 365 lessons, the workbook, one lesson for each day. The purpose of those lessons is to teach you that your thinking is something we do all the time, but it's not like it's happening to us.

The story went around that there was someone who just didn't understand what those texts were referring to and was constantly asking for help and insight. One day, a voice also began to speak in his head: 'My name is Jeshua and I will explain the workbook to you'. The texts eventually ended up in a book entitled '*A journey beyond words*'. Somehow the title appeals to me, and I come across a Dutch translation through the grapevine.

The book stirs up a lot in me. The texts are very short-sighted. Two pages are devoted to a theme, about which I think whole books could be written. Moreover, it has a kind of certainty, which I can also have myself, but which now gives me crooked toes. This is a whole new experience for me. Normally, I read a book and let the information come to me, while I decide whether or not it resonates with me. If not, I let it go. The resistance that the texts evoke is completely new to me. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, I read the book over and over again, looking for where I can find hairline cracks in the

theory. That's not easy, again a whole new experience for me. Then an email arrives in my inbox: the art of spiritual peacemaking. As always, I scan through the email. This way, I can quickly decide if something is valuable or not. I assume that what catches my eye will tell me whether or not the content of the email is important. The name Jeshua catches my eye; I read on.

The email comes from James Twyman. This man calls himself a peace troubadour. He plays the guitar and sings twelve peace prayers of the twelve great religions of the world. He found them once in a drawer he was sorting out, and the music for all twelve fell right into his head. The texts themselves were collected when twelve leaders of the world's religions came together and decided not to discuss with each other, but to read everyone's prayer of peace to each other. James Twyman travels the world singing these songs in the most dangerous war zones in the world.

The email states that he has been to Israel as part of a trip to the Palestinian territories. He felt that he had to go to the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls have been found to meditate. In his meditation, 33 lessons, each 333 words long, describe the art of spiritual peacemaking. He offers to send these lessons to you every three days. I want to register.

The lessons are beautiful. The base form is formed by a wheel with twelve spokes that contains various spiritual qualities, such as gratitude, perseverance, surrender, generosity, and abundance. They follow one another, with the last quality, abundance, giving rise to going back into the circle.

In addition, he introduces the saying: 'Think like God, feel like God, act like God'. No matter what happens in your life, apply these three steps: how would God think, feel, and act in the situation you are in.

After the 33 free e-mails, it was to be expected, the follow-up offer: a year of training. There is a voice message that ends with the question: 'Do you feel called?'. Of course I feel that, but I don't want to spend the two-and-a-half thousand dollars that is asked for the training. It's too big a bite out of our budget. But when I say that out loud, something says to me, "But you felt called, didn't you? Then you have to write that: I feel called, but I can't possibly pay for the education."

Although I think I already know the answer I will get, I write an email anyway. To my great surprise, there is an e-mail in my mailbox immediately: 'You may apply for a scholarship', with a number of questionnaires attached. I am so happy with my year in America. Describing my motivation and answering the other questions comes easily to me.

A month later I am assigned to a group, which regularly e-mails each other, listens to James' recordings and did homework assignments. There are also twelve meditations, each for one of the twelve qualities. It's nice to be part of a community. And it's very schooly. The teacher speaks and we are expected to accept it all, preferably like sweet pie.

Everyone in the group has already been through a lot on the spiritual path and is starting to question what is being offered. Especially the books, which we have to read, raise the

necessary questions. The books are either written by James or James is a co-author or he is the publisher of the book.

Moreover, he is a great supporter of the idea of Mary Magdalene. It states that a child was conceived by Jesus who fled to France. He cites evidence that mainly shows that from the eighth century AD onwards there were many people who also followed this line of thought. Every question that is asked about the training is systematically ignored.

From the grumbling about the refusal to take our questions seriously, a lively exchange of books that are definitely worth reading ensues. Of course, I haven't read most of them, but I have heard of them. I don't know one title that comes along, and it awakens something in me: 'Christ Returns'.

1 euro a month is a lot of money

As a result of the meditation wheel with twelve qualities, I came up with the idea to start twelve groups in each of our twelve provinces of the Netherlands that meditate on one particular quality every month. Each group consists of twelve participants. The contribution that is asked of the participants is twelve euros, one euro for each meeting. The idea is that having so many people meditating at the same time will certainly contribute to a more peaceful world. It seems like a fun project, but also something that will take quite a lot of time. That's why I'm looking for someone to do it with.

Finding participants is not easy. Meditating turns out to be less popular than we thought. Moreover, the commitment to do something for twelve months is a stumbling block for many.

These objections are easy to understand. What does surprise me is someone who contacts me to ask if there is also the possibility to participate without paying. She explains that 1 euro is a lot of money for her, especially if it has to be paid every month. With that money she can buy a lot of good things at the thrift store.

To me, this is a shock. All my life, money has been an issue. Often the question 'Where will the income come from in a few months?' has come up. However, there has always been money for groceries. For me, 1 euro is no more than change. This person's question gave me a whole new perspective on my wealth.

Christ Returns – Speaks His Truth

In the e-mail exchange about books, I was sent a link to the website with all the texts of 'Christ Returns'. The look and feel of the site make a deep impression on me. The opening line is equally catchy: 'I, the CHRIST have descended from the Highest Celestial Realms in the Eternal Realms of Being. Then I open the first text that starts with 'I, the **CHRIST**, take this opportunity to speak directly to YOU.'

Something inside me has been touched and without further hesitation, I click on the link asking for assistance in translating into other languages. "I will make sure that the texts are translated and published in the Dutch language area," I write and click send.

I vividly remember sitting on the train after so impulsively offering to translate the texts. I have not read more than a few lines of the first letter. All the texts are printed out and I take the thick pile of paper with me every time I travel to Utrecht and read and read: what have I actually committed myself to? I'm so lost in thought that once I even miss the train station where I have to get off and have to take the next train back.

The response I get back to my post is not what I expected. Who am I, what are my references and how do I come to make such a statement. I am deeply triggered. Why not just take what is offered to you? From my big ego of that time, I write back that I will carry out my plans no matter what, whether she finds it acceptable or not.

The answer that follows makes me think. The Recorder, the woman who passed on the texts, writes that these are texts of Christ, which are of a very high spiritual intensity and therefore the question is whether I want to reap what I sow by pushing through my own will. She certainly has a point.

It is the beginning of a long adventure, in which I learn by trial and error to follow more and more what occurs, to look at the other side of things and to learn to apologize from a truly sincere understanding of the other person's point of view.

I take it upon myself to breathe new life into the website, which has lied still completely for two years, and create a new website for every translation that becomes available. The following year I take care of collecting donations for the first edition of the texts in both English and Spanish.

It turns out to be a perilous undertaking where I get caught up in the web called PayPal because I receive too much money in a short period of time, and I have to prove that I am a real person. To do this, I need a code that is on a statement that is only sent once a month. And all the while I can't reach the money and people think I've run off with the money.

More texts come through and for all these texts I build new websites and provide announcements of events.

The more I read the texts, the clearer it becomes to me that I am going to let go of A Course In Miracles. Not only do the Letters take a stand against the glorification of the crucifixion of Jesus, indicating that no one can die for your sins. However, there is one point that is decisive for me.

In ACIM, the Big-Bang is explained as a mistake, created

when the Sons of God (another point, why not the Children of God) left in anger: the Big-Bang. They then created a place to "be without God." I've always struggled with this passage. When I looked at this beautiful planet, with everything so perfectly balanced (not counting us) I could not imagine that we had created it, in anger and without help. The simplicity of the explanations given in the Letters is so much simpler. The Universe wanted to experience itself and tore itself apart in order to make the creation of matter possible. Simple, but certainly not easy to grasp. That's why I put all my books from ACIM, including 'A journey beyond words', for free on the internet. They find refuge in a library of ACIM books in Maastricht.

Emails contain energy

In the many e-mail exchanges I have had with the Recorder of the Letters, I learn that e-mails contain energy.

At some point, an e-mail comes back with the question: what kind of energy were you in when you wrote this e-mail? I don't understand what she means but scroll down and read back the email. I do feel what she means, because although the words express one thing, I experience a sense of irritation and haste.

In my mind, I go back to the moment I wrote the email. Where was I, what happened then. To my surprise, I realize that I wrote the text at a time when I didn't really have time for it. I had to go somewhere I didn't feel like doing, but I still wanted to answer something quickly.

Meditation

I've been studying the newfound texts for a year now. They are beautiful, inspiring, and so, much easier to understand than the phrases from A Course In Miracles. Which doesn't mean that I can post or apply everything. What touches me most is that people keep talking about changes that are taking place in your life, that you don't have to suffer but can be happy. To be honest, I don't notice much difference in my life. It's not going badly, certainly not, but it's not exactly smooth sailing either. If it weren't for the fact that I promised to translate the book into Dutch, I would probably have thrown the book into a corner and not picked it up again. It suddenly sounds like all hyped-up nonsense to me. With some reluctance, I start reading again at the front.

It seems like I'm reading another book. There seems to be a reference every other page. A reference to meditation! 'When you have meditated', 'After much meditation and prayer', 'The intention is to open yourself to the influx of'. Obviously, I've missed something very important.

At the end of the eighth Letter there is a description of how you should meditate, based on the ideas of the Letters . Basically, it's very simple, memorize a prayer, sit in a comfortable position, recite the text (it's in the back of the book) and reach out to the Divine. A small detail here is of course that you have to get your mind quiet, something that I have learned pretty well by following the workbook lessons from ACIM.

Yet I sit in a chair for months, with my eyes closed, before I notice that anything is happening. First there is the feeling as if I am sinking into my sleep and then suddenly waking up,

exactly as it is described in the text. Many weeks later I notice how I almost don't breathe anymore; this is also mentioned. Yet it remains obscure to me what the point of all these actions is.

One day someone says to me: "You know, I hate it when you do that". I really don't remember what it was that was introduced to me at the time. The first thought I have is: 'If you have a problem with that, then that's your problem'. Yet there is also another thought that comes to mind: 'Is it so important for you to keep doing this?' and funnily enough I thought 'No, not really, but it seems like it's something that can't be changed'.

I remember that the texts talk about letting go of undesirable behavior. That's why I sit down with the said behavior in the following days and ask for help to let it go. A few weeks later I suddenly notice that my behavior has changed, I don't show it anymore!

Religiously marinated.

Then something very curious happens. As webmaster of the Letters, I am sent the French translation with the request to place it on the website. Because I am so busy meditating, I look up the passage in the original Letter 6 and read the prayer. To my surprise, and admittedly somewhat dismay, this translation reads: 'Père, Mère, Vie, **tu** est ma vie'. 'Father-Mother-Life¹, **you** are my life, while in the translation I have made, it says **thou** are my life'. The difference makes you uncertain, 'God' you address with thou, don't you?

¹ This term is introduced in the Letters as a substitute for the word God, which is loaded for many people.

I contact the Recorder, the woman who transcribed the texts, and seek clarification. That's not easy, because English makes very good use of you, you and you, for three different situations respectively. I explain that there is a joint you and that there are two left, one that is used for someone who deserves your respect, the other is used for a good acquaintance, a friend. The answer is clear: 'It's about the one for a friend, the Divine is your best friend, right?'

The solution is very simple, I think. Replace all thou's with you and adjust a declension here and there and that's it. I know the prayer by heart and so, I have to practice replacing all the thou's with you, but that's not really difficult.

The next time I sit down to meditate and start with 'Father-Mother-Life, you are my life', I hear a thunderous voice in my head say: 'We are not going to address our dear Lord as YOU! I open my eyes in bewilderment. This cannot be true. With so little religious background, I can't have heard this. But my heart is beating in my throat and the next attempt also yields the same result. A loud voice that forbids me to continue with this nonsense.

For weeks, maybe longer, I am in an utter state of confusion. I believe, know, that the Recorder is right when she says that the Father-Mother-Life is your best friend, whom you can address with you in affection and trust. And in me is the deep conviction that I am committing sacrilege.

I also sit down with this deep conviction, although it is very difficult to come to a good meditation in the confusion in which I find myself. Yet it is getting easier and easier, and the fear and the voice disappear from my meditation.

Excel expert

I've been meditating for about a year now. I manage to lighten small things in my life through meditation. Yet I still have the big question: 'what should I do as a job'. I have this question almost every day and I feel like I'm not getting any further.

One day, like a bolt from the blue, I hear: 'Put yourself on Marktplaats (the Dutch eBay) as an Excel expert.' I open my eyes and write it down on a piece of paper I have next to me and try to continue meditating. I just can't.

I re-read what I have written: 'put yourself on Marktplaats as an Excel expert'. First of all, Marktplaats. In 2007, the year in which this was said to me, it is not customary to use Marktplaats to offer work. The possibility did not arise until much later. And besides, Excel expert: I've never looked at myself that way. It's true that I solve pretty much everything I do through Excel, my first assignment was for spreadsheets, my entire accounting firm depended on Excel. The idea of making money with that had never occurred to me before.

It takes several more weeks for me to convince myself that this was truly an inspired inspiration and that, although it is very unusual, I am going to follow the advice anyway. 'Excel expert offering itself', I put as the title. Since I always skip ads without a photo myself, I upload my photo instead of the image of the stuff that is normally offered.

The response has been overwhelming ... in silence No one responds. My heart sinks, if even nothing comes out of this, what will?

Then someone calls who is looking for an Excel expert. Of course, I assume that he found me through the advertisement I put on Marktplaats. He wants me to come to him once to teach him how to program. Although I explain that it will be very difficult to teach him to write programs in Excel in a few sessions of a few hours, he sticks to his choice.

I replay the conversation we just had in my head. Somehow, I think he was talking about Utrecht, something I just can't figure. It keeps lingering in my head and something tells me to call him again and ask how he found me.

The answer I get is very surprising. Not Marktplaats at all, but some educational institute in Utrecht referred him to me. I search and search and eventually find a training institute in Utrecht, specialized in Excel, among other things, where an Excel expert is also offered. In the phone conversation I have with the owner of this institute, he tells me that his Excel expert walked in a month ago and informed that he was leaving for Africa for six months, anyway; He hoped that he could come back after that time, but if he couldn't, he would accept that; The owner then decided to look for someone he could refer to for the intervening period and in his search he had found me, on Marktplaats!

There's a lot going on behind the scenes

In the infinite universe in which each of us lives, so much more happens than we can imagine. If you try to shape your life with

the limited view you have of what is taking place, you miss the greatest miracle of all: the Intelligent Life that has the best interests of everyone and everything at heart. It may seem as if there is a lack of coherence at times, or that some are allocated more than others. In the end, everything is always in balance, and everyone receives exactly what is needed to reach full maturity. By writing this book, I want to show that this is how it has worked and still works, at least for me.

Translate

In the meantime, there is still my promise to the Recorder: translating and making available the texts in the Dutch language area. It just doesn't make any progress. I had thought that with my knowledge of the English language, combined with Google translate, I would come a long way. Nothing could be further from the truth. It turns out that the texts are very difficult to put together, that very difficult English words are used, where the thought quickly is: oh, that must mean that. But am I sure?

Gradually, people cross my path who want to commit to the translation work. Some come from the network of A Course In Miracles, others approach the Recorder who forwards them to me. In the end, this creates a group of six people.

It is a mixed group, each with their own background and ideas about how spirituality works. My biggest commitment is to keep the translation as close to the English language as possible. In doing so, as I look back now, I have belittled the insights and knowledge of others.

One of the most important first steps in creating the translation is to look for translations of certain English words so that a consistent whole is created. To give an example, the word conviction is frequently used in the texts. Normally, this is translated as belief in Dutch, if the word is not used in the sense of condemnation, which the word may also refer to. The Letters also speak of 'a belief', which can also be translated as conviction in Dutch. It is clear from the text that the two words do not mean the same thing. After a lot of searching and

deliberation, a new word convicted belief is coined, which is not an existing Dutch word, but it does indicate what conviction also has in it. In this way, a whole list of words is handled.

From the many contacts I have had with people around the translation of A Course In Miracles, I know how it came about. Two teams have been put together, one team translates the text from English into Dutch, the other team translates this text back into English. The parent organization checks the extent to which this translation corresponds to the original. We do not have two teams at our disposal to translate the Letters. Forming one is hard enough. But this knowledge does allow me to invariably ask, when disagreeing about translations, "What happens if you translate the sentence back into English?"

After many months of hard work, there is a translation, which is placed on the internet. Many people are happy with it, while there is also a group of people who keep saying that something is wrong with the translation; Something is missing, it is always said.

Then someone contacts me. He is Rosicrucian and says he knows what is wrong with the texts. My ego is getting in the way quite a bit. This man would know better what to do with the texts than a group of six people. In addition, I know the Rosicrucians as people who have a clear opinion about how everything works, and I dread the interference of these ideas in the texts. Nevertheless, the man manages to convince me to start a conversation with him. I agree.

In the conversation it becomes clear that he knows what he is talking about. He says that as an old hand he still had a thorough education in Dutch. In the translations, many verbs have been placed in the wrong places and words have been chosen that are anglicisms and can easily be replaced by English alternatives. In addition, there is often a missing prefix, commonly used in Dutch, in a sentence.

The process of adaptation takes more than nine months. Many versions go back and forth, bringing up many a difference of opinion. It is a great process to learn to deal with differences of opinion and to continue to respect each other despite that and to keep communication open.

During this time, I run into a woman I meet once every few years, with whom I do something and then lose sight of again. I tell her about my project and after reading a few pages, she offers to look at ambiguous words. Sometimes a word has two or more meanings, and a sentence gets a weird taste when you choose a certain explanation. It is her specialty and together we extract a lot of curious constructions from the texts.

In the middle of the year, a Belgian woman contacts me. She wants to know if the Letters have already been published in book form. I have been trying to do so. The problem, or rather the challenge, is to find a publisher who agrees with the Recorder's wish that the texts should also be freely downloadable on the Internet. That turns out to be quite a challenge, no one is interested.

The woman indicates that she considers the texts so

important that she has decided to donate a copy to all one hundred and fifty libraries in Belgium. I know that placing books in libraries is not easy. The data must first be entered centrally, the books often have to be a special edition, and each branch can also decide for itself whether or not they want to include the book in the collection. I advise her to first inquire about the situation in Belgium, because what I am telling her relates to the Dutch situation.

I also tell her that a publisher will not give her more than a 40% discount on the books she asks for, so she should expect to pay twenty-five hundred euros. The answer is surprising: "That's no problem...." Later, she gets in touch again. It turns out to be very difficult to get books into all libraries. But should the book ever be published, she would like to have one hundred and fifty copies to hand out.

For some time now I have been walking around with the idea of self-publishing the book. With the Belgian pledge plus a thousand euros that I have saved to visit the Recorder, which it becomes clear that she does not want to, and five books in presale, I have the necessary four-and-a-half-thousand euros together to have twelve hundred books printed.

Once again, my computer science background comes in handy. A website is quickly put together, a payment solution found. In addition, I locate someone in Belgium who is willing to store a number of books and send them from there, so that the shipping costs for this country are also within limits. And so, the book has been sold online since 2011 and sent to all corners of the Netherlands and Belgium.

Keep Researching

When making plans for self-publishing the Letters, a big question was how the book could also be available in bookstores. In the Netherlands, there is a special organization that meets the need for books from bookstores: the Central Book house. However, to be able to put your books there is a very expensive business, it starts with an entrance fee of around three thousand euros per year. There are partnerships, but they are also expensive, especially when it comes to small quantities.

Because I want the book to be marketed as favorably as possible, I keep looking for alternatives. So, I call a number of bookstores and ask them what the biggest hurdles are when ordering self-published books. The first thing that is invariably mentioned is that books take weeks to be delivered and are often poorly packaged. I can avoid that. In addition, there is often discussion about discounts and shipping costs. The publisher wants the bookstore to pay for it, which makes it uninteresting for the bookstore to sell a book, because the customer does not want to pay shipping costs and the book is therefore sold almost without profit.

To reduce the shipping costs, I am looking for a possibility to send the book as a letterbox package. That means the book should be a little thinner and the pages should have a little more text. This is possible without having much impact on readability.

Finally, I decide to make the price of the book *including* shipping costs. As a result, everyone pays the same price, and this discussion is also a thing of the past.

Letters lecture: six weeks in training

Now that the book is available in print, I try to get it out there as much as possible. One place I go to do that is a spiritual center that one of the translators has set up. She also has a small library. I agree that I will come by sometime to bring a book to put on the shelf.

In the conversation I have, I say: "I would also like to give a lecture about the book." Then something happens that I didn't see coming. The woman resolutely grabs her calendar, looks at it and says: "I propose 1st of September". The fear strikes me at the heart. September 1st is only six weeks in the future. That's way too fast, and I find it terrifying to talk in front of a group of people about something that is so sensitive. So, I try to get out of the agreement. But no matter what I come up with, none of my excuses are taken seriously. I'm stuck with a lecture on the Letters in six weeks.

In the six weeks that follow, I meet all kinds of people who know something about how to give a good lecture. The problem for me is that whatever I hear, contradicts something I've heard before: "Trust your own knowledge", "Prepare well", "Don't prepare too much, you know what to say", "Just make a list of points", "Don't use PowerPoint". Looking back, I see that everyone pointed at their own way of how the person in question learned to deal with giving a presentation. Everyone is unique.

Another very important moment is when I tell people at a birthday party that I am going to give a lecture. In front of me are three people, all of whom are talking to me with very good intentions. They are in complete agreement that my lecture

will be a great success. I, on the other hand, am not at all sure that my fear will disappear, and I will give a wonderful lecture. The more they talk to me, the more anxious I become. Suddenly, I said very clearly that in my experience I am back to the moment of the Inquisition. I am being attacked and forced to admit that *they* are right. **And** at the same time, I can see that it's 2011 now and that this isn't really an attack on me. I'm letting go of a piece of old pain.

In the end, I decide that there is only one person who knows how I want to give the lecture and that is me. I'm definitely going to find the way if I sit with this question a lot in meditation. The form that is given to me is to find parts of the book that I think are important and stitch them together with small pieces of explanation, which I write down completely. As a result, I don't have to memorize too much text because I keep returning to the book to read it aloud.

Despite the fact that this seems like a fairly simple way to give the lecture, I just can't seem to calm down on the day of the lecture. I can still see myself pacing the streets of our neighborhood. Practicing and practicing again and again on the short connecting pieces, with a heart that beats like crazy in my throat. It's so strange, when teaching business operations, I can address a room full of people unprepared and without any sense of nerves.

The night of the lecture it is possible even worse. I step into a nicely decorated room with a number of tables around which chairs are placed. "That makes it a bit homely," the organizer tells me with a smile. To me, homely seems to be the last thing I need. I isolate myself for a moment and look for a moment of silence to meditate.

I don't know what I asked for in the short meditation, but when I step into the room and put the book on the desk, I feel the fear fall away from me. I recite my pieces, read many passages from the book and am even able to answer questions afterwards. I have witnessed a miracle!

Giving a lecture, make it individual

Much later, I learn a method that makes it much easier to give lectures. There are two main principles. The first seems obvious: only give lectures on topics that you are passionate about. If you are asked to present something that doesn't suit your heart, give the assignment to someone else. If that is not possible, try to redirect the topic in such a way that you can speak at least part of your lecture about what you love.

The other premise is less obvious. There are several people in the room. Some of them, for whatever reason, make a disapproving, hostile, or disinterested impression on you. Mind you, it's your impression of these people. It doesn't have to be that way; in fact, it can change during the lecture. For example, someone may be busy on their phone and give the impression of being uninterested, but later put their phone away and hang on your every word.

If you look through the room, you will also discover people who radiate that they have really come to hear your story. They look at you, make eye contact, and nod their heads every now and then. These are the people to focus on. Pick one person and tell your story to them. After a few sentences, you detach yourself from this person and start looking for the next interested looking attendee. And so, you tell your story, as it were, to an individual and no longer to a room full of people.

Endless Consciousness

The above term is introduced by Pim van Lommel. He is a cardiologist and in his office hours is often confronted with strange stories of people who have survived a cardiac arrest. People who say they have been hovering above the operating table. Or it is said that family members were busy arguing about the inheritance in the waiting room. There are even people who can give details about the operation, moments of panic when a procedure does not go as expected.

Pim decides to investigate this phenomenon further, after all, he is a scientist and so, every phenomenon should be investigated. He discovers that similar stories are being told to many colleagues, which are then immediately dismissed as 'imagination' or 'bad anesthesia'.

Since this is not a satisfactory answer for him, he decides to visit the people and ask them to tell their story. The similarities between the stories are striking. Almost everyone talks about a tunnel of light, an enveloping feeling of incredible love and recognition, seeing deceased, receiving information, the unwillingness to return to earthly life and how difficult it is to continue living in a world where love for each other lies far below the love of matter and success. I came into contact with the work of Pim van Lommel through two documentaries that are broadcast on television.

The first is about Pim's journey with his research. How he, still today, is looked down upon because he tries to refute the common view of 'If the brain no longer works, you can no longer perceive anything'. And how he started between the

sliding doors of his house with a lecture for six people and now only gives lectures for very large groups, because otherwise he has no time left for other things.

In the second documentary a number of people, who have had a so-called Near Death Experience (NDE), have their say. As I hear the stories, I find myself going along with them. I recognize the images and feelings they describe. I also hear of the feeling of homesickness, the 'I don't really want to be here', a feeling that I have been carrying with me for a long time.

Slowly a question arrives that needs to be asked. Is it possible that I also had an NDE? I really know exactly what the people in the documentary are talking about. It's frightening, confusing and liberating at the same time. It explains my longing for 'elsewhere' and also the fact that I seem to look at the world differently than many others. At the same time, I'm not sure if it can be true that I remember anything. I was only eighteen months old!

NDE at a young age

The events in my life are not unique. There are probably many more people who have experienced something at a young age where they have been in a comatose state for a short or longer period of time, or even had a cardiac arrest. From my story it becomes clear that this is not always told to you, or that it is assumed to be known.

If you walk around with an inexplicable feeling of homesickness, perhaps seeing things that others don't see, or actually don't understand this world, consider what happened in your young life. Maybe you were also 'on the other side' for a while.

Booklet

The idea of an NDE keeps reverberating in my head. I bounce back and forth between finding the idea ridiculous that I can remember something and exploring different feelings and thoughts that live inside.

One very important feeling is the fear of being shot in the back. The feeling is not new to me. From a very young age, I remember that feeling. It's like a stick being pushed into my spine, just below my shoulder blades. The idea fills me with fear. Somehow it feels like there's a sniper out on me.

As I described earlier, I discovered this feeling at an early stage in my life. There's also a kind of tendency to look back, like I'm going to be attacked from behind. It is reinforced when I cycle to the beach at the age of fourteen or fifteen and a moped drives up behind me. Suddenly I hear a loud tap, I am shocked and the next moment I see a bunch of boys disappearing on the moped, laughing, waving a bicycle pump.

Ever since I let the idea of an NDE circulate in me, the fear and feeling has been very strong. It seems like it wants to say something. The more I connect with the feeling, the more anxious I become.

I sit down at my computer. "It was horrible." is the first sentence I type. Because I learned to touch type in America, something very miraculous happens. As my fingers fly back and forth across the keyboard, the sentences appear on the screen. It's only when the letters are visible that I read what my fingers have put together. This is how I read to myself.

What descends on the screen is almost impossible to read, it

fills me with fear and disbelief. So much so, in fact, that after a while I save the whole thing, turn off my computer and do something else. I don't want to read any further.

Still, the story stays in my head. What will happen next, will the person in my book ever be okay again? And so, after a few days, I sit down at the computer again, open the document, read the last two paragraphs, and again the dancing of my fingers over the keyboard begins. It's a curious experience. Again, after some time (I have no idea how long because time seems to have disappeared) I save my story because I don't want to know how it will continue.

It goes on like this a number of times, until finally the whole story unfolds to me: I took my life by suicide in the life before. Through the NDE I have been able to see what consequences this has had for my consciousness. The message is clear: "life does not end with death and suicide is not a solution." In fact, the inner battle you are having here with yourself and your thoughts only gets worse on the other side.

After transmitting, I can't describe it any other way, of this information, peace returns to my inner being. It looks like I've laid an egg.

Don't want to be here

For a long time, especially after I discovered that I had an NDE, I keep walking around with the feeling that I don't want to be here. 'There' it is better, different, easier. And in a way, that's true. On the flip side of life, what we call death, love is so much easier to experience.

Over the years, I've come to realize that the thought of not wanting to be here makes life here more difficult. By not fully choosing a life here, I am not connected, I do not give my full hundred percent and I also expect that things will be disappointing.

Besides, the whole idea of there and here is just an idea. The love I experience there, I can also experience here in myself. By doing that, I show others what it's like to be truly joyful, which is different from feeling happy because something has taken place.

Sound-healing

Again, there is a newspaper clipping on my table: Friday in two weeks, voice liberation, a one-day workshop. A very old desire is reawakened. Intuitive singing, how wonderful I have always found that. When I call to sign up, I am told that the workshop is full. I can be put on the waiting list. "Please," I say and disconnect. Nothing happens, no one calls and, on the Thursday, before the workshop I decide it's not going to work out anymore and plan something else for the next day.

Imagine my surprise when I get a call at 7:30 P.M. The workshop leader tells me that someone has just called and if I will be able to be in Amsterdam East at 9:30A.M. "Of course," I say, disconnect and immediately start arranging and canceling my appointment.

The workshop starts very simply, which makes me wonder if I'm in the right place. In the afternoon, however, a pianist arrives who is wonderfully capable of intuitively playing along with each participant and getting the best out of the person. I sing like I've never sung before and enjoy it to the fullest. It is therefore not surprising that I want to continue after this workshop and register for a two-year course. I want to discover more and working with people and voice also appeals to me.

Gradually, it becomes clear to me that the basis from which the material is offered is at odds with what I believe myself. Instead of assuming that you can change anything, the fundamental idea is that you basically have a certain number of unchangeable properties. Learning to accept this and then teaching this acceptance to others is the best tool you have in your hands, according to the trainers.

Slowly but surely, this starting point is increasingly at odds with my belief in change. It is with pain in my heart that I leave the program after a year. I've always liked to belong to something, and this course seemed perfect to find that group. But I don't want to be part of this.

Now that I've found 'sounding' again, I'm looking for other forms. I find many forms that are based on shamanism, a form of spirituality that I don't really like. I also see forms in which the main goal is to get as deep as possible into yourself and your use of voice or where it all has to be very loose and playful. Nothing really seems to suit me.

Then I participate in an afternoon "Voice" from an entrepreneurial network. One of the components is healing song for each other. I think this is so fantastic to do and also to undergo. You float in a bath of sound, as it were, you don't have to do anything and you can completely relax, at least I do.

This is the seed from which I now give sound-healing to people, called Song4YourSoul.

You can change

The line of thought I encountered in voice liberation is not unique. A lot of people assume that you are the way you are and that you can't change. That the highest achievable thing is to resign yourself to the fact that things are the way they are and that you have to learn to deal with that. I don't see it that way.

Of course, we all have things we are good at and things that we are not so good at. That has to do with our origins, our history, how we were raised, who we encountered in life. In other words, how your consciousness has formed up to this moment. All of this creates the beliefs we walk around with: nurturing as well as opposing.

Beliefs are the preconditions that we ourselves have formed to be able to understand and handle life. And so, if something in your life doesn't function the way you want it to, you have it in your power to put a different spin on it. This can be by changing the circumstances or by transforming the way you look at the circumstances. The choice is yours!

The floor falls out of the Letters

For more than seven years I have been working intensively to put the Christ's Letters on the map. Over time, that one website has grown into three different websites, which can be displayed in eight different languages. In addition, with the help of a Frenchman, who appeared on the scene out of the blue, we managed to build our own email server.

The whole thing is a gigantic structure. In part, this is because the websites aren't all neatly located in one location. In addition, I try to shape as much new information as possible into new pages as quickly as possible, which regularly puts the proper functioning of other pages in a bind. It looks a bit like a set for a big Hollywood movie: the outside looks beautiful, but at the back everything is attached to each other with wires and pieces of wood.

More and more time is spent on the maintenance of the websites. In addition, the ability to send out e-mails is being used more and more often. I coordinate the translations and make sure that all emails are sent. I enjoy the work and am convinced that this is my calling in life. I want to use all my time and energy to bring these texts, which have brought me so much insight and good, into the world.

However, there is a slight problem. By now, I'm spending more than a full working week on all the work that goes into promoting the Letters. More and more I let go of other work because I want to fully focus on what I consider to be my life's task.

After a conversation with someone who also studies the texts, it becomes clear to me that I have to make a choice. Either I spend

much less time on the Letters, and I also look for paid work, or I investigate whether it is possible to ask for donations for the work I do. Doing more things at the same time is not really my thing. As I said, I am a 'one-thing' person.

There is permission given to ask for donations. After an initially shaky start, in which all kinds of things go wrong and there is confusion about the new bank account numbers that the EU has just introduced, the flow of money is starting to get going. It is a wonderful time, in which, without worrying about income, I throw myself completely into solving a lot of problems that are at the back end, invisible to the end user.

There is something that bubbles up very regularly. We have chosen to be as transparent as possible. This means that the website states how much I need per month and how much of it has already been received. For people from low-wage countries, it is incomprehensible that an amount of 2,800 euros per month is mentioned. I try to explain that the standard of living is different here, that as an entrepreneur I have to pay VAT and especially that they are not expected to donate (much). It seems to add fuel to the fire.

Then someone in Canada comes up with a wonderful plan. What if we were to meditate on world peace with a hundred people at the same time, what a great initiative! For the date, we choose October 12, 2014, which in English format becomes 10/12/14. I think it would be a good idea to take part in this manifestation. But then again, Canada is not around the corner and flying there is probably very expensive. In order not to deny my own principles, I go to the internet, admittedly after some insistence, and look up what it costs to fly to Canada: 770 euros. That's not too bad I think.

My wife, whom I let appear on stage only this time, is also surprised. We are sitting at the table when I tell her. She picked apples for a couple of weeks and received her wages in sealed envelopes. She hasn't opened them yet. Now seems like the perfect time to do it.

A number of yellow notes appear from each envelope, each worth fifty euros. It's makes quite a impeller. She picks out ten and says with a smile, "I think you should go to Canada, you want it so badly." One of my principles that I've had for years is that if someone offers me something, I accept it. And I decide on the spot to match another three hundred euros, so that I can also choose a good seat on the plane and participate in the Canadian meeting.

In a good mood, I write a message to the Recorder. The response I get back hits like a bomb! "How do I get it into my head to use *the* donation money to go on candy trips to Canada?" I don't understand this and write back that the donations were intended as income for my work. In addition, it is not me, but someone else who pays for most of the trip and I still go to an event related to the texts?

Then something very miraculous happens. They don't talk to me anymore. There are just a lot of e-mails going back and forth *about me* discussing what weird behavior I show and how it is possible that I need so much time to build a website, that can be done in a few hours by using a self-build website.

In the end, I decide to remove the request for donations from the website and transfer everything to someone else. To my great sorrow, the contract for the hosting is not renewed and with that, everything I have built in eight years will disappear into the big digital trash. To this day, not much more has returned than a website that displays the texts and tells you where to buy the book. There is no interaction. It is incomprehensible to me that this has been allowed to unfold in this way.

Receiving is not difficult

I often watch people bickering with each other with amusement about who gets to pay for something. Or someone who is almost ashamed because he/she is offered something. "No, no, don't, there's no need." Someone once said, "The receiver gives the giver the gift of giving." Isn't that wonderful?

Read aloud about suicide

After I come back from Canada, I fall into a deep pit. I'm pretty good at staying out of anger about what happened. I spend a lot of time meditating and asking over and over again for insight into the situation and how to respond to the emails that are going around. But what to do with my working life now is an absolute mystery to me. For the last eight years, I have come to believe that spreading these texts is my life's mission. And so, I sit in my chair for days at a time and meditate.

In every meditation I ask for help, for something I can tackle. Just before Christmas, I hear a voice in my head telling me something. The texts are familiar to me, it's as if I've heard them before. Then I know, this is the text from my book! I start digging into my computer files. After a number of attempts, I find the text I have written and a first draft of an English translation. The book reads well, although the beginning of the text is confrontational.

After the loss of my job as a Letters Supervisor, I have plenty of time to spare. I also suddenly notice how small my social network is. To have something to do and at the same time make new contacts, I join a family constellation group. I continue to find it miraculous how you, as a representative, connect directly with the energy of the person you are standing in for.

In the group is a man who edits texts. And every time we meet, he says to me: "If you have a text that I can look at, say so".

Now that I read the texts, his name immediately pops into my head. And so, I send him an e-mail, in which I ask him if he wants to see how the text comes across to him.

His response is nice and matter-of-fact: "Thank you Jeroen, of course I want to look into this. After the holidays, you'll be one of the first. Have a nice holiday." A very understandable reaction, we are all more in the Christmas spirit than we are interested in work.

The next day he calls me. He has opened the document anyway to get an idea of what it is about and can no longer put it aside. Just before the end of the year, I receive the book back completely edited.

Suicide: one of the last taboos

In the course of the next year, I will start to put my vision of suicide on the map. This boils down to the fact that suicide leads nowhere because life goes on. If you end your life to escape the maelstrom of thoughts and events that are happening in your life, you will be disappointed. Because on 'the other side' they just keep going. In fact, they come to you in much higher intensity and there is no way to escape them. The only truly workable remedy is to be born again on earth and work here at what you came to do.

It's not an easy message, I know. What I didn't see coming is that talking about suicide is completely inappropriate. And that while almost everyone either knows someone who has taken their own life or knows someone who knows someone who has done so. It is therefore a very common phenomenon. But no one wants to talk about it.

It's a bit like how people talked about cancer twenty years ago. Then someone would whisper to you that "the c-word had crept into the family." Then you knew that you shouldn't talk about it and that you had to be careful with those people. Nowadays, cancer is a painful but very discussable topic. Because people talk about it, the pain and panic that people feel is easier to bear.

With suicide, there's this weird idea that if you talk about it, it gets worse. If you just sit very quietly in a corner and wait, it will pass on its own. I don't believe in that. It is precisely by making it something mysterious, that you are not allowed to talk about, that it becomes something that gains power over people.

I want to dedicate myself to a world in which suicide can be discussed. In which people who walk around with these ideas are invited to talk about what is on their minds, which makes them feel so trapped. That people understand that it doesn't help to make people happy, because that only contributes to the feeling that they are worthless. Because after the short happy feeling, they fall back deep into their own thoughts.

Ernie

Just before the bottom falls out of my life's work, someone bursts into the Letters community with great bravado. In an e-mail he writes how he found the texts and that he has made a booklet in which he gives his views on thirteen quotations from the Letters. That he would like permission to distribute the booklet and wants to get in touch with the right people as soon as possible to get things done.

There are times when the Recorder is unable to answer all emails on her own. If so, I'll write a first response to the emails. From my own experience, I know how the Recorder can respond to people, like him and me in the past, who want to do all kinds of things with the texts. From my first encounter with the Recorder, I write back an answer in which I point out to him that these texts contain a very spiritual energy, that the texts are not his and that it is important not to enter with a hemorrhoid.

The Recorder is 'not amused', she thinks that this man may be the person who will help to take the organization to a higher level. After a few e-mail exchanges, it turns out that this person's straightforward approach is not what she expected, and he is asked to leave.

Following the Recorder's response to my email, I send the man a message to apologize. I didn't mean to hurt him in any way. An unexpectedly slight response returns. "No reason to apologize, in fact: don't feel guilty about anything, everything happens for a reason".

We email back and forth for a while and then decide to Skype. From the many conversations we have about the texts and about our way of looking at the world, a deep friendship develops. I offer to put his book on the internet, an offer he grabs with both hands.

I'm learning a lot from this guy. He is 26 years older than me and has a lot of experience in spiritual development. At the same time, I look at things with a fresh perspective and help him to see new vistas. It is so fantastic to know someone who looks at the world with the same kind of view, where there is an unconditional acceptance of everyone's points of view, so that a difference of opinion only contributes to understanding and appreciating each other better.

When one day he tells me that he is coming to Europe to take a cruise to the Baltic States with his wife, I exclaim enthusiastically: "Then I want to meet you". We actually meet in Paris, which for me is no more than a day there and a day back. In addition, it gives me the opportunity to visit the labyrinth of Chartres, something that I have wanted for a long time. It's a beautiful day, where I can show my friend how the metro works in the city. We also visit a bookstore with only English books in the heart of Paris, which I discovered by chance a few months earlier. And there he 'coincidentally' finds a book on spiritual science.

Later on I decide to visit him in Canada. He turns eighty very quickly, and people can decide from one day to the next that they are going to go to the other side of life. Not that he intends

to, but sometimes a plan can change just like that.

In the week that I am there, I meet the people he has told me about and I see the area. We tell each other things from our past, things that you only tell your best buddy.

I also have a special meeting with his first, deceased, wife. The day I arrive, Ernie shows me where I'm going to sleep. It's his bedroom, he sleeps in the guest room upstairs, in his son's house. On the wall hangs a collage of photos. Because it's already late, he says he'll tell me tomorrow who is in the pictures. The first day flies by and the photos are not discussed. On the second day, too, the discussion of the people in the photos is forgotten.

I wake up in the middle of the night. That's not surprising, because in Dutch time it's already halfway through the day and my body clearly thinks it's time to get up. As I quiet my mind and slowly doze off again, my mind wanders to the collage of photos. Tomorrow I'm really going to ask for an explanation. Someone I'm very curious about is Ernie's first wife. He always talks about her with love and affection. The thought is immediately followed by another: "To see a picture of someone is not to know someone. And how I would like to get to know her, really in person'.

Then I feel my heart being filled with a soft presence, very simple and yet so complete. Immediately I know that this is his first wife. It is such a nice energy to be in, I open my being to receive it even better.

After what feels like a few seconds – I have no idea how long because time fades away in such experiences, at least far too quickly – the presence disappears. "Why don't you stay?" I say in my head. The answer surprises me, and yet it doesn't: 'Do you know how much energy is needed to reach the earth in this way?'

His wife appears once more in images, which I receive while I am giving a sound-healing. She asks Ernie to come to a specific place because she has a message for him. If you're curious about the outcome, it's in his book 'A New God'.

It's only four days before I leave that I discover that his hometown is no more than a four-hour drive from the village where I lived in America when I was eighteen. It would have been nice to go back there to experience what it's like there now and if there is anything left of the atmosphere that lives in my memory. But yes, that requires a much more structured way of life than what I do now. Better luck next time.

You choose what you think

In the time that I meet Ernie, I am not in a good mood. I feel depressed because I feel that everything I have tried to do for the Letters is not seen. And so, I tell how miserable I feel.

Ernie invariably replies that he understands what happened and that if I want to feel shitty, I have every right to do so. "But," he quickly adds, "you can also choose to think happy thoughts." After such a conversation, I always feel like I've been made a fool of. It's like my feelings don't matter. And so,

I continue to complain and get back again and again: "That it can be done differently." And I feel rejected again.

Another of Ernie's favorite remarks is 'if you do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always received.' In other words, if you want a different result, you have to change something in your approach. Whether it was these words or the fact that my state of mind is not really pleasant and the feeling of being a fool keeps coming back, either way, a thought falls down. Because I know the theory very well: you think your thinking controls you, but the reverse is true: you control your thoughts.

I focus my attention on things that make me happy, that I still have, such as a great relationship with my wife, a voice that always sings what I want to sing, a wonderful environment to live in. And I could go on and on. My mood changes and that doesn't go unnoticed by Ernie. "You have changed!" is one of the first things he says.

From this shift in attitude, I also start to see that there are a lot of things in my world, in the world, that I don't understand why they happen the way they do. Because that's what touches me the most, that something I see as so important is no longer presented to the world in a grand way. It dawns on me that I am not the creator of this universe and that I know very little, in fact nothing, except what is whispered to me in moments of insight. And that this is fine.

Working for Minimum Wage

Things are not going well financially. I have no idea what I want to focus on. My newfound field of suicide prevention is met with a lot of resistance. What else would you expect with an approach that is so different from what is normally done. I give a number of lectures, even one in Belgium, but at the regular circuit I always find no response.

An email appears in my inbox, saying that a nearby company is looking for people to start collecting books throughout the Netherlands. It doesn't pay much, just a little more than the minimum wage, to be exact. Because the locations are spread all over the country, it's getting up early, working long hours, going to bed late. For me, it's a grueling rhythm. Still, it feels like this is my only chance to move forward and so, I take the job, it's only for about five weeks.

I come out of these weeks broken. The good news is that there is even more work available. I can go to the warehouse to collect the books for the new school year. It is again 40 hours a week, but there is much less travel time, and the workload is, I am assured, a lot lower.

Immediately upon arrival at the location, I notice that there is a list of names, with numbers behind them. There is a thick line under the first few names. During the break, I understand the function of the list: it shows the number of books someone has collected. The thick line indicates who has reached the target. The rest are urged to run faster!

I'm running my lungs out. Because I have a good memory and know pretty quickly where which books are, I manage to collect the desired number of books after a few days. But the bar is set far too high, and many people are being told day in and day out to work harder, something that is really impossible in my opinion.

When I'm well and truly familiar with the process of running orders, I'm told that most of the books have been collected and that I'm no longer needed here. But, once again, salvation is at hand because there is still work to be done at the helpdesk. Again, not much more than the minimum salary is offered for this, but something is better than nothing, right?

At the helpdesk we get a half-day training. All kinds of different computer screens are shown at a rapid pace, all of which have a different function. Look, click, look, click, that's how you do it. And then on the phone with people and trying to answer as many questions as possible yourself.

The work is very difficult for me emotionally. The hallway of the office is full of posters about integrity, loyalty and customer-friendliness. All these qualities are of paramount importance. However, it seems that different rules apply to the customers.

Every time something is reported that goes wrong, it is invariably the customer who tries to cheat the case. Someone who says they don't have a computer should go find someone who does. If someone indicates that they cannot upload a photo to the site, it is claimed that this is impossible, because their website always works and is understandable to everyone.

Slowly it dawns on me that no matter how hard I work, even if I work fifty hours a week, I will never earn enough money to pay all the bills. In addition, I am so tired in the evenings and weekends that nothing comes out of my hands that can contribute anything to finding another source of income.

I go to work reluctantly and often come home with tears in my eyes. I'm walking around with the thought of indicating that I want to work fewer hours. That seems impossible, because it means even less money coming in.

Then a lady from Belgium calls the helpdesk and I get her on the line. Because it is not allowed in this country to make people pay in advance, the books are sent to their home with a bill. As a result, there is a reasonable number of defaulters. The policy is to completely cut these people off from ordering books until all outstanding bills have been paid. An understandable decision, although people have been condemned by the school to buy books from this one company and they have their backs against the wall.

The lady in question calls to ask why she still hasn't received any books. I open her file and immediately see that there is still an outstanding amount of just over sixteen euros. When I tell her this, she reacts in disbelief. Last week she called, asked what amount she had to pay and moved heaven and earth to get the amount paid on time.

Because I am not allowed to make decisions in this matter, I ask for help from my superior. He shrugs. Then she has to

transfer those sixteen euros. It doesn't matter that the school year starts in a few days, that another employee apparently misinformed her. The sixteen euros is more important!

For me, enough is enough. I go to the lady from the employment agency that hired me and tell her that I can't keep this up. I now understand much better how much stress people experience when they try to keep their heads above water.

Not all of us are highly educated

Another very important lesson I have learned from this experience is the difference in educational attainment and how much we tend to judge everything from our own level.

When picking up books, I visit all kinds of different schools. There are pre-university schools, pre-college schools and also special aid schools. To make it easier to hand in books, there are four things that students can do. To make my life easier again, I found some large A2 sheets of paper and wrote down the things on them with a thick marker.

The first few schools I visit are pre-university and pre-college schools. My system works like a train. I hang up my posters, the students read the instructions and the majority of them come to the hand-in table well prepared. The small part that didn't get it, I point to the poster, after which they disappear only to come back prepared a little later.

Not so at special aid school. When I put up my first poster, a teacher comes up to me and says, "They're not going to understand that. Leave it to me." The students arrive, after which they are told in clear language what is expected of them. Table there to unpack your books. Only then is the question of whether they have their submission form. If not, back to the locker to pick it up. Neatly line up and the teacher tells who should go to which table. Turning the books upside down with the barcode to the person who received them, is difficult for most.

Seeing the way in which students from special aid schools need guidance to hand in books makes me realize that what can be a piece of cake for me, can be a very difficult or even impossible task for someone else. Our society is increasingly becoming one big computer system that is built and set up by highly educated people, who cannot imagine that there are people who cannot follow their way of thinking. I understand much better now that these people should not try harder. Rather, it's the other way around. The highly educated should take a closer look at how people with a different level of education interact with the world.

Last time angry

It's one of those days when everything seems to go differently than how I have it in my head. In the end, the four of us are in the car on the way home. It is much later than we initially wanted to go back and now we also have to refuel. Everyone has said that it doesn't matter that the plans that were there for; that evening can be rescheduled. Still, I feel rushed and want to make up for lost time.

That's why I jump out of the car, quickly fill the car with LPG and walk at a trot to the checkout to pay and come back to the car half running. "Dad, take it easy, you look crazy" it sounds from the back seat.

Something snaps in me. I'm running around trying to get home in time and all I get is comments. In a blur I get out of the car, just remember that I have to take my wallet with me and walk away with a "I'll take the train home". Out of the corner of my eye, I see our car driving away from the gas station. It only adds to the feeling of anger and incomprehension.

As I start walking, I realize that I have left my mobile in the car. I'm somewhere in Amsterdam and have only a vague idea of how to get to a train station from my current location. I don't know what time the trains leave, what the connection with the bus is like. And also letting them know when I'm home is not an option.

Slowly, the reality of the whole situation dawns on me. I got really angry because someone asked me to slow down. No one was in a hurry anymore, only in my head there was still the need to hurry up. And now I'm walking, all alone in Amsterdam, and I won't be home for a few hours.

In the train, I survey my life and look at the moments when I hit the roof. I see how the cause is always very small, the outburst is out of proportion to what has been said or done and the end result is always that everyone feels shitty. The one I've been angry with is myself.

I make a decision never to do this again.

The drive to change

In the time that follows, I spend a lot of time letting go of my irritation. In the Letters, the sixth Letter describes a beautiful way to let go of behavior that you no longer want. I apply this to my anger and ask for relaxation and acceptance of others in return. Asking for something in return for what you give away is essential, because by letting go you create space, as it were. If you don't ask for something in return, the space will fill up again with what you had before.

What is perhaps even more important than making change is the drive you need to make the transformation stick. I had often thought in my life that my anger did not serve me and that it is good to deal with it differently. But it was all very non-committal. 'It would be nice if', 'How good is it to'. These are all ways of saying that the urge is not yet high enough. "I'm tired of it and now I'm going to change it," that works.

Business Bootcamp: a mission after all

May 2, 2016 I go to a friend for whom I still do the administration. We have known each other for many years and the conversations are mainly about very different things than figures and taxes. Somewhere in the conversation I mention that I am still struggling with my own company. I do have ideas, but finding people is and remains very difficult for me.

The girlfriend gets up and comes back a little later with a VIP card. If I sign up no later than May 1st, I will receive a VIP package. Who knows, maybe I will be able to take advantage of this opportunity tonight as well. Of course it is not, but despite that it seems like an attractive offer: 97 euros for two days of learning about marketing.

The arrival at the event makes me suspect the worst. Loud music and dancing assistants who set the tone of the day with high five and a "How are you today". As you know, I've been to America and know these whipping techniques and find them rather exaggerated.

It is quickly explained that what we are experiencing here does not come from America at all, but from an Eastern European country where research has been done into how people best absorb material. Enthusiasm, movement and participation emerged as important pillars. The Americans have adopted this phenomenon, simply because they like to use what works. Still, I sit a bit forward in my chair for the rest of the first day and also the second morning. I have seen more of these kinds of presentations, and I rarely feel a connection with the man or woman on stage.

The theme of mission is broached. I've never had a thing for a mission. To me, companies only say how good, big and great they want to be. In this workshop, a different kind of mission is discussed, the mission that transcends the company. For example, Google has the mission 'making information available to everyone', Facebook 'connecting people' and he himself uses 'making you live your full potential' as a mission statement. A new starting point. Because I also see the downside of the statements of Google and Facebook, I will look for examples that appeal to me later. Among other things, I find a company whose mission is to 'make people smile' and is currently making T-shirts. And indeed, all the images on the T-shirts will put a smile on your face.

"And what is your mission?" is the expected question that follows. While we are thinking about this, the man on stage tells us that he has written a new book and that it came from the printer this week. He has decided to give everyone who attends this training a book as a gift. A number of trolleys are wheeled in with stacks of the new book on them.

Although this man is a millionaire many times over, I can see that handing out the book affects him. And that touches me again. "This man is real," I think. 'It's time to become real yourself.' Because internally, I have already answered the question of what my mission is, but I have not yet written it down. And so, I write down:

My mission is: to contribute to a world in which the Divine has a prominent place.

The missing r

The first thing the speaker of the Business Bootcamp does is write on a flip chart: opportunity. And because everyone is stirred up to participate, more than half of the audience jumps up and shouts: "It's opportunity!"

Of course, the person on stage knows very well what he is doing and tells us that the R is indeed missing from the word. He does this on purpose to indicate that everything in life is about tackling opportunities. "And," he continues, "in every opportunity there is always a missing R. It's too expensive, too far, on the weekend when you're going to do something fun with the family, or the workshop leader also gives other workshops that make you wonder if they fit into your vision of the world, etc. etc."

Looking back at the whole thing, I can see that this is the beginning of a carefully thought-out way to get you ready to eventually buy the \$3,500 three-day training course, because it's only selling for that price this weekend and not for \$9,997 which it normally costs.

At the same time, the idea of the missing r has brought me something very valuable. With everything in life, you can look at what is not right or missing. There is often something to be found and with that a lot disappears into the category 'not interesting'. By putting on a different pair of glasses and taking the missing r for granted, you can suddenly let a lot more come to you. For example, I can listen to a pastor who talks about how to pray and let his, in my eyes, babbling about the cross and sin slide past me. I take in what belongs to me and leave everything else for what it is. What an enrichment!

A triple hernia

Somewhere in that summer of 2016, the pain in my back, which I often feel, starts to get worse. When I look back, I realize that I haven't walked without pain in months. It's slowly getting increasingly a little bit worse. Every week the pain increases, and I can do less. Until eventually I can't sit up anymore, and I can't really walk anymore. My world is getting smaller and smaller, and I spend all day looking for a position in which I feel the pain the least.

The nights are the worst of all. The moment I lie down, the pain shoots through my lower body. There is no point in getting up, because it makes the pain worse rather than less. I would prefer to stay up all night, but walking around in pain all day exhausts me and turning around in bed at night only makes it worse.

The doctor allows me to take all the painkillers that are available, but nothing relieves the pain. Even pills with liquid morphine, which I can only take for the evening, do nothing for the pain at all. It makes me desperate. One night, I cry out, "God, why am I in so much pain. Why are you doing this to me?" The answer is shocking: "You're hurting yourself, not me."

I visit the local physiotherapist who pricks with needles, tries to make all kinds of muscles with tape to pull differently, but it all helps very little.

At the same time, there is a big challenge on my path. I fell for

the sales pitch of the missing r and signed up for three weekends of sales training for just under four thousand euros. Not going doesn't seem like an option, but the pain in my back says otherwise.

I decide to go anyway and stumble back and forth as best I can between the reception area where coffee and tea are regularly served during breaks and the large hall where a few hundred people are gathered to learn how to attract the right customers and ensure that you achieve a minimum turnover of 1 million euros.

Much of what is offered in the training is about the use of thought power, positive attitude and willpower. I know it all and always feel a kind of resistance to this fanatical way of meeting your own needs. For me, it's about opening up to what the universe has ready for you, because it suits you.

"Wouldn't it be great if there was someone who could help me with my back," I think. I resolve to open myself up to help and consciously choose a place somewhere in the middle of the sea of chairs.

Someone sits down next to me and immediately starts talking about my condition. It's obvious that there's something wrong with my back. I answer that it is true and that I would like to get to know someone who can do something for me. I explain that I have already made the whole tour through the medical mill and that I have been told that surgery is not done much anymore because a hernia either goes away on its own or returns.

The woman pulls out her phone and says that she will immediately text her sister who has been cured of her hernia in a few times. At the end of the session, she says: "Just take a look at Alberts Bunnik." She gets up and disappears into the crowd.

The man in Bunnik does magic. He puts my arms and legs on pillows of different heights and then asks me to hold one hand or foot in a certain position. Then he strokes my skin very gently and asks me to sit up again. This is repeated many times and each time I feel that there is a little more movement in my body. Although I still leave the practice with pain in my back, something has clearly changed. In the times I visit him after that, it goes a little better and better.

During New Year's Eve we go to my in-laws in Rotterdam to watch the fireworks in the harbor. Of course, the city center cannot be reached by car and the plan is to walk from my brother-in-law's house to the subway, take it and then walk another ten minutes to the ports. A nice plan, but my back hasn't recovered nearly enough to complete this exercise. Fortunately, my sister-in-law has connections in the healthcare sector and arranges a wheelchair for me. Being driven through the city, pushed by my brother-in-law, is a wonderful experience. An ultimate test of surrendering and receiving.

Peace with your body

After four more treatments in the new year, I'm back to my old self. In fact, my muscles are stronger, they can deliver more power. And all that by just very gently bringing balance back into my body. How wonderful the Divine life is, if only you can let It do the necessary work.

All my life, until I got this hernia, I have been dissatisfied with my body. I thought I should be able to cycle, run, lift faster, because that was the function of my body. Fatigue was also only a bother to me.

It's only when something disappears that you notice how much you've enjoyed it. It's the same with my body. For fifty years I have taken it for granted, I have not felt how incredibly beautiful it is put together and how at every moment it is at my service to accomplish the tasks I have set out to do. And if it has to be done a little slower, because the body can't deliver more than this, then that's what it is.

Human Design

After following the marketing training courses, I know enough to put my practice on the map. At least that's what I think. When I get home, it dawns on me that all the information I have received assumes that you already have a customer base and that you are going to expand it, strengthen it, approach more people by using your satisfied customers.

Finding your first customers is not highlighted anywhere, as well as how to market something that no one knows yet. Tricky, tricky, tricky. And so, I continue my search and try in my own way to put myself on the map of helping the Netherlands. With little success, unfortunately.

After the umpteenth attempt to start a workshop, even if it's only with a few people, I post on Facebook: Wanted: second participant in my workshop 'Give sound to your passion'. I have one person who wants to participate, a second one seems necessary to me to allow the workshop to continue. I found a beautiful location in the forest, and it would be such a shame not to use it.

There is no response to my Facebook message, other than the well-known four 'likes' that I always get. In addition, two e-mail messages arrive into my inbox three hours apart. The thrust of both messages is pretty much the same: "Do you know anything about Human Design?". I ask both ladies what they mean and then send them my date of birth, place and time, because they need it to be able to tell me more. Both of them give me the answer, "That's what I thought, you're a

projector."

It doesn't mean anything to me that I'm 'a projector'. But the explanation I get is very enlightening and explains a lot to me. Human design is a system that you can devote years of study to and therefore the explanation I give here is very brief and incomplete. If you want to know more, go to the internet and type in Human Design, there are three-and-a-half billion pages to read.

Human Design, which is a combination of tarot, astrology, I Ching and chakra teaching, distinguishes four different basic types of people. The manifestor is the person with really new ideas, such as the train, the plane and the computer. The largest group are the generators that work with these ideas to put them into the world in a practical way. Then there are the reflectors that look at what has actually become of all the plans. These three groups fit together, also in terms of aura. The last group is that of projectors. One in five people is a projector and for this group of people, the world works a little differently. Projectors are a new type of human being born since about 1750 and the task of this group is to prepare for the transition to the fifth dimension.

Where generators, manifestors and reflectors are busy with the material world and how to shape it in the most productive way, a projector looks at things from a different perspective. Namely, how do we get from here to a world that is just for everyone. It means that a projector, in contact with a generator, can very quickly sense, see or name where the intention of a project is wrong or can be improved.

That's a gift, but at the same time a curse. Because most generators are not waiting for someone to look right through them and put their finger exactly on the sore spot. Usually the projector is quickly put aside with a 'that's not going to work'. The trick for a projector is to wait until someone is ready to receive the information that becomes available.

To me, this characterization clarifies a lot. Very often I see other possibilities. When I try to explain them, I usually find resistance and try to show what I mean even better. The other person isn't ready and doesn't understand what I'm talking about. The end result is that I am left with my insight exhausted and bitter.

Most of humanity is currently made up of generators. It is therefore not surprising that their way of doing things is presented as 'this is how it works'. Making plans, elaborating them and putting them into the world is the motto. But there is another way to live life. Waiting for the invitation, as they say in Human Design, is something that I may make my own. Because there aren't many examples of how exactly to do this.

Visualizing your future

A well-known generator method is to visualize what you want to achieve in the future. The idea is that if you know exactly what you want and see it in front of you in an image, or even better on a vision board, then it will manifest in your life. And the success stories are countless. The house I visualized was suddenly for sale, the contract just fell into my lap.

The question I ask myself is: do you make a picture *of* the future, or do you get a glimpse *into* the future by doing such an exercise?

Maybe it doesn't seem to matter much. The big difference for me is that when you make a picture *of* the future, you believe that you can manifest that future with the power of thought. If you get a glimpse *into* the future, you will see what is possible from where you are now and the things you have done so far. All you have to do is respond to the signs along your path to finally end up in the future you saw. The universe is your guide.

Selling the house

We have been on the verge of selling our house a number of times. It is very big, especially now that the children have found their own place in the west of the country. Still, a lot speaks against this idea. First, the housing market has completely collapsed after the global recession. In addition, there is the problem of a drop in income. It is and remains the home where our children grew up and you don't just let go of that.

Then all of a sudden, there's that feeling: 'We have to sell the house now.' It didn't come from me, and I wonder why now. Then someone, with whom I once organized the street play day, emails me to ask if I can solve an Excel problem for her. Of course I can and happy I leave for her workplace.

While developing the application, which I do on-site because of the sensitivity of the data, we talk about what's happening in our lives. She has just bought another house and her house was sold very quickly, despite the weak market. She is very pleased with the real estate agent. He does indeed sound like someone we'll get along with as well.

After more deliberation, the decision is made, and we instruct the real estate agent to sell our house. If we want to leave, we have to do it now, because last year's income is surprisingly not too bad. We can still get a mortgage on these figures. This year's revenues, on the other hand, are sure to be disappointing.

Again, we apply the real estate's paint, a little more than that. The house looks tip-top, and we even provide new bedding. Every viewing is an exercise in getting the house in order. Make the beds, put your stuff aside and leave. Completely contrary to expectations, quite a few people come to watch. It is, as mentioned, a curious house and a similar house in the neighborhood has been for sale for more than six months. However, our house is sold a few days before the national open house day.

We can't believe our luck. The price paid is close to our asking price. The plan we have, to live smaller and then also have money left over to give me the opportunity to really go for my practice for a year, seems to be coming true.

In good spirits we start looking for another house. Now that our house has been sold, that shouldn't be such a problem. We find a nice spot, with a large garden, not too much living area and for a price that is exactly right.

When we call the agent, he sounds a bit anxious. We are already the umpteenth one to call and he would like to stick to half an hour per viewing but doesn't really know how to do that. If it is possible for us to do the viewing in twenty minutes.

This is the beginning of a race that we have experienced before. The housing market has exploded again. It was not our hard work on our house that was the reason that it was sold so quickly. All of a sudden, it's hot to buy a house again.

And so, we make an offer, close to the asking price, on the house we have found and are called back a day later by the real estate agent with the announcement that we have been outbid. I can hear the surprise in his voice when he says: "I'm not allowed to say anything about the offer, but you weren't just outbid, but by a few tens of thousands of euros."

We visit, view, bid on, a lot of houses. Usually, we find someone in front of us who says they don't need a mortgage, who can afford it that way.

At the last house we find, we are one of the first. We also stay in the race here and eventually bid over the asking price and are even willing to pay a thousand euros extra for a pile of firewood. But somehow, it ain't right, the house is really very small and the garden is adjacent to an electricity house of which I can feel the energy. No matter how difficult it is, we pull the plug on the purchase. The selling party tries to come up with all kinds of things to persuade us, he doesn't understand why these arguments suddenly weigh so heavily. Sometimes there are things that can't be understood.

Finally, three weeks before we have to move out of our old house, we find a rental flat on the second floor. Not at all what I wanted. I've always thought that renting a house was a lesser thing. It's not your own, and you don't build up any assets. But like everything in life, this is a lesson for me to learn. A lot of people live in rented houses and are completely happy. Building up capital is also just an idea, because eventually you will die, and you can't take it with you.

We would still like to move to a house on the ground floor, with a garden. Very bourgeois, but no less desirable.

Money to spend

The result of this action is that we got what we wanted. We live smaller and there is money left over for me to work quietly on my practice. In fact, there is more than that. Fortunately, because the car also needs to be replaced. And children who are studying could use a financial helping hand. In addition, we fulfill a long-cherished wish and go to New York for a week, a trip we will never forget. And I visit my dear friend Ernie.

Where does the story continue? I don't have a clue. But as Ernie said, "Where that came from, there's a lot more." I assume that he means that if I continue to follow the Divine, I will find income again.

A text from more than 25 years ago

While I'm writing, my son unexpectedly comes to live with us again (for a while). To make a place for him to sleep, I move my workspace to the back of our bedroom. While cleaning out my desk, I find an old text that I wrote more than 25 years ago. I had just gone to an astrologer who said that I should do something with my voice. I only half understood what I was told, and yet I sit down and write the following to myself:

Dear Jeroen,

Angel of Light, for that is what you are.

Let your light shine. Your path is to be a light of the world. Not to change the other, but to invite the other. Sing the song: "The light shines everywhere, even in you."

Of course, you wonder how. I can't tell you everything yet, because then you'll cringe. But what I can say is that you are on the right track. And... Go speak, speak a lot. Although you don't need anything to hold on to, I advise you to prepare a story. Not that it will tell you, but it will help you not to be nervous. As the astrologer said, "Use your voice to awaken the Angels."

It is amazing how precisely this text describes the path I have walked over the past years. And how true it is that I would have cringed back then if I knew what I'm doing now and what I'm planning to do.

You only know what you need

As I write the last paragraph of my book, I can look back on everything that has happened in my life. I see how I have been guided step by step to the right places and people and how I have also been told again and again exactly what was needed to (dare to) take the next step. Because if I had heard at my first voice workshop that I was going to sing in front of a group of people, I would never have gone any further. The universe is truly infinitely more intelligent than we can ever imagine. It knows what's good for us, what we need, and what hurdles we can jump over to grow to our full potential.

I hope that with this book I have been able to plant a seed in your consciousness to live closer to the Divine that has given us life. If you want to understand more about the thoughts from which I live, I cordially invite you to study the texts of Christ Returns.

Setting an intention works

One of the beautiful principles I learned in the training is setting an intention. At the beginning of writing this book, I decided to spend one hour every day writing my book. With that, I added a thousand words to my book.

The intention to complete the work in 28 days turned out to be a bridge too far. Apparently, there were still a few things I had to work on before I was willing to go for it. In addition, I wanted to write a book with about a hundred pages and about 30,000 words. There are 214 and a little less than 53,000 words.

Because in order to show how one event in my life led to another, I sometimes had to tell more than I had thought of in my first draft. There's a whole list of things I haven't described. Who knows, maybe I'll write it again in a blog, or make a second, thinner version.

Writing the book has been a true journey of discovery within myself. I now have a better idea of who I am, how I act, where my talents lie and also where I can continue instead of doubting and thinking of something else.

Prayer

Below you will find prayer as it is written in the Letters. Read it and let the wondrous beauty of the universe we live in sink in:

**FATHER, MOTHER, LIFE,
You are my life, my constant support,
my health, my protection,
my perfect fulfillment of every need
and my highest inspiration.**

**I ask you to reveal the true Reality of Yourself to me
I know it is your WILL
that I will be fully illumed,
that I may better receive awareness of Your Presence
within and around me.**

**I know and believe that this is possible.
I believe that you protect and sustain me
in perfect LOVE.**

**I know it's my eventual purpose
to EXPRESS YOU.**

**As I speak to you I know
that you are perfectly receptive for me,
for you are UNIVERSAL LOVING INTELLIGENCE
who has so marvelously designed this world
and brought it into visible form.**

**I know that when I ask YOU to speak to me,
I send a consciousness searchlight into your Divine
Consciousness
And as I listen,
YOU will be penetrating my human consciousness
and coming ever closer to my increasingly
receptive mind and heart.**

I commit myself and my life into your care

Divinefulness

My journey has finally led me to turn my mission into one word, Divinefulness. This is in response to the mindfulness movement that conquered the world. "It's not mindfulness, it's divinefulness," I thought a few years ago.

Divinefulness stands for being full of the Divine.

At the end of 2019, I was inspired to share all my knowledge about spirituality with a group of people. From my Human Design, it turns out that storytelling works best for me. I recorded everything that was said in the meetings. I have developed these recordings into two books: Divinefulness – Pilgrimage to the soul and Divinefulness - into the world with your soul. These books can be freely downloaded from my website. <https://www.jeroenarnold.nl/en>

Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to take in one of my creations. I hope you have read passages that have helped you in your journey into the light.

Feel free to share this book with others, that's what it's for.

If you would like to support me in my work to shape the world of Peace and Love and to distribute the book 'Christ Returns - Speaks His Truth' around the world, please consider making a donation. You can find the details for this on my website <https://www.jeroenarnold.nl/en/donate>

The journey through the spiritual landscape can feel heavy and difficult at times. Feelings of loneliness are also not uncommon.

If you feel the need to spar with me about this for half an hour, feel free to schedule an appointment, completely free of charge. For this goto <https://www.jeroenarnold.nl/en/30>

I wish you to be abundantly joyful.

Heartfelt greetings,

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