

This is a free chapter from *The Self-Development Project, Volume One:*
Clean Out Your LifeCloset.

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CORBIE MITLEID



CLEAN **OUT**
YOUR **LIFECLOSET**

THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Self-Development Project

Volume I: Clean Out Your LifeCloset

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Corbie Mitleid

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Dedication

Dedicated to my father, Jerome R. Dorkin, MD (1921-2001):

Best friend, cheering section, slayer of NY Times Crossword Puzzles (in ink), brilliant and compassionate physician, punster extraordinaire. The man who taught me to remain eternally unfinished, always looking for new answers and asking the next question. If I'm any kind of writer, it's because of your love affair with words well-crafted. I miss having you "in form" with us, but cherish the fact that you're still around me in spirit. I love you.

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Foreword

By David Bennett

In my experience of coaching others, I have had the opportunity to speak to people from all around the world. I've found that we all are searching for a sense of peace and understanding. In these challenging times, we find ourselves looking everywhere but in the most important place—within ourselves. When working on developing into a better person, we sometimes come to a limit of our understanding. When we reach these boundaries, we find ourselves in an emotional realm that leads us to confusion. Now we can either step back or push forward. I prefer to move forward locating the tools needed to find solid footing and emerge from the fog with new understanding, allowing this focused zone to percolate into a new authentic self. After reading *Clean Out Your LifeCloset*, I can clearly see this book provides the tools needed to create that focus and direction in your life.

I've known Corbie Mitleid for many years and enjoy our discussions about the empowering and practical ways we can live our lives. She views life with a fresh outlook—believing life's circumstances are open to all possible explanations—and she has successfully brought that inspiring view to this work. She shows the reader how to find enthusiasm for life, to look forward to change, and to grow while experiencing it. She teaches you to allow yourself to be of service with heart-centered authenticity because you are excited about the promise life holds. You'll discover how to give up anxiety and fear, yet hold an intention of a brighter tomorrow that fills you with overflowing gratitude and love.

We are all living a personal story—each with its ups and downs, and high and low points. But what's important is the theme that structures and guides your story. When your story has positive, life-supporting themes, you have found the key to transformation. From time to time we may need to add new vigor to our disciplines, so they maintain a fresh vitality. Each chapter offers ways to reframe your world and make it sparkle. We live in a paradigm of heroic individuals struggling over limited resources, yet do we always need the biggest, the fastest, or the best? We need a new story to live in harmony and within our means. Science is showing us that we are connected to each other in many ways. We would be better served by establishing cooperation and building dynamic relationships.

Within this first book of three, we learn to cultivate an attitude of simplicity in our own life by eliminating unnecessary activities and preoccupations. Simplifying life allows us to develop a genuine mental discipline toward loving kindness with less distraction. Like an upper branch growing out of a tree, strive to live simply because the tip of the branch cannot hold the weight of too much *stuff*. As we simplify our lives, we have more time and energy to help others and realize our lightened life on the top.

Read on to find the help you need to rise above the circumstances and remove yourself from the same old rut. No matter how beautiful the rut may be, you cannot see above the furrow to the expansive possibilities that await you. Remember that every moment of possibility resides in *this* moment, and you have the capacity to clean house so your future can become a shining beacon.

DAVID BENNETT

Author of *Voyage of Purpose* and *A Voice as Old as Time*

DharmaTalks.com

Reviews

“Corbie is the Marie Kondo of the heart and soul, helping us to honor those long-held emotional hang-ups that no longer serve us, then let them go, cleansing our spirits for new experiences and greater joys. A wonderful book to reread again and again.”

- SHANNON HAYES

Author of Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture, and Long Way on a Little: An Earth Lover's Companion for Enjoying Meat, Pinching Pennies and Living Deliciously

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“If you find yourself stumbling, tripping or falling towards enlightenment, *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is an outstanding primer to give you more clarity and insight in your life. Corbie Mitleid has written a treasure trove woven full of golden stories, powerful tools and useful techniques—and a little practical magic too. *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is the book that you didn't even know that you've been looking for to integrate a new breed of self-development into your life, especially if you're a mere mortal like the rest of us!”

- BLAZE LAZARONY

CEO & Founder, Blaze A Brilliant Path

“Volumes have been written on the topic of attaining and living a fuller, more complete life. *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* pares away the rhetoric and resonates with ‘complex simplicity’ that truly defines the process. Regardless of whether you define your self as expert or novice, the words and ideas in this plainly written, well-told story will enrich your Authentic Life.”

- PAMELA STEELE

Artist/Mage/Author of *Steele Wizard Tarot* and *Wizard's Pets Tarot*

“Often used in this book is the word ‘clear’ and indeed that’s where the readers are taken: on a journey to clearly define what they want and need for their lives and a clear path to attaining it. Written in an easy to follow yet inspirational manner, *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is a volume readers will keep and return to when life gets cloudy.”

- DONNA CORNELL

Philanthropist and CEO, Cornell Enterprises

“Witty, insightful, and fun. In *Clean Out Your LifeCloset*, Corbie Mitleid gently cajoles her readers to explore life through a new and refreshing lens: that of the soul and the spiritual heart. A great read for anyone who wants to live a more meaningful and inspired life.”

- MARTHA G. BLESSING, RN

Author of *God Is A Pink Cloud: Crossing the Spiritual Bridge from Chronic Pain and Illness to Health, Happiness and Inner Peace*; Founder of Soul Light Healing Academy

“For years, Corbie Mitleid has stood out as an enlightened and gifted teacher and writer. Written in her trademark entertaining style, *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* skillfully delivers soul wisdom and encourages us to let go of that which impedes our spiritual advancement and path to internal joy and peace. If you desire to live your life in clarity and balance, this first volume of humorous Sage wisdom is a powerful tool and highly recommended for your journey. *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is the kind of unique and delightful read you will want for those you care about most, beginning with you.”

- TED SILVERHAND

Tuscarora Native Seer

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“With crystal clarity and wit, Corbie Mitleid offers a wealth of practical, down-to-earth wisdom to help you create the life of your dreams. Highly recommended.”

- ROBERT SCHWARTZ

Between Lives Soul Regression Therapist; Author of *Your Soul's Plan: Discovering the Real Meaning of the Life You Planned Before You Were Born*, and *Your Soul's Gift: The Healing Power of the Life You Planned Before You Were Born*

“Corbie Mitleid has written a gem of a book. While you may 'read' it in one day, it will take years to master the many juicy and empowering tidbits that are outlined throughout the volume. It is high time we all cleaned out and arranged our personal closet to suit our lifestyle and desires. Come ready to change, and get ready to dog-ear a bounty of pages with your highlighter!”

- CHRISTINE ALEXANDRIA

Author of *Askfirmations: Live the Life You Desire Simply by Asking*, *The Angel Chatter Oracle Cards*, and the award-winning, *Pick-A-Woowo: Have You Ever Wondered About Angels?*

“Most of us move through life looking through a clouded window, seeing what's right in front of us but never the whole picture. When it comes to our feelings, thoughts, and responses, we don't ask ourselves 'why?' Instead, we act on impulse and move on. *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* isn't about changing who you are, but about getting to know yourself and growing into the best version of you. Optimal human functioning, self-actualization, happiness, whatever you like to call it, can be achieved if you're willing to do the work. And while author Corbie Mitleid doesn't claim to have all the answers, her book can help you find them.”

- HEATHER BESCHIZZA

Adjunct Professor of Psychology, Community College of Allegheny County; ESL Instructor, Duquesne University

“*Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is a fun, creative, imagination-filled, practical self-help book that is an easy read, down to earth, with no ‘fuzzy bunnies’ or wishy washy unattainable goals. I loved the experiments and exercises offered to the reader. What a great practical way to embody the book’s message!

- ANIIYAH KLOCK

Licensed Massage Therapist and Energy Healer

“With *Clean Out Your LifeCloset*, Corbie Mitleid gives you a guide for self-examination and introspection from the heart’s vantage point. This book gives you the tools and techniques that are designed especially for each person who reads it. This will become your resource book for Life.”

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- CAROLINE CHANG

Producer & Host, Awake 2 Oneness Radio

Founder & Director, The KYLE Foundation, Inc.

"Before you set on paving your own path in life, you need to find out who you truly are, what makes you unique, and what you have to contribute to the world. *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is a great combination of insight, illustrative stories, and practical advice to give you the best opportunity to reveal your true essence. Corbie Mitleid's wisdom and wit shine through and make this book a must-read for anyone on a road of self-discovery."

- DIANA TUMMINIA, LCSW-R

Mental Health Practitioner and Psychotherapist

“Such a wonderful marriage of wisdom and wit. So thoughtful, well-written and easy to read, *Clean Out Your LifeCloset* is filled with helpful metaphors, examples and stories to bring the principles brilliantly to life—and worksheets to help you dive even deeper. If you're ready to not only think, but also fully LIVE outside the box, this book will be a treasured guide!”

- RUTH L. SCHWARTZ

Author of Soul on Earth: A Guide to Living and Loving Your Human Life

“*Clean Out Your LifeCloset* offers practical, doable, sensible techniques that create ideal conditions for personal transformation and growth. Corbie writes in pictures. Her voice is colorful and dynamic, her words a joy to read.”

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- VANESSA GOBES

Cofounder, Chrysalis Meditation Center (InsideTheChrysalis.com)

"In our modern world, we as individuals are submersed in a sense of self-induced complicatedness. In *Clean Out Your LifeCloset*, Corbie Mitleid shows us how the simplification of our lives in all aspects leads to clarity, which in turn leads to an enlightened life. It is essentially a road map out of our self-induced complicatedness where the road and the map are the individual at the same time.”

- LORRIE STOJNI

Mother, Family Law Lawyer, and Healer

“*Clean Out Your LifeCloset* brings the reader a different slant on clearing out Life’s clutter. Deeply useful in accepting responsibility for one’s own life experiences and the need to find one’s own presence in a world that suffers from non-consciousness and focuses on material needs and wants. A wonderful reminder that we are merely spiritual beings having a human adventure.”

- MICHELE KELEHER, MS, PT

Energy Medicine Practitioner

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Preface: I'll Show You Mine If You Show Me Yours

Tell me if you've heard *this* one before: A guy intent on Change walks into a coffee bar, which happens to be attached to a bookstore. The guy forgets all about the coffee as row upon row of "I've-Got-Your-Answer" tomes call to him, siren-like, from the soaring bookshelves.

If you're like me, you're someone who believes that there's always room to change, to grow, and to learn. And all that changing, growing, and learning is fun—or ought to be. But if you take a good look at your own bookshelves, I bet you've got somewhere between dozens and hundreds of New Age and self-help volumes that you haven't even read.

These books look terrific in the store. They have sexy titles, good cover art, and delicious-sounding tables of contents. The back-cover recommendation blurbs sing the author's praises. And as you flip through this one or that one, a paragraph or exercise catches your eye. You think, *Hmmm...maybe this is the one that will work!* So you buy it and bring it home. Perhaps it sits on your "to read" shelf or your bedside table for a while. You skim a chapter or two when you have a little time, but for some reason, the book just doesn't grab you the way it did in the store. And so it goes into your general library—to silently remind you that you "Still Haven't Found What You're Looking For," (thank you, U2).

Guess what? Me, too. And I've been buying these promising volumes and bringing them home for almost forty years. From the books in the 1970s that promised to make me a thin, sexy, and datable teenager, to recent ones that promised to make me thin, sexy and happily married post-menopause—not to mention compassionate, worldly-wise, activist, mindful, abundant, fearless, and happy in 350 pages or less. And except for a beloved and dog-eared handful, they remain unread.

However, what all those volumes—read and unread—*have* done is prove that the only one who has answers for me is me.

“So, smart gal,” you’re saying, “if that’s true, why should I buy *your* book?”

Simple. It’s not just mine—it’s yours. Without your participation, this book is only half-written.

I’ve experienced successes and failures. I’ve been fast tracked and shoved into the parking lot. I’ve had days where I *got* to get up in the morning and days when I *had* to (quite a difference, let me tell you). And along the way I learned, figured out what did and didn't work for me, and realized that all the self-help books in the world don't do a thing if they don't speak to who you are in every detail of your life.

The Self-Development Project series is my chance to share my own journey with you, without preaching "this is what you *have to do*." (You'll notice that the word *must* is rarely used in this book.) Instead, I want to inspire you to take your own journey, without comparing it to mine as an author or anyone else's around you. Because everyone's experiences or challenges are different, it follows that any healing journey taken by my readers will also be unique. One of the ways to find healing is through self-knowledge: understanding *why* you do what you do and *how* that brings certain events into your life. But what those answers *are* will totally and completely be up to *You*.

So, you're writing this book with me, every step of the way. In the essays and exercises that follow, you'll learn how to play: with yourself, with ideas, with the whole notion of "only one way to get it right." And at the end of the journey, you'll be able to truly own the fact that you have your own answers—you've had them all along!

Ready? Let's romp!

Introduction: How To Be a Martian Without Leaving Earth

My father, Jerome Dorkin, was a physician back in the 1950s and 1960s when doctor visits were still two dollars, evening office hours were normal, and house calls were commonplace. His small one-man office was attached to the house via a door in our kitchen. I loved wandering in when Dad wasn't busy because the big examining table had a huge roll of paper on it. Technically, it was for the patients: each one got a fresh covering for the table before they'd climb on. But for me, that big roll of paper was magic waiting to happen.

On rare occasions, my father would tear off a six-foot length and tape it to my wall. I would then proceed to go to town, drawing figures and scribbling stories to my heart's content. No coloring books for me—too small! And why color in the lines anyway? I had bigger visions than that. Those days with unlimited paper and boundless imagination are some of my best childhood memories.

That's why I love thinking like a Martian.

No, that doesn't mean running around with a scrubbing brush on my Roman-style helmet and big sneakers. I leave that version to Looney Tunes. Rather, it involves observing the world as if I am an explorer from another planet. It's an unlimited state of mind that encourages me to leave my judgments at the door of any experience.

Here's an example: I am sitting across from a man who has tears running down his face. There is no verifiable stimulus for this action. There are two questions I can ask to address this:

“Why are you crying?” assumes that there is an emotional basis to what is happening, and it is most likely a negative one.

“Why is there water running from your eyes?” is the Martian view, which does not assume anything more than what is being observed.

In the Martian point of view, all possible explanations are up for consideration. The Martian might learn about human physiology—where the person is ill, has an allergy, or has something wrong with a contact lens that causes irritation. He keys in on psychology, finding that the person might be overwhelmingly emotional—either happy or sad—and the emotion “leaks out” in the form of tears. But here's the most important thing: our little Outer Space being has left room for every potential answer; thereby, entertaining as many positive possibilities as negative. And he is guaranteed to learn something either way.

About The Self-Development Project

The Self-Development Project and its peripherals have been structured to support your “inner Martian” by encouraging you to use what you read in the way that suits your needs best. I’ll make suggestions, but they are just that—a suggested road to self-study. If there is any other underlying purpose, it’s to teach you how to play again without worrying about The Rules, right or wrong answers, or matching up your findings with anyone else’s.

The Self-Development Project is all about how you Can’t Get It Wrong. By picking up this book and reading this far, you’ve already shown up for Day One of The Life You Want class. You are standing right here with me. You have everything you need to make the changes you seek, to embrace the things you want to keep, and to have a ridiculously good time—without checking to see if it’s all right with the Professor (that’s me).

You get an A for showing up. Simple as that. Because showing up means you will have picked up what you needed to learn to go out in the world and figure out your own answers to the exam—which will always be the right ones.

The Self-Development Project is a series of three books: *Volume I: Clean Out Your LifeCloset*, *Volume II: The Big Reboot*, and *Volume III: Be Your Own Masterpiece*. This handy little trilogy will partner with you in totally turning your life inside out and upside down until you've got an entirely self-created life.

Think of this series as the literary equivalent of that big mural of paper. We encourage you to draw the Ultimate You with a huge box of crayons, a batch of finger paints, glue and scissors, and sparkly bits—whatever takes your fancy!

What You'll Learn in *Volume I: Clean Out Your LifeCloset*

This first installment of *The Self-Development Project* consists of a total of sixteen chapters organized into four sections as follows:

Part I: Getting Clear. If you are standing in the middle of a maelstrom (think teenager's bedroom), you have to get clear on what is currently in disarray. Focusing your telescope is how you set yourself up for that clarity. You'll take a closer look at places in your life that are like a three-legged stool—if any one of them is wobbly, you fall down. *Getting Clear On Your Purpose* helps you figure out what you're doing here. *Getting Clear In Your Relationships* helps you get the most out of your interactions with people around you. *Getting Clear With Spirit* helps you keep all the parts of your life in perspective.

Part II: Simplicity and Living Well With Less. As you're cleaning up that proverbial bedroom, you will have detritus to clear out and duplicates to toss—some of the belongings may even be unrecognizable underneath all the dust and grime. It's the same way with life. I'll encourage you to look at life as a Tiny House—the idea that you have core essentials worth keeping, allowing everything else to be up for discussion. You'll find out how happy you can be with what you have, not what you *think* you need. You'll discover the delicious value of experiences rather than “Stuff.” And you'll put on your practical thinking cap deciding which items to keep or toss out to simplify your existence.

Part III: Going With the Flow, Learning To Adapt. Going with the flow is one of the easiest ways to open up your life. We're going to turn the idea of perfection on its ear. You'll learn why perfection isn't what you think it is, and that you have more of it than you realize. You'll find out that stumbling toward enlightenment is valuable. You'll examine those times when perfect destroys good. And because exceptions prove the rule, you'll discover when it's perfect to stand your ground or when saying “No” is a fabulous idea.

Part IV: Stress Is a Complicated Friend. This section covers that inevitable in-your-face companion of 21st-century humans. Not all stress is inevitably bad. We'll talk about the difference between good stress and bad stress. You'll learn how to listen to its messages: recognizing when stress is a warning sign, when it's like a hot water tap you can shut off with a little nudge, or when it's that freight train of “Are you kidding me?!” barreling down the tracks and needing your immediate attention.

The Adventure Pages. You'll notice that at the end of each chapter, there are "Adventure Pages." These pages are where my book becomes *our* book—yours and mine. You'll answer some questions to help you reflect on what you've read. You'll come up with places in your life where these ideas will work. You'll get to decide what your personal takeaways are (we call that "putting arrows in your quiver"). And you have space to write down what you believe to be the Most Important Piece of Knowledge you've gained. We'll encourage your inner artist to create a picture of what you've learned from every chapter along the way—making The Self-Development Project your own personal divination deck.

Playing with the Adventure Pages will enable you to see how my ideas can work for you. They highlight the parts of your life where you want deep change. They allow you to find your own way of phrasing things. And, I hope, they coax your Little Kid side to come out and play.

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Acknowledgements

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Part I: Getting Clear

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The Joy of a Clear Telescope

From the massive Keck structures on Hawaii's Mauna Kea to the simple ones that dot backyards on cloudless nights, telescopes transform hazy vistas into brilliant clarity. Viewing a distant star can activate wonder, a desire for adventure, and a profound sense of the vastness of the universe. But no matter what such breathtaking vistas trigger, our newfound clarity changes our worldview.

Like those stars powdering the skies, our lives are full of dreams, projects, plans, and ambitions. We can work on prioritizing our heart's desires. We can figure out how to give ourselves enough time to do them. We can let go of other people's dreams for us that have nothing to do with who we really are. Most importantly, we can decide what is essential for us in the long run.

Once we've acknowledged the goals and dreams we want in our life, we may still be left with a hazy mass of possibilities.

How do you pick a focus? Must you choose one dream out of many? Can your different goals support one another, or do you have one overriding desire?

How do you bring the thing you want most in the world into dazzling clarity?

Let's look at some helpful tips to keep your internal telescope sharp and focused.

Decide To Use Your Telescope

Your first step is to decide that gaining clarity is a priority. As Ralph Blum wisely says in *The Book of Runes*, "...even more than we are doers, we are deciders. And once the decision is clear, the doing becomes effortless."

The decision to seek clarity is, in itself, an action that will bring forward motion and excitement to the process of getting clear.

Clean the Lens

No matter how beautiful the view is outside, you'll never see it through a dirty window. That's why we have spring cleaning, to scrub away the winter gunge that's built up during those months of hibernating. A little spring cleaning of our internal telescope can get the glass sparkling and the vista sharp and enticing.

But what happens when the lens of your internal telescope continues to film over with daily diversions? Such deflections can be many and varied—and they take away from what's important. You may feel pressure from the urgent things that clamor for immediate attention: *Do the laundry! Run the errands! Play with the cat!* You can be seduced by the mindless things that are easy distractions: internet surfing, television, video games, and texting. You might feel emotionally entangled with someone else's situation, pulling you away from your own state of affairs.

All of these detours get in the way of accomplishing what truly matters to you: writing that article, planning a family night, exercising, meditating. When you look at all of the time-wasters and distractions, you'll come to realize you can set them aside—but that will require you to focus your telescope.

Focus Your Telescope

The world today provides us with more information than we can possibly process. If we fail to set limits or boundaries on where we focus our attention, we fall into a numb, drifting mind-state—never knowing where to rest and always feeling overwhelmed. Rather than settling for mindlessness, seek mindfulness.

Mindfulness is magic. When we are mindful, we pay attention to our life. The present moment is very much alive, yet we look at what is going on—both in and around us—without an emotional charge. Being mindful means we are actively making choices about our precious time and mind-space. When we use mindfulness to focus, clarity is the result. With clarity, you can “aim your arrow true.” You will be able to identify a distraction quickly and find it easier to set it aside. You will catch yourself when you're thinking self-defeating thoughts and bring yourself back to productive mind-talk.

Pay attention to those times you find yourself thinking, *I can't do this*. Notice when you habitually berate yourself, compare yourself to others, or bemoan your current circumstances. These destructive thoughts and self-beliefs are the film and dirt on your internal telescope lens.

When you notice such self-talk, it's time to change perspective. Choose to think differently. Compassionately remind yourself of what you want. Is it possible for you to get it, do it, or make it happen? Yes, yes and yes! Be gentle with yourself as you go through these changes. Your mind is like a puppy; whapping it on the nose with a newspaper will not get you the outcome you want. You'll need time, repetition, and discipline to create a new habit with this mindfulness. Think of it as leash training your puppy, with treats at the end!

Aim Your Telescope

Meditation will keep your internal telescope from wobbling on its base. Too many people think meditation means sitting on a zafu cushion for hours at a time striving for no-mind. Think of meditation more as a calming of the chatter. Find time—as little as ten minutes a day—to sit quietly. Let your mind go softly silent. Coax your mental squirrels off their squeaky wheels for a while.

As your mind stills, those *urgent* beasts tend to go and sit in a corner. What you want to focus on quietly comes to sit with you. When it does, you can truly examine this most important companion and its friends, so you (and they) can work together most efficiently.

Meditation brings serenity, consolidating your energy for optimal use. The calming of the mind is one of the most powerful calibration tools your internal telescope can employ. The more you practice meditation, the more easily your mind will come into alignment.

Adjust the Lens

The beneficial structure of both you and your surroundings is crucial for clarity. Your body is the housing for your telescope. If your body isn't in sound working order, then neither are you.

These are nine simple ways to adjust your internal lens.

Cultivate simple, good habits. Get enough sleep. Eat good food at the right time, your attention centered on the meal. Avoid haphazardly shoving food in your body while on the go. Exercise to remind your body that you are partners in this adventure, which is good for raising your endorphin level.

Keep yourself and your surroundings clean and comfortable. When you're neither distracted by clutter nor feeling scruffy, focus is easier to come by.

Get dressed every day. Working in pajamas may *sound* lovely, but if not getting dressed dulls your clarity and confidence, the comfort isn't worth the trade-off.

Turn off the techno-tempters when you need to stay focused. According to Timothy Egan, contributing writer for *The New York Times*, a survey of Canadian media consumption by Microsoft concluded that a person's average attention span had fallen to eight seconds—down from 12 seconds in the year 2000. We now have a shorter attention span than goldfish. Why? Because our attention span shortens the more we indulge in electronics.

Set your schedule and keep your lists. Sheer willpower may not be enough to keep you on track, especially if you have numerous distractions throughout the day. Following a schedule and prioritizing items on a list helps to keep you focused.

Learn from other people with focused telescopes. The Law of Attraction states, “where your attention goes so goes your existence.” If you want clarity, then surround yourself with people and things that will *cultivate* clarity—not dissipate it.

Stay away from people who live in Never-land. Avoid people whose lives are filled with “no,” “not,” and “never,” who make promises but never keep them, and who are habitually late. Eschew the company of the drifters who have no direction. They exhaust your energy with unproductive talk about dreams they’ll never pursue because they’re unwilling to do the work.

Find your tribe. Your true tribe is comprised of those who are excited by life, whose direction and purpose are at the tip of their tongue, and whose lives reflect their goals and desires with promise and effort combined.

Avoid the gloom-and-doom in the world. The adage in broadcasting is “If it bleeds, it leads.” That kind of outlook is the *last* thing you need around you! Make an effort to find positive stories and inspirational books and podcasts. Listen to the words and ideas of those whose clarity of purpose and spirit has brought them joy and success. If they can achieve a happier state of being as they reach for their dreams, so can you.

Now that you have your telescope cleaned, set up, and aimed at the stars, the future is a lot clearer. Whether you choose to focus on your purpose, your relationship, or your spiritual growth, it's no longer a bunch of twinkly smudges above your head. There are vast galaxies of possibility—and they're yours to discover.

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THE ADVENTURE PAGES: The Joy of a Clear Telescope

What was your personal definition of “Clarity” before you read this chapter? Any changes?

Have you been able to find Clarity on your own? How?

What ideas in this chapter went *PING!* for you?

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Any idea where you’d like to aim that telescope?

Put more arrows in your quiver: What three things do you want to take from this chapter and put to use in your life *right now*?

Here's your Invention Page!

Write down those three arrows on the card shape. Draw, collage, or otherwise illustrate what your personal "Joy of a Clear Telescope card" would look like.

Free Chapter - Not for Resale

Conclusion

When you came looking for a book like this one, you were probably dissatisfied with your LifeCloset: full of ideas and beliefs from your past that were put there by well-meaning parents, competitive siblings, earnest friends, frenemies, work situations, romantic partners both good and bad, and all you've experienced living in this big, complicated world. And you picked up this volume because whatever was in that closet was no longer what you wanted. You thought there might be some new ideas in here that work.

Now here you are, at the tail end of the pages you started exploring with hope and curiosity not long ago. If this book has resonated with you, here are some of the ways you might have already experienced change:

- You've gotten clear on what you want to bring into your life.
- You've looked at what you have and decided what is useful and worth keeping.
- You've tossed aside that which doesn't serve you.
- You've even learned that you can adapt some of what's around you to bring you what you want.
- You've learned how to deal with inevitable stress so that you handle it rather than it handling you.
- Most importantly, you've learned to trust your own knowing about things.

How do I know? Because you've stuck with me through this whole self-quest, and you're still reading.

Throughout these pages, I've reminded you time and again that YOU are your own best expert. Let's be honest: I can give you examples of what I've seen and done. I can share lists with you that I have found useful. I can even tell you reassuring stories about how I got through some very tough times that may look a lot like what you've gone through yourself.

But unless these stories and examples resonate with you, they are not equipment to put in your LifeCloset.

What goes back into your LifeCloset are those beliefs, ideas, methods and tips that will support the life you want to bring into being. That's why The Adventure Pages at the end of each chapter are so important (and if you didn't do those activities, trust me, you want to go back and dig in). They were designed to be the place where you go to play around with my ideas and make them delightfully, uniquely yours.

And when you've closed this book and settled back on your shelf, what happens then? That's when the fun really begins. Go, my friend. Go and try out all those ideas on your world.

Look at your life with more clarity. Know where that telescope—cleaned and polished and aimed to a fare-thee-well—can catch a glimpse of all the promise that is yours in the future, no matter your age or your circumstances.

You will have cleared out all of those raggedy thoughts, outworn principles, too-small life plans and directions that were never yours in the first place but bequeathed to you by others. You'll recognize them for what they are: poorly-fitting hand-me-downs that don't need to take up precious space.

You'll have lightened your load—disposing of anything you no longer need, which no longer supports you. That leaves room and time to cherish what is precious. You'll start looking for experiences, not “stuff.” And you'll have passed on some of those ideas, things, and experiences to those who will treasure them.

You'll have practiced living your life like the best of chefs, making sumptuous days and weeks out of what is presented to you by Spirit. You'll understand the deliciousness of making perfection out of imperfection. You'll understand that stumbling is actually part of the Big Dance. And you will have a solid understanding of when adaptability is not useful, but a big fat “No” is.

You'll get a grip on stress. You'll be able to differentiate between good and bad stress. You'll recognize when it's real and when it's false. You'll work out how to turn matters away if they aren't your problem to solve. And though stress is and always will be a part of your life, you won't let it bury you.

You'll be ready for *The Big Reboot*, which will be Volume II of *The Self-Development Project*.

The biggest change that I would wish for you, now that we've walked together, is a simple one: Own the fact that you are in charge of your own existence. Not the Fates. Not your financial circumstances. Not your family or your birth or your gender. You. Knowing that you are the captain of your own ship means you can decide how to steer it through the waters of your existence. Sometimes those waters will make for smooth sailing, and sometimes they will be so rough you will be pea-green in the face and hanging over the edge of the deck. But you will still be the captain. You get to claim your own triumphs and recognize your own miscalculations. Either way, you are in charge, and that means all possibilities are yours as well.

Lastly, I want to thank you. Yes, really. Not just for buying or reading the book, but for being someone who wanted to take the same journey as I did. You can't write what you don't know, so I had to live every single chapter of this book before getting it down on paper.

Clarity for me meant knowing who I was and what I was here to do. It meant getting rid of all those things that I allowed to stop me before. I had to jettison self-doubt, an insurmountable mountain of half-formed ideas I'd no idea how to finish, and the constant urge to put myself last because everyone else needed more. I had to be willing to dump the excuses: waiting until the timing was perfect, or until I was well-known enough, or until a big publishing house would magnanimously give me permission to be *in a book*. And it meant I had to let go of all that self-imposed stress—or this manuscript would never get finished.

You can do what I do because I had to do what I've asked you to do. And there are so many more delicious adventures to experience together!

About the Author

Corbie Mitleid has always been “the different one.” A writer and visionary in a completely medical family (father a doctor, mother a nurse, brother a doctor), she has always made her own path rather than take one cut for her by others. Leaving an Ivy League university after two years, Corbie struck out to find where joy and purpose lived, regardless of what she was told she “ought” to do.

The path wasn't easy. Two marriages, which didn't last, and a constant search for The Partner Who Understood. A succession of jobs. A series of spiritual paths. Moving from Cambridge to Philadelphia to Poughkeepsie to New York City to Atlanta. Out of the blue, breast cancer—not once, but three times. Life became a roller coaster with no brakes, asking Corbie to survive divorce, abuse, poverty and life-threatening illness. But through all of this, she learned the value of the Examined Life: meeting challenges and always asking the next question, facing each new situation with strength, courage and humor.

Today, Corbie brings a full toolbox to her job as a beacon of manifestation and vision for her clients. She knows what it is to create a career out of experiences. While she's now a full-time intuitive counselor and inspirational speaker, her career has encompassed positions as a published author, a professional actress, a television producer, a radio personality, an executive recruiter and the “power behind the throne” for a number of high-profile CEOs.

Corbie's career now spans the globe, with clients worldwide. Her talents as an intuitive are featured in bestselling books. Still, her clients treasure her attitude of *I'm not special, you can do what I do.*

"We have opportunities we can go after, and challenges to get past," she says firmly. "My job is to give you the tools and courage to deal with both situations. Everything else is free will, and up to you!"

Corbie lives in upstate New York with her husband Carle, a museum director, and three large and exuberant Maine Coon cats.

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Watch for *The Self-Development Project* Volumes II and III.