

A sunset over the ocean with a heart-shaped sun. The sun is a bright, glowing heart shape in the upper center of the frame, casting a shimmering path of light across the dark water below. The sky is a gradient of orange and red, and the water is dark with a trail of golden reflections from the sun.

**Living a Courageously
Authentic Life**

**Lesson Three:
Recognize Your Gifts**

Lesson 3: Recognize Your Gifts

“Everyone has a purpose in life...a unique gift or special talent to give to others.”

~Deepak Chopra

I was talking with a friend of mine recently. We were talking about her many gifts, and she confessed to me that she shied away from talking about and owning her gifts because she was uncomfortable talking about herself that way. She felt that she would come across as self-centered or selfish.

In fact, the greatest tragedy in our lives is to hide our gifts from the rest of the world. We create a gap that only our gifts can fill. As I told my friend, we are not selfish when we talk about and share our gifts, we are selfish when we don't.

Each one of us is unique. We have a distinct mix of skills, talents and gifts that is unlike anyone else's on the planet. I firmly believe that each of our unique skills, talents and gifts is needed to help ourselves, each other, and our planet heal and grow.

Our life mission and purpose is to improve and raise the levels of love and consciousness of the planet through the sharing of our gifts. One small act can ripple out in ways that we could never imagine and touch many, many lives. And when we consistently share our gifts, the many ripples end up creating a tidal wave of positive change that can reach every corner of the world.

Our job titles, parenting role, and life labels are not what make us unique. To truly recognize and know our gifts, we need to look below the surface of titles and labels. Some of our talents and gifts are obvious – we may be an excellent baker or musician or dancer. Others require a bit more digging. Perhaps people, even strangers, share their life stories and problems with you wherever you go. You may have a gift for listening or compassion that others see in you. Or maybe you have gifts that you haven't shared with others because you worry that you will be criticized or made fun of.

Sometimes we can't see our own gifts because they are too intrinsically tied to our being and we may even think that everyone else can do these things. For example, I have always been intuitive. I hear that little voice inside of me loud and clear and usually (but not always!) listen to it. It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized that this was a gift. Until then, I had assumed that everyone could do this.

Your distinct skills, talents and gifts form the basis of your authentic life. They are the things that you are meant to bring forward and share with the world.

Case story: Recognizing Your Gifts

One of my clients was trying to figure out what her next career move should be. She had been working in one field for quite some time and was looking for a career move, but wanted one that would align with her passions and life purpose.

We started by spending some time defining what her gifts and talents were. I did a shamanic journey to get some insights on her gifts for her. She reached out to friends and family members for their ideas. She and I then consolidated all of the identified gifts into one list. We then looked at the commonalities and themes across each list, and identified a handful of talents and gifts that seemed to be most prominent:

- Caring and compassionate
- Empathetic
- Mentoring
- Connection with others – especially other women

While she had identified other gifts and talents, she could see how these four gifts really summarized what her gifts for the world were.

Taking Action

Set aside a couple hours (all at once or in smaller time blocks) and find a quiet place to respond to the following questions. Have fun with this! As you go through the exercises, you should learn quite a bit about yourself and even get some great feedback from others.

- 1) Spend time identifying your gifts. Do at least three of the suggestions listed below so that you have a broad and varied perspective.
 - a) Write down at least 8-12 gifts that you have that differentiate you from other people.
 - b) Ask people that know you well what they think your gifts and talents are.
 - c) Find a quiet place to do some channeled stream-of-consciousness writing. Write: “What are my gifts and talents?” on top of a piece of paper. Then, take a deep breath, clear your mind, and ask your higher self to answer the question for you. With you mind clear, wait and watch for the words to begin forming in your mind. As soon as they do, begin writing them down. Don’t

- worry about spelling or grammar – just write until the words stop flowing in your mind. When done, go back and see what you wrote.
- d) Ask for insights about your gifts to come to you in your dreams at night. Put a pad and pen next to your bed. When you have a dream, write it down as soon as you wake up with as much detail as you can remember. Look for the ways that your gifts and talents are being demonstrated in the dream.
- 2) Create a “map” of your unique and distinctive gifts.
- Write each gift and talent you have identified (or have been identified for you) on its own piece of paper or index card.
 - Group your gifts together into categories that make sense to you.
 - Come up with a name and description for each group.
- 3) Summarize how you use each gift and talent.
- How have you used this gift/group in the past?
 - How did you feel when you used this gift/group in the past?
 - How has this gift/group been beneficial to you?
 - Are there things about this gift that you have held back on using?
 - Are there any negative aspects or concerns you have about this gift?
 - How have others responded to this gift/group?
 - How can you share this gift/group with the world?
- 4) If you are having difficulty with this exercise, look back at your limiting beliefs and personas, and ask yourself:
- Did my persona(s) require me to use any special skills or talents that I might not have developed? What are they?
 - How have I used those skills or talents in my life? Are they gifts?
 - Are my limiting beliefs negating or limiting my perceptions of my gifts?
 - What fears are preventing me from honestly assessing the gifts I have?
- 5) If you identified any ways that you have been holding back on using your gifts, or that there were some negative aspects or concerns, spend time some understanding why and coming up with ideas on how you can fully maximize your gifts.

Congratulations on completing Lesson 3! What special thing can you do for yourself to honor and reward yourself for the work you’ve done?