



How Did I Get Here?: Finding Your Way to Renewed Hope and Happiness When Life and Love Take Unexpected Turns

By Barbara De Angelis

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All of us find ourselves, at one time or another facing the unexpected and asking "How did I get here?" Whether because of disappointments in love, crises in health, family or finances, professional dissatisfaction, or events beyond your control, life doesn't look like you expected or intended it to.

HOW DID I GET HERE? is a groundbreaking inspirational handbook for anyone of any age going through change, challenge or reevaluation in any aspect of their lives. It is about finding your way to renewed hope and happiness from wherever you are. Renowned transformational teacher Barbara De Angelis masterfully guides you through an understanding of your own life lessons, and teaches you how to successfully use whatever you're going through as a springboard for regeneration and rebirth.

We live in turbulent times of profound change, and many of us find ourselves at emotional and spiritual crossroads.

HOW DID I GET HERE? offers illuminating teachings and practical, innovative techniques that free you to move forward into a life of renewed optimism, true contentment and courageous awakening. With her remarkable blend of timeless wisdom, practical techniques and down-to-earth advice, Barbara De Angelis helps you to :

*Recognize and understand the significant transitions, turning points, and wake-up calls on your path

*Transform fear into courage, confusion and into vision, and self-doubt into confidence

*Turn what appear to be dead ends into doorways

*Reclaim your passion and purpose for living and loving

*Discover freedom, fulfillment and authenticity from the inside out

Written with Barbara De Angelis' trademark eloquence, honesty and compassion, and containing the treasures of her own thirty-five year quest for enlightenment, HOW DID I GET HERE is a more than uplifting, intimate and moving--it is a true transformational manual for achieving emotional and spiritual rebirth that will change your life.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Barbara De Angelis has written a brilliant, hopeful, illuminating book that is essential reading for anyone on a path to truth. Reading it will inspire you, heal you and awaken you.” ?DEEPAK CHOPRA, author of THE BOOK OF SECRETS

“Barbara De Angelis is a rare inspirational teacher who has the courage to share the truth we all need to hear in a way that is impossible to ignore. How Did I Get Here? is authentic, deep and rich with timeless knowledge.” ?JACK CANFIELD, co-creator CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL Series and author of THE SUCCESS PRINCIPLES

“Whether you've read all the classic self-help books, or have never read one, do not miss 'How Did I Get Here?' Barbara De Angelis has written her best and most important work yet.” ?DAVID BACH, author of THE AUTOMATIC MILLIONAIRE

About the Author

Barbara De Angelis Ph.D. is one of the most influential teachers of our time in the field of personal and spiritual growth. For the past twenty-five years, she has reached tens of millions of people throughout the world with her positive messages about love, happiness and the search for meaning in our lives. She is the author of fourteen books published in over twenty languages including the New York Times bestsellers Real Moments, Secrets About Men Every Woman Should Know, Chicken Soup for the Couples Soul and Are You the One for Me?. Barbara has hosted her own television shows on CNN, CBS and PBS as well as producing and starred in her award-winning infomercial Making Love Work She lives in Santa Barbara, California.

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Chapter One

Digging Deep for Wisdom

It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work,
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.

—Wendell Berry

We begin with a story:

A man who always considered himself clever and capable died at the end of a long life and found himself on

The Other Side, waiting for an interview with God. Time seemed to be nonexistent as he sat alone in a light-filled room with no ceiling, no walls and no floor, trying to adjust to his new circumstances and anxiously anticipating his upcoming meeting.

What will God ask me? he wondered. I was never much of a deep thinker. What if he asks me about the meaning of life? I won't know what to say. I could always tell the truth—I was too busy being successful to think about that kind of thing. After all, my accomplishments have been very impressive—even God should be able to see that!

With intense concentration, he tried to recall all of the marvelous things he had achieved during his lifetime, so he'd be ready to talk to God.

Suddenly God appeared before him and sat down in the other empty chair. It is good to see you, God began. So tell me, how do you think you did?

The man breathed an enormous sigh of relief to hear that this was the question God was asking the one question he was sure he could answer. Feeling confident, he began: Well, I thought you might ask that, so I've made a short list of my accomplishments. I wanted to own my own business and become financially successful, and I did that. I wanted to have a good marriage, and I stayed married until my wife passed away—fifty-two years! I wanted to put my two children through college, and I did that. I wanted to own a luxurious home, and I did that. I wanted to learn to play golf and break ninety, and I did that. I wanted to buy a boat, and I did that. Oh, I can't forget this one—I wanted to donate money to worthy causes on a regular basis, and I did that. The man felt quite satisfied with himself, hearing his own list. Surely God was going to be impressed.

So in conclusion, he declared, I would say without wanting to sound immodest or anything, that I did very well, considering I accomplished most of the things I set out to do. But of course, since you're God, you knew all of this already.

God smiled kindly at the man. Actually, you're mistaken.

Mistaken? the man asked. I don't understand.

You're mistaken, God repeated, Because I wasn't paying much attention to the goals you achieved.

The man was taken aback. You weren't? But I thought...

I know, God interrupted. Everyone thinks the better their life went, the more successful their life was. But it doesn't work that way up here. I didn't pay attention to all the times you got what you expected and hoped for, for that wouldn't teach me much about what you were learning in your earthly existence. I was watching you most closely during all those difficult times when you encountered the unexpected, the things you did not plan on or want to happen. You see, it is how you dealt with these that reflects the growth and wisdom of your soul.

The man was stunned. He'd gotten it all wrong! He'd spent his whole life trying to do everything right. How should I know what lessons I learned from life's difficult moments? he wondered in a panic. I never even liked to admit I had any problems. What am I supposed to tell God now?

For a moment, he was speechless, but never one for enjoying defeat, he soon got a second wind of energy.

‘Don’t just sit here!!’ he told himself sternly. ‘You never lost a negotiation on earth. Try again! Gathering up all of his confidence, he began once more:

Well, to tell the truth, God, I was just being polite before. Actually—and don’t take this personally—my life was hell! What hardships, what disappointments, what tests and trials! Let me tell you about the time my mother-in-law moved in with us for months. And then there was the time I passed two kidney stones—at once! And my youngest son, he was nothing but trouble. And my wife, don’t get me started on my wife or I’ll be here forever....

Take your time, God replied. I’m in no hurry...

In one way or another, we are all like the man in my little fable. We do our best in life to get things right. We make lists, set goals, study, train, learn, commit to our relationships and our dreams, get organized, pray, affirm and problem-solve, hoping to experience the happiness and success we imagine for ourselves. Yet, inevitably, all of us arrive at times when, in spite of how steadfastly we have worked, how well we have prepared, how deeply we have loved, things still don’t turn out the way we thought they would. No matter how hard we try, we cannot plan for the unexpected.

Whether these difficult surprises come in the form of small setbacks, horrible shocks, or gradual, painful awakenings, the result is the same: We end up face-to-face with jaw-dropping moments of unwelcome revelation when we realize to our great dismay that we are living a life that does not look like the one we wanted. And unlike the man in the story, we are usually not so quick with a snappy comeback to the unexpected. More often, we are left shaken, disoriented and desperate for answers.

After two decades of writing, researching and teaching about personal transformation, I’ve come to the conclusion that so much of the pain, confusion and unhappiness most people—including myself—struggle with comes from our encounters with the unexpected, in both our outer and our inner worlds. Try as we might, these encounters are inescapable, an inevitable part of being human. Even though each of us secretly suspects that we’re the only one whose life is so off-course or inexplicably unsatisfying, and that everyone else is deliriously happy, the truth is something quite different: All of us are lifetime warriors in a prolonged battle—with change, with reluctant endings and scary beginnings, with assessments and reassessments, with more moments of disappointment than we care to count.

Recently I was going through some old notebooks I’d kept from college, and I discovered a page I’d written in my early twenties listing my personal goals and dreams. As I read the items on my life wish list, I was astonished by two things. The first was that I had indeed accomplished many of the goals I’d set for myself over thirty years ago: to become a published author, to move to California, to teach people about relationships and personal growth, to create a community of conscious people, to travel to exotic places around the world, to study with wise spiritual teachers, to fall in love and have a beautiful wedding, to own a home, to perform onstage, just to name a few.

The second realization I had as I read the items I’d included was more sobering. I became aware of how many unexpected things had happened to me that certainly were not on my original wish list. I had not written: Get divorced... more than once; be cheated by dishonest business partners; lose lots of money in the stock market; create alliances with companies that go bankrupt; Battle unfair lawsuit; brave slanderous attacks by jealous colleague; lose dear friends to cancer. I certainly didn’t remember setting these events as goals, yet they had occurred just the same.

Then it dawned on me—like so many of us, like the clever man in the fable, I had always believed my challenges would lie in overcoming the obstacles to my goals. But I was wrong. My deepest turmoil has had nothing to do with the things I didn't get, but rather with the things I did not expect, and got anyway.

It is not the things we want and don't get that are the source of our greatest tests and trials—it is the things we do get that we did not want and never expected.

...

It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door, he used to say. You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to.

—J. R. R. Tolkien

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