



RECIPES
FOR
ENCHANTMENT

The Secret Ingredient is YOU!

Volume 3

*A Wisdom Book of Stories for Women
with Space to Journal Your Journey
In 3 Volumes*

Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein

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INTRODUCTION

I am Barbara Becker-Holstein, psychologist, mother, wife, friend, child, and woman. Let me tell you more. After many years of study, I became a psychologist and developed a thriving private practice with my husband, Russell Holstein. But one day, I suddenly became aware that I had a small “hole” in my heart. It wasn’t the kind of hole that requires surgery. It was the kind that heartache creates.

I began to realize that the hole had been there for a long time – in fact, since I was a little girl – and that the emptiness and pain that accompanied it could no longer be denied. It seemed to have grown out of the accumulated insults and disappointments I had sustained over many years.

Some of the pain was a direct result of the insulting messages, some subtle, some not, that society had given me and other women – a society that prizes external values over internal truths and that often views physical beauty as more important than inner wisdom; a society that dotes on youth, competition, money, and the outward trappings of success; a society in which I had grown up idolizing and identifying with movie stars rather than appreciating the other moms who lived on my block; a society that taught me not to accumulate cellulite on my thighs and encouraged me to marry young.

Over time I have also slowly come to recognize that many other women I know, both professionally and personally, seem to experience this emptiness too. With my clients, and even my own mother, I could identify particular ways in which they had all been diminished and demoralized. For example, my mother had been told by the patriarch of her family that she was beautiful but dumb, and her options were to be a saleslady in Filene’s or a clerk. Needless to say, she didn’t want to be either and chose instead to marry my father at 19.

One client told me how her husband deflated her every time she had a good idea by saying, “Well, that and 10 cents will get you a cup of coffee.” Another client recalled that her husband had once turned to her and said, “You know, you’re a very ineffectual and inefficient person.” I have seen how the blows to these women’s self-esteem not only penetrated their hearts but also took years of effort to repair – if indeed they could be fully repaired.

I wondered what other subtle, insidious, or mixed messages had contributed to the hole in my heart. Did they have to do with my definition of who I was? Did they have to do with the loss or discouragement of early talents, hopes, dreams? Did they have to do with living in a society that did not value sacred space and privacy? Did they have to

do with the gradual erosion of a sense of joy or the difficulty of bringing enough joy into my daily life to give me pleasure?

My first book, THE ENCHANTED SELF, A Positive Therapy, tells at great length what I discovered about myself – how I became aware of the hole in my heart, and how I began the long journey that resulted not only in the healing of this hole, but also in my growing determination to bring more joy and happiness and a sense of well-being into others' lives as well as my own. I hope you will take the time to share my journey by reading THE ENCHANTED SELF, A Positive Therapy.

Indeed, the repair work had everything to do with reclaiming lost parts of myself, including my potential, interests, talents, and dreams, which had been stifled or disregarded by myself or others. It had everything to do with treasuring my own history, my own story, and seeing my life as a miraculous unfolding that had positive value for both myself and others. And it had everything to do with finally having the courage to redefine myself according to a definition that made me feel like a glorious and talented and wondrous woman with a full life, rather than struggling without motive and squelching definitions that people in my life, and society at large, had attempted to give me.

A turning point in repairing my heart and opening myself up to joy – which is certainly relevant to this book, RECIPES FOR ENCHANTMENT, The Secret Ingredient is YOU! – was the period in the early 1990's during which I interviewed a series of women who were not clients. These women, ranging in age from 35 to their 80s, gave me a gift, which I eventually called "enchantment."

I perceived that these women, even with such difficult lives, were able to live positively for the most part, at times seemingly by magic – to live lives of integrity while deriving pleasure, having fun, meeting challenges, seizing opportunities, and, in general, experiencing a sense of well-being. Even those women whose lives were interwoven with disappointment, pain, family difficulties, divorce, and loss of loved ones were able to do this.

I began to realize that we have been conditioned to perceive ourselves as women in more negative ways than necessary. How can I ever forget the excitement I felt while listening to a woman in her 70's tell me how she had been able to recapture so much joy after ending a bad marriage of 40 years! Her descriptions of herself folk dancing, rediscovering her love of playing the piano, managing her own money, becoming a nutritional guru of sorts, were all so life affirming. She even negotiated successfully with her landlord so as not to receive a rent raise.

The psychologist and educator in me began to realize that we could practice positive states of well being and integrate them into our lives more and more often. I saw that I could teach my clients to see themselves in a more positive light, to recognize and focus on the best in themselves. I saw that I could do that with myself too. It became apparent to me that the more we women learn to negotiate and meet our needs more effectively, the more possibilities we will have to develop a sense of joy. The better we feel about ourselves, the more courage we will have to utilize ourselves effectively and develop our talents. This shift in perception of ourselves which encourages well-being, joy and a determined effort to live a life of purpose unique to each of us, became The Enchanted Self.

I developed a paradigm shift in my treatment, using my clients' memories to retrieve good times, happy times, and funny times and to focus on the functional aspects of their childhood rather than the dysfunctional. I began to teach clients how to recognize and itemize their talents and lost potential, how to view their lives as joyful journeys even with their many twists and turns, disappointments and complications.

I began to find that if we practice, we can recognize what brings us pleasure and joy, that it's not so hard to put that into words, and even to have more of it. The joy can come from a very small thing, as with a client who told me how elated she felt just taking a bath for half an hour with the door closed and a couple of candles lit, away from her children, her husband, and the television. There was a sense of returning to herself that was so special.

What I didn't realize by the time the first book was written was how I continued to grow spiritually and joyfully as I let in positive glimpses of life. I hadn't realized how many opportunities I would have to be charmed by others. But enchantment suddenly began streaming into my life from all directions. My clients were teaching me positive capacities, courage, and coping skills as fast as I could listen to them. Strangers were giving me lessons in wisdom and sharing their joy. Even people on television I would probably never meet were sharing good news. Forgotten fables and fairy tales, from my past and my present, were bringing joy into my life. So many random opportunities were giving me a sense of hope and a belief that the miraculous can happen.

Those responding to my book, THE ENCHANTED SELF, A Positive Therapy, to THE ENCHANTED SELF NEWSLETTER, to the website, www.enchantedself.com, and to my presentations, were pouring forth their experiences-sharing their moments of enchantment, joy, and happiness. They wrote me e-mail, they sent their stories to the newsletter, and they became my guests on THE ENCHANTED SELF radio show and recounted positive events from their lives. It quickly became

apparent that a new book would be emerging. *RECIPES FOR ENCHANTMENT* is the result.

There are three ingredients in any "recipe for enchantment." The first ingredient is a positive feeling within oneself – of optimism, hope, a sense of well being, purpose, determination, wholeness. You will see more nuances of these feelings in the book. The second major ingredient is a positive action, such as sharing, giving, loving, helping, befriending. The third major ingredient that is always necessary is your uniqueness, your perceptions of the world, reactions, interests, abilities, and passions. In essence, all three ingredients are parts of YOU. That is why I say that YOU are the secret ingredient – your positive energies combine with your unique history, your strengths and hidden potential to create RECIPES FOR ENCHANTMENT. Again and again you create magic by combining your positive feelings with positive action in your special way. Let me illustrate with two short episodes about real people.

Kay's happiest memories as a child were with a pencil and a sketchpad or with watercolors. Her life as an adult was very stressful and hectic. She had difficult teenagers and a marriage that perhaps many of you can identify with, one that left much to be desired. Her husband was often harsh and critical. One of her goals in treatment was to get back some of the joy she had experienced as a child.

Over the months she had practiced taking time for herself in order to do this, particularly to draw. Talking about her recent vacation in the Bahamas, she said, "Oh, it's filled with all the usual family bickering, but I'm so proud of myself. Every night as the sun set, I was able to get out my sketchpad and draw. I didn't allow my family to get in the way of this wonderful part of me that I've rediscovered. I love being able to own my own talent. Inside I feel an excitement growing as I take sketchpad in hand and pick a color, looking out at an image and recapturing it on paper. There's almost a tingling inside of me, and I know that I'm coming closer to my true essence. I share everything else in my life, but my talent belongs to me."

Here's another little story, about Tess. Tess was very artistic as a child. She had loved making doll clothes and using bits of fabric to make clothespin dolls. But as a young adult, she had a boyfriend who, although he seemed perfect for her at first, became very negative, putting her down and making her feel unhappy. They finally broke up. Rather than feeling depressed, Tess felt liberated. She started making clothing again, but this time for herself and her friends, not for dolls. "I was able to tune into my younger self," she told me. Eventually she found a wonderful guy, married; walking down the aisle in a beautiful gown she had designed. "I agree that people have to get more in touch with what was positive in their youth and then be true to those parts of themselves," she says. "It really worked for me."

Each of these women became to focus on what was right about herself rather than what was wrong. As each did, positive changes occurred. All the stories that follow are designed to teach you about the happy outcomes that are available to all of us when we focus on the positive rather than on the negative. They are also designed to help you begin to construct a more meaningful life by giving you the courage, insight, wisdom, and humor to take more positive actions every day.

No, we cannot prevent life from being challenging, difficult, at times overwhelming and even despairing. But we can bring into our lives the special ingredients that turn even the most trying times into moments in which the human spirit triumphs.

Each little story or glimpse that I share comes to you from my special collection of "recipes for enchantment." Like any good recipe box, this collection has grown over the years through many sources. There are clippings from all sorts of writings I have read, short accounts from things I saw on television, and wonderful stories that clients and friends have told me, or that other people have sent in to my newsletter.

When you eat something delicious, it feels good and it warms your heart as well as your stomach. A "recipe for enchantment" also feels good, provides nourishment, gives you a sense of well being and, hopefully, sets your mind, heart, and spirit in motion to create more enchantment.

Some of the words that can be ingredients in the recipes include giving, helping, trusting, forgiving, remembering, forgetting, loving, hoping, thanking and caring. I am encouraging you to focus on positive actions because that's what's required to create a sense of well being in one's life, or a shared sense of joyfulness and pleasure. This action may involve the simple step of thinking about someone in a positive light, or looking for the good in an event. Or it may be a more involved sequence of steps that requires brainstorming, problem solving, perhaps even learning a new way of living.







As you can see, actions taken in our lives can have both positive and negative consequences. Some words, such as "remembering," can be used both positively and negatively. You may reminisce about the worst times in your life, or the best times in your life. The focus will be different, the feeling aroused will be very different and the information taken from these memories will lead to different consequences. This is part of the tremendous responsibility and awesomeness of being human. Indeed we are capable of taking the best from a situation, whether it's in the past or present, or the worst, remembering what didn't work and allowing ourselves to feel discouraged, hopeless and fearful as a result.

However, your uniqueness remains priceless and is often stored in your memories. At the end of each story, you will find a learning opportunity. You can take the major ingredient in that particular story—sharing, caring, loving—and search your own memory bank for a unique experience in which you or someone else took a positive action. If you wish, you can write about that experience and in doing so, bring to life the "seasonings" that are uniquely yours – your background, your interests, your values, your potential. Often you can use the activity following each story as a jumping off point to stimulate personal growth or merely for yourself and pleasure.

Above all, let this book serve as a means for you to see your gifts through reflecting on these extraordinary, yet ordinary, people. Take the time to acknowledge what makes you special and let your courage to truly become your ENCHANTED SELF.

Let a sense of well-being permeate your life. Let joy become your rightful companion. Proudly live a life of purpose, unique to your style, your talents, abilities, and potential. The stories I've included have been chosen intuitively by me as useful teaching stories. I believe their particular voices serve as mentors whose vibrational energies go out to you. They can help us create larger and larger circles of harmony and good will, circles where we live lives of meaning and experience joy while feeling to our very core our uniqueness and our personal capacities for inspiration.

My journey has led me to the following conclusions that I would like to share with you as you go on to read these stories:

-  *You are entitled to joy, pleasure and repeated states of well being.*
-  *You're entitled to a life of meaning.*
-  *You are unique and the world needs your special gift.*
-  *The story of your life is your most precious gift and the most precious gift you can share with others. The stories of your life contain all the information you need to recognize your talents, interests, preferences, skills and potential. How you use your uniqueness in a positive fashion is your personal assignment.*
-  *All the lessons you will ever need are being taught all the time around you – stay open to them.*
-  *Never forget that you're also one of those loving teachers. View yourself in a positive way filled with light and always available to mentor someone to cheer her up, to share some wisdom whether you can see it in yourself or not. Rest assured that you are one of the messengers of enchantment.*

A BLESSING

I am changed by you Forever

Let it be good!

Let my influence on you be life-enhancing and yours on mine

May we learn from each other, golden threads of selfhood and together may we make a life-enhancing tapestry

Let me always remember that the teacher is in the student

And, in awe, I see the beauty in all.

You have the opportunity to participate after reading each story or vignette in this book. My hope is that you will do so and then, like any good cook, pass back to the universe your very best “enchanted recipes.” To do this, please send your stories to me at encself@aol.com so that RECIPES FOR ENCHANTMENT can continue. May this little book and the activities that follow inspire you.

RENEWING: The House My Great-Grandfather Built

When I was a child, I loved to listen to stories my grandmother told about growing up in Chelsea, Massachusetts. She was refined and beautiful, and I was intrigued by every facet of her life: that she was the oldest of nine children; that her parents employed two live-in maids; that her mother and a seamstress made most of the family's clothes, pressing them with a flat iron that had to be heated on the stove; that when she was older she traveled alone, by trolley, into Boston, to take piano lessons at the Boston Conservatory of Music, and that the house she grew up in had a twin across the street – a house identical in every detail but reversed – where her father's friend, who had designed both houses, lived.

Each room in my grandmother's house had its own magical story. The top floor playroom was huge enough to roughhouse in, and contained a giant reed organ. The kitchen had a tin ceiling that could be rolled back during the holiday of Succoth so that the family could eat under the stars. Great-Grandma and Great-Grandpa would hang fruits and vegetables from a trellis above their heads, and eat all their meals there for a week, talking, as they ate, about the forty years that the Jews had wandered in the desert. My own parents didn't celebrate Succoth, so hearing about Grandma's celebration sounded especially magical to me.

But perhaps her most unbelievable story – which her older brothers confirm as true – happened in the dining room. When my grandmother was sixteen, she developed a terrible stomach ache. The doctor who came to the house diagnosed appendicitis and said that she had to go to the hospital for an operation. But Grandma cried and refused to go. In despair, her father insisted that the doctor perform the surgery at home. After sterilizing the walls and floor, the doctor removed my grandmother's appendix right there, on the dining room table, the one on which her father ate his banquet lunch every day with his children on his knees. I think this story sticks in my mind because it suggests a time when people could control their circumstances in certain ways that are no longer permitted.

One day, after Grandma had been gone for a few years, my husband and I decided to drive to Chelsea with our baby daughter, Jessica. We searched the small streets for what felt like hours until we found our destination – two old houses, one the mirror image of the other. On the front lawn of my Grandma's house was a sign that said, "Alfred Lopez for Councilman – Vote for Him."

With my heart aching, I walked to the front door and rang the bell, hoping that the owners would let me in. The door was opened by a man who didn't look like anyone in

my family. Politely, and somewhat sheepishly, he said, "Oh I'd love to show you the house. But it's in such bad shape. For years it's been a boarding house. We just recently bought it and I'm really ashamed to take you upstairs. But if you'd like, I'll show you the first floor."

With great trepidation, I walked through the now gray, run-down rooms that looked so much smaller than they appeared in my imagination. I saw what must have been the parlor and the dining room – though it was hard to imagine the long, elegant dining room table in that dingy room. I asked if I could see the upstairs, but Mr. Lopez kindly but firmly refused. Oh well, I thought, the reed organ must be long gone anyway. But I did see the kitchen where I found the remains of the tin ceiling and the small, now very rusty wheels and track along which it was retracted.

Standing there, I tried to recall all of Grandma's beautiful stories – the meals she described, the aromas, the laughter, the fun, the maids heating hot irons while the seamstresses took measurements. But it was hard.


Several children had accompanied us as we walked from room to room; I assumed they were Mr. Lopez's. Now, as we made our way to the front door, they came with us. I thanked him for sharing his home with me. Just as I was about to leave, he said, out of the blue, "This is a wonderful home. I'm so glad we bought it. It's perfect for my wife and myself and our nine children."

Suddenly I felt tears behind my eyes and a lump in my throat as I realized that my grandmother's childhood home had not been deserted. A new family, also with nine children, was creating their own home within its walls. I felt as if the essence of my family was still inside – as if our love of connection and good conversation and our pleasure at belonging to a tribe had permeated the wood beams themselves, welcoming another family into its loving embrace.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

This true story about my family always moves me. It's a wonderful story of essential renewal. So many times in life, what's right finally does happen. It just may not happen in the way we initially expected. My grandmother's house deserved a family. What a lovely touch that the Divine brought the Lopez's and their nine children to live there. Though they are from a different "tribe," they are a loving family. Sometimes it's hard to see what is essential in life. We grow so accustomed to looking at the trappings.

Have you ever had an experience after which you realized, "What goes around, comes around?" Maybe years after you worked with someone, for instance, that person told you how much she had appreciated you. Perhaps you see in a grandchild qualities which you couldn't appreciate in his parents, or that his parents don't appreciate. I see another example of balance and renewal today. Many young families have decided to take charge by making a stand against the tide of popular culture by choosing to value family time instead. For example, many have rules pertaining to television watching, permitting it only at certain hours or allowing only certain channels to be viewed. This certainly seems to be a reaction to the abundance of media stimulation in our lives, and an attempt to balance it with more meaningful activities.

-  *Can you think of a story from your own life? If you can't, don't worry. Come back to this story on another occasion. Maybe by then you will have a story to tell about justice, or about someone who made an attempt to provide balance in a tumultuous and unbalanced world.*

SAVING: A Soldier's Love for his Family

Once there was a young man who lived in a small town in the United States. He loved his family: his mother, his father, his grandparents, his aunts and uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters. When the Second World War came, he signed up for the armed forces, along with thousands of other young men of his generation. He was frightened and overwhelmed, but determined to give his life, if necessary, for his country.

As his last day at home drew closer, he had many opportunities to say goodbye. Special masses were offered at church, and his family threw a gala goodbye party attended by over 150 family and friends. His mother hugged and kissed him. He watched the tears form in her eyes as his father toasted him. At the train station, he had one last handshake from Dad. He watched his family waving, growing smaller and smaller, as the train pulled out of the station. He was on his way toward the scary unknown of war.

The next several months held many adventures. From some he grew; others were too terrible to even think about. Loving letters from his mother, grandmother, and his favorite aunt, Celia, sustained him. It seemed as if every mail call held a letter for him, with welcome news of his family and town, and reassurance that he was in everyone's prayers.

One night, a terrible battle raged. He and his friends were positioned in the front trenches listening to exploding bombs and artillery. Then tragedy struck. His two best friends in the next trench were felled by bullets and mortally wounded. Before he could register the shock of their death, he felt a searing, intense pain. He himself was hit. He looked toward his back hip. Blood. Blood was pouring out of his body.

But there was no time to attend to his wounds. Certain he was dying, and that he would join his comrades by morning to help them work their way to the heavenly host, he nonetheless fired his gun all night, as best he could.


Dawn came. He looked around. All was eerily quiet. Unbelievably, he was still alive. But was death close? In a matter of moments or hours would he find himself in a hospital bed? Would he lose his limbs? Live out the rest of his life in excruciating pain? He started to explore his back hip where he'd been hit. He felt and he felt. Despite the quantity of dried blood around the wound, it seemed superficial, already beginning to scab. Suddenly he remembered the back pocket of his army pants. That's where he stuffed all the letters from his grandmother, mother and aunt. He removed the letters. And slowly he realized what had happened. A huge bullet was lodged in the

now unreadable pages. They had acted like a shield, preventing the bullet from penetrating him. If not for the letters, he would certainly have been killed.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

What an incredible mystical love story!

Have you ever felt the hand of God helping you negotiate your life, moving in the love that you feel for others and they feel for you? I certainly have. I had a series of appendicitis attacks when I was 10 and 11, and because the doctors couldn't find anything wrong with me, they literally turned my mother away when she brought me to the hospital. But my mother was insistent. She was convinced that I had appendicitis and she refused to allow me to use a hot water bottle to alleviate the excruciating pain I experienced the night of my final attack. Lucky for me! If I had used the water bottle, the pain may have subsided and I would have died, or become severely ill. For, sure enough, the appendix had ruptured that night, just as my mother knew it would.

 *If you have a memory of divine intervention, share it now. If you can't think of one in your own life, perhaps you have heard about something that happened to a friend, or of a story in the news. If you still can't think of one, keep your ears open. There's something magical about listening for stories recounting divine help. The more we look, the more often we become aware of it. Stories like these make us confront the truth of the old saying, "There but for the grace of God, go I."*

Come back to his page at any time to add divine interventions.

SAVORING: Chocolate Circles of Love
Leslie Britzman

For years I believed that the chocolate covered raspberry jelly was unique in the universe, the only candy endowed with magic. These candies mystically and instantly bestow unconditional love upon those who partake of the great pleasure of their taste. This truth, as I believed it, was revealed to me at a very young age, in Brooklyn, at my great Aunt Rose's house. The time was the late forties and early fifties, when I was too young to realize the secrets I would unravel later as an adult – such as the fact that Aunt Rose's son Sussie had a real name, Sol. But the greatest secret of all was how those chocolate covered raspberry jellies worked their magic, each and every time, on every visit to my Great Aunt Rose.

Aunt Rose's house was a two story, but family life took place on the main level. The rooms were long, set out like blocks, one after another. First there was the porch. How I loved that porch! Things HAPPENED on that porch. That's where Sussie would take up his guitar, and the cousins would gather round and sing for hours. That's where one of the older cousins stole a kiss with her "beau" when she thought no one could see (but I saw!). That's where I checked the seams on my nylon stockings, the first time I was grown up enough to wear them (to Aunt Rose's in Brooklyn!). And that's where my first love told me he loved me, when I was eleven.

At the back of the house was the kitchen, which was the first stop upon arriving (I would then work my way back to the front of the house, the porch). Apron-clad Aunt Rose would always be in the kitchen. Even when I was very small, Aunt Rose never seemed to be a large woman. In fact, she was tiny in stature, like a Jewish Mrs. Claus – soft, round, gray haired, with a kind smile and a soft touch. Her first hug and “look-over” were the beginning of her ritual of marveling. I got bigger, prettier, and smarter every time I came to see Aunt Rose.

After the initial hug and “look-over”, I was on my own. I would go through the living/dining room on my way back to the porch. The chocolate covered raspberry jellies were always waiting for me in the same spot in the living room. Aunt Rose would always call out, “Take, take, shayna maydela, take as many as you like”. The Yiddish “shayna maydela means “sweet girl”.

When I sat down with those chocolate covered jellies, knowing that I could have as many as I wanted, I knew that those candies were magic. Nowhere else in my whole childhood could I have as many as I wanted of ANYTHING. Nowhere else did I feel so special, just KNOWING I could have as many as I wanted. Can you imagine? NO








LIMITS. Where childhood is a place of constantly being taught what the limits are; here was one place where I ruled. I don't remember how many I ever ate. I just remember the feeling. How could anyone who had just been given rights to the whole dish of chocolate covered raspberry jellies be anything but invincible!

I had not thought much about Aunt Rose and her candy dish until recently, when I became a great aunt for the first time. Now, in adulthood, it's easy to see where the poor old candy dish would have been without Aunt Rose. So I have my candy dish waiting for Melanie, my great niece, and can't wait for her to be old enough to understand when I tell her, "take as many as you like, sweet girl." That, in your great aunt's house, you will know unconditional love.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

This story inspires in me such a wonderful feeling of being loved as well as the sense of delight about a special treat. As I read the story, memories of wonderful treats from my childhood came back to me. I can remember, as if it were yesterday, the lollipops that my mother and grandmother treated me to in St. Claire's Restaurant. The glass counter in the front of the store was filled with candies, smelling so good, I imagined heaven would smell like St. Claire's. But the ones I really wanted were the big giant lollipops on sticks in the shapes of toys. One was in the shape of a small locomotive; one was in the shape of a doll. Finally, one day, five in a box were purchased for me. I particularly enjoyed the lime flavor of the little choo-choo train. I wanted it to last forever, and reading Leslie's story, it's as if it did.

Why don't you have some fun now, listing and remembering as many foods as you can that you love? Go for it. You're just writing them down so no calories are being ingested. I'll start you off.

-  Whole chunks of lobster in butter.
-  Coffee ice cream with hot fudge.
-  Hershey's candy bar.
-  Homemade mashed potatoes.
-  _____
-  _____
-  _____

SHARING: The Lady and the Biscuits

Hilda, a young Jewish woman, made a last-minute airline reservation and rushed to the airport: her family, who lived across the country, had asked that she come as soon as possible. But no sooner did Hilda arrive at the terminal than she realized she hadn't brought any food for the trip. Because she kept kosher, this loomed as a huge problem.




Fortunately, she managed to find a package of kosher biscuits at a food shop. With some time before her flight, she decided to sit in the food court and have her biscuits. The area was extremely crowded and she was lucky to find a place to sit.

Within minutes, a man approached her to ask if he could share the table. She said yes, and he sat down opposite her. Absently, she took a biscuit from the package on the table. To her surprise, the man reached over and took a biscuit, too. She couldn't believe it! Not wanting to be rude, she didn't say anything; she just took another biscuit. The man did the same. Soon, only one was left. Smiling, the man reached for it, broke it two, and gave her half.

Hilda was furious. What kind of man was he anyway! Those were her biscuits! If he hadn't been so brazen, she might have offered him one. But instead of waiting, he had helped himself to half the bag. Now she had a long flight ahead of her, and she was still hungry.

Soon her flight was called. Hilda boarded the plane, found her seat, and proceeded to organize her things. When she opened her purse, there, to her amazement, was a full package of biscuits. Only then did she remember that she'd put the package in her purse when she sat down at the table. The biscuits she'd eaten hadn't been hers at all, but the mysterious man." How generous he now seemed. He'd even shared the very last one with her.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

-  *Have you ever made negative assumptions about someone? Though they may be painful to recall, write them down here.*
-  *Have you been surprised to later discover that the person was acting more in your best interest than you initially thought? How did you feel when you discovered your error? Describe the situation.*
-  *What did you learn from the experience?*

SINGING: A Brighter Day
Emily Doherty

I awoke one Saturday to a morning that reminded me of the lyrics to the famous song from "Oklahoma!" – "when the wind came right behind the rain." Determined, in true New England fashion, to ignore the forecast of an imminent hurricane, I left my husband to his rainy day Rip Van Winkle snoozing and went to look in on my daughter, also snoozing. But then I whispered the magic words in her ear: "Freehold Mall." Sure enough, a mere half-hour later she was in the shower, the sound of which woke Rip himself. Together with our other children, we piled in the car, determined to Enjoy Being A Family.

I winced a bit as my husband clicked on the car radio. It's not that I don't share his love of classical music, just that his taste can be a bit heavy for me. But to our mutual surprise, the local classical station was playing an unusual piece we both knew! In our pre-parental existence, we had both been singers; in fact, that experience had been the circumstance of our first meeting, a fact that was often obscured in the push and pull of everyday life.

The lyrical melody I heard on the radio instantly transported me to a magical morning some thirty years ago. Waking at 4:30 AM to find the Connecticut temperature maliciously hovering at 33 degrees, I had closed my overstuffed suitcase by sitting on it one more time, and then trekked bravely across the sodden campus, braving the first of the spring rains, to a gingerbread fraternity house. After drinking two cups of lukewarm leftover coffee I'd later regret, I threw my soggy trench coat over my new blue Villager suit, boarded the waiting bus, and headed with my fifty fellow choristers to the airport. We were greeted with fog – in the air, on the horizon, and in the glazed eyes of the frustrated commuters whose flights to Boston and Washington, DC had been indefinitely delayed. Combing the rain out of my hair, I took a seat in the airport's waiting room.

Suddenly, as if by magic, I found myself arm-in-arm with the other singers who would soon become my friends. In the fog of early morning, despite the delay and our mutual discontent, we began singing the first few haunting notes of the renaissance mass we had endlessly rehearsed. We weren't standing in our usual groupings – I rubbed elbows with basses, tenors, and altos – yet together we composed a morning miracle. Elegantly, our voices rose above the buzz of the restless crowd, silencing them with wonder. On the wings of our song, we left the waiting room behind and found ourselves in the vaulted arches of an ancient basilica.

The memory of what happened that morning permeated the tour we took together – two weeks of canons and camaraderie, never to be forgotten.

And that recent Saturday morning, in our car on the way to the Freehold Mall, the song on the car radio banished both the rain, winds and the weekend woes, becoming once again an instrument of enchantment. I felt good. I could see my husband smiling and relaxing as the children dozed. Yes, I was enjoying the moment, my family and my memories!


How Can You Relate To This Story?

So often in adult life, we awaken to a day filled with the prospect of chores and nuisance tasks, and feel overwhelmed with negative thoughts. And if the weather is bad, well, that's even worse! Emily's story gives us courage to try to rise above our immediate circumstances and look for positive cues, wherever we are.

One Saturday when I was about 16, I found myself in a despairing mood. I had no plans, no boyfriend, and nothing to look forward to. Even worse, my parents were going out, so I'd be alone in the house for the entire evening. I started to cry. My situation felt intolerable. In the midst of my tears, I remember crying out to God, "Please, let something good happen!"

Suddenly, the telephone rang. It was our new, very dear friends, Mr. & Mrs. Sylvester, who were in their seventies, calling to invite my parents to the theater with them. Seizing the moment, I told them that my parents were out and that I had no plans. Graciously, they asked if I'd like to join them at the theater instead. Now, 16 year old girls don't normally go out with a couple in their 70's. But for some reason, our age difference didn't matter. I felt my heart begin to pound with an unexpected eagerness. My prayers were answered. Not only was I going out on a Saturday night, but I was going to the theater, which I loved.

By the time Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester arrived to pick me up, I was dressed up and ready to go – and still elated. We attended a wonderful local production of "Blithe Spirit," one of the greatest Noel Coward plays that I've always enjoyed. I came home refreshed, tired – and convinced that a bad day can be transformed into a good one.

-  *Take some time now to reminisce. You, too, may remember a day that seemed filled with darkness but suddenly turned brighter. Recall that story now. If nothing comes to mind, don't worry. I guarantee that all you have to do is plant the seed. Once you believe that a bad day can turn good, you will discover that it actually happens.*

SURVIVING: The Rabbi Who Lived in the Woods

There once was a Rabbi in training. His teacher usually held his lessons outdoors, where he would intersperse his scholarly talks with lessons about nature. His long white beard flowing and hands clasped behind his back, he would interrupt their walks, saying, "You see that mushroom? It's poisonous; don't ever eat it."

"Why is he telling me this," his student would wonder. "I never eat food that is lying around, my mother is a great cook and I am never hungry in her home."

On another walk, the older man would point to the nearby fields. "Come and see, there are some herbs growing here. If you cut yourself, take the herbs and rub them into the wound, it will help them to heal." Again the student said to himself, "Why does he tell me this? We have a doctor in the village; I go to him when I need medical assistance."

This went on for months and then years, the younger man's head bowed as he respectfully listened to his learned teacher, who always interrupted his Talmudic teachings with talks about how plants in the wilds could be used to a person's benefit.

One day a cloud came over the village: the Holocaust had reached the young Rabbi's village. Facing capture and the dreaded concentration camps that were rumored to be the fate of the Jews, he fled into the forest. There he was able to live by eating the plants, shrubs, fruits and berries that his dear Rabbi had taught him would be safe to eat. When he suffered a cut or wound, he used the same herbs that he had been taught would make him well.

Not only did the young Rabbi's strong faith keep him alive, but all the things his old teacher had shown and taught him, when they had wandered together through the forest years before, came to his rescue and kept him alive. What had never seemed important to the young man thirsting for Biblical knowledge, served to save his life.

After the Holocaust ended, the young man went on to become a great, learned Rabbi, in his turn revered by those whose lives he touched.

We never know how important our learning may prove to be. We should savor all kinds of knowledge; you can never tell when one will become important later in life.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

- ✚ *Have you ever learned something that when you first started, it seemed purposeless and burdensome?*

I remember how terrible I felt when I first took typing. How boring the practice exercises were! Yet over the years, typing has proven to be one of my greatest assets, making it possible for me to keep notes and records on so much of both my personal and my professional life.

- ✚ *Can you reminisce about some form of learning that went from feeling irritating and annoying, to becoming a very positive, important part of your life? If you have a story from your life, write it down. If you can't think of one, just carry with you the memory of the Rabbi's walks in the forest. You never know when something you're asked to learn will someday result in enchantment rather than in frustration or annoyance.*

TRUSTING: The Hatpin

Rabbi Akiva lived during the 12th century and was considered one of the great scholars and leaders in Judaism. He had a daughter, and on the day she was born, a soothsayer told him that she would die on her wedding day, bitten on the arm by a poisonous snake. This is as tragic a fate as anyone can imagine – raising a daughter while worrying that you will lose her on what should be the most beautiful day of her life.




Rabbi Akiva decided not to believe the soothsayer, although he certainly thought about what she had said. But he trusted God, so he proceeded to make arrangements for his daughter's wedding. A proper suitor was found, and the wedding day soon arrived.

The daughter knew nothing of the strange prophecy, but she did have a terrible headache that day. Finally, unable to bear the headdress she was wearing, she took it off and absently stuck the large hatpin that held it into the edge of a curtain in her bedroom. Immediately, shaking and hissing sounds seemed to emanate from behind the curtain, but the daughter had already left the room.

The marriage ceremony took place as scheduled, followed by a daylong celebration and feast – and, indeed, to Rabbi Akiva's great relief, his daughter remained alive and well. The next day, the daughter remembered the hatpin and sent a servant to retrieve it from the curtain. As he wrenched it free, to his amazement, the servant heard a loud thud, as if something had fallen to the floor. Upon investigation, he discovered a poisonous dead snake on the floor behind the curtain. It bore a fatal wound along its side, apparently from being stabbed by the daughter's hatpin.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

I remember when my ballet teacher predicted to my mother that I would be too tall to become a professional dancer. Her prediction crushed my dreams in an instant. Now I would never become a professional dancer. I put aside my toe shoes and stifled my dreams. How ironic, given the fact that by the time I was an adult, many professional dancers were my height of 5' 8" or even taller.

-  *Can you think of a time when a prediction got you in trouble? (Perhaps you became frightened or gave up on something?)*
-  *Did you ever feel you had been protected, or saved from harm, as Rabbi Akiva's daughter was from a disaster? Tell the story.*
-  *Have you ever been able to override a prediction given to you, by sheer will, prayer, or belief in yourself? Tell the story.*

VISITING: The Matzo Factory

From the outside, it looked like a decrepit old building. Perhaps a used furniture store or an old hardware store was concealed behind the wooden slats. Entering, I was amazed to see that the building was teeming with life.

First, I saw a room with long tables. Women wearing housedresses or full skirts and blouses, and kerchiefs around their heads reminiscent of the “old country,” were busily making Passover matzo. They used long thin rollers similar to the rolling pin in my kitchen but three times as long and one third as thick. According to the tradition, they had to work quickly – they had only eighteen minutes to completely prepare and cook the matzo.

Watching the women, I felt energized, my positive energy level so palpable that I could taste it. Several of them smiled at me. I yearned to stay with them, to be taken in by them, given a housedress and a rolling pin and a spot at one of the tables. They were triggering some very old memories and feelings in me that had faded but not died, of being taken in by people and feeling safe. I would like to tell you about one of these memories.

I was visiting Joannie, a college friend, who lived with her parents in a very small house that looked run-down by my suburban standards. Their living room contained stuffed old furniture. A dining room table and chairs were squeezed into one corner. The kitchen was terribly outdated – I didn't even see any appliances. The night I arrived, her mother, a voluminous woman, came to the door in a large print housedress, her hair messy, wearing no make-up. She gave me a big hug.*

As we chatted and snacked, I realized that someone had put a record on.

Joannie was a violinist and I knew that her whole family loved music. Suddenly, Mrs. R. jumped up and started folk dancing all by herself, turning, bowing and spinning. The house was filled with warmth and energy. I loved watching her. Soon we were all moving and swaying. The rooms seemed to expand to hold our movements. Mrs. R. was a true ballerina of the soul!

When I left the next day, everything outside seemed cold and empty, almost sterile. I was confused by my reaction, the elation I had experienced in their house, and my desire to remain. Yet the house possessed none of the externals I had been taught to value. It wasn't clean, or roomy, and it didn't have a spacious new kitchen. Her mother wasn't thin and didn't wear make-up or stylish clothes. Joannie herself didn't even meet my

standards! She was brainy, an attribute I admired, but plain – and eschewed make-up just as her mother did.

Years later, in a matzo factory watching Russian immigrants, (who had lived their lives unable to celebrate Passover), molding sacred Passover dough, creating a special positive energy system, I experienced a sense of welcoming comfort. I felt myself to be an integral part of things rather than standing apart from them. This feeling made colors richer. The external values to which I'd clung seemed to matter less.

As I watched the women, I knew in my soul that I was watching Joannie's mom. This wasn't the only time that I have felt elated, or excited, or really enjoyed myself, but the women in the matzo factory touched the deepest recess of my soul. The experience validated my belief in the human spirit. It was like walking into a well-defined room that felt as solid as a rock flooded with brilliant, transparent sunlight.

I couldn't bring myself to leave the matzo factory; I felt like a child who has to be dragged away from a beloved activity. Outside, I felt bereft. The sidewalk seemed cold and empty, as if the sun had set, though it was still shining. All of life seemed within that room, not out here. If I had been a little younger, maybe a little braver, I would have let the tears of soul knowledge pour down my face. Or I would have run back into the matzo factory, hugged one of the women and said, "Thank you for being here and embracing me with positive energies!" But I didn't have the courage. I went along with my day as best as I knew how, working as hard as I could to knead their sunlight into the bread of my life.





Yet I did have the courage to acknowledge a painful truth: that there had been many times in my life where I had lost a chance for enchantment because I clung to a set of notions, attitudes, or biases as to what was acceptable.

Much to my surprise, I'd seen that many chubby women in housedresses can lead exuberant lives filled with connection, warmth, and delight. At the same time, I had to acknowledge that many coiffured, thin women – women who look as if they have it all together – live lives of quiet despair and disappointment.

This ache in my heart signaled to me that I still had time – time to move beyond outmoded biases and trite notions about others. Although I didn't physically return to the matzo factory that day, metaphorically I walked out backwards, so that I could hold in my heart all the sunlight and joy that I had witnessed there, and have it last for days and years to come.

**name changed*

How Can You Relate To This Story?

-  *Has there ever been a time in your life when you were startled by the intensity of joy and positive emotions you experienced? If so, write about that experience here.*
-  *Taking into account your own interests, talents, preferences, and potential, what are several activities that would elicit a sense of passionate connection and joy from you?*
-  *For example, because of my desires to belong, to be part of a community, to continue to learn, and to feel involved in something vital, I would love to embrace many new experiences. Here are two of them: work in a community theater for a week so I could participate in a live performance; and to go to Israel to volunteer on a Kibbutz or in a hospital. Both of these opportunities intrigue me and set my pulse racing.*
-  *I hope you'll take the time to reflect on activities that could potentially lead to your own Recipes for Enchantment. Over the next few months, come back to your notes, and see if one or more of your ideas stands out from the others. Perhaps it's time to try to make at least one fantasy a reality.*

WALTZING: Grandfather Really Knew How to Dance!

My friend Mary Ellen recently began taking ballroom dancing lessons through a local adult education program. As she relaxes in the strong arms of her teacher, a courtly gentleman who is teaching her to fox trot, cha-cha and tango, Mary Ellen's memories return to her first dancing partner, her grandfather.



When she was a girl, she took several ocean voyages to Europe with her grandparents on the Queen Elizabeth II. Her grandfather, she tells me, looked like a Spanish count, and not without reason – the blood of Spanish royalty ran in his veins. Yet he always acted like the perennial host, welcoming people and treating everyone like royalty.

What she remembers best are the formal evening activities. She loved getting ready for dinner – slipping into her taffeta dresses and satiny, shiny shoes. They were enough to make any awkward, homely, eleven-year-old girl feel as if she'd stepped into a fairy tale.

But the dressing up was only a part of the fun. Best of all was when her tall, distinguished, perpetually tanned grandfather would take her in his arms. Gliding with him across the polished dance floor with the live orchestra playing behind them, she felt transformed. No longer chubby and insecure, she was now a beautiful woman, a svelte princess. It was an ENCHANTED MOMENT.

For a long time, Mary Ellen thought those elegant days were gone forever. But when she began taking dance lessons, she was flooded with memories – of the ship, the music, her imagined beauty, and most of all, of her grandfather. Now she finds herself enjoying ENCHANTED MOMENTS in her everyday life, reinforced by her memories from so long ago.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

-  *Think of all your activities. Is it possible that you could derive more pleasure from them than you now do, if you associated them with pleasant memories? To find out, pick an activity you already enjoy. Close your eyes and let your mind wander. Think of times in the past when you enjoyed this or similar activities. Write your memories here.*
-  *Can you recall any pleasant memories that would be rekindled if you embarked upon a similar activity now, just as Mary Ellen's dance lessons rekindled hers? What activity from your long-ago life could you bring back to life today? What great memory accompanies that activity? How would you go about including this activity in your present life?*

There are always two ways to take advantage of your memories: by letting experiences from the past lead you to new ones, or by augmenting present-day activities with memories from the past. Don't forget: we are not simple. In our "Recipes for Enchantment," we enhance our activities with positive feelings and thoughts. The more positive threads we bring to the loom, the richer the tapestry, and the more we get out of enchanted living.

WELCOMING: A Familiar Friend
Doreen Laperdon-Addison

Caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, I realize that it's been a long while since I've spent an extended period of time with a familiar friend – myself. Living often lends itself to excuses for not catching up with old acquaintances.

The summer of 1997 was great, the best in years. I've deposited in my personal memory bank enchanted recollections of going to the beach, swimming, hiking, taking day trips to museums and the zoo, and spending quality time with family and friends.

But the summer also summoned anxiety and restlessness on a deep personal level. During this time, I returned my focus to Tai Chi. I hadn't practiced it for about a year and a half. When I stopped, I knew that I would resume at some point. As time went on, though, I found myself worrying about all I had forgotten, which made it harder for me to begin again. But a dancer's mind also resides in her body (some people refer to this as "muscle memory"). When I first began practicing I was a little rusty, but found myself moving nonetheless. After a few weeks, I met with Peter Eno, my Tai Chi instructor and friend. With Peter, I realized how much I missed this type of movement, and the physical and emotional and spiritual pleasure I derive from it.

Establishing time for practice required that my whole family adjust its schedule. Initially I would practice in the house, trying to create a peaceful environment among people whose needs sometimes conflicted with mine. This proved difficult. I would imagine my husband thinking, "What is she up to now?" – while my daughter was shouting, "Where's Mommy?" But I continued. I couldn't deny that moving again made me breathe more deeply and feel both more relaxed and alert. Though this wasn't a formal "dance class," I was maintaining my flexibility while working on balance and other subtle movement patterns.

One morning, I found myself thinking that I should go outside and practice. I still remember gazing through the multi-colored leaves at the bluer-than-blue sky. Since then I've practiced outdoors every morning, regardless of the weather.

Why? My answer is simple: because it is exhilarating. My senses have become more attuned. Moving in this way enables me to reconnect with a friend: myself. Through my practice, I am learning how to maintain my focus on the present moment. I am also reminded of my love of learning and of nature, and of the importance of movement in my life. With childlike wonder I watch spiders spinning their webs, feel the sunshine

on my skin, listen to the wind, and notice the squirrels, flowers, trees and vegetables while smelling the fragrant air.

My memories ebb and flow from past to present, creating the positive links that ground and support me as I continue to grow and change. My restlessness and anxiety have decreased. I now look forward to each morning, when I move, sometimes like a dancer and sometimes not, attuning myself to the rhythms within and without.


Welcome back, old friend. It's good to be on intimate terms once again.

How Can You Relate To This Story?

Sandwiched between family, work, and social obligations, we have so little time for ourselves. But you can take a few seconds or minutes out from your busy day anywhere, at any time. Here's a way to help welcome back your old friend.

The next time you walk to your car, cook a meal, or find yourself pushing your toddler on the swing at the playground, take a moment and say to yourself, "Stop!" Take a few deep breaths, and look at the world around you as if you just returned from a long trip. Notice the colors and smells that surround you, and the way the light plays with the leaves or your child's hair. Become aware of the temperature and the breeze. If you're sitting on a bench or waiting for a bus, study the people walking by. Notice how differently they move and dress. Listen for the sound of birds, or pay attention to the different sounds that the traffic makes. If you're in your kitchen, consider the colors that surround you, the view from your window, the taste and textures of the foods in your pantry and refrigerator, and the sounds of your settling house.

There are many ways to be "in the moment," attuned to your surroundings. Experiencing yourself as an integral part of your environment will help you feel more relaxed and more positive about yourself. Paying attention to yourself in this way can help to bring you more in tune with your ENCHANTED SELF.

 *Write some notes here about an "in the moment" experience.*




WISHING: A Vision

I see them coming onto the field knowing the land and knowing nature and knowing how to survive. They are strong and they know how to create a world. I see them in a giant circle holding hands – so many different peoples. The Amish and the Mennonites merge into the New England farmers, and they merge into the pioneers who crossed the country, and they merge into all the immigrants from the small villages in Europe. And then behind them I see another giant circle and that circle has tribal peoples from around the world and they too are holding hands. There are Native American Indians and Eskimos and people from high in the Andes. There are people out of Africa dancing in their tribal costumes and colorations. And in the middle is a giant bonfire. The stars are out and every one is singing joyful songs. And I walk amongst them and I'm holding on to the hands of people I love, and they are holding onto the hands of people they love, and we are making a giant chain of people that weaves its way in and out of these two circles.

I'm never afraid. I realize that I have with me all of my family and friends and that I'm weaving in and out of all the groups, the courageous groups and tribes of the world. We are dancing in and out and circling around these people, and sometimes presents are given to us. Sometimes a feather is given to me or one of my family members or friends, or a piece of ribbon or some other treasure as we pass by. A barrette may be placed in my hair or a piece of paper with a note on it placed in my waistband. These I have time to relish later, but for the moment it is more important to be in motion and feel our bodies moving and hear the songs coming through. Soon we go inside and make a circle inside the first circle and we dance our own dance; all my friends and family and the dance just free flows. It works, and before we know it, we are all singing each of us and all the songs that come up into the sky are from each person's soul and they blend and harmonize.

Suddenly, I notice that the dawn is starting and the bonfire is going out. Just the embers are left, but the sun is coming up. Yes, we danced the whole night and the sky is now clearing, the sun is rising and it is this kind of wildness, a freedom, a sense of ecstasy is building at the same time as the fatigue is setting in. The air is so clean and the sky so clear and the darkness as it leaves is replaced by such a promise of a blue sky. And I'm aware that all the songs of each person's souls are filling the dawn. Can you imagine this field with a thousand people singing their song of their souls? And we all harmonize!

How Can You Relate To This Story?

-  *What's a dream of yours for mankind?*
-  *A wish?*
-  *A blessing you'd like to give to others?*

CONCLUSION

*“Always remember:
Joy is not merely incidental to
Your spiritual quest.
It is vital.”
Rebbe Nachman of Breslov*

Dear Readers:

I hope these stories that I have shared with you will become good companions as you journey through daily living. Each story, like any good friend, has its own disposition and style. Likewise, the activities that follow each story take you to different places and stretch you in different ways.

And as with good friends, there is always some work involved in getting the most out of the opportunity presented. I hope that your mental perspiration as you responded and shared your own feelings, thoughts, and stories was far outweighed by your inspiration. I hope you experienced a sense of purpose and joyfulness by taking this shared journey.

Remember, that above all, you are the secret ingredient in creating a life that is filled with positive actions and experienced as joyful and above all, unique to you.

I wish you wonderful adventures, pleasures beyond counting, and most of all I wish that every day of your life, you feel centered, whole, and that being YOU is the most fabulous adventure of all. Let this adventure resonate with the Divine. I wish for you that if you could be in touch with the celestial angels, you would hear them sing in harmony with you, your very own song.

Please send your stories of enchanted living with or without follow-up activities to: Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein at encself@aol.com.

Perhaps you would like to cut out and post this picture to keep as a reminder of your special journey. Enjoy!



CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Brittman, Leslie – SAVORING – Chocolate Circles of Love

Laperdon-Addison, Doreen – WELCOMING – A Familiar Friend