



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

How to Claim Healing as Your Own

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.

START HERE—TELL YOUR STORY

The first act of reclaiming our 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 Big Energy recovery and 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 or use the margins of this book. 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 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 here], and they began a wondrous journey . . .

OUR BEAUTIFUL ENERGY ROADMAP—THE NINE DOMAINS OF HEALING

You've called your power back by envisioning your destination. Now what do you need?

Well, on any worthwhile journey it helps to have a mentor (me!), tools (we've got lots of tools to explore and put to use throughout this book), fellow travelers (we're all here with you!), and a roadmap with suggestions for directions that we choose based on where we are and where we want to be. A nuanced roadmap that knows the best path isn't always a straight

line from point A to point B. Our paths through the terrain of our healing will be different. For each of us, our paths may loop back, revisiting areas we've already been, or exploring side paths of interest.

Throughout this book, that roadmap will be the Nine Domains of Healing. These nine domains are the keys to reclaiming your power. Each domain explores, teaches, and guides you through a different foundational aspect of the healing life. They merge the great traditions of human science—state of the art physiology, Functional Medicine systems biology, body-mind psychology, and integrative spirituality—with wisdom from Life School: healing insights that cross cultures and contain the knowledge and observations from my consultation room, acquired from nearly thirty years of working with people just like you.

Each of the Nine Domains of Healing reminds us of our deep potential for growth and healing in every aspect of our lives through the core science of epigenetics and neuroplasticity.^[1] Each domain invites you to call your power back to an essential aspect of yourself, to create your healing life.



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As you can see, the Nine Domains of Healing roadmap is multi-layered, with one domain flowing into the next, all integrated as one whole—just as we are.

This is the healing roadmap that respects us as the people who we are. Multifaceted. Complex. Not needing to be “fixed,” but empowered. Not being told what to do or where we “need” to go but shown the lay of the land so we can choose for ourselves—with perhaps messy and stressful lives, but lives that are also beautiful, heroic, and uniquely ours.

This Nine Domains of Healing roadmap supports our innate strength and wisdom, however unrealized it may be in our fatigue or suffering. It will serve as our guide, and source of encouragement and inspiration. It will be in our hands to help us as we take this intuitive journey of our lives, explore our problems and struggles, and find the resources we need.

Yes, this beautiful energy roadmap, the Nine Domains of Healing, will accompany us all the way on this big journey of ours to creating a healing life. Allow me to introduce you to each domain.

LET GO

To Create Space for Healing, Let Go of Toxins, Irritants, and Negative Energy

As we let go, clear out, and slow down we create space for healing and energy recovery to occur, knowing we can't bring in the new until the old is reckoned with. Letting go—of the toxins and irritants that make us sick; the habits that don't nourish us; the incessant distractions that consume our precious time, attention, and energy; the negative energy of people and old stories that hold us back—brings in new life, new hope, new potential. It literally frees up energy and space for healing to occur.

LOVE

Love and Connect (Yourself First, Then Others)

With our newly created space, we let the love in—the love that is our destination, our purpose, and our path. We thrive when love flows into our lives. But though love is all around us, accessible to us all, we can lose our connection to it. In our fatigue and suffering we can forget our worthiness for love. In the domain of *LOVE* we explore the necessity of loving ourselves first, then extending our hearts out to others, creating the circle of love that is the strength of our humanity and the source of our healing.

BALANCE

Find Your Strong Center and Become Stress Resilient

Having created space and welcomed love, we now can find, nurture, and fortify our center.

Our center is *us*—our wise inner self, our strength, and, like a compass rose, our internal place of balance. From this core of our being we take on the challenges, struggles, joys, and the daily chores.

In the domain of *BALANCE*, we explore how to create a strong center to support our dynamic vitality. We'll learn to bolster the biological energy that sustains our center—the stress response (the physiology of energy and the power of our core) and the brain-thyroid-adrenal-mitochondrial (BTAM) energy operating system. We'll learn to savor how it fuels us in the face of all that life brings us.

RESTORE

Sleep Deeply, as well as Pause, Rest, and Play

As we embrace the challenges of our lives and create our strong center, we must also rest. Sleep is powerful medicine and a magical, mysterious time that allows us to power down, repair, replenish, and renew, providing the deepest restoration of energy and wellbeing available to us. We'll learn how sleep is the boss—it can't be hacked, passed over, substituted for, or shorted without devastating consequences. We'll explore the ways that deep restorative sleep, as well as pause, rest, and play, are available to us all.

MOVE

Move, Balance, and Carry Yourself Well

We were born to move—to survive, to seek, to play, and to love. Established by our ancestors long ago, there is an exquisite genetic relationship between movement and our biology, our biology and function, our function and wellbeing. This central biology was calibrated to operate optimally at our ancestors' level of activity—on the move constantly to meet their subsistence needs. But our immediate survival no longer depends on such a hard working life. Many of us hardly move at all.

We need our bodies strong, stable, nimble, and ready to engage. And we must be *in* our bodies. For this we must learn to show up for them, unraveling old entrenched habits and creating new ones through how we move, balance, and carry ourselves well.

NOURISH

Eat for Vitality

You knew we'd get to this, didn't you? Yes, we literally *are* what we eat. The molecules we

eat become *us*, for better or worse. Our food turns on and off our genes to make us who we are—to fuel our energy and support all function. Or, put the brakes on our healing. We get to choose at this powerful control point of our biology.

Food is a foundational, nonnegotiable part of the journey to our energy recovery and healing. We will share powerful stories of healing through food, and suggest a compelling, science-based, and thoroughly street-tested roadmap for your own nutritional healing.

DISCOVER

Realize Your Mind's Infinite Potential (Claim Your True Life Stories)

Our minds are our greatest tools and advisors but understanding them is never simple. Our brains were designed to keep us alive by telling stories. Our stories have great power—they can strengthen us, or they can stop us soundly in our tracks. We must honor the stories of our lives and how they may have served us at one time and helped us survive. But it's time to scrutinize our stories for their value and truth as we step into our power and potential. We must release the toxic stories that hold us back.

We'll explore the science of neural networks and neuroplasticity—the biology of stories—and the promise of our brains to change to create new, intentional, powerful healing stories.

FLOW

Trust Your Emotional Wisdom (Find Your Truth)

Here we explore the wisdom of our deepest, wisest selves—our emotional genius. We learn to honor our emotions, feelings, and sensations of our bodies as pure unadulterated feedback about the truth of us—who we are, what's going on in our environments, the people around us, and the conditions of our lives. Taught by our culture to cut ourselves off from our emotions in favor of our more rational minds (and stories), we may be entering unfamiliar and uncomfortable territory. Yes, we'll squirm, but we must step into our fear to claim the raw truth of our emotional wisdom.

RISE

Nourish Meaning, Purpose, Grace, and Awe (Be Present)

Finally, we rise. We rise in small ways—with each intention, each decision, each step, each small victory, each celebration of ourselves and our commitment to our healing life. And we rise big as our self-care opens space, fuels energy, and nudges (or catapults) us into our

potential. Because our energy, clarity, and practiced intention to ourselves, our bodies, this moment, and the beauty of the world all around us anchors us in present time. This presence is our ultimate healing, and it reveals the path as well as the prize—the meaning, purpose, grace, and awe of our entire lives.

HOW TO PACK FOR YOUR HEALING JOURNEY

You've called your power back and envisioned your destination. You see the terrain—and the many possibilities for the way there. You have the roadmap in your hands that will accompany you and support you in your travels. You feel the anticipation for the journey. You're scared, but you've made the commitment—you've said yes.

This healing that you've asked for is a journey. And like all journeys, you must come prepared. Just as you'd need to pack your toothbrush for a trip, healing requires that you pack and know where to find the parts of yourself that are essential to this journey.

And you've got to travel light. You must also know what to leave behind—those things that weigh you down, distract you, and get in the way of your progress.

First, Hope

We're wired to know that tomorrow will be a better day than today. We *know* this. Hope is that opening in our thinking that something better is possible—that *healing* is possible. We may not see the healing or know what it is, but we believe in the possibilities.

Harness the Extraordinary Power of Practice

The story of your healing is what you *do*.

In other words, we must *live* this journey. Healing, wholeness, energy recovery, potential—all that we aspire to—are in what we practice every day. Not what we plan, think about, or ponder. They're what we live. Right now.

Let Go of the Need to Be All Ready

When are we ever ready—*really* ready—for jumping over the precipice of big change into the abyss of the unknown? Isn't that just what it feels like? Even the new food plan, gym, or yoga class feels scary. That very first walking across the threshold into our new lives—into change—is so hard!

In spite of not feeling ready, we all have the capacity to be brave, to be optimistic, to have hope, and to commit. We can all do these hard things even when we're scared and uncertain about the outcome.

Let Go of the Need to Be Perfect

We must not allow our drive for unattainable perfection sabotage our efforts to heal. The path to perfection always leads to failure and disappointment. Perfection is the impossible urge to control all possible variables of our lives—to avoid mistakes and failures. We must cherish the adventure of our journey, mistakes and failures and all, and trust that all outcomes born from our best efforts always guide us in the direction that is right for *us*.

Let Go of the Need to Know What Happens Next

Uncertainty makes us squirm, doesn't it? But the unexpected is the only certainty in this life. Imagine the smashing, exhilarating things that happen to us that we'd miss if we didn't take risks. We must be brave and embrace the responsibility of making choices and taking action—they all involve risk. Uncertainty will inevitably lead us to roadblocks and setbacks, but also to the many joys of the evolution of our healing and spectacular life.

Let Go of the Need for Permission

To embark on steps to heal, the mature mind only needs permission from itself, not from the "experts," loved ones, or members of the tribe. We must reclaim this personal power for ourselves and let go of the judgment and shame that get in our way—to imagine, to hear our inner guidance, to decide, and to take decisive action. Because we say so.

Let Go of the Need to Have It Easy

You didn't really think it would be easy, did you? It's true, we get to glide sometimes, but that's our reward for hard work. While we must learn the art of pause, rest, and play, we must also embrace how a life worth living is a call to challenge. And, as we'll learn, challenge creates our strength. But what's harder? A bit of practice each day as we take one step at a time, one moment at a time, to claim our power and healing? Or displacing our energy into resisting our call and fearful imaginings about what our challenges ask of us, and going nowhere?

Let Go of the Fear of Deprivation

Yes, we've all experienced loss and deprivation associated with changes we've invited into our lives. We grieve the loss of our very worst habits—the comfort, the solace, the rewards.

And we feel the agony of our cravings, longings, and unfulfilled desires. But deprivation is a short-term discomfort for long-term gains that we can manage. We'll explore tools to help us with this.

Let Go of the Need for One-Size-Fits-All Solutions to Our Problems

We're not all the same. Life is not that simple. We'll no longer accept being inconveniences to those who try to stick us in their box, use their one-size-fits-all protocols to "fix" us, and prescribe treatments that don't fit us—and don't work! On this journey we'll explore *your* unique story and *your* unique needs to achieve sustainable solutions to *your* unique problems. Yes, this journey is a celebration of *you*!

FINALLY, HEALING IS NOT ALWAYS CURING

Healing is our innate trajectory. The primary impulse of all living things is to heal. Look at the natural world. Earth destroyed by fire or volcanic flow will soon sprout new trees and flowers. The waters flow again, and the animals return. A new landscape takes the place of what once looked like total devastation. And it never looks like what we'd expect—what we fear we'll have to settle for. The scars are still there—the deep crags and crevices, the upended rocks, the deep valleys. But look at how our perceptions change, as time heals, as the remarkable beauty of healing takes hold. The earth's potential for rebirth is not only unpredictable, but also miraculous, jaw dropping, awe-inspiring. Nature does not settle for cures.

We're just the same. We may look for cures. But what we get instead, when we actively pursue our healing, when we work the Nine Domains of Healing roadmap, is something far greater. We may not be cured—we may have scars, disabilities, and vulnerabilities that will need our lifelong attention—but we get our own true, perhaps unpredictable, jaw dropping, and awe-inspiring potential. Consider the phenomenal life of Stephen Hawking—never cured of his disease, confined to a wheelchair and unable to speak, but nonetheless lived a brilliant healing life and soared into the stratosphere!

Curing is a story that assumes a particular outcome about not being sick, no longer having that "disease," or no longer suffering. But healing is much bigger than that. Curing is inherently limited in its scope. Healing opens us to the possibilities that may be beyond our wildest dreams. If we release the story of curing, while lovingly, reverently caring for ourselves, where does that land us? Healing. Wholeness. Potential.

LAST THOUGHTS: WELCOME TO MY TRAVEL COMPANIONS

I am so grateful you are here with me. That we get to take this remarkable journey together. And that you've shown up for yourself in this beautiful and powerful way. Your energy and vitality are necessary for you to live and express the potential that is within you. And beyond yourself, *the world needs your potential*. Whoever you are, whatever your strengths, whatever your ambitions—however grand, simple, or commonplace—the world needs the very best of you now.

Your healing journey is vital.

And it is within your reach. Right here. Right now. With us.

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.

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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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