

RIDICULOUSLY OK

A Practical Guide to Clarity, Connection,
and Resilient Happiness

Y. E. YOUNG

PREFACE

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, FOR NO APPARENT REASON, happiness abandoned me. I felt my energy draining and my light going out. The beautiful life I had built still looked good from the outside, but my experience of it all was rapidly breaking down. My career, which had been interesting and rewarding for two decades, now felt flat and unsatisfying. My community service, too, began to feel devoid of any real benefit to others.

More importantly, I began to struggle in my relationship with my wife of twenty-five years. I was beginning to fear she would leave—leave me physically or, perhaps worse, stay but live a parallel yet distant life under the same roof (a stark contrast to the joyful and vibrant connection we had thus far enjoyed). And perhaps worst of all, I found I couldn't blame her as I awoke to the reality that I had become something

of a wooden man that no one would really find enjoyable to live with for the long haul.

I felt confused. Having diligently tried to do and say good things all my life, how had I gotten here? By nature as a kid, I was playful and happy, connecting easily with others, and full of excitement for life. Now I felt broken, scared, and alone. I didn't know what I needed to change. I didn't know *how* to change. What I did know was that I was losing the will to keep trying.

Amid this suffering, one day I lay flat on my back drenched in sweat at the end of a yoga practice. I was in a final resting pose. In that posture, called corpse pose, death felt real and close. With tears running into my ears, I cried out silently, "I need help. I don't know how to, or if I can, keep doing this."

Then a voice within me responded: "Everything is OK."

"Everything is OK?" I asked with surprise.

"Yes. Ridiculously OK."

Strangely, the voice was full of mirth. I felt a playful loving laughter in it. Warmth and comfort flooded through me. I could not resist. I could not help but feel throughout my whole body that the message was true, that everything—*every thing*—was and is and always will be OK. Then the speaker laughed. And I had no choice. I laughed together with her, feeling free and light and slightly sheepish, incredulous that I had been so heavy and scared just seconds before.



We learn and build and plan and work for success in life. The quest is beautiful and exciting. As the years go by, we tell ourselves, one day, when we have it all together, we will relax and be OK with how things are. With how we are. But day after day, despite our best efforts, today never seems to be that day. And then life starts to fall apart. We scramble to put the pieces back together—finances, careers, and, most importantly, relationships that are veering off course. This is not the peace and joy we expected after all our work trying to live right.

Something feels off.

What follows are perspectives and practices that entered my life since the aforementioned experience wherein I was granted deep trust in a time of crisis. They are lessons in letting go.

Though I continue to struggle and falter, these lessons nourish my conviction that everything really is OK. And because this book has found you, I believe there is something here for you also—a gem or two at least—to illuminate your current path.

PART I





1

WHAT IS MEANT BY LETTING GO

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

WE DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH WE LOVE SOMETHING until it's gone. Because I no longer live there, I now know I love New Hampshire. By and large it is where Jayne and I raised our four children. For that reason, it feels like home. To them and to us. We lived there eighteen years, and even though that is only about a third of my life, when people

ask me where I'm from, I always answer, "New Hampshire." And then later I get a lot of flak from the kids about it.

During the thick and thin of establishing a New England homestead and raising this fab four, Jayne and I felt the need to carve out more time to spend as a couple than our Saturday night date afforded, so we launched the twenty-four-hour getaway concept. At first it was annual, then twice-yearly, then quarterly as our resources and the children grew. Our default location was Ogunquit, Maine.

Beyond the traditions of good food and lots of loving, we always took a slow six-mile walk down the coast to Wells and back. Many difficult topics were hashed through over the years on these walks. On one particular walk we were discussing concerns around the development and happiness of one of our children. Toward the end of our long walk, we felt no wiser. Despite working at it for hours, we had come up with neither answers nor strategies. The mood was fretful and worried. I was unwilling to end the journey in such a discouraged state.

Desperate for some wisp of inspiration, I looked at the sky. (That always seems to help in such moments.) But no words were written for me there. So I shrugged my shoulders and offered up, "What if we just pretended God were in charge?"

Jayne looked at me in silence. I felt worried I had just made the situation worse. Then she burst out laughing. I joined. It was a unique laughter—starting light, rife with relief, and ending in tears. Problem unsolved, but worry completely dissolved, we felt the lightness we sought on these retreats flood over us.

For me that experience epitomizes what is meant by letting go. Letting go is a surrender to Source, whatever that Being or Energy is for you. Not a tossing of your will out the window, but a sharing of will—the work of developing a deeper and deeper partnership with the Divine. Letting go asks us to remain alert and intentional as we mindfully let Providence take the wheel, cognizant that quite often the steering will be returned to our care.

Letting go is the moment-by-moment exercise of real and practical faith. No matter what your metaphysical paradigm, letting go offers each of us daily practice in trusting that the Universe is unfolding as it should. Or perhaps we should say that our own universe is unfolding as it should.

And sometimes it helps to pretend at first.



2

WHY LET GO?

*In the pursuit of knowledge, every day something is added.
In the practice of the Way, every day something is dropped.*

LAO-TZU

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO MAKE ANY EFFORT TO let go?

You could choose to let go in order to heed the teachings of some of history's wisest beings. I invite you to do your own research, but when I took time to see what the world's great religions had to say about letting go, this is what I found: they all highly recommend it. From Jesus to the

Buddha, from Yoga to Hinduism, from Islam, Judaism, Taoism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Confucianism—all suggest letting go in some form. It begs the question: has any helpful, wholesome, spiritual tradition not recommended letting go?

But maybe you have little to no concern with spiritual traditions and religions. Why then bother with letting go?

Because letting go is the most rewarding endeavor you can take on. That's right. I'll say it again. There is nothing more effective you can do that will enable your fullest potential and awaken your greatest joy than learning to let go. Nothing else better represents how to get out of your own way and enjoy the love, connection, and happiness that is your natural inheritance.

Does this idea of letting go feel weird or sound hard to you? Both impressions are valid. What is perhaps strange and difficult, especially for those of us of Western culture, is that this concept of letting go contains a message of surrender. What? Surrender?

Growing up, I was bombarded with messages of never give up or never surrender. While in so many parts of my life, these were and still are positive messages, helping me dig deep and stretch myself, out of context or adhered to relentlessly, they have also served to stunt my growth.

By contrast, there is a saying that has significantly impacted my ability to let go in the last decade. It has helped me through relocations, surgeries, career shifts, marital shifts, mentality shifts, and life season changes. The message is on a card I have visible in whatever vehicle I drive most. Or if

you don't find it there, it is my current bookmark: "Give up the need to know."

Yup. That's right. One of the most powerful teachings in my life begins with the two words, "Give up." Trust me, this is not intuitive for me. It is neither in my DNA nor in my upbringing. And I'm betting it's not in yours either. But there it is. By letting go, I do mean give it up. Surrender. Release the tight grip.

Quite honestly, letting go is scary. It is uncomfortable. Sometimes letting go is even painful. Life can be a bit daunting with everything in flux. Nothing is permanent, and we just do not know how life will evolve and unfold. And we are extremely uncomfortable with this not knowing. So we do our best to create some sense of stability and safety. We may even consume immense amounts of our energy to create a sense of permanence.

Knowledge of right answers, physical structures, identity constructs—we build all of these to anchor and define ourselves in a quest for permanence. In so doing, we do ourselves a great disservice. In our natural state we are fluid—constantly evolving and learning and growing and changing. This change brings joy. To pin ourselves and each other motionless with judgments and labels is to block that joy and reap frustration. You might even call it a dammed way of life.

So again, why do the work (and it is work) of letting go?

Because until we do, we will continue to hold ourselves hostage from the beautiful work we were born to do.

WHY LET GO?

Because everyone who cares for us wants to see us shine. They want to feel us enjoy life. They want to enjoy us simply as we are. All this hanging on is blocking that. It is furrowing our brow, pursing our lips, and folding our arms across our chest, right when our people need to feel us see them, be warmed by our smile, and receive our warm embrace.

Because the world needs us to make our highest contribution in whatever way and in whichever communities we feel called to serve.

Because holding on is hurting us. It is hurting us emotionally. It is hurting us physically. Holding on is sometimes even making us sick, because holding on keeps us in a state of dis-ease.

And last, because holding on is just no fun. Yes, life is hard, but it can also be very fun.

Honestly, it doesn't matter what your motivation is for letting go. What matters is that you give it a try. Try and you will be surprised by how good you will feel day after day as you work to let go. Excitement and enthusiasm will flow. Curiosity and playfulness will increase. Your energy, love of life, and likely even love life will light up.

Why let go? Because in a very real sense, in its quality and substance, your life depends on it.

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of *Ridiculously OK*



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more and order today!

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RIDICULOUSLY OK

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-**Cory Hogan**, Chief Revenue Officer, Lob.com

“A glorious journey of letting go that will help anyone searching for enduring happiness.”

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-**Deborah Adele**, Author,
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“A playful and direct path to a life of clarity and connection . . . An inspiring must-read.”

-**Susanne Conrad**, Founder of Lightyear Leadership,
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“Readers will benefit enormously from this lively combination of principles and practicalities. Like a conversation with a good friend, you will feel both comforted and challenged to live a better life.”

-**David F. Holland**, John A. Bartlett Professor at
Harvard Divinity School, and author of *Sacred Borders:
Continuing Revelation and Canonical Restraint in Early America*

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