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# DESIRE CONTRACT

MAKE AN AGREEMENT WITH YOURSELF  
TO LIVE THE LIFE YOU WANT



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## PREFACE

# WHAT DO YOU WANT?

*Let yourself be gently pulled by the deeper  
desire of what you want. -Rumi*

What do you want? What do you truly want? If you're like most women, that simple question can be very difficult to answer. You may know you have a hunger, some sort of persistent longing. You can feel it, you know it's there, but it's hard to name or describe. It goes deeper than the longing for beautiful objects or extended vacations or a new home. It's the underlying desire, so big you can hardly get your arms around it.

This yearning comes from your very soul. So when faced with the question, "What do I really want?" it's understandable that most of us women find ourselves a little tongue-tied.

But when it comes to what you want, you do know. There is a voice inside of you—in the deep, earthy center of you—that has the answers you're looking for. It's a voice that has been with you all along, even if you weren't listening to it. It's your internal compass. Its name is *desire*.



## INTRODUCTION

# EXCAVATING YOUR DESIRE

Desire. It's a word that elicits all sorts of emotions in women—from excitement to fear, from bewilderment to hunger. Most of us think we know what we want but when pressed, we have a hard time articulating it. We have completely swept desire under the rug. But why? Why this chasm between ourselves and what we yearn for? How have we become estranged from our desire?

Desire is unpredictable. It is out of our control; it seems not appropriate and might not play by the rules. We may think it's okay to unleash in the bedroom. Maybe it's appropriate for other people. But we're not going to let it mess with a civilized trajectory. We have our plans, our goals. We play roles and wear labels like mother, sister, CEO, friend, teacher,

athlete, straight, gay, political, intellectual, etc. How do we know whether or not our desire will threaten the life we have carefully shaped? The self we've come to know?

Desire often pulls us out of our comfort zone. But that's not all it does. It also enlivens us. It enchants and delights us. It is a benevolent, magnetic force that charms us right into a life of deeper meaning and fulfillment. It is a guiding light, a compass. It is the only map we have. When trusted, it will lead us deeply into the truth—the truth of who we are and the path we are meant to follow.

But what is that truth? The only way to find out is to rediscover that deep, intimate, urging voice within. To let your desire simmer up to the surface, you may first need to unmask some of the ideas and beliefs that have kept it muted. Perhaps you're afraid if you really let your desire speak, it will lead you somewhere you don't want to go. Some women think desire will plunge them into a whirlpool of unbridled lust or send them on an erotic binge. They're afraid desire might usher them straight out of their job, their house, their city, or their marriage. For others, the fear is not so earth-shaking: Desire may simply plunge them directly into an ice-cream sundae. Either way, many of us have gotten the message that desire will lead us astray. We've worked hard to build lives that make sense, where the pieces of the puzzle fit together, fearing chaos and mayhem while forgetting that fear has a habit of over-dramatizing.

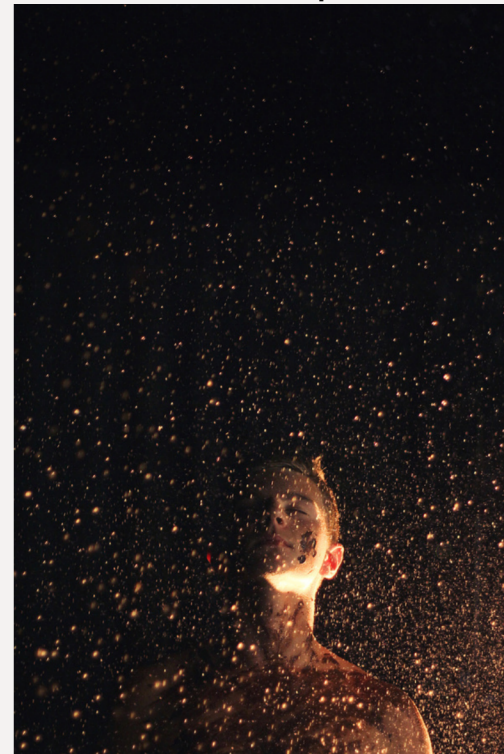
How beautiful to discover the truth, then, that the voice of our desire is soothing, healing. It's the nourishment we've been craving—the missing nutrient that magically cures our ills. Its voice is the very one you want to turn toward as you commit to a life of fulfillment. To attune yourself to it—to know that the voice of desire you're listening to is worthy of your trust—requires a gentle unraveling of the limiting beliefs and attitudes civilization may have entrained.

# The Language of Desire

**Desire is direct and positive.** It speaks in the affirmative, “I want you to touch me here.” Like a sailor, desire chooses a point on the shore and sets its unwavering tack. It is not vague; it is not unclear. When we connect with and speak from unadulterated, affirmative desire, we are speaking our native tongues. It’s the first step toward getting precisely what we want.

**Desire is based on what is.** Desire wants what it has; it wants to be saturated with the fullness of this moment. So it starts where it is—from here: This is what I want. It doesn’t start with a fantasy in the future, trying to build a bridge to itself from distant abstraction. It begins in the here and now, with the circumstances it finds around it.

**Desire responds to rightness.** Rightness is desire’s essential nature, regardless of propriety’s judgment. True desire cannot be anything other than right. Its very birth into our consciousness makes it right. Is this convenient? No. Simple? Rarely. But that is also what makes it so great. It invites us always into deeper exploration. The more we delve into desire’s mystery, the deeper we immerse in it, the more new and revelatory horizons open up and give us a reason to continue. Meet desire with confidence. Do not back down. Do not wither. Desire is your passport into an adventure—your invitation to greater courage. Meet it with the same power with which it meets you.



Desire is non-negotiable, unapologetic, and incontrovertible. You can't change your desire. It will not be whittled away or bargained down. Its price is set—because what you want is worth having in its entirety. Every last drop. Often, we skimp on what we allow ourselves to want and only order half of that. We are left with a mere shell of the original desire, with all of its potency dissipated. The answer is to stop short-ordering. When a desire comes to mind, do your best to speak it in the moment, exactly as it came to you. Do not hold back out of fear, guilt, shame. Desire will not go away, even if you do—it will just pop up again later. Treat your desire with the respect it deserves right from the start, and it will lead you precisely where you want it to.

Desire doesn't stop just because we resist. Desire still sends its impulses, even if we feel victimized by them. Stop resisting, because desire plus resistance equals suffering. I am not suggesting you accept every desire that arises, but simply that you let go of the idea that getting upset about it will make it go away. Getting upset only turns a pure and clean desire into a big, messy, sad one. Instead, get creative. Be resourceful in terms of giving your desire what it's asking for in a way that feels good to you. Not only will you stop suffering, but you'll get what you desire!



Desire needs an external anchor. Saying yes to a desire is like setting your GPS. If you set it for the nearest convenience store, it'll take you as far as the next corner. If you set it for unconditional awakening, you might find yourself on quite a ride. The journey starts the moment you commit to it. True desire requires unbelievable discipline. We need to be pruned and cultivated to become the person who is able to "have" our desires. It's not that we don't feel desire, but that we are not yet a person who can have.

Desire co-arises. Desire is an energy that arises between two or more poles. The energy that you feel toward someone is the same energy they feel toward you. That's not to say they are interpreting that energy the same way. Your heart might be set for love, connection, or longing; theirs might be set for disconnection, fear, or unavailability. Both hearts are activated in equal proportion, just in different directions. In either case, you are not alone. The force is the same. And where you can feel a force, there is a request being made by your desire. It is your work to unravel what that desire is. Keep following it. Allow yourself to be changed by it. Be willing to wrestle with it. In the heart of desire, all differences find their meeting point.

Desire is its own self-organizing system. Who you are is exactly who you need to be. Your desire will organize you into the person best suited to do what you are here to do. It knows how to let go of what isn't needed and draw in what will be required. Anyone who has made a difference in the world has allowed themselves to be gripped, taken, and moved in this way. Just plug in, give yourself over, and leave the rest to your passionate, unstoppable desire.

We've been taught to curtail desire, to bloom where we're planted, to settle and take disappointment as character-building opportunities. So we try to shoehorn ourselves into feeling okay in a world disconnected by intellect and reason from desire. But hardly anyone succeeds in managing desire. Those who do seem not to succeed at much else because curtailing desire has the unfortunate effect of stunting our growth in precisely the same areas that have the capacity to bring us joy: ambition, imagination, and creativity. The creative drive—more specifically, the procreative drive—is so closely entwined with desire that it fuels continuity of life. Desire draws the bee to the flower. Eliminate it and the human race is over. Nobody's getting born.

The bee's hunger can only satiate itself through the acquisition of nectar. The nectar-producing plant has a desire to propagate itself. It attracts with a fanfare of color and softness of its petals. When we start to see the desire-driven world around us, it starts to make sense that we get to know our desire, listen to it, hear what it has to say.

## Beyond Dollar Store Desires

For most of my life, I kept the voice of my desire buckled down. *Hush, I'd think, I've drawn this nice straight line for my future and you're throwing in all sorts of curves. What business do you have coming in with your ridiculous notions?* But lucky for me, desire wasn't listening. It whispered in my ear, *Tune in.* Desire longed for my approval. It yearned for a pact: an agreement that I would follow my deepest longings. It would accept nothing less than my total buy-in. I resisted until I finally started to understand the truth: No matter how hard I tried to get away from that voice, it wasn't going anywhere. I could turn away from it, but it would dog me for the rest of my life.

That attention came with the help of my wise old friend, Ray. He was 75 years old when I was 34, and my roommate. Having ignored the call of desire, I was a bit lost. I was sitting across from him at the kitchen table, collapsing under the weight of my own doubt. He pushed a notebook toward me. “Write down everything you want, Nicole. Everything you truly desire.” I could only stare at the notebook. On the one hand, I couldn’t think of a single desire. On the other hand, I was overwhelmed. I might not have known what my desire looked like, but I knew it was going to be big. He just smiled and pointed again to the notebook. It took a couple of days, but I finally picked up a pen. Suddenly, a wealth of desires, perfectly clear, poured onto the page. Twenty-six single-spaced pages.

I handed my list of desires over to Ray, awaiting validation. He nodded solemnly and then did not speak to me for three full days. During that time I felt an emptiness come over me. I’d shifted from a sense of accomplishment to a dull, privileged space—like the desires I had written in that notebook were owed to me. I slipped into entitled victimhood.

A fog of hollowness lingered around me. Something wasn’t quite right. I went back to him for advice about why I felt so conflicted. He suggested that my desires weren’t anchored in anything deep. My list was a collection of “dollar store” desires. Objects, mostly. I had a whole lot on there, but none of it felt special or meaningful. Objects, he said, only become meaningful when they serve a greater goal. The deeper the desire—the more important it is to us—the deeper the meaning. Once my desires reflected that depth, he told me, everything else would arrange itself accordingly.

I was accustomed to determining value and meaning based on external factors: price, label, cultural significance. Ray was asking me to determine value according to a different measure—what I was here to do, and whether or not the objects contributed to that. I realized that acquiring the objects on my desire list was not my real work. My real work was getting to the heart of my deepest desire and then working from the inside out rather than the outside in. Which, luckily, sounded much more interesting anyway.

My list shrank to about two pages. One core desire stood out from the rest. There it was, on paper, shining at me: the desire to wake up to a fuller, freer, more embodied life—and to inspire others to do the same. I knew, looking at the list, that waking up was the only thing that would ever satisfy me. I had tried a socially acceptable, academic approach to life for too long. The roots of my desire were pulling me in a different direction. I was being called into my deeper life—and I was finally willing to listen.

If you've found this book, you're likely here for the same reason. Desire is calling you. You've tried doing things the conventional way—you know, navigating the nice straight line. Maybe you've ignored your deeper desire, or even denied it intentionally. But still, its voice is inviting you. Beckoning your full attention. Isn't it time to let it guide you exactly where you want to go?

## It's Not About the Bike

One of my closest childhood friends was a girl named Maria. She came from a large, warm, rambunctious Chilean family. As an only child with divorced parents, I envied the love that seemed to surround her. More than that, I envied her most cherished possession: her bicycle. She rode it everywhere and took very good care of it. She had such a passion for that bike that she learned everything about how it worked and what it needed, and eventually got a job repairing bikes for other people. The love she felt for her bike made it glow—made it seem like the most desirable object on Earth. I wanted that same feeling, that sensation of love.

I hadn't yet discovered the truth: that the feeling I wanted was not tied to the bike at all. It was the feeling of love that came from the relationship Maria had with her bike. I figured if I bought a better bike than hers, my bike would glow even more. So I begged my mom to buy me one that was top of the line. She did, yet somehow the glow still eluded me.



I rarely rode the bike, and its presence in my garage began to feel vaguely reproachful. I almost came to hate it. This was definitely the bike's fault. That's how it usually ends up when we confuse an object and a feeling. We blame the object for failing to deliver the joy we expected it to deliver.

One day, my friend's beloved bike was stolen. She borrowed mine and rode it everywhere. Soon, it began to have the same magical glow I had so envied in her old bike. So, naturally, I wanted it back. But once I got it, I still didn't really feel like riding it, and it resumed its reproachful sulk in my garage. It refused to glow for me.

What made any bike that Maria possessed seem so desirable was the love she lavished on it. The glow was not in the bike, but in her relationship to it. Because that relationship was active and ongoing, she never lost interest in the bike. It remained just as desirable as the day she bought it.

Make sure as you begin to create a relationship with your desire that you are not confusing objects for sensations, feelings, and relationship. That's the difference between "dollar store" desire and the real thing. ♦

## EXERCISE:

# DESIRE IS CALLING

To “prime the pump” of your desires, try this short exercise. What desires are calling to you right now? Without overthinking it, write down the first ten desires that arise in your awareness. Keep in mind one of the most important tenets of identifying your real desires: Desires are always stated in the positive. They are forward-moving and affirmative. Most of us know very clearly what we don’t want, but we have a harder time figuring out what we do want. So make the switch. If you find yourself writing, “I don’t want to work in a corporate setting anymore,” or “I don’t want to be lonely” follow the thread to what may be the real desire: “I desire to start my own company and work from home,” or “I want to develop some deep, connected friendships.”

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Welcome. You've just taken the first step toward letting desire be your guide. This book gives you the next step. It presents step-by-step instructions for how to write a Desire Contract—a contract between you and your desire. Yes, you can have what you want. Having it starts with unearthing what it is, and then communicating it—first to yourself, and perhaps later to someone else. That's the journey you're about to go on—the journey of the Desire Contract.

My whole life changed when I signed on the dotted line. Yours can too.

## We Are the First Obstacle

Most of us are starved for desire, but only because we haven't let ourselves have it. We blame society, our partner, our upbringing, our friends, our family, our job, and a colorful variety of institutions and circumstances for keeping us from our desires. But in truth, its most dangerous guardian is us. There's a chronically deprived part of us—a troll under the bridge to what we want—that is bent on keeping us from crossing the river. The Desire Contract is a process of discovery, meant to reacquaint you with your troll in all its forms. You'll come to see that the voice that insists you can't have it is only a mirage, your own sweet attempt to protect yourself from disappointment. As you reclaim the power that you've been handing over to that cranky but loving old troll, you may find that renewed energy and enthusiasm come rushing in—filling the void that fear and doubt left as they departed.

# How to Use This Guide

Page by page, the work you put into your Desire Contract can clear away years (even decades) of confusion, misunderstanding, and disillusionment so that you can get on with the business of having exactly what you want—the business of living the life you were meant to live.

## Desire in Six Parts

A Desire Contract consists of six parts. Each is a revelation on its own, but also paves the way for the process that follows it. What I have found in writing (and rewriting) my own Desire Contract, and in working with students as they write theirs, is that a synergy emerges between the sections—where the whole reveals itself to be greater than the sum of its parts.

**Section One: Big D desires.** Big D desire is that of our deepest calling. It holds the ideals that we live for and is the destination we are aiming for: freedom, power, wisdom, love. As you start each day afresh, it says, “This is where we are headed.” When you get lost or sidetracked, Big D desire acts as a beacon calling you back.

**Section Two: Little d desires.** Little d desires are the tools you need to get your Big D desire. They include all the things you’ll want to pack in your suitcase as you head out on your journey. They form the map of how you’ll most effectively—and joyously—get there. These little d’s are all about detail—things like time, location, numbers, dollars, and other



resources. The more specific you are with your little d desires, the easier it will be to measure their results. They will help you know exactly when you've received what you desire.

**Section Three: Admissions.** Admissions are the things you need to acknowledge in order to be ushered into your own desire. They are often decisions that you made about life to comfort yourself in face of the fear that you couldn't have what you want—behaviors or circumstances you created as acceptable alternatives to true desire. The self-reflection and courage required in this section is worth the effort. With each honest disclosure, obstacles are removed on the path back to yourself.

**Section Four: Offerings.** The Offerings section results in a resume that will get you the best position of your life: a partnership with your deepest desires. Here you will identify your strengths and gifts and detail the skills and talents you can dedicate to achieving your desires, big and little. Ownership and specificity are the magic ingredients at this point in the Desire Contract. Specifically, what do you offer? Where and how are you going to offer it? And are you willing to own that you do have what it takes to achieve your desires?

**Section Five: Hard No's.** Hard No's are boundaries that communicate what you simply will not do, under any circumstances, as you head out on your journey of desire. Often, the act of writing a "hard no" is enough. You may not even need to use it. Simply by claiming it, you set enough of a boundary that others can feel it and will not try to cross it. Of course, the beautiful paradox is that each Hard No creates more space in you for a yes that can change your life for the better.

**Section Six: User's Guide.** The final piece of your Desire Contract is to lay out your User's Guide—the instruction manual to you! Not only will it help you to know yourself more intimately, your user's guide will give your friends, supporters, and loved ones clear insight into what makes you tick: your likes, dislikes, emotional needs, and behavioral

idiosyncrasies. It's like giving them the secret code to your inner life, putting them on the fast track to understanding you and how you would like to cocreate your unique relationships.

At the back of the book you will find what is really your final, and most important, exercise: a Desire Contract of your very own. The invitation and opportunity here is to summarize the decisions, proclamations, commitments, and desires that have revealed themselves to be the most significant at this moment in your life.

This workbook is one that you may choose to return to again and again. What you're doing the first time you write a Desire Contract is creating a template that can be updated many times throughout your life. Perhaps you'll want to make it a ritual in the week leading up to your birthday each year. Or you could have it as a part of your New Year's tradition. As you move through the pages, consider how it can serve you now and in the future. Don't worry about making a mistake—nothing is written in blood. You can update and adapt it as soon as tomorrow. By the time you are finished, you will have a living, breathing contract with yourself—one that has the authenticity and pliability to transform right along with you. For as you grow and evolve, so will your desires.

# Finding Your Desire Again

Finding and dusting off the map of your desire is central to the purpose of this workbook and essential for crafting a Desire Contract that feeds your heart and soul. And I have to tell you that I know of no better way to reacquaint yourself with your desires than to pop the cork on the genie bottle of what you want. I know, “want” is another word that has been judged harshly. We throw our needs, wants, and desires into one big pot and turn up the flame. If we’re lucky, maybe we’ll burn all of these pesky, selfish concerns. But the reality is that our wants are close allies of our desires. To get to our desires, we must first acknowledge our wants—no matter how frivolous they may seem.

In truth, our wants are cravings with a purpose. Just like we might crave a juicy steak when we need iron or a spinach salad when we’re in serious need of minerals, our wants often lead us to the nourishment that fuels our ability to dream, heal, hope, and create. As we ingest the nutrients that actually hold meaning for us, something magnificent happens: Again and again, we are able to engage in the world with optimism—even with wonder.

As we allow ourselves to want what we want, we see ourselves mature before our very own eyes. The whining about not getting what we want (whether done silently or aloud) begins to quiet down. In the silence, we may find that what we desire is closer than we ever imagined. So let’s find out what you want!

EXERCISE:

# THE WANT LIST

Completing the following exercise may be the most fun you've had in years! It's your opportunity to wholeheartedly, unabashedly unleash yourself. The list below is numbered from 1 – 100, purposely giving you ample space for every want you can think of. I encourage you to find a cozy place to relax, take a deep breath, and write every material, emotional, physical, spiritual, financial, and experiential desire that registers in your awareness. From "I want red high heels" to "I want to know God," allow yourself to proclaim what you want. Don't worry about whether you actually get to 100, or whether you need to take out an extra piece of paper to get to 150. Simply be open to everything that arises when you give yourself full permission to want.

## Declaration

I PROMISE NOT TO CENSOR MY WANT LIST FOR APPROPRIATENESS OR FEASIBILITY. WHETHER OR NOT MY PARENTS, PARTNER, OR BEST FRIEND WOULD APPROVE OF MY WANTS, I WILL PROCEED HONESTLY, BOLDLY, AND SPONTANEOUSLY.

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## STEP TWO: TAKE A DEEP BREATH, AND BEGIN...

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# DESIRE CONTRACT

## SECTION ONE:

### BIG D DESIRES

Not all desires are created equal. Each may have a richness all its own, but only some carry the power to move mountains. These are the “Big D” desires—the ones that stand above the rest. They are the guiding light not just for this moment, this meal, or this shopping trip; they guide us for our entire lives. Big D desire is the desire of our deepest calling, the destination we are aiming for—freedom, power, wisdom, love. It’s what sets your compass.

Everyone has a different Big D desire. Some women have a very specific Big D desire; for others, it will be vague. Some might have one Big D desire, others three or four. For me, the Big D desire is awakening: fully activating all of the potential I have been given and getting out of my own way to do it. Then, to the best of my ability, showing others how to do the same. Whatever your Big D might be, it will be big. Within it, you will be able to fit relationships, family life, work, day-to-day activities, and spiritual pursuits. It will be big enough to hold everything your life is about, all of your dreams, the direction you are moving in, and the destination you are heading toward. It may look ambitious and illogical to some and perhaps clichéd to others. But it will be beautiful, because it will be distinctly yours.

How do you know if it’s “The One”? How do you wade through your Want List toward this desire-that-encompasses-all-other desires? Is it something you should have known

since you were young? Or do we “grow into” our Big D’s? Should it land in your lap with a sort of “clunk,” or does it whisper softly in dreams, asking you to look deeper in order to find it?

The answer is yes; Big D desire can make itself known in all of these ways. If you’re not sure what your Big D desire is, you may need to learn the two languages that Big D’s tend to speak—sensation and intuition. They will be your guide.

## Sensation and Intuition

There are many ways that sensation arrives—a physical sensation, an unadorned feeling, a perception of awareness before emotion enters the room and makes a scene. Not to demonize emotions; they are essential to our human experience. However, they are stories attached to a sensation that inhibit our ability to simply experience what is here to be experienced in each moment. These stories about sensation often obscure our ability to feel where sensation is actually trying to take us, which is a place intimately connected to our desire. Sensation is often a guide pointing us toward intuition.

Intuition is, at heart, the ability to listen. Not to simply hear with your ears, but to receive through your five senses and beyond. To tune in. To wait attentively, even while your life is very much in motion. To welcome an internal communication, one that may surprise you in its delivery, sometimes arriving like a thunderbolt, other times as a soft whisper. You may feel a spaciousness, an unfamiliar stability, or an irrefutable knowing. There is the intuitive voice that has a protective nature: “Turn right here. Cancel the trip. Leave now.” Sometimes there is a bossiness to it: “Say yes, even if you aren’t yet sure why you’re saying yes.” “Walk away from this job offer, and trust that something better is coming.” “Marry him.” These interior directives are nearly always forthcoming. Are you listening for them?

Have you heard an incisive voice from within that had a change-your-life kind of reverberation? I read somewhere that Oprah Winfrey heard such a voice. She heard that she was to use a television show as a platform to spread a message, and so she set about getting herself a television show. I distinctly remember the moment I heard, “Now is the time to open a retreat center.” It came through in a voice so clear, so sure—even though it was patently insane. This intuitive bulletin struck me as more than a little premature. I had neither the money to open a center nor a following of students. And yet, the voice would not be bargained down. My life was subsequently spent in reference to what I had heard. The closer I came to it the more alive I felt; the further I moved away from it the more asleep I felt.

## Intuition in Action

Once you identify what feels like a Big D desire, notice how alive and lit up you feel. Continue to pay attention to sensation and follow this deep intuitive voice. Your Big D is the desire of your deepest calling. It’s the desire to build your life upon. If you find that you have attached a caveat to your desire, you know it’s not a Big D desire, because Big D’s are absolute. You know exactly what you want and nothing less will do.

Big D desires are confident and bold; they always speak in the affirmative. In the face of Big D desires, all the things you don’t want naturally dissolve—so you don’t even need to address them. When you disclose a desire (on paper, out loud, or in the privacy of your own mind) look again to be sure it’s stated in the positive, that it’s forward-moving. Rather than saying, “I never want to be poor,” you could say, “I want to feel financially free and abundant.” When you phrase your desires in the positive, you are willing to take responsibility for them. When you state what you don’t want, you keep the complaint, the blame, and the resentment alive. Working with your Desire Contract is an opportunity to stop any victim-tinged patterns in their tracks. Focusing on and asking for only direct, clear,

authentic, and positive desires creates an internal merger of strength and grace. It's a powerful combination. More often than not, strength plus grace equals getting what you want. So rather than asking for a life free from fear, you can get right to the point and stake your claim to creative action and power.

As you stake your claim, you'll realize how much of your desire you've suppressed out of fear of disappointment. Many women begin to notice that the minute desire pops up, their internal censor steps in and shuts it down. "Not so fast," it says. "That's never going to work. Tone it down a bit or you will be embarrassed." The key to living your purpose is not to silence that voice, but instead to befriend both your fear of disappointment and the dreamer within. As you befriend your fear, it stops taking you hostage to get your attention. And as you befriend your dreamer, you gain access not just to the dream but also to the steps it will take to realize the dream. Suddenly you find that you have created something brilliant that no one else has allowed themselves the freedom to explore. Those women who do the things you think you could never do are women who let the dreamer lead the dance. Their actions might appear to be quite unreasonable, as if they're in denial of the risks involved and the potential for failure. In truth, they are wide awake to the possible pitfalls and often in dialogue with their fear—sometimes even fueled by it.

Be advised that your dreamer can feel crazy at times. Even dreamers do sometimes question the viability (and sanity) of following dreams; the idealism and romance of it all seems so impractical. So big and beautiful. That is why a good working relationship with your internal censor comes in handy: to keep you grounded in real-world results. Take the time to listen to it, to pay attention. It probably has some viable concerns. Integrate any of its advice that rings true, but be sure to leave the rest.

## What Really Matters

Remember my friend Ray? With his wise counsel, I began to view my list of wants and

desires through a different lens. Rather than focusing on the acquisition of objects, I turned my attention toward what I was really here on this planet to do. I came to understand that my work was to get deeply honest about what really mattered to me. On those days when I awoke with a tingling excitement and just had to get out of bed and get going, what was it that was so compelling? What gave me energy, even when I put long hours into it? What brought me closer to myself and to others? What inspired me to give more and to be more? As I went about this inquiry, I began to notice an interesting thread running through the fabric of each answer that came to me: My deepest desires seemed to have a distinctly out-flowing nature. When I heeded their call and was willing to receive them, I found myself increasingly involved and engaged in supporting other women along their own path. Creative surges and fresh insights arrived, and I found that my teaching took on new dimensions. As the best in me was fully activated, I felt moved to give more. In the depths of desire, I found a fullness, a bounteousness. And there was nothing to do but share it.

Aligning with my deepest calling put everything into sharp perspective. I saw my lists of wants and desires in a clarifying light. They began to make more sense in relationship to my real mission. Sure, attaining an individual desire could be pleasurable, but far more important was whether or not a desire contributed to my real purpose, my calling, my joy. A house, a car, a degree, a lover—the true value of these things could be measured by how they contributed to what I was here to do. From the deepest place in my heart, my desire was to wake up, to experience the truth of freedom in my body, and to be deeply present and available for life. And as is the way with our interconnected experience, the deeper desire was—and still is—to inspire others to do the same.

## MEMORIES AND BIG D DESIRE

Up to this point, you have begun to reacquaint yourself with desire as an essential force in your life, unleashed your wants, and entered into the conversation of your Big D desire. There is likely a great deal stirring in you right about now—thoughts, feelings, sensations, and perhaps the gentle nudge of memories. As you move into the two exploratory exercises that follow, let your memories surface—they may hold important clues to desires and dreams that you shelved or even buried. Sometimes the most important desires of all are the ones that are the most thoroughly abandoned.

EXERCISE:

# YOUR REAL WORK

At this point in the process of crafting your own Desire Contract, your work is to dig even deeper, to dive all the way down into your soul in search of your Big D. Get in touch with that part of you that has always been and will always be. Allow that voice to answer the following questions. They will either lead you closer to, or fully reveal, your Big D desire.

Note: Don't worry if the same or a similar answer arises for each question. It just means you're on to something!

**Q** For what purpose were you born?

---

---

---

**Q** What are you here to do?

---

---

---



Q What matters most to you?

---

---

---

Q What infuses you with energy and enthusiasm?

---

---

---

Q What inspires you to rise above old patterns and offer your larger self?

---

---

---

Q If this were your last day on Earth, what would you want your most important contribution to have been?

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---

## EXERCISE:

# IDENTIFYING YOUR BIG D DESIRE

You have already begun to move closer to your Big D desire. By sensing what is happening in your body right now and recalling moments of intuition, you're cultivating the skills required to excavate your deepest truths. This exercise is meant to help you get even deeper; in the search for a Big D, it's often a matter of peeling away layers so more can be seen. It's also common to think you know what your Big D's are, but to find yourself caught up in the Little d's—the wants that are meant to support your deeper calling. One of the best ways to drill down to your Big D desire is to look for the desire behind the desire. For example, I might think my biggest desire is to be a teacher. But when I ask myself what desire is behind the desire to teach, I discover a desire to share with others the ideas that have helped me so much on my own journey. The desire behind that desire is to do my part to help alleviate suffering. And the desire behind that one is for all to be free. At this point, there is no bigger desire. I have landed on my Big D desire of waking up so I can help others do the same.

1. Starting with the circle in the center, write down the Big D desire you've been toying with. If you feel unclear at this point, just write down a big desire, whatever it may be. Remember to stay connected with your body as you write.
2. Is there a bigger desire behind that one? If so, write that down inside the second circle.
3. See if there's an even bigger desire behind the second one. Write that desire in the next circle and continue on from there. Remember there is no right or wrong here. You might fill in the first circle only, or you might find your Big D desire lies six layers out! Simply allow yourself to enjoy the investigation.

I live my life in growing rings  
which move out  
over the things around me.

– Rainer Maria Rilke



# DESIRE CONTRACT

## SECTION TWO:

### LITTLE D DESIRES

Little d desires are the tools you need to get your Big D desire. They are the stepping stones required to get us from where we are to where we want to be. A Big D desire illuminates the path you are traveling with its guiding light—infusing each step with purpose and meaning. Your Little d's include all the things you'll want to pack in your suitcase as you head out on the journey.

Little d desires are very specific. They are all about detail—things like time, location, numbers, dates, and dollars. Look to the areas of your life that are most important to you—friendship, work, family, physical well-being, education, travel, creative expression, romance, sex, spiritual growth, and others. What are the specific little d desires related to your Big D desire? Think of how many close friends you wish to have or the advance degree you're going to need to realize your Big D. Is there a training program that will bring you closer to your Big D? If so, how much money will you need to save in order to enroll and when does the program begin? Would making changes to your daily diet and exercise habits serve you in living your Big D desire? By being specific, you'll be able to see the results—you'll know exactly when you've received what you desire. Also, as you itemize the tools and resources you need, and as you begin to create a timeline for attaining certain desired goals, you'll find that a map emerges to guide you as you fulfill your Big D desire.

EXERCISE:

# RETOOLING YOUR WANT LIST

Now that you've found your Big D desire, it's time to look again at your Want List. Go back to your list of 100 wants and pare it down to a list of 25 wants.

You can have more than 25, but the funny thing is that most women end up with a handful of 5-10 wants that show themselves to be of particular significance. Again, once you see the power of your Big D desire, the rest of your desires become clearer. For example, you might discover that some of the desires you've held as highly important were actually based in fear rather than true desire.

01 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

02 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

03 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

04 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

05 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

06 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

07 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

08 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

09 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

10 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

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22 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

23 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

24 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

25 I WANT \_\_\_\_\_

# Discovering and Clarifying Your Little d Desires

Include everything you need in your bag of Little d desires, but remember, you're going to have to carry this suitcase, so you don't want it to be heavier than necessary. There's no bigger hassle than carrying around ten pairs of shoes, when you'll only end up wearing your sneakers. Aim toward simplicity. What is the minimum amount you need in order to get where you want to go happily? While you'll enjoy the play of Little d desires, they're not the end of the line. There are four categories of little d desires. Some you need and others add excess weight.

## “Good Person” Desires

“Good person” desires are things you think you should want even if you don't really want them. Many women were taught there is a certain path to follow to get where we want to go. How many women have followed precisely the script that was given them—something like “meet the perfect partner, marry, get a high-paying job, have two kids, etc.”—only to end up with an empty feeling of defeat? I can't tell you how many Desire Contracts I have read that say, “I want to talk to my mother once a week,” only to discover that it is not a desire at all, but a way to alleviate guilt. I've done experiments and had women talk to their mothers weekly to find out if it's a true desire. It rarely is. The actual desire is to be free of guilt. They may love their mothers, respect them, and truly enjoy their company, but the desire to be free of guilt, duty, and obligation is what is actually begging for attention. Once acknowledged, a genuine desire, which might even include talking to one's mother daily, will arise. You need to find out for you what the real desire is.

It is important though that those “want to wants,” as I call them, be acknowledged. Ignore them and the voice of guilt will only get louder. Listen to them and they can relax—like a guard dog who has sniffed out the perimeter and can now take a snooze in the shade.

## “Bad Person” Desires

As you start seeing how many “good person” desires you’ve manufactured, you’ll likely find right next to them all your “bad person” desires. You know, the things that you just know are bad for you—the ex who always cut you down, daily pints of ice cream, or watching four hours of TV straight. Like the good ones, these bad ones need to get some air time or they will clobber you with cravings. They might even lead you to a deep desire that wouldn’t usually make it past your spam or taboo filter. However, that deep desire can only be heard if the “bad person” desires or temptations are allowed to flow and you come into relationship with your shadow.

## “Embarrassed to Admit” Desires

The next set of little d's are those you're “embarrassed to admit.” One of my students desired “to make my high school friends jealous of how far I've come by having a TV show.” It felt totally true, and at this point in his consciousness the desire to prove is still a very valuable motivator. Within the context of something more meaningful (the Big D), that smaller desire can be used and discarded when his vision turns to something bigger.

## “Easy to Admit” Desires

There are little d desires you just know you want. After you sift through and eliminate some of the excess baggage of little d's that you’ve outgrown, you arrive at the desires you actually want. Qualities to cultivate, experiences to have, items you need to be successful in your journey towards your Big D desire.



If you're unsure about whether a little d desire is worth signing on the dotted line for, think about it in relation to your Big D desire. Will it lead you where you want to go? Or will it distract you? You do want to be careful that you don't settle for less than you need. While some things will be truly distracting, others that seem minor may be exactly what's required. Garden-fresh flowers by your bed may seem like an indulgence, but if the sight of them upon waking reminds you of beauty in a dark time, they're vital. External rules don't work here. Absolutes like "I will not eat sugar" or "I will buy whatever I want whenever I want it" leave you feeling ungratified—with a residue of guilt and craving. Tuning in to your Big D will help to make wholehearted and complete choices that feel good regardless of the circumstances, because they are true to you in the moment.

EXERCISE:

# YOU CAN HAVE IT

Go back to your original Want List, the 100 wants and desires.

1. Next to each of your 100 wants, write down “who” wants each of these things—the good girl, the bad girl, the bad boy, daddy’s little girl, the high achiever, the rebel, etc.
2. Write down how old the part of you is who wants each one. Is it your four-year-old self, your twelve-year-old self, your twenty-year-old self, or some other version of you? Some of them may be current, however, often you will find that the true origins of your desire arose much earlier.
3. Whittle the list down so the only desires left are the ones you truly want, not out of scarcity but out of clean desire.

Each step of this exercise gives you more clarity. Each honest and vulnerable moment of inquiry that you're doing to unearth your little d desire is bringing you into greater alignment with your deepest self.

# DESIRE CONTRACT

## SECTION THREE:

### ADMISSIONS

Now that you've laid out your Big D and little d desires, the next step is to do some accounting. There are some things you need to admit—your “admissions.” These are the things, usually a handful or so, that you need to acknowledge in order to be admitted into your desire. Admissions are the things you know but have been unwilling to admit in your heart. They are often related to decisions you made to comfort yourself in the face of the fear that you can't have what you want. They are the behaviors or circumstances you created as soft-landing alternatives. Unfortunately, what seemed like acceptable alternatives at one time may now be revealing themselves to have huge price tags attached. To settle for alternatives, you made a compromise. This is the time to admit your fears, admit to the decisions that followed, and admit to what you may have lost.

You may be asking, “Why all the fuss? Do I really need to dredge up and admit to things of the past? And why would I need to pay my way into my own desire?” Because entering into the world of your true desire is an invitation to step more honestly, authentically, and fearlessly into your life. It's an opportunity to grow, to arrive at the door of desire all grown up—spiritually mature. Rumi wrote, “Move within, but don't move the way fear makes you move.” The cost of having fear as a chief decision-maker in your life is just too high now. As you reunite with desire, you're naturally called into a life with fewer obstacles, fewer speed bumps made out of fear, anxiety, and self-doubt. Admissions are

yours to give when you are ready and willing. They cannot be plucked off the tree before they are ready. When they are ripe, they will fall tenderly into the palm of your hand.

## Truth Telling

As a teacher, I have found that women will admit things to me that they can hardly believe they're saying. It's as if I am momentarily transformed into a faceless priest listening anonymously through the window of a confessional booth. I love these moments, because I know from my own experience what a profound relief it is to finally tell the truth—to speak for the one (perhaps the child, the adolescent, or the young adult within us) who made a decision about life that is still affecting our day-to-day experience. Decisions born out of emotional pain have a way of giving rise to behavioral patterns, situations, and circumstances that are hard to navigate. Thus the search for those “soft-landing” alternatives. It's as if we say to ourselves, “Okay, since I'm absolutely sure that I can't have this desire fulfilled, I guess I'll settle for that instead.” Some unattended part of ourselves is afraid that being honest will cost us something we're pretty sure we can't afford.

Here are just a few examples of admissions I have been privy to:

- She never wanted to marry her husband.
- He's no longer gratified by his spiritual practice.
- She has no energy left to look after others.
- She thinks people see her as stupid and uninteresting, so she got two PhDs.
- He decided that he would never have the charisma to make it in the business world, so he became a spiritual teacher who harbors shame about what he hasn't accomplished in the outer world.
- She has the respect and admiration of her colleagues, but has been single for eight years and fears that she'll never be loved by a man.
- He's wanted to move to another city in a different state for the past 18 years, but he remains in the same house seven miles from his parents—because that's just what you do.

When we step outside of our own lives for a moment and see how others struggle, penetrating questions come rushing to the surface: Why would we think we can't have what we want? What is the real cost of accepting substitutes for our true desires? And why, with all of our wit and sophistication, do we allow ourselves to remain trapped in anything—a profession, a relationship, a town, an addiction, or an old identity?

Perhaps you've already devoted a lot of time and money in the pursuit of unraveling some of those psychological knots. You may be aware of the silent, invisible agreements you made as a child and adolescent—the agreements you made to fit in, to belong, to be accepted, to be loved. You understand that you took some emotional hits and were left with some shrapnel—shame, anger, despair. You can approach things differently.

In navigating the workbook, let your newly reclaimed desires come to your aid. Rather than taking one more step to figure out the complexity of old emotional wounds, let desire be an antidote and truth be an elixir. The simple act of admitting the truth on behalf of the life that is calling you can set you free from years of quiet bondage. It may take a little time; it may be gradual. But you can relax now and let the power of your admissions work its magic.

EXERCISE:

# THROUGH THE DOORWAY OF HONESTY

You may remember that desires are always stated in the positive. Well, not so for admissions. Consider this your chance to purge! Use words like not, never, and no as many times as you wish. Your admissions can be rough and ragged—whatever it takes to pull the limiting beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and decisions out of the dark and into the light of day. Keep in mind that powerful admissions can also be bursting with positivity. You might choose to admit that you’ve been withholding one of your gifts, that you need to be touched, or that you love someone. In addition to the blank journaling page below, here are a few sentence fragments to help you get started. Only use the ones that call to you:

I need \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If my body could talk, it would say \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I’m afraid to admit that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I regret \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I wish I had never \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If I could start over, I would \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I need to tell him that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I wish I had the courage to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I can no longer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm tired of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I believed that I would never be good enough for \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm afraid that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm pissed off because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I settled for \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I decided that I couldn't have \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If I believed in myself more, I would \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I need help with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_









# DESIRE CONTRACT

## SECTION FOUR:

### OFFERINGS

One thing I know to be true is that women want to contribute, to give everything we have to give—whether five years old or eighty-five. When we don't, we wilt. Given an opportunity to share our gifts, we perk up like thirsty house plants after being watered. Much like the cycle of night and day, there is a cycle of giving and receiving. The overflowing bounty that I had to share when I began to truly receive the gifts of my own desires was due to this cycle. It didn't take effort or will; it was more like breathing; in and out, in and out.

How would you like to be used? How would you like to give?

The Offerings section of your Desire Contract is where you agree to give something back in exchange for getting what you desire. You put your skills and dedication on the table, and ask that they be put to good use. The first offering of the desire contract is really an offering to yourself—clarifying and concentrating what you have to give so that you will start to see opportunities to yourself where you might not have noticed them before.

# Offerings in Two Parts

To give you a quick preview, in this section you will identify your gifts, your challenges, and your angels:

- Part One focuses on your unique gifts, which include your learned skills, your natural gifts, and your secret gifts.
- Part Two focuses on turning your challenges into strengths and choosing your angels. Your angels are the people who will support you through your challenges and remind you of your greater purpose whenever you forget.

Here, detail everything you will dedicate to achieving your Big and little desires. Be specific what you have to offer, where you're going to offer it, and when you're going to offer it.

One student of mine wanted to be a public speaker. She felt called to inspire groups of people by leading workshops that were specific to her training and experience. But she was mortified to be the center of attention in a room full of people. Fueled by her passion for speaking, she took stock of her skills and sought a job as a conference director for a national event organization that hosted over 100 speakers per event. Not only did she put herself in proximity to some of the most skillful speakers in the world, but she also made sure to introduce the headlining presenters at each conference, putting herself in front of hundreds of audience members. Focused more on the speaker she was introducing in those few minutes than on herself, she gradually moved through her anxiety around being visible. Now she feels that many of her deepest gifts are activated and utilized in the workshops that she leads.

Maybe your offering is of a more private and personal nature. If the way you would like to be well used is to be a mother, to love and nurture a child and guide them into a life of their own, what could you offer now that would activate that desire? How might you choose to offer your devoted attention to those who are in your care now in exchange for the

fulfillment of your passion for mothering?

To identify your offerings, think about those who have guided you toward becoming who you want to be. What skills and talents do you have that you can offer to these guides? If you want to be a leader in a particular field—political, corporate, religious, personal development, or any other—what can you offer to the teachers you have had in that field? As a teacher who asked to lead and inspire others, I had to take inventory myself to see what I had to offer. I am excellent at event coordination, so in exchange for learning to run a community, I agreed to handle all of my teachers' scheduling and to do so with pleasure and gratitude.

Directing your skills and gifts in this way is something that will evolve through the years. You will have to keep upping the ante in terms of what you offer, and it will likely have you bumping into things that scare you—which in turn will be the things that facilitate your growth. One of my greatest fears is a kind of undirected social interaction. But when I realized that I would need to do this to have my Big D, I agreed to offer ten hours a week to simply socialize with people. Interacting with others in an unstructured way brought rich new textures to my ability to relate, including more trust and transparency.

## Declaring the Form

You are agreeing to give something back in exchange for getting what you desire. It is important to clarify and state the form—the manner, methods, and channels through which you will carry your gifts forward. My form, for example, is through books, media, and founding a community. In the early days, these seemed like crazy dreams, but I got to grow into them. Doing something that seemed impossible was a key part of my evolution into a woman who was capable of holding the weight of her Big D desire. Maybe your form looks like a volunteer program, a marriage, an online business, a classroom, a healing center, a YouTube channel, or a monastery. Whatever it is, it will feel true to you when you land on it.

# OFFERINGS PART ONE: YOUR UNIQUE GIFTS

Part One is a resume of sorts, a summary of your skills, natural gifts, and secret gifts—the things that qualify you to be the holder of your desires. Individually and collectively, your unique gifts are at the heart of your offerings. As you reflect on your Big D and little d desires, notice what they reveal about how you want to be of service—be it your children, your family, your clients, your customers, your students, your coworkers, your community, or the world itself.

## 1. Your Learned Skills

Skills are often production-oriented abilities that you have typically learned at school, on the job, and in collaboration with others.

## 2. Your Natural Gifts

Your natural gifts arise organically and spontaneously, reflecting your natural way of being. Often you can't explain them because they are second nature to you. These are the things you do that compel people to ask, "How do you do that?" And your honest answer is, "I don't know. I just do." Your natural gifts are the way your unique genius is expressed—your natural capacities and talents that often show themselves as a kind of mastery. You could apply the word "skill" to many of these abilities too, but the word "effortlessness" is a better fit. When you know what these natural gifts are, you can be more deliberate with them—allowing you to have greater effectiveness and positive impact on the world around you.

### 3. Your Secret Gifts

Everyone holds precious jewels inside. They're very much like natural gifts, however these treasures are safeguarded and shared only in the right moment or with the right people. Perhaps you were ridiculed or were threatened with outright rejection when you displayed these gifts and natural proclivities in your youth. Or maybe you lived in an environment where competition, envy, jealousy, or greed were rampant, and you made the private decision that these important aspects of yourself were under threat. As adults, sometimes you can see that you're still hoarding these gifts because you don't want to be taken advantage of. Once the secret is out, people might come to you with needs and demands that you have no desire to fulfill. Or maybe you hoard them because you still harbor the belief that you'll never be good enough, and holding tightly to these gifts makes you feel special.

At this point in your life, the advantages of concealing and withholding your gifts do not outweigh the costs. When you shield your shimmering gifts from the world, they start to dim. Your natural energy, the thing that would get them shining again, is tied up keeping your light under a bushel. Gifts that once were obvious get obscured in a haze of negative thoughts.

For example, hoarding one of your secret gifts so you can feel special will tend to reinforce the false belief that you aren't special at all. Ironically, the luster of your jewel can grow dull beneath built-up resentment—resentment that others are not knocking down your door begging you to share talent!

A sincere desire to deeply participate in life is more powerful than any shame-based belief that may cause you to hide your gifts. As you begin to share your gifts, you will keep energy moving in the direction of your desires.

EXERCISE:

# YOUR LEARNED SKILLS

Make a list of the production-oriented skills you possess, especially the ones that light you up and give you the most energy. Examples: Website design; project management; team-building; audio editing; copywriting; attention to details and organization; accounting.

My skills: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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## EXERCISE:

# YOUR NATURAL GIFTS

Make a list of who you are in your essence and how that gets outwardly expressed. Examples: I plan fun outings for my friends; I make people laugh; friends come to me for perspective and to hear the truth; I make the best coffee; I'm intuitive; I'm a great storyteller; I create a beautiful environment wherever I go. Special Note: If it helps to get your list fleshed out, talk to two people who know you well and ask them to list three things that you do naturally and effortlessly. Ask, "What makes it easy or pleasurable to be with me? What are some things you see me do that make you curious about how I do them?"

My natural gifts: \_\_\_\_\_

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EXERCISE:

# RETOOLING YOUR WANT LIST

Take inventory of the gifts inside of you that you've been keeping undercover (and probably not so successfully). Examples: telling the truth; identifying people's gifts; service; writing; humor; managing projects; sales; psychic abilities; the willingness to forgive; compassionate love. Once you've made your list, look to see what limiting ideas or beliefs are attached to each one. What will happen if you let go and allow these gifts to flow out of you from desire? Look at how you can bring them out and let them shine the way they were meant to.

Choose one secret gift to focus on this week and commit to doing one thing within the next seven days that will let this gift out. Notice how it feels to let it be seen. The more you use your gift to serve, the more it glows and expands.

My secret gifts: \_\_\_\_\_

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The secret gift that I will share this week: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The dominant idea or belief that has kept it hidden (until now): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if I let it out: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My action-based commitment (the one thing I will do to share this gift): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My desired result: \_\_\_\_\_

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## OFFERINGS PART TWO:

# TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OFFERINGS

Now that you have clarified and reclaimed your skills and gifts, the next step is exploring the challenges you currently face, building strength where you may feel weakened and deflated, and identifying the key support people who believe in you and will remind you of your strengths in those moments when you forget. These supporters are the angels in your life who really see who you are, the people who expect you to fulfill the promise of your life.

### Step 1: Your Challenges

Most people are fairly well-conditioned to equate challenges with weakness, shying away from any area perceived as a weakness. We don't want to ignite feelings like frustration or powerlessness. But desire takes everything into account, so any unexamined challenges end up draining energy that could be put toward other things. In this section, you will deliberately turn your attention toward the places where you don't feel as strong as you would like to in hopes of building these areas into something even better than you could have imagined.

### Step 2: Choose Your Angels

Angels are the people in your life who give you the blessing of being seen, heard, felt, and profoundly understood by another human being. You may find yourself saying things like, "How did I get so lucky?" Even though their insights into your soul may cause you to cringe sometimes—and the depths they ask you to meet them at may feel like tough love—

your heart is ultimately cracked open by the generosity of their love. They observe you moving through your life, watching you navigate through all kinds of internal weather, while caring about your journey. They value all aspects of who you are in equal measure.

In return, treat your angels with care, kindness, and respect. Be honest, open, and vulnerable with them and yourself. Show up with integrity, taking responsibility for examining your life. Be willing to grow and change and to open the door to desire and allow its heat to melt away any resistance you have to living.

# EXERCISE:

# TURN CHALLENGES INTO STRENGTHS

1. Make a list of your challenges. As with earlier exercises, make a promise to yourself to proceed without self-judgment or censoring. Examples: tendency to isolate; inability to problem-solve in the moment; being happy; communicating my desires; procrastination; overworking.

My challenges: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. From your list of challenges above, choose one that you'd like to work with this week. Create a game that will help you rebuild the muscles that have atrophied a bit under the weight of that challenge. The aim here is to turn your challenge into play by deliberately creating a fun situation in which you get to work on strengthening yourself in that particular area. (Over time you can make a game for each of your challenges.)
  
2. After the game, write about your experience—how you felt during it, how you felt after it, and what you learned from it.
  
4. Make a commitment to how you will continue building this muscle.

### A detailed example:

**CHALLENGE:** Being open and vulnerable about my feelings in public. I'm comfortable with having my emotions in private and don't like to make a scene about them in public. When they do come out in public, I feel shy and awkward about it afterwards and tend to hide again.

**GAME:** Get a group of my friends together where we talk about a certain subject where I feel emotionally stuck. I have to come out about how I really feel and let others in to see me. After the experience I have to stay out. Let others know what I need in order to stay in the group doing things with them instead of hiding.

**EXPERIENCE:** One place I feel stuck is talking to women about food and dieting. It was something that I always did in private and whenever my female friends talk about their eating and food issues, I disconnect, judge them, and pretend like I have no issues with it. I invited four female friends over and told them about my desire to be with people in this

area and how this was hard for me to do. I asked for their support and trust to open up in this area and they were more than happy to go through it with me. It was an emotional experience. I told them my shame around hiding my eating and why I never came out with it. I cried a lot during that experience and also felt a lot of shame move out of me. After the experience I felt closer to my friends. They didn't judge me the way I thought they would. Instead they were supportive and it felt good to have friends to connect to. After the experience I didn't feel sneaky with my food around them anymore. We were actually able to joke about food and eating, and it lifted the shame I had around it.

**COMMITMENT:** I am committed to sharing my feelings in public when they arise and letting others see me.

Challenge: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Game: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Commitment: \_\_\_\_\_  
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EXERCISE:

# CHOOSING YOUR ANGELS

Identify two angels in your life. And when you are ready, share your Desire Contract with them. You can either do that now, while in the midst of the process, or you can share it with them when you've completed the contract.

Angel 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Angel 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

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Take 15-30 minutes to meditate and journal on the following: Design your ideal relationship with both of your angels. How might that be different than the way it is now? How do you want them to be with you and hold you accountable for your desire?

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Remember to tell them how grateful you are for their presence, help, guidance, and support.

# DESIRE CONTRACT

## SECTION FIVE:

### HARD NO'S

In writing your Desire Contract, you become the guardian of your desire. You are responsible for looking out for yourself as you hold this desire. You can be sure that your desire will ask you to go to your edges; to push your own boundaries. And yet, everyone has edges they are not willing to go past, that perhaps they shouldn't go past. These are Hard No's—the places you are simply not willing to tread on the path to your Big D desires. Doing so wouldn't support your great unfolding. There are edges that are thresholds of growth, frontiers of opportunity and evolution. And then there are edges that are simply cliffs, with nothing but pain at the bottom. This section is designed to help you discern between the two and to establish the boundaries that will serve as guardians on your journey.

#### The Relationship Between Fear and Boundaries

How many hard no's you have depends on the role fear plays in your life. Someone who has been traumatized will have a more up-close-and-personal relationship with fear. They will sense danger at a much greater distance. They may jump at a thump down the hallway or at the shriek of a siren. This is where the gift of fear, meant to be our trustworthy protector, has gone haywire. It's the fight-or-flight response in overdrive.

If this is you, it's your job to get in touch with these looming threats and communicate them. Otherwise, you will spend a lot of time feeling frazzled and defensive without even knowing why. Your hard no's will actually help you unwind from the grip of fear that has turned toxic.

Once you have clearly discerned a hard no in yourself, you may be surprised to find that you don't even need to use it. How effective and elegant is that? Simply by claiming it, you set a strong boundary that others can feel and will not cross. And the more specific you are, the truer this becomes. As an example, saying "I will not be violated" isn't specific enough. Although my perception of what a violation is may be different from yours, one of my hard no's is that "I will not have my body touched after I have said 'no' once."

Of course, you will also want to have discernment in listing your hard no's. Boundaries are useful, prison walls are (in this case) not. You want to assert all the no's that are deeply true for you. And you'll want to be clear on the ones that are indulgences or wishful thinking. A common no for many women is "I absolutely will not leave my marriage." Often, with a little excavation, this one ends up being more a fear of disappointing others than a true desire. This does not mean you will have to leave your marriage; it simply means that if you had to decide between your marriage and the Big D desire of your life, you might choose differently than you would have expected. Ultimately, your work is to determine what is authentically true for you.

EXERCISE:

# YOUR HARD NOS

List your Hard No's. The most powerful Hard No's are those that are clear and specific. Your list may be shorter or longer than you would have expected. When you make your list, keep in mind that you have control of both the gas pedal and the brake pedal. In either case, it is a lot more fun when you use them consciously.

My Hard No's: \_\_\_\_\_

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# DESIRE CONTRACT

## SECTION SIX:

### USER'S GUIDE

The final piece of your Desire Contract is to lay out your “User’s Guide”—the instruction manual to you. As much as people might like to think they are low-maintenance and easygoing folks, everyone has behavioral quirks their friends, supporters, and angels would do well to understand in advance if they’re going to help us follow our desires. For me, they include judging others, retreating into silence, and getting lost in insecurity. If I didn’t give my supporters some clues in advance, they could waste hours (or years!) running around trying to figure me out.

This section of your Desire Contract requires yet another level of honesty. For example, you may hate discipline and accountability, but that might be the only thing that keeps you on track to reach your desire. In that case, you must ask for it—even if no part of you seems to want it. If you have an internal critic that keeps you on lockdown most of the time, ask for an external force of compassion from others even if it seems needy. Maybe you need slow, direct communication with a lot of examples and repeats. Or maybe you like it fast but tend to not want to hurt others' feelings, so you tolerate their painfully long stories and explanations when you would rather they cut to the chase. Whatever it is, say it. Tell the world how to be with you and tell them how you’re best able to hear them. Some people like a fatherly voice, some a maternal voice, and others a kind of companion who cheers them on. Everyone needs something different to help them along their way.

While you're working on this section, notice the places where you think you want something but it's not actually the best for you. For example, you may love attention but not actually grow from it. Or you may like praise but not trust the people who give it to you. You may like "hard-hitting" interactions but only because they support your preexisting low self-esteem. Make sure that your habituated self is not feeding off of your User's Guide, getting more of the food it craves but isn't actually being nourished by. You are dedicated to growing into your fullest, most radiant potential, which may sometimes mean not having something you think you like.

Once you've written your User's Guide, read it to someone. Enroll someone you trust—your best friend, your partner, a coach, spiritual guide, or close family member—to bear witness to the unfolding of your desire.



# User's Guide - A Trilogy

Your User's Guide has three parts.

**Part I: Know who you are and your relationship to your emotional states.**

This section is a self-discovery process where you will get to know yourself better; it's an opportunity to become more mentally and emotionally intimate with you.

**Part II: How to work with you.**

In this section, you will lay out exactly how the people in your life can work with you, and the secret codes to your operating system. By doing this, you are confirming a desire for, and making possible, more fluidity and harmony in your relationships.

**Part III: How you would like to co-create relationships.**

This section is your decree, an authoritative (yet light-hearted) pronouncement of what you are willing to do and take responsibility for in cocreating fulfilling relationships with your partner, friends, colleagues, and community. It is also the commitment you make to yourself to ensure the use and effectiveness of this manual.

The writing exercises for each of the three sections are designed to help you experience a deeper understanding of yourself, a deeper level of consciousness.

# Part One

## Know Who You Are and Your Relationship to Your Emotional States

Emotions are feelings and sensations that usually arrive in your awareness with a particular story attached. They can be a bit tricky to observe with neutrality because you have aspects of your identity linked to them. People tend to get rather robotic in their emotional reactions (“say this or do that, and you can expect a certain response from me”). The aim of this writing exercise is to provide some spaciousness in the realm of your emotions.

How well do you know your emotions? Are you generally happy or generally sad? Do you have constantly shifting emotions? Take some time to know how you work and function. Which buttons get pushed in what types of situations? How do you express love and where do you try to block love?

I have consistently observed in myself and others four states of mind that signal the alarm bell that you’re not feeling your desire: entitlement, blame, compulsion (a seeming lack of choice), and control (needing to keep everything on lockdown, and not being okay when things get messy). These states are strategies that keep you from feeling much of anything at all—especially desire. So while you’re surveying your inner landscape, look to see where they may come up for you.

As you take personal inventory of your emotional states and behaviors, you will be preparing for Part Two on how others can best work with you.

EXERCISE:

# YOUR EMOTIONAL STATES

1. The emotions that are easy for me to express are: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. The emotions that are difficult for me to express are: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Some of my most consistently felt emotions (and situations that give rise to them) are:

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4. Specific examples of when I have felt seen by others are:\_\_\_\_\_

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5. Ways that I express my love and appreciation for someone are: \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Places where I have a hard time receiving love and appreciation from others are:

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7. How I usually express my need for help is: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Part Two

# How to Work With Me

Most of us are not accustomed to providing this depth of instruction about ourselves to others. But you and your close confidantes have much to gain by putting this information “on the table.” It’s important to know your own style, so to speak, so that you can guide others on how to interact with you. Think of how you want someone to help you get where you are going. Do you want to be playfully teased? Told straight? Given the space to come out on your own? Do you want compassion? Affection? Tough love?

EXERCISE:

# HOW YOU WANT TO BE WORKED WITH

1. Think about your two most highly charged emotions. They could be emotions that you find difficult to navigate and be with. Or they could be emotions that hold a high degree of intensity for you—maybe even intense pleasure. Examples: sad; happy; turned on; angry; jealous; competitive; insecure; loving; hateful; powerless, shut down; afraid; depressed; joyous; bitter; cranky; resentful.

EMOTION 1

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EMOTION 2

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How I would like someone to be with me when I'm experiencing these two specific emotional states: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How do you want people to interact with you when you're feeling stressed out, bound up, and self-protective? What are some lines or words they can say to you to lighten you up? Examples: "Hey, when you feel up for it, will you tell me what's stirring in you?" or "Whatever it is you're feeling, don't forget that I love you."

How I want people to interact with me when I'm feeling stressed, and the words I want them to say: \_\_\_\_\_

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4. When you're feeling good—open, receptive, happy, inspired—it's great to have the people close to you prepared to support that state of being. Again, give them words they can say to help keep you in this. Examples: "You feel great to be around" or "What's got you feeling so turned on?"

How I want people to interact with me when I'm turned on and feeling open, and the words I want them to say: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How do you want someone to come toward you when your defensive instinct is to push them away? Do you want them to approach you with softness? Or would you feel met by having them match you with a hard truth?

Example: You are angry about work. Someone asks you what's wrong and your knee-jerk response is "Nothing! I'm fine!" You might want them to gently touch you and look in your eyes and say, "Hey, I can see you're angry. What is it?"

How I want people to interact with me when I push them away, and the words I want them to say: \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How do you like to be loved, charmed, and tempted into the field of your desire? What delights, attracts, and entertains you? What opens you? How do you want a partner to play with you? Examples: buy you flowers and gifts; joke with you when you're angry to make you laugh; pretend to be hurt when you're playing hard to get; wine and dine you; boss you around; listen to you intently; rouse your intellect.

How I like to be loved: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. You have a language all your own, which is usually employed when you want to express a feeling, a desire, a need, or to make a request. You are the only person who knows this language, but you often wish that people could read your mind—and see with utter clarity that what you really mean is the opposite of what you are saying! Examples: When I say “I’m fine” or “I’m doing good” what I actually want is for you to stop what you’re doing and ask me more about how I’m really doing; when I say “I don’t need any help” what I want is for you to ask what one thing you can help me with; when I say “leave me alone” what I want is for you to give me a hug; when I ignore you what I want is for you to chase me.

My conditioned, habitual responses and what I actually mean by them: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Part Three

# How Would I Like to Cocreate this Relationship

Now that you are more intimate with your feelings and how you want others to engage with you, think of what kind of commitment you want to make to yourself to ensure that this User's Guide will be put to good use. You have a choice in how you react once you are conscious of your habitual patterns. You can train yourself to respond and react differently. Some patterns will take longer to change than others, but it is possible with conscious effort. The most important thing is to have fun and go easy on yourself. Trust and enjoy the process. It's the life you are meant to live—the one you've always felt you were made for—that awaits you.

EXERCISE:

# MY DESIRE-BASED DECREE

This is a proclamation to yourself and others. Write down the things you will do to help others understand you, communicate with you, work with you, and win with you. Central to your decree is stating what you will take responsibility for and how. When you share this with the people in your life, their optimism and trust is likely to increase exponentially.

*Optional Sentence-Starters:*

When my feelings are hurt, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

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When I am stressed, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

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When I feel stuck and it's hard for me to identify what I want and need, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

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When I do or say something hurtful, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

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When I feel angry or jealous, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

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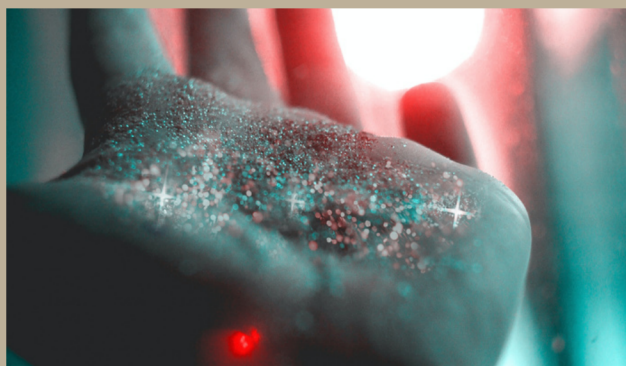
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# THE BEGINNING

Here's the best news I can give you: The end of a book about desire is only the beginning. Desire is a living, breathing force, flowing inside each of us without end. Never static, our relationship with it is ever evolving. Desire is dynamic, alive, and full of wonderful surprises. What the Desire Contract offers is a way of relating to this intrepid force that I have found useful and true for me. Desire may show up differently for you. However it shows up, follow it and pay attention. It is the guide, the map, and the first step all in one.



The exercise of writing reveals a great deal about you and your desire. Take what is useful to you and leave the rest. Use it as your compass. Most of us never actually get to the heart of what our desire is, so you have already exceeded expectations. Now's the time to go one step further. Having used the workbook pages to excavate your interior life, use the template that follows to distill your discoveries into a succinct contract. Hone, clarify, and polish your findings. The way you relate to your contract is the way you relate to your desire, after all. Lay it out beautifully. Align the margins and smooth out your sentences. The care you apply will call the force of these things into your life. This last step is often a revelatory one. And of course, it's really not a last step at all. It is another gorgeous new beginning.

Big and little, your desires merge into a magnificent singular force in your life. And while you may not yet know the depth and breadth of your desire, you are known to it. You are known by it. It knows your name. It knows your amazing face. It knows your heart. Desire doesn't have to look for you, because it already knows where you are. It has never lost sight of you. Not for one instant. So while you complete your Desire Contract—and as you come back to it again and again—simply be open to the magnetic pulses that desire is sending your way. Allow it to call you back home, to your deepest and most beautiful life.



# DESIRE CONTRACT

My agreement with myself to live the life I deeply want.

## I MY "BIG D" DESIRE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

## II MY TOP FIVE "LITTLE D" DESIRES:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

## III MY PRIMARY ADMISSIONS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## IV MY OFFERINGS:

1. My top two learned skills:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. My top two natural gifts and talents:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. My top two secret gifts and talents:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. The two challenges that I'm turning into strengths:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## V MY TOP THREE HARD NO'S:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## VI MY USER'S GUIDE:

1. How I like to receive attention from others: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How I want people to play with me when I'm turned on and open:

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3. How I want people to play with me when I'm contracted and push them away:

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4. I am now taking responsibility for: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How I will show appreciation for the people I love is: \_\_\_\_\_

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SIGNED

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DATE

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