

"A powerful and engaging guide to transforming
your business and life."

Diane Johnston

Sacred Selling



Foundations for an
Aligned, Abundant Business.

Melina Abbott 

Praise for Sacred Selling

"What I loved most about Melina's book, "Sacred Selling", was the authenticity conveyed in her words. Reading through the book I felt like I was on a journey, one that I was sharing with Melina. So much of what she wrote, I resonated with. "Sacred Selling" is a powerful book for anyone who wants to explore their own personal expansion. But when you mix this with forming the foundations of a soul based business, Melina's book is a must. She shares vulnerable moments within her own business journey and with that you get to see the true grit and resolve that Melina has for helping others towards success. A success that is founded on the dedicated pursuit of truth."

Julia Mulcahy, Mindset Coach

"I SO enjoyed reading this book over the past couple of weeks! I found the book so insightful and helpful - so much of what you share deeply resonates. This is a really powerful book and I'm excited for it to make its way into the world."

Nicola Humber, Author of *Heal Your Inner Good Girl, Unbound* and *Unbound Writing*, and Founder of The Unbound Press

"Sacred Selling is full of inspiring real-life examples for attracting customers from your heart instead of getting caught up in your head. So beautifully written evoking how this more magical approach makes the whole experience such an enjoyable and rewarding one for all."

Leigh Clarke, Founder of Soul Resuscitation

"Sacred Selling is an invaluable book that will cause many other spiritual entrepreneurs like myself to breathe a sigh of relief. Melina clearly explains how to merge spirituality and sales in a way that feels good, takes away the "ickiness" and backs all of her guidance up with personal stories of how and why her techniques are designed to bring success"

Em Mulholland, Soulful Copywriter, Editor & Energy Healer

"So many a-has and 'of course' reminders in this book. I love that Melina speaks truth and shares her wisdom using personal challenges to illustrate her points. A great combination of grounded, solid and spiritual guidance. Such a breath of fresh air in the world of sales, particularly for those of us selling transformational services (that can feel difficult to describe.)"

Julie Johnson, Author of *Dance Your Way to Success* and Founder of The Success Club

"This book will take you on a self-discovery journey as well as creating the foundations for your best sales strategies without being pushy or "icky." An easy read with lots of insights and learning."

Jackie Adamson, Retired Business Owner

Sacred selling is not just another sales book. It's a practical, engaging guide to transforming your business and your entire life. It teaches you how to sell and serve more clients with authenticity and integrity, and is full of powerful examples and practical tips to help you create alignment and abundance in your life and business.

When you read this book and apply the principals, you'll experience the art of selling from a completely new, unique and enjoyable perspective.

Diane Johnston, Transformational Coach

Introduction

I have been writing for many years. English was my best subject in school and when I was 10, I envisioned writing a novel. Our teacher gave us an exercise book to get started. I wrote two and a half pages before I decided it was too much like Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* and abandoned it.

When I became a business owner and became known and respected in my field, people started telling me to write a book or asking when I was going to write one. I kept saying no – it wasn't something I wanted to do.

Of course, as you're reading this, it's pretty obvious I did write a book – not because I succumbed to peer pressure, but because deep in my heart I knew it was something I wanted to do. My favourite time to write was first thing in the morning, sitting at a small table in the front of French doors with a pot of tea, writing.

As I looked outside at the ever-changing face of Mother Nature, watching the little birds perch on the tiniest branches, foraging for food on the ground and ever vigilant for predators, I would watch them and write. Inspiration would come through the landscape in front of me that would shift subtly moment by moment.

Yet in these hours – hours when I was totally at peace and in flow, doing what I believed I was put on the planet to do, I didn't want to write what I felt I "should" be writing.

I didn't want to write about marketing, or sales – words that would bring clients to me and grow my business. I wanted to write about what I saw. I longed to share my delight in a beautiful blackbird who appeared in front of me, pecking away at the ground in his quest for food. Or the tiny blue tits who were checking out our nesting box, wondering if it could be a suitable home.

I wanted to write about my journey – the insights and learnings I had from a sales call that didn't go quite according to plan. Or the downloads I had when out on a walk. Often these were sales and marketing related, but they were narrative reflections of what I felt and believed – not trainings that others could follow step by step.

I would write – the words would flow effortlessly across the page. It would feel wonderful – I felt totally in tune with Spirit that these were the words the world wanted to hear.

Then it would come to editing. And the critic would appear and doubts would set in: this was rubbish, people didn't want to read it, it had no conclusion, there were no sub-headings, I was talking about me, people didn't care about me, they just wanted to know what I could do for them.

Sometimes I didn't get as far as the editing stage before the words got smothered – where I'd write, delete, write something else, delete. An hour or more would pass and I would be screaming in frustration as I struggled to create the teaching point – to make it relevant to my reader. It needed a logical conclusion – even better, a step-by-step action plan, or an amazing tip the reader could go away and implement.

So often, writing was agony – and this continued for many years. If you read my blog posts from around 2018/2019 you will see me sharing this struggle. It got to the point where I felt like a stuck record, and it bored me.

It didn't matter how many people told me they loved my writing, that they read every word, that they felt I was speaking directly to them – I always felt it wasn't good enough, that someone would read it and tell me I was wrong, that I didn't understand, that I hadn't a clue about the workings of the world. Always at the back of my mind were the words *"crawl back into your hole, Melina, and shut up"*.

When it became clear that the one thing I loved above everything else was writing, and I accepted I had a gift with words, writing a book was the logical next step.

At first, I resisted writing a book on selling – I wanted to write a book on finding freedom and experiencing one-ness with the Divine. In time, it became clear that a book on selling was the first book I needed to write. Knowing I could write more than one really helped, as I didn't have to squeeze everything I knew into one small volume.

Yet the same pattern played out when writing this book. I wrote 39,000 words and stopped – for over a year.

But on my journey of radical self-acceptance, digging deep and exploring the root cause and triggers for my actions and behaviours, I started to see just

how much was going on under the surface. In truth, I didn't really believe my writing wasn't good enough. I knew I was a competent writer, that I could write a book that was as good as many books that have been published. Indeed, with the advent of self-publishing and the ease with which anyone can publish a book no matter what the standard, writing and publishing a book felt like something "anyone could do".

In the business circles I moved through, it felt like everyone I knew was writing a book. So I resisted and resisted – until I touched on what was really going on for me.

I didn't want to "write a book". I wanted to write a book that was brilliant. A book that sold millions. A book that coaches, mentors and business schools would recommend to their students. A "must-read" book.

Think Robert Cialdini's *Persuasion*, Michael Gerber's *The E-Myth*, Gay Hendricks' *The Big Leap*.

I wanted to write a book that would stand the test of time and would be read long after I'm gone.

Of course, having been on a deeply transformative and spiritual journey, I also knew that whether this happened or not was totally out of my hands. It was in the hands of the Divine. I knew that, but instead of stepping forward in faith and trust that God had my back, I was paralysed by fear.

When I look back now, it was like my deep knowing and my strong unshakeable connection to the Divine was going head-to-head in battle with my innate humanness.

When I sat and wrote, totally in flow, thinking my writing was brilliant and everyone would love it, I was connected to the Divine.

When I reviewed my work and started editing, all the doubts would set in: I imagined the people it didn't apply to, who would say "*well that's all very well for you Melina, but it's different for me because...*". I would then try to soften the words, to add examples of how it would apply in those situations. I got tangled up in knots. I lost my connection to the Divine and was in the smallness of being human.

But there was another layer. And this was what paralysed me.

Being seen.

Seen to have these big lofty dreams and failing.

Being seen to put my heart and soul into something, try my very best and believe with all my heart that I was capable and brilliant.

Then being seen to fail – to feel the shame and humiliation of having tried hard, but not cutting it.

Hearing the well-meaning voices:

“Never mind, you tried”

“But look at what you’ve done – you’ve sold loads of books”

“There is no failure, only feedback”

“Edison failed 1000 times before he invented the light-bulb”

“Colonel Sanders was rejected 1009 times before achieving success”

You see, it doesn’t matter how true these words are – the way for me to heal the pain of rejection is to be willing to through the pain of rejection.

As Joseph Campbell wisely said:

***“The cave you fear to enter holds
the treasure you seek”***

But what this wonderful quote doesn’t tell us is that we’re called to enter that cave many, many times on our quest for freedom.

So what does this have to do with you?

And more importantly, what does this have to do with selling?

EVERYTHING.

When we build a business that’s meaningful to us, when it matters so much whether we succeed or fail, when the work itself is what we love, when our business is not a means to an end but it’s everything we ever dreamed of, our patterns and wounds come to the surface to be healed.

We are called to gain even deeper mastery of what we're teaching.

We're called to let go of all attachment to outcome.

We're called to let go and let God.

Over and over.

The nuts and bolts of our business is not separate from our inner world – it's totally connected. Our inner and outer must be aligned for us to experience Divine Abundance.

Think of your business as a Divine Playground. It's the theme park in which you get to ride your spiritual rollercoaster.

That is Sacred Selling.

I am guessing you have picked up this book because you resonate with the sacred and want to sell in a way that feels aligned to your beliefs and your values. You may have done sales training in the past that didn't feel good. Maybe it employed techniques that felt icky and so you hesitated to put them into practice. Maybe you do sell and are actually good at it, but feel that those conversations are somehow different; they don't feel like selling – they are more like having a chat. Wherever you're at with selling you probably think it's this difficult, icky thing that you must master in order to grow your business.

I am here to show you that selling – far from being something to pull away from or be fearful of – is something to embrace. As someone who wants to help heal the world in some way, I believe you are a natural salesperson. That selling is something you can do effortlessly because you come from a place of service. It means letting go of all the sales tactics and techniques that feel icky – you don't need to do any of these. Instead, I will show you how to embrace the timeless beauty of selling that aligns with the very essence of you.

I can't promise it will always feel comfortable. I can't promise it will always be easy. I can't promise a smooth ride.

But what I can promise is that through the integration of the sacred with selling you will grow and blossom. You will gain confidence and do the dance of delight when your prospects say yes. You will start looking back at your

conversations and notice that they feel almost effortless. If you implement and practice everything I share in this book, your experience of sales will be transformed.

This is not a passive book. I invite you to reflect, explore and take action.

I invite you to look at the stories you tell yourself and the patterns that play out. It will probably feel uncomfortable at times. But magical transformation happens when we dig deep; when we courageously go where we've never been before.

It's an exciting journey and I'm honoured to be your guide.

Chapter 1

Sacred Foundations

One of the most magical aspects of our Sacred Selling journey is how the Divine is always guiding us. Spirit leads us and dances with us. The more we surrender, trust and let go, the more magical our life becomes and the more abundance we experience.

Our whole Sacred Selling journey is built upon Sacred Foundations. Strong, solid foundations keep us grounded and rooted in the here and now; enable us to trust when life comes crashing down, and gift us a deep joy and lightness of being which radiates to everyone around us.

There are five parts to Sacred Foundations:

Trust

Alignment

Awareness

Acceptance

Appreciation

Trust

“A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, because its trust is not on the branch but on its own wings.”

– Unknown

If we had to pick just one element that was the most essential on a Sacred Selling journey, it has to be trust.

Trust in yourself.

Trust in the Divine.

Trust in life.

Of course, we all trust:

That the sun will rise and set.

That there will be air to breathe.

Yet as I was trying to think of a third example of something we all universally trust, I couldn't think of one.

I thought about our heart pumping blood around our body – but realised there are people with heart conditions who might not trust this process.

We all have varying degrees of trust.

Some trust themselves, but are regularly let down by others – so they feel they can never let go and struggle in finding people who can support them in the way they want to be supported.

Some trust others, but not themselves – so they look outside of themselves for feedback and recognition.

Some trust themselves and others, but believe that life's out to get them and the world is on the brink of total disaster.

Some trust God, but feel let down by humankind.

Where would you say you are on the trust scale?

To explore trust, we also have to explore faith. Trust and faith are deeply intertwined. Rather like the weft in weaving, trust and faith weave throughout our life. We dance in and out of trust and faith as we go through life.

Definitions

noun: **trust**

firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something.

'relations have to be built on trust'

verb: **trust**

believe in the reliability, truth, or ability of.

'I should never have trusted her'

noun: **faith**

1. complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

'this restores one's faith in politicians'

2. strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof.

"bereaved people who have shown supreme faith"

(Oxford Languages Online Dictionary)

Trust is integral to your Sacred Selling journey, which is why we start with it.

Trust is also one of those foundation pieces that we think we have: our mind says one thing, our actions say something else.

For many years I believed I had total trust, yet my actions told a different story.

I noticed this specifically on one occasion in 2019 when I was invited to participate in a transformational retreat. My initial response was to say no: I didn't have the money, and it was an intensive four days which meant six nights away from home. However, during my conversation with the event organiser, it became clear that I did want to attend, but had no idea where the money would come from to pay for it. I didn't even have the money for the deposit, let alone the balance. And because I didn't know the how, I didn't want to say yes. I needed to know that it would all work out before I leapt.

In that moment, I realised that although I thought I had total trust in both myself and the Divine, I didn't really. I was paying lip service to it. I was asking for certainty before leaping.

I took a deep breath and said yes, allowing myself to be supported in a way that felt deeply uncomfortable. I wasn't saying yes to a retreat, I was saying yes to trust – and a much deeper connection to the Divine.

The organiser found someone in the community to support me with the deposit (I was to pay them back before the retreat began) and I was enrolled. Once enrolled, I was in the energy of the programme and bathing in its magic. Whenever we sign up for transformational work, we enter an energetic field

and magic starts happening the moment we say yes. You may have noticed your clients will often experience shifts before you start working together. This is not coincidence.

Despite unwavering faith that the money would show up, a week before the retreat I still had no idea how I would pay the balance. I genuinely thought I was going to have to pull out. Once again, I noticed myself doubting the Divine. So, I took a deep breath and re-committed to the retreat. In doing so I stepped into trust

On the day the balance was due, a client paid me for some work early – the exact amount I needed for the balance. It's difficult to describe how I felt at the time: this deep sense of gratitude for having leapt and the net appearing. I was in total awe of the Divine and the incredible power of letting go.

I was also reminded of the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* when Indiana was searching for the Holy Grail in order to heal his father. Before finding the Grail, Indiana had to go through a series of challenges to prove he was worthy. The clue for his penultimate challenge were the words "*only in the leap from the lion's head will he prove his worth.*" He had to leap from a sculpture of a lion's head across a huge canyon. It looked like instant death. In reality, there was a hidden path that was painted to look like the depth of the canyon. To reach the other side, Indiana had to believe he could cross whether or not he saw the path. He took a step and felt the path under his feet.

Indiana's final challenge was to choose the Holy Grail amongst a room full of cups. Drinking from the real Holy Grail would give everlasting life; drinking from any other would give instant death. His instruction was to "*choose wisely*". Of course, he chose wisely – it's an Indiana Jones adventure movie, after all!

And whilst we're not in an adventure movie with Indiana Jones (as much as I'd LOVE that), we are invited to take a leap of faith many, many times. To step forward in faith, not knowing how the journey will end. It may involve money – choosing where to invest wisely, investing in a project without knowing whether it will be successful or not.

It might be saying yes to a speaking opportunity to a room full of hundreds of people. Not knowing whether they'll resonate with your message or whether you'll do it well. What if you mess it up and look stupid?

It might be hiring a team and not knowing whether your business will be

able to support the growth.

Over and over, we are called to commit to something without knowing the outcome. Trust is what makes the difference.

As John Burroughs said:

“Leap and the net will appear”

When I started writing this book, I invested in support, editing, proofreading and design. To help fund it, I decided to invite people on a transformational, book-writing journey.

There are two crucial keys that facilitate transformation:

1. A safe, supportive space to delve deep. A space where you can drop the mask, be seen for who you are, shine a light on your patterns and let go of everything that doesn't serve you.
2. A leader who has gone deep on their own transformational journey and who continues to do the work each and every day – without fear of judgement.

My intention was to create this safe, supportive space and share my own transformational journey as I wrote the book; outing the patterns that were coming up for me, sharing my fears and the steps I took to move through them. I thought it would be powerful and insightful.

When a group comes together, each and every person in the group is a mirror for us in some way. When they shine a light on their patterns, there is always something we can learn or take away from that experience. My intention was to write the book, and share my process of the process (something I will be inviting you to do at various stages as you journey through this book).

In the ten weeks between launching this adventure and closing the doors, I experienced huge shifts and massive growth.

Whenever we trust and take a leap of faith, the magic is not in the results: the magic comes from the growth we experience after we leap. Transformational journeys provide foundations that create consistent, lasting results.

Since I began my business adventure in 2004, I have created programmes and experiences and invited people to sign up. Some I charged for, others were free. With each launch, my heart was in my mouth: would it be a success or would it bomb?

I got mixed results.

However, as I started working with the sacred (and integrating everything I teach in this book), I became less and less attached to the results. Instead, with every launch that bombed, there came healing and growth.

When it came to launching the book writing journey it felt very different – everything I'd learnt and integrated up until that point, everything that would become part of the book came together. It was like the final few pieces of a jigsaw, or tiny spheres of liquid mercury that find each other to become one large, swirling sphere.

Over and over, I had to keep stepping into trust.

Looking back, when I first launched the journey, the place I was coming from was one of *"please support me"*. Whilst I knew the book would be good and people would learn a lot, I still wasn't sure if anyone would want to read it. Would it be good enough, would they learn from it? I was plagued by self-doubt. My marketing was centred around appealing to those who knew me and wanted to support me.

Initially sales were slow and I felt the pain of disappointment.

I tweaked the sales page a couple of times and sales picked up. Each time someone said yes I got very excited, doing the happy dance wherever I happened to be.

Every day I did the work I teach in this book. I let go of all attachment to the outcome. I kept reminding myself that it didn't matter how many people said yes – my only job was to do the work. The work being to write the book and invite people to join me on the journey. As I wrote and embodied the work to a greater depth, I could see that the journey I was inviting people on needed to change. It needed to be less about me, and more about the adventurous pioneers who said yes.

I rewrote the sales page, this time coming from a place of power and truly seeing the magic of Sacred Selling. I've always been very clear that this work is not mine – I'm simply the conduit through which this work is flowing. Yet through inviting people to sign up, I could see how attached I was to them saying yes. Again, I had to step into trust and let go of all attachment.

Trust is not something we have or don't have. It's a practice. The more we practice trust, the more that trust gets reflected back to us and magic happens. That doesn't mean being reckless or taking silly risks, saying *"if*

it's meant to be, it's meant to be". It means taking wise, considered action. It means being mindful. It means checking in with our heart, our soul and the Divine.

Your Sacred Selling Journey is a journey of trust. Learning to trust if you don't already. Deepening your trust if you already trust.

Over the years, I have learnt to:

- Trust myself to show up in a way that's powerful.
- Trust my clients will be supported at all times.
- Trust I am a good teacher.
- Trust that I will be taken care of and that life will always support me.
- Trust others to do a great job.
- Trust at a very deep level that all will be well.

Trust does not mean believing you will be permanently happy and won't experience any challenges. It means having total trust that whatever life presents to you, you will be able to ride the waves and weather any storm. Having total trust that you have the skills and resources to handle what comes your way.

Of course, until we're in a particular situation, none of us can ever know how we're going to respond. But having a deep sense of trust is what keeps us grounded and calm.

How to Develop and Deepen your Sense of Trust

Step One: Pay attention and become aware of the trust you already have, and build on that.

It's like going to the gym: the more we exercise and move certain muscles, the stronger they get. Developing trust is the same. We focus on the trust we already have, nurture it and grow it.

For example:

- I trust myself to boil a kettle and make a cup of tea.
- I trust myself to get dressed in the morning.

- I trust myself to go shopping.
- I trust myself to prepare a nourishing meal.
- I trust myself to go for a walk in nature every day.

These may feel silly or dumb things to trust because they're so basic. Yet everything we now do effortlessly without thinking about it, we had to learn. Whenever we undertake anything new, we don't know if we can do it – we might find it difficult and challenging. It might be easy and we find we excel at it. We might find we never really grasp it, and decide to drop it and focus on areas where we do well.

We are born with total trust – it is our natural state of being.

On the Sacred Selling journey, we start reclaiming that part of ourselves.

Step Two: Every time you feel fear, become anxious or worry that something won't work out, take a deep breath. Reassure yourself that you never know how something will turn out until you move forward.

Trust that you will be able to handle anything that crops up. Tell yourself that you wouldn't be in this situation if you couldn't handle it.

When it comes to your dreams and what you want for the future, know that it will be scary. You are doing something that means a lot to you. You might not succeed and it makes you vulnerable. It's natural to feel fear. Breathe through it.

As Friedrich Salomon Perls brilliantly says:

“Fear is just excitement without the breath”

So breathe. Several big, deep belly breaths as you step forward.

I would tell myself over and over:

God didn't give us our dreams without the ability to make them happen.

You may want to print this out and have it in front of you as a daily reminder.

Questions for Reflection

- Where do you trust yourself?
- Where don't you trust yourself?
- What aspects of life do you trust?
- What aspects of life don't you trust?
- Where would you like to develop more trust?

Imagine you had total trust in yourself and life: what would life be like? What would you do, where would you go, how would you feel?

Alignment

The Sacred Selling Journey is one of alignment. Aligning your business with who you are. When your business is aligned, everything flows and your experience of being in business is a joyful one. That doesn't mean you won't face challenges or experience irritations or difficulties. What it means is when challenges and difficulties arise, you'll face them with pragmatism and curiosity and experience them as an essential part of your growth.

I believe life is constantly guiding and supporting us. As we pay attention and act on the whispers we hear daily and navigate our lives with awareness and consciousness, we align ourselves to the Divine that constantly flows through us. As a result, we experience magic and joy and sometimes have to pinch ourselves that life can be this good.

Similarly, when life isn't going well – when we feel frustrated, angry, disappointed or fearful, we have drifted off our alignment track. Often, we can look at our behaviours and actions and notice that they are not aligned with what serves and supports us.

We can therefore use our business success – or lack of it – as an Alignment Barometer. When things are going well and we are getting the results we desire, we know we are firmly centred and flowing along our alignment track. When things get difficult and it feels like we're pushing a boulder uphill, it's almost certain we've drifted off-track. In these instances, it's time to pause, reflect and look to see where we might be out of alignment.

And here's the thing with alignment: it's not something we do once and once

we're aligned that's it, we're good to go forever. Alignment is something that shifts and moves. Just like a river changes and shifts depending on the volume of water flowing through it, our alignment ebbs and flows. We're rarely slap bang in the middle of our alignment track and stay there. Usually we're shifting a little left, then right, then back to centre – constantly moving, constantly flowing. We evolve and our businesses must evolve with it. Businesses that are very rigid and unable to evolve are likely to wither and die. Alignment has a life of its own, and the greater our awareness of how this shapes and supports us in business, the greater success we will have.

So, what is alignment?

To me, alignment means being in flow. It means feeling joyful about our work. It means finding meaning and purpose in all the little things we do, whether that's having a transformative conversation with a client or balancing our accounts. It means honouring the work that we do; seeing all parts of our business as an essential cog on a well-oiled machine. Every moving part has its role to play and when one cog breaks down, it impacts everything else.

You may think the argument you had with a loved one this morning has nothing to do with the client who cancels, but everything is connected. It could well be that the key to your business growth is to take care of something in your home life. On your Sacred Selling Journey, we do not separate business from the rest of your life in the way most business trainings do. Your business and the rest of your life are deeply intertwined. Work on one area and you will experience transformation in another.

That's why it's not unusual to be posting daily on social media and suddenly a client you've not heard from in several years emails you out of the blue wanting to work with you. Everything is linked. How you start your day, how you show up for meetings, how you honour your time and life force energy. It's all connected to your business and the results you experience. So on this journey we are going to pay consistent attention to how aligned you are. And it starts with awareness.

Awareness

Awareness: *the state of being conscious of something. More specifically, it is the ability to directly know and perceive, to feel, or to be cognisant of events.* (Wikipedia)

In the Western world, we put great importance on thinking and thought. We

use thinking to figure out why things happen. We use it to solve problems and find solutions. We use thinking to come up with creative ideas, to write, to communicate. We also use it to judge, to beat ourselves up, to criticise. We are very familiar with thinking and with thoughts.

However, have you noticed that the mind doesn't just think? It can also be aware that it is thinking.

This is crucial to your Sacred Selling journey.

This is what Mark Williams and Danny Penman have to say about awareness in their book *Mindfulness*:

"Pure awareness transcends thinking. It allows you to step outside the chattering negative self-talk and your reactive impulses and emotions. It allows you to look at the world once again with open eyes. And when you do so, a sense of wonder and quiet contentment begins to reappear in your life." - Mark Williams and Danny Penman - *Mindfulness*

Awareness is like being a bird flying high: you see everything from a high vantage point and can see for miles around. It gives you distance and perspective from what is swirling round and round in your head.

One of the reasons awareness is so powerful is because you cannot be aware and judge at the same time. We constantly judge – *this is good, that's bad, he shouldn't have done that, she shouldn't have said that, that's unkind, that's beautiful.*

We judge our life, our circumstances, other people. We judge most things.

Through practising awareness, you suspend judgment, which allows you to get distance on any situation.

Several years ago, we had some friends visiting for a couple of days. On the night they arrived I drank a lot of wine – too much.

I awoke the next morning hungover and feeling rubbish.

Up until then, this had been a pattern: I'd be having fun with friends, drinking, and the next morning awake with a horrible hangover. Then the voices would begin: *"Melina, why do you do that, why didn't you stop after a couple of glasses? It's not serving you; you have no willpower; when are you going to stop doing this?"*

On and on, my thoughts would come, and I would vow that next time I would stop. But I didn't, so the pattern would repeat.

Until that morning when something different happened – I practiced awareness.

Instead of engaging with the thoughts, with the judgement, with the harsh criticism, I allowed it to be there. I simply noticed everything that came up. I noticed that I felt sick, I noticed I had a headache, I noticed that I felt upset, angry. I noticed that I didn't like how I felt.

And as I allowed myself to simply be present with what was so instead of trying to change anything, I was moved to listen to 'In Your Eyes', a Peter Gabriel song that I had loved in my teens. I played the song and listened to the lyrics – really listened. As I did so, I was overcome with grief.

I didn't try to analyse the grief or figure out where it came from. I didn't try to unpick what it all meant – I simply felt it. I was present with everything that was there. Over the next few hours, it felt like my body and soul were being cleansed and a huge healing was taking place.

Since that day, that pattern with alcohol has never repeated. I still drink at weekends, enjoying a glass or wine or a gin and tonic, but I no longer drink to excess or get horribly drunk.

Practising awareness totally shifted a deeply entrenched pattern.

So, how do you practice awareness?

Through noticing.

Let's start now.

The Awareness Process

Take a pause from reading this book and look around you.

- What do you see?
- What can you hear?
- What can you smell?
- How do you feel?

- What thoughts pop into your head?
- What judgements come up?
- Where does your mind go?

Spend two or three minutes simply looking around and noticing.

How was it?

What did you notice? What thoughts or judgments came up for you as you did this process?

I recommend you do this several times every day to really build your awareness muscle.

Acceptance

We cannot control life. Life's unpredictable. Anything can (and does) happen at any moment. We never know what is around the corner. This can be unsettling and frightening.

I've discovered that the more we adapt to life and what comes our way, the happier and more fulfilled we are. And I don't mean we become a martyr or a victim – feeling that we have no choice and we're doomed to our fate. I see it more as dancing with life.

- Letting life take the lead, and we follow.
- Following our desires, our curiosity, our wisdom.
- Following wherever the music takes us and delighting in the unexpected.

The primary reason we get so frustrated is because we believe whatever is going on should be different to how it is.

We wish we were thinner, had more money, had more time.

We resent the fact that we're running around like a headless chicken, with so much on our plate.

We get frustrated that our kids are messy and leave all the lights on.

If only things were different, then our lives would be better.

So, we go about trying to change our circumstances. A new job, starting a business, moving to a new house, connecting with new people. Yet despite all our efforts, after a while we start noticing the same patterns repeating. Some of our new friends treat us badly, our new job isn't quite what we thought it would be (it might even be worse), we're earning much less in our business than we were in employment (and working much harder).

We think we'll have more time when X happens – only to have some other catastrophe show up which takes up our much-needed downtime.

The reality is:

It's not necessarily our circumstances we have to change – it's our relationship to them.

It doesn't matter what our circumstances are; in any situation there are going to be things we love, and there are going to be things we hate. For example, if you love new adventures and opportunities, each time you start something new it feels exciting, because you're in the honeymoon phase. You love everything about it. When the newness wears off, you start noticing all the cracks, you see everything that's wrong. When you look at it objectively, it's not your circumstances that have changed – you have. Because you're unhappy or frustrated, it's easy to think it's the situation causing the stress and look to change your circumstances – get a new job, start a new business, find a different life partner.

Then the same cycle repeats.

Breaking the Cycle

Whenever you're unhappy or frustrated with an experience or person, the **first** place to look is within.

Before you look to speak to someone who has caused you pain or angst, before you look to change the situation, before you put boundaries in place:

Look within.

Ask yourself: *what is this situation triggering?*

I used to think my house was too small – that the reason it was messy and cluttered was because I didn't have enough space. It caused me great frustration: I got angry with myself that I didn't clean and tidy enough, and I

got frustrated with the kids when they didn't tidy up after themselves.

Then we moved from a tiny three-bedroom cottage that needed work to a large five-bedroom home that was beautifully appointed and finished. Soon it was messy and full of clutter – more cluttered because there's a lot more room to hide everything away.

To be tidy and clutter-free, the shift needed to come from within me.

It wasn't my tiny house that was causing the clutter – it was my behaviour and actions.

I'd love to tell you that I'm reformed and my home is now a temple of delight. But this is an area I'm still diving into and is a work in progress.

So how do you practice acceptance when you hate everything about the situation you find yourself in? By following the steps in the Acceptance Process:

The Acceptance Process

1. Accept what's so, that it's meant to be so – and it's an *essential* part of your life journey

I know you're frustrated, I know you want to change it, I know you feel it's someone else's stuff and you shouldn't have to engage with it – but this is the way it is. Wishing it were different doesn't change it. So embrace it with open arms.

The way I do this is to imagine I'm the lead actress in a movie, a movie called *The Life and Adventures of Melina Abbott*.

As part of the movie, I have to deal with this particular challenge. The things other people are doing, the specific words they say – it's all written into the script. It's a movie and if the hero didn't have to face any challenges it would be a really dull movie!

I know you think the movie of your life wouldn't be very interesting to watch – that's ok. When those thoughts come up, smile sweetly and let them go.

I promise you it becomes easier with practice and you'll fall in love with this way of viewing your life. It brings a lightness to any frustrating situation which is hugely freeing.

2. Dive into the experience

Feel into the emotions: notice the sensations in your body – is anywhere tight, is your breathing shallow, do you feel butterflies?

Journal on what comes up. Don't try to change it – simply notice it.

Notice your thoughts: what are the voices saying? *"This always happens to me", "why can't he be more considerate", "it's not fair, all I want is...is that too much to ask?"*

Write them down – don't judge them or try to change them, simply notice them.

Sometimes you're so caught up in your thoughts and emotions that gaining any distance is impossible. If this is the case, do what you can to distance yourself from the situation, then come back to Step Two when you're calmer and able to look at it more objectively.

You want to get to a place where you can look at what's going on with detachment. When you're in it, it's easy to be consumed by your thoughts and feelings.

There are many things you can do to get distance – find what works for you. Here are some of the things that work for me and other people I've worked with:

- Physically remove yourself from the situation – go for a walk or go to a café.
- Exercise – a run, a walk, a swim, do some weights.
- Journal – get it out of your head and onto paper. Don't modulate or worry about what you write, just get it all out.
- Find stillness – meditate, do some yoga, have a bath.
- Get grounded – take your shoes and socks off and feel the ground beneath you. If you can get outside to do this, even better.
- Breathe – there will be times when physically removing yourself is not possible, so close your eyes and take three deep belly breaths.

3. Get Curious

Once you can view the situation with some detachment, start exploring

the patterns that are triggering it. We often think the issues are “out there”, totally independent of us, but when we get curious and dig deeper, we discover that we are contributing to the issue.

To do this, ask yourself a series of questions. Ideally journal on it as this will allow you to tune into your unconscious. Or if journaling’s not your thing, simply think about it. I would often do my processing whilst out walking in nature, when insights would come thick and fast.

Some questions you can ask:

- Given that this is meant to play out, what is it within me that’s being triggered?
- What’s underneath the frustration/anger/hurt...?
- If I look back at how everything has unfolded, what am I doing/how am I behaving that may be contributing to it?
- Given that this is the way it is, how do I deal with it right now?

Some examples:

Example One

Putting my daughter to bed used to be hugely frustrating for me. She was the queen of procrastination and as soon as bedtime came around, she was hungry and thirsty. Sometimes she had homework to do before bed. I found myself getting wound up and angry. I applied the process to this situation:

- *Given that this is meant to play out, what is it within me that’s being triggered?*

I believed I was a bad mother, that I had no discipline, that I was hopeless at saying no.

- *What’s underneath the frustration/anger/hurt...?*

That I was doing things wrong: I shouldn’t let her have a snack or a drink if she really should be in bed – I should say no and stick to it. Underneath was “I’m wrong”.

- *If I look back at how everything has unfolded, what am I doing/how am I behaving that may be contributing to it?*

My daughter fuffs – she only starts thinking about what needs to happen for bed when I say it’s bedtime. She gets it from me, which is one of the reasons it triggers me so much.

But as I looked at how bedtime went, I would say it was bedtime when I actually wanted her to be settled in bed. I was busy, I left it late – so by the time I started to put her to bed, I was already cross with myself for not taking action sooner. Then the faffing started, which wound me up even more.

- *Given that this is the way it is, how do I deal with it right now?*

Start bedtime 30 minutes before she needed to settle down. Make sure she'd had a snack before she needed to get ready for bed. Check whether she had any homework when she got in from school.

It worked – whilst bedtimes never became a joy, they did become positive experiences.

Example Two

The school run: getting two children out of the door and to two different schools on time whilst remaining calm and serene. It was always stressful and rushed; traffic was horrendous and I'd return home feeling frazzled. Not a great state to start my working day.

So I applied the process to this situation:

- *Given that this is meant to play out, what is it within me that's being triggered?*

Frustration at being late – that I was always late for everything.

- *What's underneath the frustration/anger/hurt...?*

I believed I was rubbish – that I was always late, that I couldn't even do something as simple as get two children to school on time (we generally made it, but only just).

- *If I look back at how everything has unfolded, what am I doing/how am I behaving that may be contributing to it?*

Similar to the bedtime example, I would still be getting ready when we needed to be walking out the door. If I was ready early, I would start doing something "useful" whilst waiting. For me, leaving at 8:30 meant getting ready at 8:30 and of course, putting coats and shoes on takes a few minutes – and those few minutes made all the difference.

- *Given that this is the way it is, how do I deal with it right now?*

Build 10-15 minutes "wiggle room" into my schedule. Instead of aiming to leave at 8:30, I needed to aim to leave at 8:15/8:20 – that way when I was late leaving it didn't matter.

If you are someone who is always early or on time, this probably makes no sense – it may be impossible to understand why something as simple as being on time should be so difficult. Maybe it's something that triggers you: you believe people who are late are rude, that they have no respect, that they're selfish.

If this is the case, the next time you are cross waiting for someone, apply this process to that and see what comes up.

Example Three

A client said yes to working with me. We'd worked together before and I was excited, planning to buy a new (second-hand) car with the money. Just before we were due to start, she pulled out, choosing to work with someone else. I was gutted. so I applied the process to this situation:

- *Given that this is meant to play out, what is it within me that's being triggered?*

Disappointment: I was expecting money that I'd earmarked for something I really wanted and now I couldn't buy it. I felt let down that someone had committed to something but didn't follow through. I berated myself for not demanding money immediately and counting it as a sale before the money came in.

- *What's underneath the frustration/anger/hurt...?*

My "not wanted" story. Despite getting great results the first time we'd worked together, she didn't want to work with me now – instead, she chose someone else. I wasn't wanted and that hurt (I talk about this more in Chapter Three when we look at core wounds).

- *If I look back at how everything has unfolded, what am I doing/how am I behaving that may be contributing to it?*

I was attached to the outcome – expecting it. I didn't listen to the hidden messages. I also bent over backwards to win her as a client by agreeing to travel when normally I ask people to travel to me. I was being too needy. I was counting on her as the source of my income, forgetting that God is my source.

- *Given that this is the way it is, how do I deal with it right now?*

I accept that this is the way it is. I recognise that I need to honour my boundaries and ways I want to work, and look for other ways to finance the car.

Example Four

I had a really great sales conversation with someone – I gave it my all and it sounded like they wanted to work with me. I got all excited, presented my offer and they said no. I was gutted. But by asking these questions, I found peace:

- *Given that this is meant to play out, what is it within me that's being triggered?*

Disappointment, hopes being dashed.

- *What's underneath the frustration/anger/hurt...?*

My "not wanted" story – I felt the pain of rejection.

- *If I look back at how everything has unfolded, what am I doing/how am I behaving that may be contributing to it?*

I expected a yes. I was attached to the outcome – I wanted them to say yes more than they wanted it.

- *Given that this is the way it is, how do I deal with it right now?*

I recognise that nothing in my life has changed as a result of her saying no. I still have the same amount of money, I have a beautiful home and my life is the same. All that has happened is that someone said no to an invitation. It's no big deal – it's part of the sales process.

4. **Be Compassionate**

Please understand that this is a process. The shifts do not happen overnight. As you begin to make changes, chances are the first few times the exact same patterns will repeat.

Accept them. Embrace them.

For example, I'd known I needed to start the bedtime routine earlier for a long time. I also knew I needed to leave the house earlier on school mornings. But whilst I knew it, I didn't do it.

So for the first few weeks, whilst I meant to change and didn't, I didn't beat myself up when I failed – I accepted my daughter would be going to sleep later, and my kids might be late for school. I didn't get frustrated that traffic was bad and I had to wait ages at the light – I accepted that this was written into the script and if they were late, they were meant to be late. I didn't get cross when they argued – I smiled at what brilliant actors they were in the movie of my life.

This broke the chain. After a few weeks, the kids stopped fighting – and we were leaving earlier. The school run became much more pleasant.

Often, we know exactly what we should be doing to make our lives more meaningful, more joyful and more fulfilling – yet we don't do those things.

Applying this process repeatedly will shift that. You will start doing the things that make a difference effortlessly: it won't require any willpower, accountability or even motivation – it simply becomes a part of life.

As this has started happening in my own life, I look back in awe. It feels like magic – especially as often these were things I'd struggled with for years.

Appreciation

Appreciation – such a beautiful word.

It means:

1. Recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something.
2. A full understanding of a situation.

I often sit (or stand) back and look at my life with appreciation. How wonderful life feels right now and how grateful I feel to be alive.

I appreciate a log fire on a cold winter's day; the crisp, cold air on my daily walk; the kindness and love of my husband; twinkling lights on a Christmas tree; a bowl of bran flakes for breakfast; my gorgeous children; my beautiful home; snowdrops in the depths of winter heralding the promise of spring; warm sunshine on my face; the cold water against my skin as I swim in the sea; the view from my lounge as I sit and write.

As I sit here typing, I look back in appreciation of my life and how far I've come; I reflect on what a magical journey it's been and my eyes sparkle at the possibility of what's next.

I remember swimming the Solent back in 2013 on a beautiful sunny day in late summer and stopping halfway across. I looked at how far I'd already swum then looked across at where I was headed and I just floated for a moment in pure joy and appreciation. It was truly magical.

Of course, it's easy to be appreciative when things are going well. However,

when things challenge us, it's not so easy. When you're feeling low, you might read this and think:

"Well, it's okay for you Melina, you have a loving family, you live in a beautiful home – of course you appreciate life. But my life's not like that – I don't have all of that, I don't have...enough money, enough time, I'm living in a house that's too small/too shabby/too messy/needs too much work, I have a lousy relationship with my partner, my kids are ungrateful..."

Many years ago, I remember being on a mastermind call and hearing a friend tell us about her \$100k launch. At the time, whilst I wanted to be thrilled for her, I wasn't. Instead, my overriding emotion was one of despair: I believed I had to be doing something wrong because I wasn't getting such results. Worse, I didn't feel like I could tell anyone because I should be cheering, not crying inside.

So if there are times when you feel there's nothing to appreciate, I get it. Please know it's okay to feel like this – there's nothing wrong with you. It's far better to acknowledge how you actually feel and honour that than pretend to be appreciative of something when you're not feeling it.

However, appreciation is something that grows the more love and attention we give to it.

Imagine you have an Appreciation Tree growing in your home. For it to grow you need to water it, feed it and lavish love and attention on it. If you ignore it, and never water it, it will wither away and die.

If you can find something to appreciate during the darkest times, you will be gifted so much more to appreciate. I believe it's no accident that appreciation is used in accounting to mean rise in value or price.

There's a direct correlation between how much we express appreciation and how much we receive. So, instead of wishing things were different, appreciate the things you love about your life.

Practising the Art of Appreciation

1. Appreciate others

Several years ago, I used to get very frustrated with my husband and would inwardly grumble and complain about how it was easy for him because he didn't have the same responsibilities as me. He didn't have clients waiting on

X, Y or Z, so he didn't have to stay up late and complete things. He didn't have to do all the things I had to do so could be on time for everything. Looking back, I really was a grump, but I didn't see this at the time – instead, I felt unsupported and unappreciated.

I started practising appreciation and paid attention to how he was supporting me. I appreciated how he did all the shopping and cooking. I appreciated how he'd make me cups of tea and coffee. I appreciated him for cleaning the bath so I could have a soak. It truly was a case of:

“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

– Max Planck

The more I appreciated about him, the more supportive and loving he was.

2. Appreciate your environment

What do you love about your home, your garden, your local area?

For years, I would complain about how messy our home was and whilst I liked to think everyone else was to blame for creating the mess, in truth, most of it was my own creation.

I stopped complaining, and instead started to appreciate the areas that were beautiful and tidy – even if that was only one room I didn't use very often.

3. Appreciate your growth

We often look in discouragement at how far we've got to go, wondering whether we'll ever “get there”, but how often do you look back and appreciate how far you've come?

You've travelled far, grown much. Appreciate just how far you've already travelled and how far you've come.

This might not come easily as we're accustomed to berating our faults – not congratulating ourselves on our accomplishments.

I remember congratulating myself one teatime, saying how proud I was of my mashed potato (I make really good mash) and my daughter told me off for boasting. She was about 9 years old and I certainly hadn't brought her up thinking boasting was bad – so it's either in our collective psyche, or she picked it up from school.

As you practice appreciation, the easier it will become. Often this practice alone can create huge shifts.

Amazingly, as I practiced appreciation daily, I noticed my behaviour shifting:

- I noticed that I'd started tidying up after me so the house wasn't as messy.
- I noticed myself getting ready sooner so I wasn't late.
- I noticed I wasn't as stressed whilst cooking.
- I noticed that I was able to focus more, instead of getting constantly distracted.

We can always do more, have more, be more – it's a never-ending cycle of more!

However, when we practice appreciation, this starts to shift and we naturally accomplish more without the angst – and therefore have even more to appreciate.

Questions for Reflection/Journaling

- What was your biggest insight or “aha!” as you read Sacred Foundations?
- Where do you see the greatest potential for more trust?
- Where does your business lack alignment?
- As you practice awareness, what do you notice that surprises you?
- As you've applied the Acceptance Process to a situation that's triggered you, what have you learnt?
- What do you most appreciate about your business?

Dear Reader,

I do hope you have enjoyed reading the first chapter of this book and have a feel for what the rest will be like.

The other chapters go on to explore:

- Sacred Myths
- Sacred You
- Sacred Money
- Sacred Selling
- Sacred Marketing
- Sacred Rejoicing

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Much love,

Melina