

# The Stimulati Experience: 9 Skills for Getting Past Pain, Setbacks, and Trauma to Ignite Health and Happiness

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*I dedicate this book to all the wonderfully terrible obstacles in life, and all those striving to move forward in spite of them.*

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Writing this book has been the next step in my healing. It has opened something in me—I can feel it in my chest. It has connected me again to emotion and put a larger crack in the wall.

I am so grateful for this opportunity and to all of those who have supported me in the process. Thank you to all the Stimulati who contributed to my life and these pages. Your lessons are invaluable.

To my family: Mom, Dad, Pam, Kevin, Kim, Mike, Jess (my young guru), Jared, Jenna, and Joshua, thank you for being my cheerleaders and my support, and more importantly, thank you for your unwavering love. I love you to the moon.

To my son, Aidan, you are quite simply, the man. This book is for you. And Odie, off the bed—good boy.

I would also like to thank my guide in writing this book, Pam Liflander (you are amazing), my agent

Carol Mann, and Adam Mitchell for all of their great advice. And to my partners at Rodale, particularly Marisa Vigilante, thank you for believing in me. **STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING**

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

—*Robert Frost*

FOREWORD

I've been a full-time student and teacher of spirituality and personal growth for 12 years. One beautiful benefit of having such a consistent spiritual practice is that I've shifted the way I think about, recognize, and deal with something that often keeps us in a headlock: fear. Now, fear can be pretty straightforward and helpful—for example, it helps to keep us from doing reckless things, like darting into the street. But there's a whole other kind of fear that's very layered and lives deep within our psyche: It's a belief system formed from stories of our past. We've held on to these fearful beliefs for decades, and we project them onto the present and the future.

Recognizing and releasing fear is something I do daily. As a student and teacher of the metaphysical text *A Course in Miracles*, I know that when I catch myself detouring into fear, I can choose again. And I do it every single day. I'm in no way immune to fear! I've talked about my fears in my books, on both my blog and YouTube channel, and even on national TV with Oprah and Dr. Oz.

In the past 12 years, I've learned something really powerful about myself, and I strongly feel that it will resonate with you, too. I believe that on some level, we're addicted to our fears—we don't really want to live without them. I've also learned that if we want to find true freedom and happiness, we have to release our resistance to these fears. Refusing to acknowledge fear only gives it more power. Freedom from fear becomes available to us when we accept that fear is normal, and that we're not weak or weird for feeling it. When you recognize your fears, you can look at them from a place of love.

My friend Jim Curtis calls this more positive, loving relationship with fear "creating vulnerability," and I was thrilled to read about this idea in the beautiful book you're holding in your hands right now. In many ways, Jim and I have traveled the same path. We have both experienced major struggles and overcome despair by finding our authentic selves. The work he has done with his Stimulati (the people and places that have influenced him), which he shares on these pages, reminds me of my relationship with John of God. In fact, it's because of John of God that Jim and I met.

Jim and I share a very dear friend, Jenny. Jenny would talk to me about Jim all the time, and I felt like I was getting to know him, even though we'd never met. Jenny's stories about Jim were always in the context of the wonderful, loving, fearless experiences he would take on in his quest to find his authentic self. Of course, the Universe has a way of bringing together people who need to meet, and it did just that. John of God, an extraordinary and world-renowned spiritual healer, was holding a healing session for hundreds of people at the Omega Center in Rhinebeck, New York. It was incredibly peaceful. Everyone there was dressed in pure white, meeting each other and working in solitude, meditating and feeling his spiritual healing power.

As we wrapped up a meditation session on the first day of the retreat, I saw a man walking toward me on the green. He was moving with a little difficulty, but at the same time, he was glowing beautifully in white. When he came up to me, he said, "We have a mutual friend, Jenny," and right then I knew it was Jim. We experienced John of God together and talked about his ability to bring people together in kindness and health.

I sensed Jim's openness and desire to authentically connect with others. It is truly his purpose. And I realized that we share a mission: to help people discover their authentic selves, to enlighten, and to create more love and kindness in the world. After dealing with traumas in our lives, Jim and I both surrendered our need to control and our desire to escape, and we chose to align with love.

This book is an authentic reflection of Jim's journey. Within these pages, he gets vulnerable and honest, sharing the wisdom he's gained. Trust that you've been led to this book for a reason. No matter what you're facing, whether it's a health challenge or your ability to feel happy, the lessons and exercises in this book will help you look at fear from a place of love and discover your unique purpose. And living a life of purpose is one of the most powerful ways to reclaim your health.

*Gabrielle Bernstein*  
INTRODUCTION

I agreed to give it a try. The peripherally inserted central catheter (or PICC line) had to be surgically implanted. A strong tube, a couple of feet long, was inserted through a vein in my arm. It ran up through my bicep and shoulder and stopped at the top of my heart. It delivered a high dosage of seriously strong drugs, drugs you should not be on for a long period of time. Luckily for me, the treatments made a significant difference. I felt better for the first time in years.

Meanwhile, I was still out partying and generally behaving like a maniac until I finally pushed it too far and broke the PICC line in a barroom brawl. I was in a seedy New York City dive bar when the

tube ruptured. As soon as I realized what had happened, my doctor's warnings about the risks and care of the line immediately echoed in my head. Infection. Aneurysm. Death. Responsibility...

In the dim light of the dive bar bathroom, I tried to assess the damage, and I realized there was a significant amount of blood in the line and trickling down my forearm. Not knowing what to do, I called my mother, and she said quite matter-of-factly, "Pull it out."

Ever since the onset of my illness, I had worked up a strong aversion to needles and all things that could be inserted into the veins of my body. I looked at myself in the bathroom mirror and thought, "Can I actually do this?" I had a feeling of being outside myself as I pulled out almost 2 feet of tubing. I felt things get dark, and I almost passed out: It didn't slide out easily; there were some tugs along the way. But I did it. You never know what you are capable of until you do something.

That was 21 years ago, but that moment was neither the start nor the end of my story.

Two nights ago, my family celebrated Thanksgiving together at my sister's home in New York City. My parents are now elderly but still, for the most part, with it. My son, almost 9, to our astonishment, ate turkey; my four nieces and nephews, all 18 and older, were like puppies, huddled up talking about their newest love interests. To my disbelief, my sister and I have become the middle-age adults in the room.

This past year has not been easy for my family. We've all had our ups and downs, but what particularly marks this holiday is that my sister's baby, the youngest son, has come back home from over a year of therapeutic schooling in Montana for anxiety and what they call dangerous coping mechanisms. He now has the insight of a guru: He has not only done the work but also accepted his experience and used it to change his story. He is at ease, confident, and calm, and he was the first person to ask me *why* I am writing this book. I have answered the question *so what is the book about?* many times, but *why* was new. I answered him with some bullshit about the power of mindset and how I felt compelled to get the word out. True enough, but my answer stuck with me, because it just didn't feel authentic.

I have been consumed by his question since, and it is not until this moment, sitting in the back of an Uber watching the blur of trees go by, that I get real with why I am writing. The truth is, I am writing this book because I want my suffering to mean something.

I want to believe it was all for a higher purpose.

I know pain...well. I have experienced life with the hopelessness that even another oxycodone or Vicodin couldn't fix. I have been intimate with despair and have lived in the darkness of guilt and shame that surrounds illness. I have felt my body crumble under the fight for mental, physical, and spiritual health as my muscles, energy, strength, and self-worth withered away. I understand forgetting what *good* or *normal* feels like. I have been comforted by denial and have made up justifications and told stories built around lies for survival. I have experienced the crush of heartbreak, the loss of close relationships, and the confusion of wondering *who am I?* and *what should I do now?*

For much of my life I let my stories, specifically the ones around my illness and sense of self, define and create my reality. When I finally got clear after practicing the lessons of the Stimulati, I could see what I was creating and chose to create a new story. Then my life changed dramatically for the better.

My Stimulati experiences were the turning points in my life. The skills I learned from integrating

the work of the world's leading thought igniters and healers gave me a new mindset that I then made real by the stronger, better, bolder story I chose to live. The mindset is about being bold enough to examine your present reality (caution: this might sting a bit) and not the oftentimes limited stories we tell ourselves and others that are based in fear and inadequacy. Shit, I could have put those two emotions in the first paragraph, because they've been like welcome family members to me. Happily, they are like estranged second cousins now. I became strong enough to accept the truth, which led me to feel better than ever before.

The experiences in this book will teach you to dump your fear. Seriously. Get a No Fear bumper sticker or tattoo if you need a reminder. There is a better way to live, and in these pages I will tell you my own story and the stories of some truly amazing people like you, as well as show you exactly how to do it.

If you are reading this book, you are someone who has had enough and is looking for a change. You might have just received news about your health or the health of a loved one. You may have had a terrible experience where you feel loss or rejection, either from a divorce, a death of someone close, job issues, or another event that has put a cold wet blanket around your shoulders. You may be caring for yourself or someone else. But as you start reading, I ask you to consider this: By your human nature, you are a fighter, even if you are scared, depressed, or anxious. In you, there is a will to live...better. I'm here to tell you that a stronger, bolder, happier, and healthier life is not only possible but also just a few choices away.

You may be skeptical that any single book will actually help you. Is this just the same self-help program from another self-proclaimed guru who will tell you how to unleash your unlimited power? Or will it end up focusing on quantum physics and the power to heal yourself with the energy of the universe? Okay, I confess, I believe both: You have the potential to be and do most anything you set your mind to, and quantum physics is too cool to be ignored. However, I am no guru. I am like you. But I have spent the past 20 years studying how to fight illness and optimize mindset.

I understand that the constant physical and emotional feelings of sickness, depression, and pain are real. I don't deny your struggle, and I know that a quick self-help placebo is a short-lived respite. I also know that often, you've made decisions about what you can and cannot do before you are even aware you have made them: Ninety-five percent of our decisions are made in our unconscious mind. I'm here to show you that being amazingly better, doing whatever you want to do, and being more fulfilled in life can be your reality.

You may have heard or read stories of miraculous recoveries or of people who despite their serious, debilitating conditions are able to do the improbable, survive the impossible, and achieve the unachievable. What makes these people succeed when others can't leave their house? This book sets out to identify the clear catalysts for disruptive, life-altering change.

I have been on a quest to answer this question. I've learned from my work with the world's leading medical and spiritual experts that these people are not outliers; with the right tools, guidance, and awareness, anyone who is struggling with emotional, spiritual, and physical health can have similar outcomes. Today I'm one of these miracle stories, and soon you will be one of them, too. Together, we can disrupt the struggle and the illness mindset. **SO IT GOES**

My awareness of what is possible did not come easily. Oh, let me tell you, I am no angel. I have made questionable life choices, to put it lightly.

My journey, like everyone else's, began with my parents. I was a miracle baby, or a mistake, depending on how you frame it. My mother, an emergency room nurse at Massachusetts General

Hospital, was told that she couldn't hold a pregnancy after my older sister was born. My parents then decided to adopt and brought my second sister into the family. Six years later, my parents, then in their mid-forties, got pregnant with yours truly.

When I was a child, there was always something frightening to me about my health. My parents told me stories of how as a newborn, I had trouble breathing and was not released from the hospital for some time. Once I was at home, my parents would sit with me each night, one hand on my stomach, praying the worst didn't happen. By the time I was 8 years old, I had a growth in my throat that prohibited me from breathing again, which required surgery to remove. Was this karma? Years later, I was regressed into a past life by Dr. Brian Weiss, the author of *Many Lives, Many Masters*, and appeared on *The Maury Povich Show* (back when Maury wasn't focused on breaking up fights between estranged lovers). Maury and the Good Doc seemed to believe these health issues were from past lives or possibly trauma from my parents' arguments while still in the womb. While this could be true, soon I will show you why it doesn't matter.

Despite these issues, I became confident and strong. I grew up in Brockton, Massachusetts, an urban neighborhood filled with all sorts of characters and access to plenty of no good. To be more specific: guns, drugs, alcohol, and fighting. My saving grace was the pool: I swam competitively through high school, became nationally ranked, and was recruited to swim at the University of New Hampshire.

When I got older, my mother was never one to get nervous or stressed when I got sick or injured, which happened with some regularity. My athletics, schoolwork, and strict father never seemed to get in the way of my attraction to trouble, and I had my fair share of ER visits. I remember a time as a teenager, eager to escape the house, I was thoughtlessly running and smashed my face through the glass storm door. There was blood everywhere. My mom calmly got me into the car, drove me to the hospital, and over the shoulder of the attending physician made it clear how she wanted the stitches, so as to not leave a scar on her baby's pretty face.

During the summer of 1995, amid a period of heroic drinking, drugging, and Grateful Dead shows, my life changed forever. I was 19 and living on Cape Cod for the summer. One afternoon, I awoke to my typical hangover, pulled myself out of bed, and lumbered into the bathroom to shower. As I leaned against the tile wall, the hot water beat down over me. I remained still, waiting for my head to clear. But I noticed something was different. It was my left foot. I raised it closer to the hot water, but still, something was wrong. There was no sensation. I could not feel the heat of the water or the water itself. My stomach dropped. After some attempts to massage and stomp my foot back to life, I did what anyone in survival mode would do: I decided to ignore it. This was my first unconscious wait-and-see health decision. Instead I focused on trying to figure out what had happened the previous night.

I had clocked out of my job as a waiter at a small Greek restaurant around 10 p.m., gotten into my old Toyota Camry hatchback, and proceeded to ingest an eighth of an ounce of *magic mushrooms* before driving to my best friend's house. He was basically living on the beach in a garage, which had become a safe haven for us to drink and smoke without any fear of punishment. As the night drew on, I had a stroke of genius, which included my driving to a local bar.

When we arrived, my fake ID was promptly confiscated after the doorman asked me to spell my fake last name and I answered incorrectly. In my embarrassment and for fear of repercussions I wanted to quickly escape, and in doing so, I crashed my car into the side of the bar as I tried to maneuver out of the crowded parking lot. Then I crashed into another car parked on the opposite side. Finding myself wedged between the bar and a car posed a problem, remedied simply by hitting the gas with no regard for damage—something I was particularly adept at. Then things get a little murkier. I also remember somehow speeding down a dirt road on my old 10-speed Schwinn

bicycle. Front tire sank into deep sand. Launched over handlebars, resulting in solid face-plant. \*

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## **A comprehensive plan for overcoming chronic illness, stress, and personal setbacks**

For more than 20 years, Jim Curtis battled a mysterious chronic illness. He grew accustomed to living in pain, denial, and despair. But when traditional medical therapies didn't help, he sought answers elsewhere. He traveled the world and met a group of extraordinary people he calls The Stimulati; and what he learned from them ultimately changed his life.

In *The Stimulati Experience*, Jim outlines his own incredible journey, as well as his step-by-step program to overcome pain, setback, and struggle to transform your life into one filled with better health, freedom, joy, strength, and purpose. Whether you suffer from a chronic illness, anxiety, or depression, you'll learn how to achieve better health and an abundance of happiness. Featuring a motivational and inspiring foreword by *New York Times* bestselling author Gabrielle Bernstein, *The Stimulati Experience* distills Jim's unique nine-step program created from his own personal experience, The Stimulati themselves, and lessons he has learned from creating the world's leading digital health platforms.

Using grounded scientific research, practical takeaways, insightful evaluations, and his own personal stories, Jim takes you on a journey of self-discovery so that you can radically improve your life. *The Stimulati Experience* is your ultimate guide to optimal health of the body and mind.

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