

A heart-shaped sun is positioned in the upper center of the image, glowing brightly against a dark orange and red sky. The sun's light creates a shimmering path of golden reflections that extends down the center of a dark, rippling body of water. The overall mood is serene and hopeful.

# **Living a Courageously Authentic Life**

## **Introduction and Course Overview**

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Welcome and congratulations on your desire and commitment to live an authentic, purposeful and joyful life!

To live authentically takes courage. So many people today walk around like zombies, completely cut off from themselves and their inner spark and purpose. Some don't know how to connect to their spark and their authentic self. Others are afraid to. Some are afraid that they might fail...or even that they will succeed. There are many reasons why people do not live authentically, but these are the primary reasons that I see when I'm working with clients.

When you live an inauthentic life, you:

- Deny a skill, gift, passion or part of your being because you're afraid others will mock it or not accept it
- Stay in a job that is causing physical toll and health issues (your physical body is great at letting you know when something is out of alignment with your authentic being)
- Remain in a relationship that is devoid of joy and love...and where you and/or the other person involved are unwilling to work back toward a love-based state
- Choose to follow a path (career, relationship, etc.) because it is what is expected of you, instead of being what your soul sings out for

To me, living authentically means stripping down to the core of your being; discovering and connecting to your inner spark, integrity and source; and then bringing that forward consistently and consciously into your day-to-day living.

I'm not going to lie. It takes work to do this. Throughout this course, I will share stories from my own personal journey to authentic living, as well as stories from some of my clients. (I have changed the names and some of the details of my clients to protect their privacy.) My hope is that these stories will inspire you and help bring some of the exercises to life for you.

What I've found through my own work and through working with clients is that to live an authentic life requires deep personal insights. It means being able to answer the following questions and then acting accordingly:

- What personas did I adopt to protect or mask aspects of myself that I was afraid to let others see? Do these personas help or hinder my personal

- development? What would happen if I released them? And, what would be left when I do (this one is a scary question for many people!)?
- What "rules" or boundaries that I have either set for myself or accepted by others are not necessary for me to live an authentic life...and may in fact be holding me back from doing so?
  - Who am I really? What makes me uniquely me? What gifts do I bring to this world that, when combined together, create a force to be reckoned with?
  - What is my purpose? What is it that I am meant to do with my life?
  - What is important to me? What kind of life makes my heart and soul sing? What attributes and characteristics are so ingrained in my being that if I didn't express them, I would be out of integrity with myself?
  - What deep-rooted fears do I have and how do I address them as I make life changes?
  - What changes do I need to make in my life now and in the future?

This program is designed to help you answer all of these questions – and more – over the next six lessons. When you complete the program, you will have a much clearer understanding of who you are, what your life purpose is, and the life you want to create. You will also have vision plan of things you need to do, starting immediately, to help you realize that life.

Each lesson is designed to build off of the previous one, so please complete these in the order that they are presented. I would recommend that you spend at least a week on each lesson. While many of the questions and activities are straightforward, you will want to take the time to think through each, and where, appropriate, get feedback from other people. If you choose to spend more than a week on each lesson, that is great! Go at a pace that feels right for you.

I recommend that you purchase a journal and write down your responses to each activity in it so that you can see your progress, have one place to refer back to, and be able make any updates to previous lessons that may come as a result of a later lesson. And, given the deep, personal nature of this work, I also suggest that you remember that other people will have a variety of reactions to this work that you are doing for yourself. Some will be genuinely excited and happy for you and will support you through this journey. Others will be worried for you and even fearful of the changes you are making. It is up to you to decide if, when and what you share with other people. Whether you take or ignore other people's suggestions, send blessing to these people, but recognize that ultimately you are the only person who can truly say who you are and what you need for your life.

If you are in a committed relationship, consider doing the program together so that you can co-create your future. You can bring both of your gifts and purposes

together to potentially create a future vision that would be greater than if you were doing this program alone.

## **My Story: Starting on the Path to Authentic Living**

I spent most of my childhood and young adult years hiding who I was, desperately trying to fit in and not be "different."

I always felt I was different. Not in a bad way, but different enough because of my unique gifts that I felt somewhat alone and isolated. I have a vivid memory from kindergarten where I felt so overwhelmingly different from my classmates that I went into the closet and cried. The teacher tried everything she could do to get me to come out, but I refused. I told myself at that point that I would try to look and act and be as my classmates.

For the most part, it worked. I did my best to blend in, to bury my uniqueness and to not do anything that would set me apart from other people. Of course, I wasn't 100% successful. Bits of the "real me" would come out from time to time - after all, it is impossible to truly hide who you are. I had a core group of friends that I was comfortable showing more of who I really was with. And there were those random people who for some reason, surprisingly, were able to see right through the facade I had built and saw me at my core.

When I was an adult, I went away to a soul quest retreat. There were about 15-20 of us there. I was the youngest. I was trying to work through one of the biggest losses of my life, and was doing my usual cover up routine to fit in. I was cautiously private with everyone. Halfway through the retreat, one of the women in my group lashed out at me at lunch one day. I burst into tears and ran out.

I went to my sacred space in the woods (we had been tasked with finding our own sacred place to do our individual work) and connected with nature and the spirit world. As I began to get my emotions under control, Fawn (an animal guide that had walked right up to me my first day there) showed up and shared a message with me - that of accepting who I was in my entirety. I followed her through the forest and sat in a beautifully sunny field with wild flowers while she patiently waited under a large tree in the middle for me to fully understand the message.

As soon as I realized her message, something within me began to crack. I could feel parts of me beginning to shine out. There was still a protective "shell" around me, but more of the real me was able to come out. I reveled in the feeling of just being me, relaxed fully in the field, and wove a garland of flowers for my hair.

I walked back to the retreat center, wearing my flower crown and feeling as if I were a different person. My group was meeting in a cabin, but stopped their conversation when I walked in. I took a deep breath and then shared the loss that I had recently experienced as well as my life-long quest to cover up who I was and try to blend in.

The response from my group was immediate: they formed a circle around me and gave me a big hug. The woman who had lashed out at me apologized to me and became my biggest cheerleader for the rest of the retreat. And then they shared with me what they saw special about me. They gently scolded me for trying to blend in and encouraged me to be true to who I was, since the real me had so much to offer to the world.

Several women thanked me at the end of the retreat for giving them the gift of greater insight about themselves through my opening up. I began to see how by being true to myself I could help others.

Since then, I've learned that it is when I am truly authentic that I am able to help others the most. When I am authentic, I can tap into my inner wisdom and the wisdom and love of the Universe and share that with the world. Which, when I think about it, is an amazing thing to share!

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I wish you all the best on your journey!

## Program Start – Personal Assessment

Take a moment to assess yourself and your life today with this short form. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 = Completely Disagree and 5 = Complete Agree, rank your current status for each statement.

I know my life purpose \_\_\_\_\_

I live my life purpose everyday \_\_\_\_\_

I awaken each day feeling positive and excited about the day ahead \_\_\_\_\_

I feel like I live authentically and true to myself \_\_\_\_\_

I only take on roles and personas that align with my authentic self \_\_\_\_\_

I know what type of life I want to create for myself \_\_\_\_\_

I have a clear vision on how to create my authentic life \_\_\_\_\_

I recognize and release my deep-rooted fears that try to hold me back \_\_\_\_\_