



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

How to Become the Expert on You: Write Your Story of Healing

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | MAY 1, 2020



Healing is ours. Our birthright. The primary urge of all nature. But we must claim it as our own. No one else can do this for us. Our healing, our wholeness, our potential rests squarely in our own hands.

This is power. This is our power. This is the promise of our amazing humanness.

It all begins with a simple decision. A “yes,” softly spoken, perhaps tentatively at first, that precedes the next “yes,” and the next. Or belled out from the gut, ready to release suffering, ripe for this journey of self-discovery and healing.

But each decision, however soft or booming, is singularly powerful. Each one a beginning. Each one staking its claim. Each one tenacious and alive with intention.

Let us share this common bond of truth seeking and thirst for claiming what is ours—our story, our power—by walking this path together.

We know where we're headed: Energy. Potential. Wholeness. Healing.

—Karyn Shanks MD, [Heal](#), 2019.

Start Here: Write Your Healing Story

To become the expert on ourselves we must know who we are. This is our power. The first act of reclaiming this power is telling our story of becoming well. We say it, imagine it, and thereby breathe life into it. That's how we can begin to reclaim the power we may have given away to the experts who we believe know more than we do. The power we may have subdued through our resistance to change, our fear of failure, or our beliefs of unworthiness and not having time. The power we may have lost sight of, buried in our fatigue, our overwhelm, or our suffering. The power that is still there, ripe for the taking.

So, let's start with your story of becoming well. *Your* story. Because this is *your* life, *your* journey, *your* potential. Only you can tell this story. Only you can name your hopes, desires, and goals—your destination. This is where your hero's journey (yes, you are a hero!) to healing begins.

Tell Your Story of Becoming Well

Even if you feel totally tanked, hopeless, disbelieving, lost, or pessimistic about your future, you can still tell your story. Let's take this first crucial step together.

Write your new life story. Your healing story. Your story of becoming well. This will just be your first draft. But it's the all-important beginning where you stake your claim to a better future. Where you say yes to this journey. Where you begin to build the mind pathways of hope that support and nourish you.

First, Breathe

Breathe deeply in and out and let it all go. Let your breath guide you into your body. Soften your judgments. Soften your disbelief. Come along on this journey with us. Just breathe.

Declare Your “Yes”

Say yes.

Yes to healing. Yes to a better future. Yes to opening the door to possibilities—even if just a crack.

Say yes in any way you feel inspired. A single word. Yes. Or long flowing sentences. Yes, yes, yes!

List Your Goals and Desires

Find a blank piece of paper. Don't worry, this is not a quiz. This is for you—no one else will see this unless you choose to share. Write down your goals and desires. Forget the complete sentences, punctuation, and flowing prose. Ditch the perfectionism and just write.

What do you, in your deepest heart of hearts, want to achieve? What are your goals for healing?

This journey must be about *you*. It doesn't matter what anyone else would have you do or aspire to. This is *your* life story. Claim it now. (Hint: it is not necessary to diagnose yourself or know anything at all about *what* needs to be healed. This is simply you stating what you want to achieve: To have more energy? To reach your potential? To feel like yourself again? To be able to compete in your first ironman? To be able to work again or go back to school? See what I'm asking you to do?)

Now, Imagine You've Achieved Those Goals

What does your healing life look like? Can you see or feel differences in your world? What do you feel like in your body, mind, and spirit? What are you doing? What do you look like? Who else is there with you at your side? What's possible? Now that you've imagined successfully achieving these first goals, are there more that come to mind? Perhaps goals you never dreamed were possible?

Congratulations!

You've just called your power back. You've claimed your healing life. You may not feel it yet. You may detect just a trickle of hope. You may sense a bit of strength rise up from your gut. This is only the beginning.

Once upon a time there was a hero/heroine named [insert your name her], and they began a wondrous journey . . .

Write Affirmations to Support Your

Vision of Healing

All healing is a growth process. We must affirm it and live it every day. You've written your first story of becoming well. How can we support that?

New stories need new neural networks—brain pathways to support your vision. We ignite the energy of neuroplasticity (the ability of your brain to change to make manifest your vision) by nourishing our brains with new stories. Stories that tell the truth that we can change. That we can heal.

Let's create three affirmations to practice every day. Practice is key as we're literally re-wiring your brain, creating new neural pathways to support your vision.

Create positive, present tense affirmations to articulate and support your goal to heal. This makes them "sticky," mobilizing the resources needed to bring them to life. It affirms the direction you are headed (forward, into needed change), the possibility of change (away from the perception of being stuck in the old vision), and attracts the help you need.

Make the affirmations your own and use words you feel comfortable with. The following are examples of what positive, present tense healing affirmations might look like:

I enjoy radiant new energy.

I direct my own healing and achieve my goals.

I am Divinely guided and supported in my healing.

Daily Writing Practice

Then show up every day—practice wires in your vision. Commit to at least ten minutes of daily writing practice for thirty straight days. Write your vision of becoming well and let it evolve and grow. Write fast and don't over-think. Support that vision with affirmations, creating more as you feel inspired.

Neuroscience shows us that longhand writing practice engages more of the brain and strengthens learning. Writing is best done when the mind is relaxed, clear, and alert. For many, the best time for creative, reflective writing is first thing in the morning. As an early morning practice it can also help set a positive, hopeful tone for the day.

Resources:

Karyn Shanks MD. [Heal: A Nine-Stage Roadmap to Recover Energy, Reverse Chronic Illness, and Claim the Potential of a Vibrant New You.](#) 2019.

K Erhard, et al. [Professional training in creative writing is associated with enhanced fronto-striatal activity in a literary text continuation task.](#) NeuroImage 2014.

Karin H James and Laura Engelhardt. [The effects of handwriting experience on functional brain development in pre-literate children.](#) Trends Neurosci Educ. 2012 Dec; 1(1): 32-42.

Christopher Cascio, et al. [Self-affirmation activates brain systems associated with self-related processing and reward and is reinforced by future orientation.](#) Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci. 2016.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of Liftoff, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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