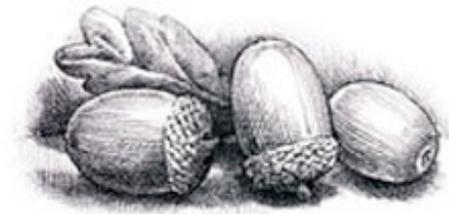


Niching for Hippies

Week One

The Seeds



*we
are*

MOVERS DOERS FARMERS SCIENTISTS
SHEPHERDSTRADITIONAL PICKLERS
GO-GETTERS BAKERS CARNIVORES
GARDENERS COMMUNITY BUILDERS
ARCHITECTSPASSIONATE CHEFS
BUSINESS OWNERS ENGINEERS
WRITERSSEE KEEPERS CITIZENS

SOIL NERDS CARPENTERS OPEN GUITAR STRUMMERS
CHEESE MAKERS DESIGNERS COOPERATIVE PARENTS
EMPATHETIC YOUTHFUL JAMMERS ACCOUNTANTS
HOME BREWERS INSPIRING INNOVATIVE PHOTOGRAPHERS
ARTISTS NEIGHBORS SEED SAVERS CHILDREN BUTCHERS
RAPIDLY GAINING SPEED INTELLIGENT FILM MAKERS
MECHANICS CYCLISTS COMPASSIONATE INVENTORS
CRAFTS PEOPLE FERMENTATION GEEKS LAWMAKERS
A NEW GENERATION AN OLD GENERATION VEGANS
BIG THINKERS WEEDING EXPERTS COMMUNICATORS
HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS HEALTH CARE PREVENTERS
ADVOCATES DRIVEN BANJO PICKERS BLACKSMITHS
JOYOUS DANCERSTECH SAVVY STRONG VINTNERS
ENTREPRENEURS THRIFTY CANNERS PIG ROASTERS
CREATING NEW ECONOMIES TURNIP ENTHUSIASTS
CHANGING PERSPECTIVES SHAKING UP CONVENTION
PUNK ROCKERS MILK AFFICIONADOS THINKERS
READY TO GO BUILDING NATURALISTS ECONOMISTS
NETWORKING STRONG-WILLED TAXONOMISTS RALLYERS
PLUMBERS FIST CLENCHERS PHOTOSYNTHESIZERS
WELL-FED INCESSANTLY SCHEMING RUNNERS LEAN
NOT GOING TO SETTLE CHARCUTIERS ARBORISTS
EXAMPLES TINKERERS METEOROLOGISTS INCLUSIVE
OUTRAGED AND READY FOR CHANGE HIP SHAKERS
RHYTHMIC RAZOR SHARP LEADERS THIRSTY FOR MORE
URBAN PLANNERS SWEATER KNITTERS KIMCHI FREAKS
RESILIENT STARGAZERS CONNECTED INNOVATORS
SEASONED BRIGHT EYED CONFIDENT PROBLEM SOLVERS
HURDLERS ILLUSTRATORS ELECTRICIANS FORAGERS
CALLOUSED WORDSMITHS EDUCATORS PROGRESS

RAPIDLY GAINING SPEED.



THE
INDIA FOR A FASTER GROWTH

you are medicine

- a poem by tad hargrave

you are not alone in this city.

you think you are out
lost and alone
wandering the streets
past the shuffling rags
the pulled up pea coats against the cold wind
but
you are at home
and your light is on
late at night
you are typing out words of sadness and beauty
you are that strange light
in the strange window
in that strange building
on that strange hill
in that strange city

that never goes out
that no one can fail to notice

find it

and you will know that
all the people wandering the streets
are looking for you

find it

and you will know
for sure this time
that you are not the wounds you have received
you are medicine that flows from them

you are not alone in this city.
you are at home
and your light is on
late at night
you are typing out words of sadness and beauty

unlock your door
guests will be arriving soon

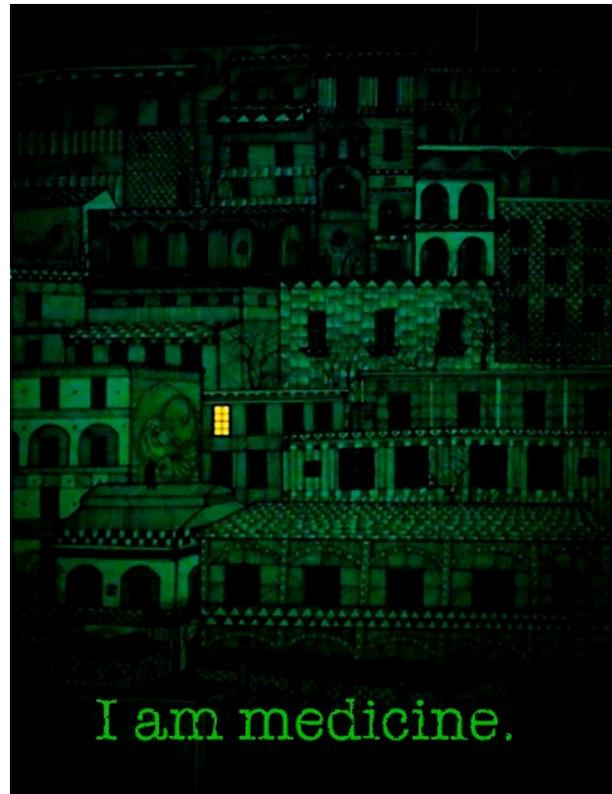
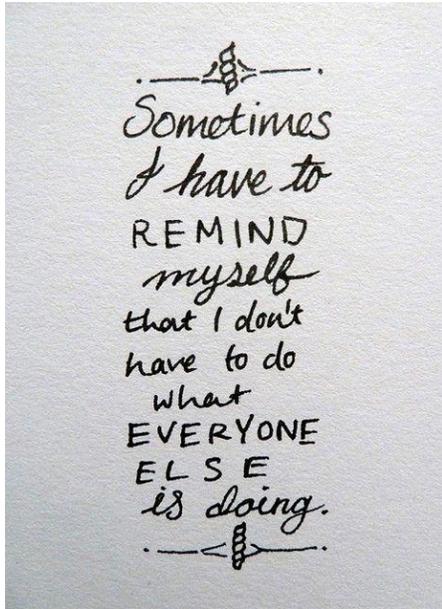


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Finding an Authentic Niche:



The intention of this ebook is to inspire you to find the seeds of an authentic niche. The heart of something.

Right now we're going to chop down a tree. We'll be making it into a beautiful totem later with intricate and detailed carvings later. First the rough cuts, then the refined ones. Don't worry about this being perfect. Just listen for the heart of things.

Niching is about finding our place in the world. Being different. Occupying a different place.

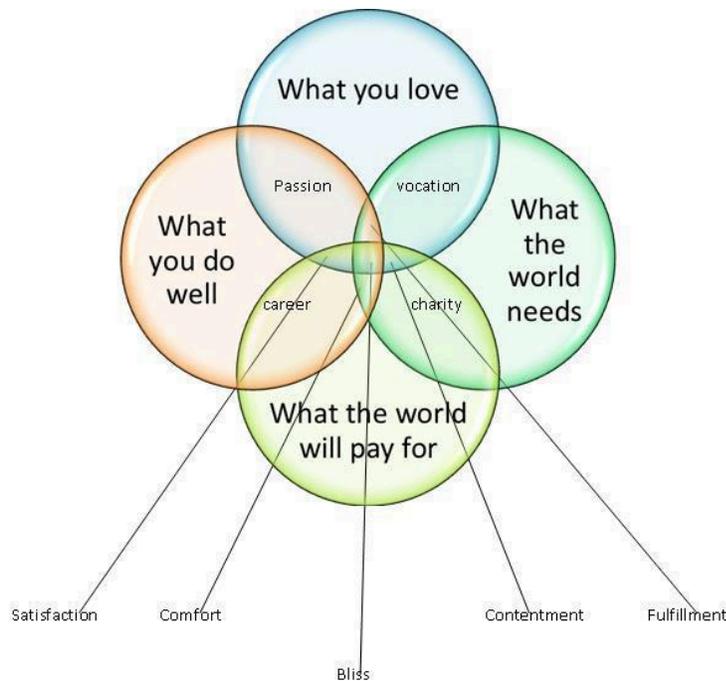
Sometimes we do need to remind ourselves that we don't have to do what everyone else is doing . . . or in the same way . . . or for the same people.

And yet, finding our niche is often a struggle. When we try to find our place we realize it isn't so simple. It's not just about identifying our **strengths**. After all, what do we use them for? It's not just about what we **love** (we might not be very good at it). It's not just about asking what the world **needs** or what it will **pay** for. It's about looking at all of these things for that sweet spot where they all overlap.

And luckily for us - there is a short cut to that sweet spot.

Our own wounds.

For many people, this is the most profound notion in niche marketing - the idea that our deepest wound may end up being our truest niche.



Why is this the case?

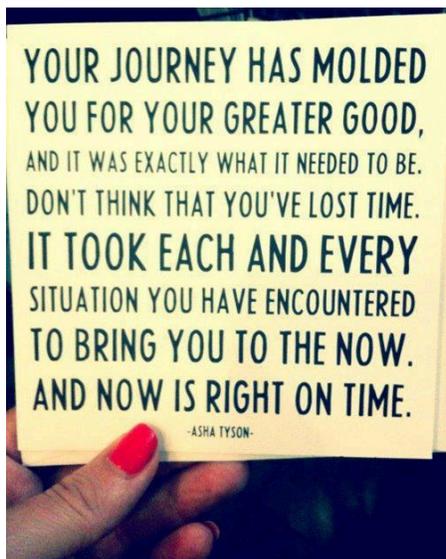
Consider this . . .

Your wounds were challenges in your life you had to overcome. In order to overcome them you were likely really motivated to get good at certain things and develop skills. If it's a struggle you had, then there's a good chance that others have had it - that means there is likely a need and that there are others who want to pay you for it. And people are often surprised by how much they love the idea of helping people who are currently struggling like they used to.

Wounds aren't a magic bullet. But they are a surprisingly accurate doorway into an authentic niche.

Another way of looking at it: what if the whole purpose of growing up was to become the adult whose support you were most needing when you were younger?

Before I even formally had this notion in my mind, I began to see that there was a deep connection between one's ideal niche and one's nature as a person. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people in my workshops say, "well, basically, my niche is people just like me!" And that's not a crazy response. It makes sense.



I keep seeing, in my own life and the lives of others, how our lives ending up preparing us to bring certain gifts to our communities.

Gifts that no one else *could* bring.

There are certain things we're good at and certain things we aren't good at. And it's a relief in a way because the world is full of lots of needs but only *you*. There's a lot of sickness in the world but only *one* medicine like you. We're not built to solve every problem in the world. But there is something we are prepped for. Something we can give that no one else can. And I think that's got a lot to do with our niche.

At its baseline, your business exists to help people on their journey from Island A (their problems) to Island B. And, if you've done that journey yourself you're going to be a lot better qualified to help others. You are like the Sherpa that guides people up the mountain. You've walked along the path before. You have a first hand knowledge of it.

And so it is with niching.

If you have a lot of experience with the community you're trying to reach (better yet you're a *part* of them) - if you're an expert in their experiences - you're going to do better.

If you know their world inside and out, if you know the trends and troubles, the key players, the politics, the hope and dreams etc. of your niche - you're bound to have an easier time of it.

If you know the emotional landscape of their lives – all the better for you.

It's possible to randomly pick a niche and work it. You can do that. It's just harder is all.

Consider these three options and ask yourself which is more appealing to you:

1. Someone who has their product and service and is trying to sell you on it hard (regardless of whether or not it's a perfect fit).
2. someone who is committed to learning about and understanding your needs and taking as much time as they need to really make sure they understand you before they sell you anything
3. somebody who *already* understands you and has designed something perfect for you.

When you're a native (vs. a tourist) in your niche, you're going to be far ahead.

Of course, number three is the most compelling. So much time and energy is saved.

Your deepest wound may be the doorway to your truest niche.

Read that again. It might just be the most important idea I know of in niching.

In fact, here are some of the core reasons why your wound can be the best source of your niche:

- you'll have a deep empathy for what your clients are going through (because you've been through it) and that means they'll melt in your presence, they'll feel safe, open up and want to work with you.



- you know the terrain of the problem they're experiencing intimately (because you had that very same problem) and that means you'll know how to word your sales letters and that, when you speak about it people will really feel you.
- you know the terrain of the journey that they're about to go through (because you did the same journey) and that means you'll be an excellent guide for others.
- you'll save time on market research (because your whole life was market research) which means you'll be able to shave months or years off of the growth cycle of your business. You'll intuitively know what others spend a fortune to find out.
- you'll see through their bullshit (because you were full of the same bullshit when you were in their shoes) and that means you'll be able to help them make progress faster
- your offers will be better (because you'll know just what you would have loved to get and be offered when you were struggling) and that means you'll make a lot more money with a lot less effort
- you'll have a better sense of the hubs and potential partners (because you know where else you went to for solutions when you were in pain) and that means you'll make even more money with even less effort.
- You might not just find that it's a wound you have healed (or are healing) – but that it's the wound in the world that you are here to help heal. You might find that instead of feeling like an isolated entrepreneur trying to make a buck – suddenly you're a part of a larger movement for change in the world. Suddenly, all of the injustice you've endured has woven you into a larger movement for justice, all the pain you've experienced becomes the well of relief you are able to offer to others.

A lot of the conversation about target markets and niches can get pretty . . . dry, hollow, abstract, cynical and 'tactical'. It can be incredibly uninspired.

And it's easy to see how it happens.

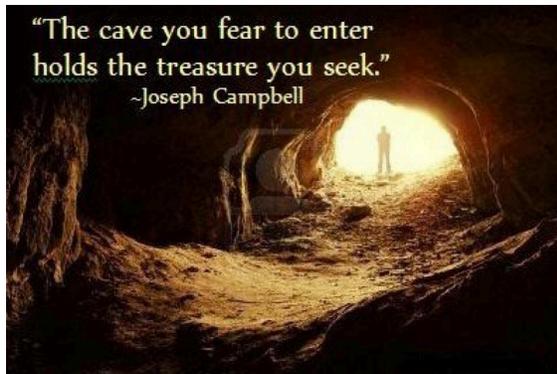
People go to a marketing workshop and they hear that they need to choose a niche. And so they think about the kinds of clients they like or the past jobs they've had and they decide that 'yes! i'll be a coach for lawyers' but . . . they don't really give a shit.

It's kind of an arbitrary choice.

But the best niches aren't arbitrary – they're deeply authentic. They come from somewhere.

So where do these deeply authentic and resonant niches come from? How can you find a niche that's so good it makes your toes curl with goodness? A niche that's so authentic you never feel like a fraud? A niche so good that marketing doesn't even feel like marketing anymore. Where do you look to find this kind of niche?

You look to your wounds.



You look to those really hard things you've gone through.

You look to where you've been 'pulled under' like a surfer and come out the other side knowing how to ride those particular waves.

You look to your own history and the significant events in your life.

To me what's interesting about this is that this is obviously not a new dynamic. Every shaman, every major healer out there went through some really intense crisis moment in their life. I remember reading this interview with this Siberian shaman.

They said, "Before you got your healing powers, did you get sick?"

He looked at them with a really funny look and said, "Of course I got sick."

He looked like, "Are you new? Why are you asking me this?"

One coach I spoke to had no idea about what kind of clients she wanted. Turns out she used to work in the soul crushing corporate world. And when I proposed to her working with that niche - specifically closet mystics and progressive women working in the corporate world - she lit up like a candle.

If you've been through breast cancer and you're a holistic practitioner, you might feel passionate about helping other women going through that process. If you've been through a painful divorce and you're a life coach - you might feel inspired about coaching women who are going through one themselves. Some people find that helping others through painful events that they've gone through is actually very healing for them.

I worked with one coach who did a lot of personal growth workshops - but she was having a dickens of a time identifying any niches. I asked her to describe who was *already* coming. She told me that many of them were women who'd gone through a painful divorce. I asked her if this

might be a potential niche. Turns out it was. She had been through a painful divorce herself and loved the thought of helping other women through that.

If you were told to shut up when you were young and have spent the rest of your life finding your voice – then you could be the perfect guide to help others find their voice.

Conversely, if you were made to speak when you didn't want to, you might be the perfect person to help people set boundaries, enjoy their solitude and create restful spaces for themselves.

Or consider this example from Blaire Finnie from Victoria who attended my workshop in Vancouver a few years ago.

“You know how highly functional adults and teens between the ages 15 and 35 with diagnosed mental illnesses struggle with their identity, their relationships, and an overwhelming confusion about their prescription medication(s)?

Well, I support people who live as their mental illness to transition into living with and eventually without their diagnosis and, in some cases, without their medication.

For example, I have been diagnosed with OCD, clinical depression, and twice with life-long bipolar disorder. I took antidepressants and anti psychotics, and was hospitalized in a psychiatric ward twice. Needless to say, I was living with extreme suffering, fear, and rage. I believed deeply that I was broken for ever.

Over a period of about three years, having done all kinds of self-study and research, I found ways to overcome these challenges, and to move from blame, fear, and a fundamental lack of trust in myself and my experience of life through to acceptance, self compassion and self-love, and ultimately toward innate trust within myself and in my experience of life. One critical part of this process was to commit, unwaveringly, to a lifestyle primarily focused on spirituality.

Now, I have a strong and healthy sense of my identity, as well as a nourished and active body. I have beautiful, dynamic, and loving relationships with my family, a partner, and many friends, and I don't even need to worry about prescription medications or psychiatrists because I no longer take any drugs of any kind, including pharmaceutical and recreational drugs.

I offer educational and inspirational seminars and lectures to schools, businesses, support groups, and families. I offer one on one coaching and guidance, as well as hands on healing and bodywork in individual sessions. In my work, I emphasize rest, proper nutrition and supplementation, regular exercise, and the creation routine in your lifestyle. My aim is to help you to realize who and what you are, and who and what you are not. I offer help and support for you to move beyond your belief that you are permanently and fundamentally mentally ill.”

Is there any doubt that he carries an immense and authentic credibility around helping people who are deeply mentally distressed? Is there any doubt that he will have a profound empathy?

Or what about my client who practices as a shaman. Sure, shamanism can help a lot of people – but who can he best help? Well, this man got involved in biker gangs for years. It took him four years to get out of it without being killed. But here's a fellow who engaged in a very toxic and intense form of masculinity and is now one of the most beautiful embodiments of healthy

masculinity I know. Do you think he might just have something to say to other men about embodiment a more authentic and life affirming form of manhood? I do.

A few weeks ago, I led a little workshop at Hollow Reed here in Winnipeg. I was here leading a workshop last October and was completely charmed by the place and the people running it.

We had an intimate little group of seven people who were all just the cat's pajamas.

A highlight of the evening for me was when we were talking about this whole question of niche.

Because it was a small group we could go around and have everyone share what niche they wanted to fiddle with. One woman – a spiritual counselor – shared that she felt kind of stuck.

“I love to work with the entire family to help them resolve things. Get everyone together. But, I feel like a bit of a fraud because I wasn't able to do that with my family. I've done all I can but they're not wanting to fix things.”

I could feel where she was coming from. How can you promise to take someone on a journey you were unable to complete yourself. If you've ever tried to position yourself in that way – it's really stressful.

“Well . . . maybe,” I offered. “Your best niche is to work with people who've been unable to heal the difficulties in their family and are now left with trying to heal themselves and deal with the realities of that. And maybe you might even end up working with the whole family down the road . . . but why not start with those people? That's a path you've absolutely walked down yourself.”

Her eyes widened, “I could do that and feel so authentic about that . . .”

Or what about my dear friend and colleague **Alex Baisley**. He spent nine years as an underwater welder in the Atlantic Ocean when the two things he hated most in the world were being cold and being alone. Then he spent six years as a reiki practitioner and that left him miserable too. He realized he was a gypsy stuck in an office. And now he travels about North America and helps people to create wonderful, unconventional, quirky and sustainable lifestyles. He's been through the pain so many of his clients face of having so many ideas and talents and not knowing how to weave them together.

Or what about me? I spent years learning and doing 'hard sales' and cold calling and learning NLP and sales techniques. I did so many things that felt gross. It changed me. It affected me. I became more 'slick' in my personal interactions. My hippie friends distanced themselves. It hurt. And now? . . . I'm allergic to inauthentic marketing. I just can't stand it. But I can smell it a mile away.

Time and time again, I've heard people tell me that, "well, my niche is basically people like me."

There's a reason for that. The ultimate niche you pick is going to be an expression of who you are - your nature. You are going to be most qualified to help people who are going through situations you have gone through as well.

One of the reasons groups like Alcoholics Anonymous is so successful is because it's alcoholics helping other alcoholics. You can't con a con man, as the saying goes. They're already gone through it.

You're going to be effective to the extent that you really understand the people you're trying to help.

You're going to be far more effective when you love what you're doing and the clients you're serving.

If you are having to pretend to be someone you aren't, it will eat at you. If you're pretending to be an expert when you aren't - there's a heavy cost to your soul there. If you feel like you're wearing a mask, that will make you lose attractive. It will throw you off rhythm. Pick a business and a niche that allows your nature to express itself as fully as possible.

Consider this example from a realtor, "I work with people with disabilities-- who struggle to find a home that they like and can afford and who feel overwhelmed and confused about where to even start in applying for financing."

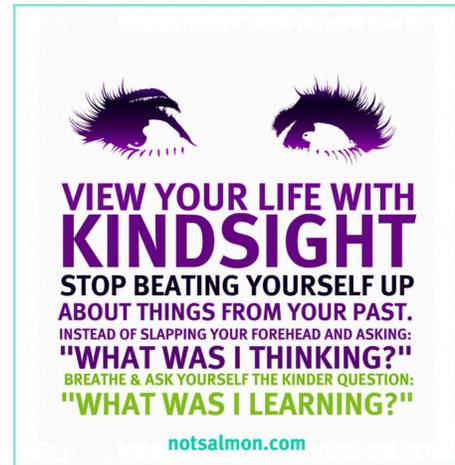
When I asked Dolores - the realtor - how she'd come across this, she told me, "*It's a natural for me-- I've been a teacher, and I've worked a lot with people with disabilities.*"

Easy.

What follows is an excerpt from a transcript of a call I did with Jeffrey Van Dyk exploring the connection between our niche and our wounds . . .

Tad: Since getting to know you something that I have become aware of is that one of my wounds a lot of my life was always feeling like I wasn't cool enough. I grew up feeling that other people were always cooler than me. I never seemed to fit in.

What's interesting is that as a compensating mechanism for that I started learning how to play the guitar, do close-up magic tricks, and be really funny and entertaining. I saw that that got me attention and made me cooler. It also helped me figure out how I could get into inner circles of people.



Unconsciously what that had me do was to always be performing and entertaining – even when it wasn't appropriate. I was putting on the "Tad Show." In my early twenties I was always doing that. Also if I'd show up in a group of people I'd unconsciously try and get in there. It maybe even felt a little bit pushy and insensitive to other people.

However what's interesting is that as I've come to embrace it, the same things that unconsciously were harmful for me in a conscious way can become art. Now at my marketing workshops all of those magic tricks and entertaining can be a part of the facilitation for the participants.

Jeffrey: Absolutely.

Tad: In talking about this need to be a part of the inner circle, part of the gift it gave me is the ability to power map a room. I can think, "Who do I need to talk to?"

This unconsciously can have me running around scrambling desperate, but consciously can also lead to a lot of discernment.

Jeffrey: Exactly.

Tad: It's interesting and ironic to me that I'm talking about working with people around marketing when such a core wound for me is being cool and accepted. It's just an interesting connection between marketing and that. That's where I am in my "uncomfortableness."

Jeffrey: Yes. What I would say about that is that the strategy that you had to use in the wound of, "I need to be cool. I need to be liked" – and this is really, "I need to be loved. I need to be seen. I need to be witnessed, acknowledged, and heard." Right? I would say that that's the thing underneath the "I want to be cool."

Tad: Right.

Jeffrey: What that wound of “I need to be cool; I need to be witnessed, seen, heard, and loved” developed all sorts of skills.

It’s just like you said, “I can really energetically map a room and see who I need to know.”

It can either be unconsciously driven by my wound: sort of like hot potato or hot stove. I touch it and “ouch!” I pull the hand away. That reactive energy is fueling the activity.

Or you can use the skill set you built from the wound in a really conscious way by being a grounded, energetic reader of a room. You can say, “Who is in my tribe that I need to know?” You can use it that way.

It’s not really a bad or good, you know? It’s just, “Wow. I have this amazing skill. I wouldn’t have had it without that wound. I wouldn’t have needed to learn how to read energy in a room and map it. I wouldn’t have had a reason to learn that skill.”

There’s a beautiful, beautiful way that the wound prepares you perfectly for your life’s work.

In my work with Tim Kelley we would always say that, “Your wounds are the training program for your purpose.”

We have different wounds that actually prepare us in different ways. I think in some ways I have a different wound that led to similar development. As a kid I always felt like – well, there are two things that I’ll speak about. One is that I always felt judged and wrong. I grew up in a really religious community that felt, “You have to do everything right.”

I remember once when I was at a friend’s house. They were going to church. I was wearing shorts. They wouldn’t let me go with them. They said, “You can’t wear shorts to church.”

I was always saying things that were inappropriate. I remember being somewhere with my mom. She had gotten her tubes tied. I didn’t really know what having tubes tied meant. I was four. I remember asking these ladies, “Hey, have you gotten your tubes tied, too? You look pretty old.”

I remember the condemnation in their stares. They were looking down at me. I thought, “I’m just curious. I’m asking these questions.”

So the wound was, “Oh crap. There’s something wrong with me.”

I always felt kind of broken: almost like a defective toy. That was the big wound that I

wanted to hide from the world. “I’m defective. I don’t want you to see it, because if you see that I’m defective you won’t love me.” My compensation strategy for that was being a star performer. So like I said, “Different wound but a similar strategy” from what it sounds like for you.

Tad: Right.

Jeffrey: So I learned to put on a show. I didn’t learn magic tricks, et cetera. I just learned to be really charming and entertaining. Later in life I eventually spent a good decade – literally – on stage. I’ve sung all over the world on huge stages.

Now as a speaker and teacher I really know audiences, you know? If you really want to know how to work a room to learn an audience, try being a cabaret singer in a bar full of people half drunk. That will teach you and it will teach you quickly.

The difference is that if I’m doing it from the place of, “I’m secretly broken. I want you to love me.” I’m kind of like a leech on the audience, you know?

If I’m trying to teach consciousness work, if I’m trying to support people in building their bright lights, the big downside of that wound-driven energy was that some part of my psyche always believed that I needed to be the brightest light in the room in order to be loved. This means other people can only shine so bright before I’m threatened.

So I had to do some work with that part of my psyche. What it said was, “Blah, blah, blah. I want you to be the brightest light so that you’ll be loved.”

I said, “Great. How do you hope I’ll feel if I’m loved and seen as this bright light?”

“Oh, well then you’ll be free because you’ll feel really comfortable, et cetera, et cetera.”

What it was really after was this deep sense of freedom for me. Its strategy was, “Make sure you’re the brightest light in the room.”

So in working with that part of my psyche it created a new job description for itself. When it really realized it said, “Well that’s great but it’s not making me feel loved. It makes me feel isolated.” Is this right? If I have to be the brightest light in the room, I’m not in community any more. I’m not in relationship. It feels really lonely.

Then it was, “Oh yeah. That’s not so good.”

So it created a new strategy. This is like a very young, teenage part of my psyche. It said, “I know. I’ll be someone who creates a band of super heroes who can change the world.”

Tad: Right.

Jeffrey: Its philosophy was, “Oh, well with super heroes everybody has their own super power. They’re all super cool.” Right? However one bright light doesn’t outshine the other. They all have really interesting, super cool, magical super powers.

My work and really helping people understand what they’re on earth to do is like saying, “What is your super power? What’s your magical thing that your wounds have perfectly designed you to do?”

So this part of my psyche that used to be really pretty detrimental to my work in the world has become part of the biggest ally of my work in the world. That transition is a big part of allowing the wound not just to inform the need but allowing the part that seems to be your biggest nemesis to actually be the greatest contributor.

What we do in The Spiritual Marketing Quest is that we start by looking at what the wounding experiences were. Then from those wounds we look for what emotional landscape you are an expert at from which you can serve other people. This is because in some level your ideal clients, which we call your Divine Market, has the experience of this in emotional landscape and is looking for support to find a new experience.

For example if someone grew up feeling imprisoned where they had a really controlling home life and maybe went to Catholic school. They might really know the landscape of imprisonment: the hopelessness, desperation, longing, the give-up, the whole landscape of it, right?

Now we can look at, “Well what markets feel imprisoned?”

Let’s give some examples.

You just made me think of **Pam Slim**. She has the blog, Escape from Cubicle Nation. Suzanne helped to brand and build it. For those of you listening Suzanne is my business partner in The Spiritual Marketing Quest.

Pam’s wounds were that she grew up in Marin County, California. What’s the wound about that? Well, she grew up in San Anselmo. Her father was the mayor of San Anselmo. Her father decided to divorce her mom and find himself.

Her experience of it was that she grew up in a wealthy suburb and people talked. She was suddenly the black sheep. She was the kid whose father left the community, quit being the mayor, and *divorced* her mom.

So she always felt like she was trapped in that experience. “I’m in the suburb, in this place,

and everybody looks at and stares at us. They talk about us. I'm trapped. All I want really is a sense of freedom and that sense of escape."

When she came to Suzanne she wanted to build a corporate consulting business. However where her heart really was, was with the people in the cubicles who wanted to escape. So that's where the real benefit was built. She knew about that craving for escape.

She's become one of the top bloggers in the world. She is in the top four thousand blogs in the world out of a half a trillion blogs.

"I decided that I wanted to be that bridge. As a coach, I wanted to help people that were still in a corporate job and had some fears and anxieties about leaving. I would navigate that transition of figuring out what they wanted to do, how they could leave, how they could work it out financially and everything that comes up with that. I would get them to that point where they were ready to really launch their business and then pass them off to other folks who could help them to grow, put the infrastructure in place, etc... I really did a lot of thinking about the specific kind of work that I wanted to do and the kinds of people I wanted to work with. It was a very careful and thoughtful definition of my target market." - Pamela Slim - <http://www.escapefromcubiclenation.com/>

Then there's **Mari Smith**. She's a huge, huge, huge teacher of using Facebook and social media.

I don't know if you've ever met Mari. She's fabulous and I adore her. She's tall. She's about my height or your height, Tad – about six feet.

She grew up in rural Canada as a tall, gawky girl. Her best friends were the chickens. All she wanted to do was connect, to have community. So what did she end up doing? She ended up being one of the top people in the world on creating community online. She was absolutely using the gift of that wound.

Some people can sort of stumble into it just by following their desire and what they really want. For others of us having some support to do that is really beneficial. That's what I'm always looking at.

I have another guy: **Dike Drummond**. I adore him. He's such a sweet man. He grew up and became a doctor, an M.D.

At some point he had a midlife crisis. He realized that his parents wanted him to be a doctor since he was a kid. He realized that he never actually wanted to be a doctor. His

career kind of fell apart. He let go of his practice. His marriage fell apart. His life fell apart.

What he realized through it is the value of using a midlife expansion moment – expansion opportunity – to transition with grace and that having the crisis is optional.

He has a business now called the 3-Hour Midlife Crisis. In a three hour workshop he has people explore what they really want that they've never been willing to give themselves. They also explore what benefit they've gotten from not saying yes to what they really want – from not answering that call of their soul.

Being able to re-evaluate is now the time to say, “Yes” and if so, “How will they do it?”

This is so that they can use the crisis as a gorgeous, gorgeous opportunity for expansion, you know?

I'll just mention one more. The woman who, when she got 98% on a test had parents who would say, “Why aren't you living up to your full potential?” I mentioned this earlier.

Her wounding was, “I'm not good enough.” Just straight up: “I'm not good enough.”

Like I said, she created a strategy of, “I'm going to work really, really, really, really hard to validate my worth.” As a result of that, she has multiple degrees and what-not. She also got completely burnt out. She burnt out her adrenals.

She has a degree in dietary sciences. She's a nutritionist, a raw food coach, et cetera. However instead of just being a raw food coach she now serves women who have been driven to prove and validate their worth on some level. Women who have worked really, really, really hard only to have their bodies fail on them.

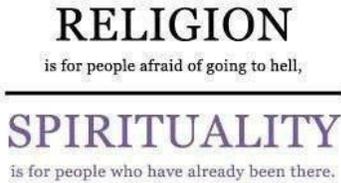
They are looking for nutritional support in order to find new balance.

If you are that woman and go to her Web site you're going to say, “Wow. She knows me. She knows who I am. Sure, I guess I could go to somebody else who could support me in nutrition and raw food if I wanted to do raw food. However, why would I? They don't know who I am and this woman does.”

I could go on and on.

What's the journey you are most qualified to lead and are most intimately familiar with? To whom can you legitimately and empathically say, “I've been there.”? What journeys have you already made? What terrain have you already explored and reflected on? What journeys scare and overwhelm others that don't scare or overwhelm you? Or less so? What have you overcome? Most proud of? Most humbling moments?

Here are some more examples . . .



Byron Katie: She wrote the book, *Loving What Is: 4 Questions That Can Change Your Life*. She went through this seven year massive depression. She had to check herself into this place. She was sleeping on the floor because she didn't even think she was worthy of being on the bed.

She went through this massive pain but at the end of it what she came out with was, "Wow. Believing my thoughts makes me suffer." This incredible work came out of it.

Marshall Rosenberg who wrote many books about non-violent communication. He grew up in Philly during the race riots. He saw that just the color of people's skin was enough to get them beaten. His last name – Rosenberg – is a Jewish name. It was enough for him to get beaten. He just lived with this question his whole life: "Why do people do this?"

He asked, "How can we communicate in such a way that isn't violent? Where does this violence come from?"

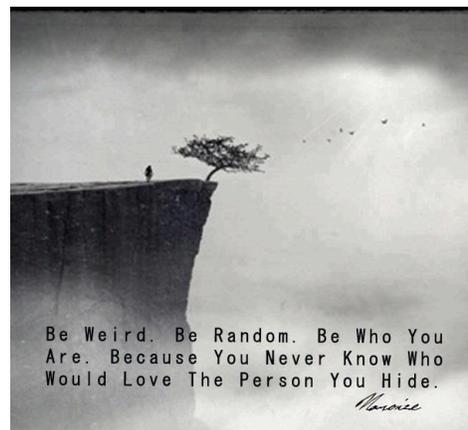
For his whole life that just became his through line - this question. Out of that came this incredible work of non-violent communication.

A colleague in London, England, **Ellie Chester** went through many terrible years of chronic fatigue. And what has that turned into? Working with people around their exhaustion. Notice that she doesn't need to target 'chronic fatigue' specifically. She can go a bit broader into the human experience of exhaustion (whatever the cause of it is). But you'd better believe she knows the emotional landscape of that feeling.

The Biker Shaman: There was a guy I know in who I met. He came to my workshop. He was just this cool dude. He was doing shamanism stuff.

We were going around and I was asking, "Who are you trying to reach?" They all kept answering, "Middle-age, white women." It came to Duane and he said, "Well, yeah, women, I guess." I asked, "How do you feel about working with men?"

He said, "Oh, I'd love to – if I can get them to sign up for anything." I said, "Let's worry about the 'how' later. I'd



love to explore that.”

We then went for lunch. It turned out that he’d been a member of a biker gang. It was a biker, biker gang.

He knew a thing or two about hardened men.

It took him four years to get out of it without getting killed. It was *that* kind of gang. He had this experience of this real toxic, shadow side of masculinity. Then through this shamanic kind of healing work that he’s engaged in, he’s just the most beautiful man – so gorgeous.

I said, “Wow. You have something to offer there.”

Now it may be about men, but there’s some journey that he went through. It just struck me that men seem to be the most obvious example and there may be another one there.

“The depth of the wound has a relationship to the
height or expansiveness of the gift.”

- Jeffrey Van Dyk

The Sunrise Foundation and Barry Kaufman. He had a son who had autism. He got a lot of, “Here’s what you do. Here’s how you deal with it.”

Basically the advice was, “You just have to adapt. He’s just going to have this for the rest of his life.”

Something in Barry just felt, “I have to try something.”

He began these years of experimenting by entering into his son’s world. His son would be sitting and staring. He would just sit and stare with him. His son would do these repetitive motions. He entered his son’s world and did the repetitive motions, too. This whole school of thought around autism came out over these experiences. It’s called The Sunrise Foundation.

It’s been this crazy wound: the devastation for the family finding out that their son has autism. Now the son actually doesn’t have autism. He’s totally, fully functioning.

They now have this whole foundation. Another of my friends just went to it to learn how to work with their twins. She came back just overjoyed. They knew that the people who started the foundation “get it” and have been through the same experiences before. They have incredible credibility because they’ve been through the same specific experience. When she came back it was just like she had so many new ideas and tools.

It's the first breakthrough that I've seen for my friend's family in five years. It's because these people went through it and took it forward.

Or consider these words from Stephanie Rainbow Bell of <http://plussizeinnerpeace.com/> who attended Jeffrey's Spiritual Marketing Quest -

"After going to the Quest and being at the weekend I was thinking, "I'm not getting it. I'm not getting my instant niche. I'm not walking away with this." However I realized while I was there that, indeed, as Jeffrey and Suzanne talk about, the soup was simmering.

A few weeks later I was led in a certain direction about eating. My big wound is that I've been more than 100 pounds overweight all of my life. That clearly has impacted absolutely every area of my life, especially the whole shame, guilt, blame, not good enough – that whole series of emotions. They are pretty deep and powerful.

At any rate, as things have transpired over the last few weeks, it became really clear to me – and spirit downloaded to me – my new direction. It's called, "The Plus-Size Inner Peace Network."



It's going to be a community for plus-size women to believe in their inner beauty both inside and out. It's going to celebrate their uniqueness as they are. There are many paths to that self-acceptance. Some of that will be losing weight but some of it is just to be who you are.

I can hardly breathe right now because I feel so empowered. For the first time in my life I feel like I'm stepping up for who I really am without all of the struggle against being fat. Now, being who I am – I'm celebrating and embracing all of it. Now I'm encouraging and inspiring other women to do the same

thing. That's just beyond cool. I guess I've said enough, so thank you, thank you, thank you."

Abundant Yogi - <http://www.abundantyogi.com>

Last year at some point, I came across a lady named Kris Ward who runs a business called Abundant Yogi. Maybe I felt an affinity because my own business name is one of apparent contradictions too. "Marketing and hippies?? What?"

So many conscious entrepreneurs really struggle with making their business more than just an expensive hobby for them. Kris was in that place and in this blog interview she shares where she is now and some ideas on how you can turn your expensive hobby into a really wonderful,

sustainable business you're thrilled with. And to do it in a way that also creates a wonderful quality of life.

Here's what Kris has to say about her story . . .

“Abundant Yogi is a reaction to all the “yogier than thou” tendencies I saw in the yoga and holistic wellness community, where teachers and service providers within the industry were afraid to promote themselves and their services for fear of looking greedy, too “corporate-y”, or un-yogi-like. I knew this was going on because I played into it for YEARS before I sat myself down one day for a serious BIG-SELF on little-self INTERVENTION.

I got really honest with myself about the lifestyle I wanted and the dreams I had, and I basically just made the decision that I was going to defy the norm and become an “Abundant Yogi” (a phrase that, up until that point, had pretty much been an oxymoron—at least for me and the other yogis I knew).

This decision was a no-brainer for me. I'd been wired like a true entrepreneur since I was a scrawny little 7th grader selling Blow-Pops and Airheads at school for 50 cents a pop and counting my wad of babysitting money over and over in a very joyful yet OCD fashion. My dad always told me I'd have to marry a rich guy or become a business owner because I had such expensive taste. I actually LOVED participating in the exchange of value.

To deny that I loved the game of business as much as I loved being a yogi and wellness coach just so I could be accepted by my ‘spiritual’ community was a big fat lie and super uncomfortable for me. It wasn't authentic.

So I stopped pretending, relaxed into my desires, and started trusting them a lot more. I sought out and mentored under some really amazing people—entrepreneurs, leaders and coaches who were running multi-million dollar businesses built on integrity and real value. I began modeling them and learned everything I could from them, applying all the parts that felt right to me.

It took a few years but eventually I found my groove and got to the point where I actually felt free from the good opinions of others. At least enough to be myself (potty mouth and all) and “let it all hang out” on my blog and in my videos, courses and newsletters. And once I found that sweet spot, everything just started to flow.

Clients, speaking gigs, money in my bank account, better relationships, more confidence and creativity, the support team I wanted and needed... it all went from being ONE HUGE STRUGGLE (or nonexistent) to being quite fun, exciting, and easily accessible.

And you know how we humans are. The second we have a breakthrough and we discover the “magic formula” to anything, all we want to do is share the good news and bring other people into the same good fortune. So that’s how Abundant Yogi came to be.

I figured surely there were others out there like me (in the yoga community and beyond) who actually LIKED the idea of getting paid to be the real them, truly leaning into their pleasure, passions, and callings, and giving themselves permission to live the lifestyle they choose—for no other reason than that they choose to. That’s what the creative life force within them is called towards. And they choose to answer that calling in an honest way, through doing work that they LOVE that utilizes the best of their unique passions, talents and skills. That, to me, is the essence of lifestyle design.”

Neil Strauss wrote a book called *The Game* all about the emerging ‘pick up artist’ scene that was happening in the United States. You either love the book or hate it. But the interesting part is his story. For most of his life he had no luck with women. Despite being a best selling author for years writing books with Jenna Jameson and Motley Crew – the only kiss he ever got was from Tommy Lee (the lead singer). He felt awkward nerdy and scrawny. But then he heard rumours of these underground lairs of men who were learning how to pick up women. So he thought he’d write an expose on it. He went undercover and ... got totally sucked into the scene. And it changed his life. For the first time ever, he was starting conversations with women he would have never even dreamed of approaching before. He was dating. He was feeling attractive for the first time in his life. And eventually, he began to teach other men how to handle their dating life. Do you think he might have a bit of credibility having spent most of his life with no belief in himself around dating?

A colleague of mine **Candyce** was depressed for years and then discovered Reiki. And engaging with that healed her depression. Can you think of anyone more qualified to help people through their depression. She is intimately familiar with the terrain of depression. Another fellow in London, Ontario healed his depression with meditation. Same thing. He will be able to translate the practice of meditation into that specific world of depression. He’ll be able to help them see the relevance in a way that few other people could. Other people would be busy trying to sell the boat, ‘meditation is amazing! You need to meditate.’ Not very compelling.

Thomas Leonard was one of the founders of the modern life coaching movement. And he was an incredibly emotionally sensitive person. If you yelled at him he would cry. And for years he felt like a cripple because of it. And then he read a book called *The Highly Sensitive Person* and it framed that kind of sensitivity as a strength not a weakness. It was, after all, the most sensitive animal that warned the herd of danger. He began to realize that his sensitivity also meant that he could pick up on things going on inside his client that other people never could have. It would also make Don’t you think that history would make him especially attractive to folks who were also feeling crippled by their sensitivity?

One of my clients, **Shyra Rawson** shared these words with me after a workshop she attended, *“For some reason, during our conversation, I started talking about how I had experienced severe depression as a teenager, but healed myself through meditation, understanding that I was empathic (so I learned to clear my energy, put up protection etc.), music & writing and a new world view. Then, Yvette stopped me and said 'Shyra... Why isn't THAT your niche???' and just those words completely grounded me. I realized that I could integrate all of my skills - as a holistic nutritionist, reiki practitioner and energy medicine practitioner and I could help teenage girls (ages 15-24) with depression. I started to get 'visions' about workshops and retreats.”*

Most **comedians** are a fine example of transforming wounds into gifts. So many comedians grew up feeling like outsiders and insecure. And, instead of letting them cripple them, they become the source of laughter for others. The audience sits there in awe thinking, ‘wow. They totally know.’ Comedians know that those things which are most personal are most general.

My friend **Jana** is a yoga teacher. Years ago she broke her back and used yoga to heal herself. I knew of another woman who was basically paralyzed and could barely move. A yoga teacher encouraged her to come to class and just do the postures in her mind. Bit by bit she began to experience movement in her fingers and toes. And it spread. Now she’s a yoga teacher with no small amount of credibility. She understands the landscape of that particular situation – but even moreso, she understand the landscape of hopelessness, loss and grief.

The Therapy Vault: Lisa Mitchell has created something beautiful that was born out of empathy. It’s an amazing example of how our deepest wound can be our truest niche. It’s also an incredibly practical case study in becoming a hub for a community.

Furthermore, it’s got a really wonderful and unique welcome video on the homepage. I asked Lisa to share the story of how it all came about. Here’s what she had to say ...

After 20 years in the mental health profession, as an art therapist, psychotherapist, and trainer, I realized that I felt tired and burdened with client stories of pain and recovery.

In my work with therapists, as their therapist or trainer, I heard about these same difficulties of carrying remnants of stories and pain not their own. In our profession, we are expected to bare it. And there’s a myth that if we have good boundaries, proper training, and excellent self care we shouldn’t feel burned out or heavy hearted.

I had an answer in my art and creativity.

In order to save myself from burn out, and to help other therapists learn to sustain themselves on a day to day basis in their practice, I decided to expand my business. Of course, I didn’t have a clue about how to do this. Or what it would even look like.

In my work with Suzanne and Jeffrey, I not only found my business platform, The Therapy Vault, but I also learned to live into it by honoring parts of myself that I wasn’t allowing in my work formerly.

It was tough work, because it required more vulnerability than I felt comfortable with, but in a funny way, they helped me become unburdened. And now I feel totally re-inspired with my work, and am helping other therapists transform their burdens into beautiful pieces of inspiration.

Yoga for Caregivers: Last fall, I did my first ever workshop in Winnipeg, Manitoba. You can read about it here: day one, day two, day three. And I sort of fell in love with the town – particularly the hippie neighbourhood of Wolsley.

One of the people who made my visit possible at all was a wonderful woman, mother and yoga teacher named Beth Martens (pictured right). As we got to know each other and discuss this whole idea of niching for her business a niche came up for her that felt so true: caregivers.

What you're about to read is a gorgeous example of the power of empathy and becoming a hub.

So recently we had a little chat about how that was going for her.

How long have you been teaching yoga now and what got you started with it?

My yoga practice is going on 20 years, beginning in Mysore, India when I took my first of eight trips there to study yoga, meditation and kirtan. I've been teaching yoga and leading kirtan full time since 2003, upon recovering from Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

I began with this practice because of a life-long attraction to practical spirituality. I was totally disillusioned with religion and social control, but discovered quickly that the spiritual arts can be very personal and guided by a system at the same time.

I ended up in India almost by default, choosing a last half credit to graduate my undergrad degree in anthropology, taking a one-time-ever course in meditation for credit, and then feeling attracted to leave the academic behind and get my own feet in the ocean of life.

When I discovered that yoga is even bigger, more all-encompassing than anthropology, I traded "up" for the direct experience of all the stuff I'd read and heard described. I wanted to see for myself what the science experiment in consciousness itself could hold for me.

You've recently been exploring focusing on the niche of 'caregivers'. Can you tell us what prompted that – what was the need you saw in your community that gave you this idea – and how does that connect to your own life?

Carving out a niche was on your advice, and I really and finally got the point, that trying to be everyone's singing yoga teacher was costing me too much energy, scattering my limited marketing efforts and making me feel overwhelmed enough to not promote at all.

Choosing a niche that genuinely matters to me makes me feel alive and energized in the communication and though still overwhelming, I don't get stuck with that daunting, "where do I begin?"

You've also been a good model for supporting and uplifting one another in our small earth and consciousness-friendly projects, and seeing how high we can fly when forces are combined, competition removed from the foreground, and co-operation fully engaged. It's way more fun and has the fantastic side effect of making me feel connected with my community.

I also feel it was career transforming to hear you speak to the need for marketing plans to reflect community needs, to actually bring people together and to treat that growth like the real measure of wealth. I was tripping on and off that idea vicariously, where now it's an integral part of the game plan as well as instructions to students. Thanks Tad!!

As I mentioned I had a three year struggle with my health, cancer of the lymph, that caused me to ask life's big questions, and forced me to come up with answers, as my life was at stake. In those years I was in need of and very close with several caregivers, and saw first hand what they were going through in efforts to help me save my own skin, not a little thing.

After recovering I also walked with several family members through their own scary illnesses, and now am the single mom of a young son. When creating this niche I didn't even see myself in the role of caregiver, but started getting lucid as I was reading and writing about the symptoms that this group share, no matter how they came to the role.

And they do indeed share stuff, mainly including a sense of energy depletion, reduced immunity and social isolation. Caregiver is a role many will default into suddenly, rather than choose, so that creates a whole level of crisis-style lifestyle management that can go on at that crisis pace for years.

As our health care system becomes more and more weighed down demographically, as our society becomes less and less adept at caring for ourselves and each other, caregivers are left to pick up the pieces, survive on behalf of their loved ones and carry extraordinary and heroic-level burdens.

The deeper I looked into caregivers' mostly silent journey, and realizing they have very little support systemically, the more I began to emotionally engage. I recently, for example, re-friended someone I hadn't heard from for 15 years because her husband had a severe stroke and I was ill at the time. She is lucky enough that a decade of care to him has resulted in some recovery and she is regaining some lifestyle freedom, but for ten years, her personal life did not exist.

It makes these people desperate for some sense of connection with others that get what they are going through, and hungry for chances to take care of themselves for a change. I find caregivers' stories riveting and almost unbelievable testimonies to the enormous power of the human spirit. And that makes me want to be of service to this group.

What is it that you're offering these caregivers?

In the short term I've created workshops called Yoga Cream Pie as an answer to what ails caregivers, both physically, spiritually and socially. This currently three-hour workshop is a refuge for caregivers, where they will get a chance to enjoy a yoga practice that is not only good for them, but feels amazing and makes up for the inevitable pleasure deficits that follow being isolated, literally stranded on the desert island of their obligations.

The session includes supported and restorative yoga, as well as massage while they are in these already delish poses, with the live music called kirtan, India's ecstatic chant tradition. I also give them some time at the end to meet at least one person in the group with whom they can identify, share something about themselves and realize that they are in fact, not alone in their caregiving experiences.

People come to these sessions looking haggard, drawn, depleted. They likely rushed there, begged and borrowed to get the time and have a huge hope that they are not wasting their precious time off.

After the session, which always seems so short, participants leave refreshed, with more energy than when they arrived, they have got their bodies gently opened, lovingly worked-upon with healing hands of an RMT and filled with the magic mantras that are the food for my own healing journey. Their faces are the most telling of the benefit, looking younger, more relaxed and so much happier.

And this is just the beginning of what I have envisioned.

What's the response been?

I'm a little slow in the start up of this project, but the response has been awesome with the hubs that I've contacted, related to caregivers. I've received nothing but good feedback from the multitude of organizations that come into vicarious contact with caregivers, because there on the front line, they know that the caregivers need to be not just recognized, but supported. And they have nothing or little to offer, being almost entirely client and patient focused. A focus on caregivers hopefully will reveal that care is a community responsibility, and that caregiver shouldn't mean one individual, but rather a whole team of help and love."

Tiina Veer is a client of mine who's an amazing example of the power of proper niching in action. Instead of trying to make her yoga class appeal to everyone – she chose a very particular niche.

People who don't look like Barbie Dolls.

There's a whole community of people with 'round bodies' who might feel intimidated to go to a typical yoga class. But, with Tiina, they find an incredibly safe and supportive space.

I love this.

Yoga for Round Bodies CLASSES & RETREATS

These yoga classes and retreats are offered specifically with the round body in mind. In these classes and retreats, not only will you have the opportunity to explore yoga in a way that suits your constitution/anatomy best, you will also be able to practice and explore in a comfortable, non-competitive environment in small groups, in pleasant surroundings. Classes will include restoration (deep relaxation) practices, gentle yoga and mindful movement.

Absolute beginners welcome along with any other "level." Any size is welcome. This exploration is not about how big or not big, nor how advanced or not advanced, how flexible, nor how strong. Nor is it about weight loss. It is an opportunity to come and begin from where you are, to move your body and quiet your mind in a comfortable, supportive environment.

NO YOGA EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY, yes really!
And your teacher is round, too!

These offerings are intended for beginners and do not include vigorous practices, however, if you have done yoga, they include a significant amount of restorative practice—of benefit to anyone—and foundational principles that can be applied to any level of practice. Class size is small enough to accommodate modifications and individual attention. And because stress is a significant challenge faced by most of us, ample time is given to explore relaxation/restoration practices so you can also learn useful tools to counterpoise everyday stress and its effects.

I did a quick interview with Tiina about this and here's what she had to say,

What gave you the idea to start this?

“After practicing massage therapy for a number of years, I realized I needed to do something to counterbalance the physical stresses of my work, and thought Yoga would be perfect. Though I quickly fell in love with yoga, I found myself frustrated and discouraged over and over, as it was difficult to find teachers who were able to work with my very round body. When I discovered yoga using props, I found some liberation in the practice, but when I found a class called “Full-Bodied Yoga” and tried it, by the third class I found myself saying, “Oh my God, I have to become a yoga teacher so I can teach classes like this.” That is where the seed was planted, and I’ve manifested a thought into reality. Feels great!”

How has the response been?

“The response has been incredible. Even people who aren’t in the “round camp” think it’s a great idea, that it makes so much sense. And it does. A lot of round women feel judged, or like the third wheel, in “regular” yoga classes. It makes sense to create a safe, non-judgmental space for us to practice together, with a teacher who knows how to modify poses to the unique needs of a rounder body. As women discover these classes, workshops and retreats, I get this comment a lot: “It’s so great there’s a class JUST FOR ME out there!””

A lot of people would say, ‘by narrowing in your niche so much, you’re limiting who comes! aren’t you afraid of losing clients?’

“Hogwash. My niche came very naturally to me, but if I had to choose to-niche or not-to-niche, I would definitely niche. By having a niche, it allows me to utilize and develop my skills, knowledge and expertise in a very focused way. In the end, it also makes marketing EASIER... the niche guides where I spend my very limited budget of money and time. E.g., if I’m just promoting a regular yoga class, aside from the usual suspects, like online yoga directories, etc., where would I advertise? If you’re advertising to EVERYBODY, like in a major city’s newspaper for example, your message is going to be totally watered down, unnoticed. If I take a targeted message/product/service with to a specific group with a deliverable promise specific to them, it will capture attention because they want what I have to offer them specifically. It’s impossible to “market to everybody.” You have to find out who is interested in what you have, or tailor what you have to specific groups. “Marketing to everyone” is kind of like being Waldo.”

Here’s an email I got from a client of mine on this theme . . .

“I did go through the 41 page workbook you sent me and I think that the most powerful question there, for me, was about the 5 most pivotal moments in my life. That got me really thinking and from there, the other questions started to show me obvious themes in my habits, hobbies and preferences. Sooooo.....

I started formulating ideas. One of the most pivotal experiences for me was when I took 5 weeks in Europe, alone, just as I got divorced. It was an amazing healing experience. I LOVE to travel, I LOVE to take groups on travel retreats (as well as to go myself) and so how could I shape my experiences into something doing that? I started thinking about creating unique trips for women who are newly single that would be different in that the group would really be a safety net and I would create an atmosphere for being alone and exploration. This got me thinking to writing a workbook first.

I came up with a title: "Unaccompanied Woman..... Travelling Alone"

I have a sense of some of the sections and chapters, utilizing the metaphor of outward travel and exploration for the inward journey.

For example,

Finding Yourself Amongst the Ruins (about finding your center again, and remembering who you are - maybe the old relics of yourself that you buried or lost in the relationship)

My Life, My Museum (about how to cherish memories but let go of attachments, and also pulling some of those relics out of the closet that were found in the previous chapter)

Etc.....

Each section would have an anecdotal story, what the lesson from that is, some exercises to do on your own travel adventure and room for journaling.

I started going through my own journaling from that trip (over 50 pages) to see what patterns or experiences there were that led me through my immense healing experience. I also was thinking about the highly popular book "Eat, Pray, Love" which actually does not have a workbook, or trip or anything associated with it that I could find. I thought there could be some kind of alliance there once I am prepared with the workbook. My networks could include women's travel groups (of which there are many) as well as recovering from divorce, how to be single kinds of groups. I see this as a crossover between the two.

Anyway, I don't think this is a niche for ALL of who I am forever, but it is a piece that is important, that I love and I think there could be a market for."



Notice the creativity and ideas that come from having a clear niche she resonates with.

You want a niche? Look to your wounds. You might be surprised with what you find there.

As we approach the launch of my six week [Niching for Hippies](#) coaching program, I've been writing and thinking a lot about niching.

And one thing has gotten clearer and clearer to me over the past month: your niche is often you.

A while back, I wrote a blog post about how our [deepest wounds](#) can be a doorway to our truest niche. And then a few weeks ago, I wrote a bit more about how [your niche is often you](#).

Or at least who you used to be.

And I want to hone in on that theme here.

Because, I think there's one question you can ask yourself which will take you closer to figuring out your most authentic niche than anything I know.

A question that's so simple and so obvious but so clear that you it might surprise you.

Here's the question: "What have you had to overcome in your life to be where you are today?"

That's it.

Think about it. You've had to overcome a lot in your life to be where you are: heartbreak, death, profound loss, deep loneliness, cruelty from others etc.

And to survive that, you had to adapt. You had to learn to get good at certain things. You had to develop skills. And maybe life just pulverized you into submission and you had to learn the art of letting go. Maybe you became charming, maybe you got good at art, maybe you learned a lot about compassion, maybe you had to learn a lot about how life really works vs. how you wished it might.

My guess is that to deal with your wounds you might have talked to a lot of friends, gone to workshops, sought out counseling, gone back to school.

Overcoming things is not easy work.

And the word 'overcome' here is important.

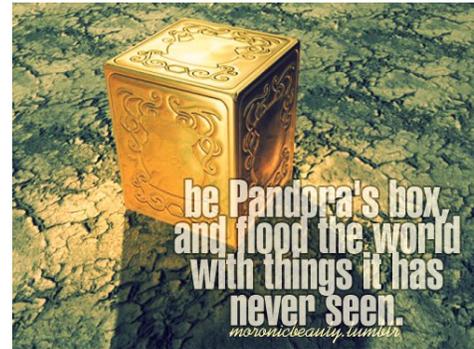
I'm not just asking you to think about where you've struggled in life. Struggle doesn't imply any kind of growth or learning. I'm asking you to consider where in your life you've really made progress. Maybe you didn't make it as far as you would have liked, but you're further than you were (and maybe further than you ever imagined you'd be).

Maybe you used to be really overweight. And now you're still a bit overweight but you've made so much progress.

Maybe you used to be deep in debt and you're not all the way out but you're well on your way.

Maybe you were shattered by heartbreak and, you're not 100% over it but you're 75% over it.

Maybe you used to feel anxious and depressed all the time and now it's only some of the time.



You've made progress. You've overcome it in a lot of ways. You're not longer trapped in the quicksand of the problem.

And that qualifies you to help anyone who has made less progress than you, anyone who's a few steps behind you in their journey. You don't have to [posture](#) and pretend to be an expert or to be perfect. To offer help you just need to be a few steps ahead.

Another way of putting it: haven't you become the very person whose help you needed when you were younger?

Dike Drummond of [The Happy MD](#) who was featured in [yesterday's blog post](#) said it so well of his past as a burned out Medical Doctor,

I realized that the person I have become here in 2012 is the exact person I would have so loved to meet back in 1998 ... and if we had met, I am pretty sure I would still be practicing medicine in some fashion today. Once I realized this and saw the amount of burnout – and suffering – out there ... the purpose of these last 12 years of my life became crystal clear.

Imagine if younger you could have had the insights and experience you have now. Imagine if, somehow, you could have given yourself the mentorship and guidance that you so needed back then (and that you would have listened).

Well, this world is full of 'younger you's'. It's not too late. There are so many people trapped in the swamps of the very issues you have overcome and made so much progress in.

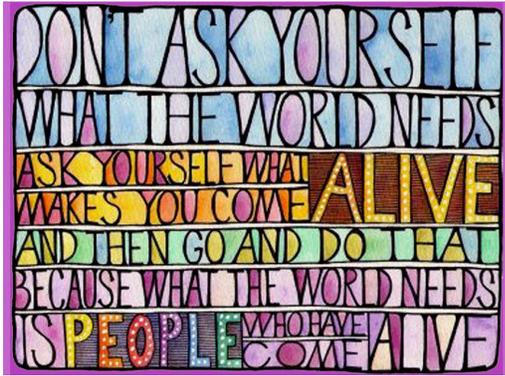
Can you think of any group of people you are more qualified to help than them?

Can you think of any person they might be happier to see than you? Someone who's already been through it.

Can you think of any group of people you'd be happier to help? Any kind of work that would be more meaningful?

I invite you to sit with this question: "What have you had to overcome in your life to be where you are today?"

Your answers might surprise you, free you and delight others.



Exercises for Discovering Your Niche:

So, we know that having a niche is important. And now we know how to identify a good one.

So, this is all great in theory - but how about in practice? What about in your *particular* situation.

So, where do you even start?

This is the hardest part. Identifying your niche(s). After all, you could choose any one of hundreds of possibilities. How do you choose?

The following ten questions are based on the assumption that you don't already have a strong implicit niche for what you do - that there's the possibility to choose a more narrow niche.

They're also based on the idea that you want to choose a niche that is a natural fit for you - a niche that's an extension of you somehow. You want the niche to be fun. In truth - it doesn't need to be for the success of your business - but it likely does for your own fulfillment. So, these questions are often about you - getting to know yourself.

First of all, if you feel uptight about making the choice - relax. You're not crazy. It's a tricky question. And you're not alone. A lot of people feel this way. And also relax because - you don't have to figure this out over night. It's okay - and often important - to take your time.

When I teach workshops – this is where people get stuck. All the theory I covered before is fine. It's logical. It makes sense. They love it. And then I invite them to pick a niche to focus on for the weekend – and they freeze up or freak out.

Now, not all of these will make sense or be a fit for your situation - but I invite you to sit with each exercise - and see what comes up. You might just be surprised. Come up with your answers and then let yourself steep in them. Write the answers down and then schedule to revisit them in a month. Actually schedule it.

Identifying Your Core Wounds:

(for a more indepth exploration of this, go to www.spiritualmarketingquest.com)

I invite you to block off a couple of hours either by yourself or with a close friend or colleague and reflect over the different stages of your life and look at where your hurt and struggled the most. Go through each age range and jot some notes of those moments that were defining moments or personal tragedies for you.

Identifying Your Wounds Timeline

Age Range	What were the most pivotal, lifechanging, impactful, traumatizing, painful moments during this period of your life?
Ages 0-5	
Ages 6-10	
Ages 11 – 14	
Ages 15 – 17	
Ages 19 – 23	
Ages 23 – 30	
Ages 30 - 40	
Ages 40 - 60	
Ages 50 - 60	
Ages 60 - 70	
Ages 70 – 80	

Now **circle the five moments** that stand out as the most meaningful for you. And explore them more deeply on the next five pages.

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

”

— Elizabeth Kubler Ros

Your Top Five Moments

Moment #1: _____

How did this experience feel? What happens and how do you react when you remember it? (This is how your niche is likely feeling right now which is useful when writing descriptions of what you do). CONSULT THE “FEELINGS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

Which needs of yours weren't met from this experience? (These unmet needs are the heart of really understanding your niche and crafting offers for them) CONSULT THE “NEEDS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

What did you learn from that moment about yourself, others and life? What disempowering beliefs might you have adopted from this experience?

What special abilities, skills or talents did you adapt to get through this experience?

How might those abilities, skills or talents actually be a blessing to the others and to the world?

If we were to pretend that everything in life happened *for* you not *to* you, and that the universe is a friendly place conspiring to wake you up to the truth – what else might have been the hidden blessing in this for you? What kind of work might your life have perfectly prepared you for?

From this, what types of people are you drawn to help? Who else might have gone through a similar emotional landscape that you could feel drawn to supporting on their journey? They might not be the exact same situations but let yourself think with an open mind.

Moment #2: _____

How did this experience feel? What happens and how do you react when you remember it? (This is how your niche is likely feeling right now which is useful when writing descriptions of what you do). CONSULT THE “FEELINGS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

Which needs of yours weren’t met from this experience? (These unmet needs are the heart of really understanding your niche and crafting offers for them) CONSULT THE “NEEDS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

What did you learn from that moment about yourself, others and life? What disempowering beliefs might you have adopted from this experience?

What special abilities, skills or talents did you adapt to get through this experience?

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Moment #3: _____

How did this experience feel? What happens and how do you react when you remember it? (This is how your niche is likely feeling right now which is useful when writing descriptions of what you do). CONSULT THE “FEELINGS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

Which needs of yours weren’t met from this experience? (These unmet needs are the heart of really understanding your niche and crafting offers for them) CONSULT THE “NEEDS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

What did you learn from that moment about yourself, others and life? What disempowering beliefs might you have adopted from this experience?

What special abilities, skills or talents did you adapt to get through this experience?

How might those abilities, skills or talents actually be a blessing to the others and to the world?

If we were to pretend that everything in life happened *for* you not *to* you, and that the universe is a friendly place conspiring to wake you up to the truth – what else might have been the hidden blessing in this for you? What kind of work might your life have perfectly prepared you for?

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Moment #4: _____

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Which needs of yours weren’t met from this experience? (These unmet needs are the heart of really understanding your niche and crafting offers for them) CONSULT THE “NEEDS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

What did you learn from that moment about yourself, others and life? What disempowering beliefs might you have adopted from this experience?

What special abilities, skills or talents did you adapt to get through this experience?

How might those abilities, skills or talents actually be a blessing to the others and to the world?

If we were to pretend that everything in life happened *for* you not *to* you, and that the universe is a friendly place conspiring to wake you up to the truth – what else might have been the hidden blessing in this for you? What kind of work might your life have perfectly prepared you for?

From this, what types of people are you drawn to help? Who else might have gone through a similar emotional landscape that you could feel drawn to supporting on their journey? They might not be the exact same situations but let yourself think with an open mind.

Moment #5: _____

How did this experience feel? What happens and how do you react when you remember it? (This is how your niche is likely feeling right now which is useful when writing descriptions of what you do). CONSULT THE “FEELINGS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

Which needs of yours weren’t met from this experience? (These unmet needs are the heart of really understanding your niche and crafting offers for them) CONSULT THE “NEEDS INVENTORY” at the back of the workbook.

What did you learn from that moment about yourself, others and life? What disempowering beliefs might you have adopted from this experience?

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Weaving Together the Wounds Exercise:

List the top five special gifts and abilities that have come from your wounding experiences.

List the top three groups of people you feel drawn to work with out of this exercise.

Feelings Inventory

Feelings we may experience when our needs are being met. The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of mental states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

EXERCISE: Circle the Top Ten words that you believe best describe how your clients feel in relationship to the problems you’ve identified. If the pain is a small one you likely wouldn’t circle high intensity words like horrified, but if the issue is a serious one with very powerful implications you likely wouldn’t circle a word like “irked” or “miffed”. Circle words that you believe accurately reflect how they feel on a regular basis about their problems.

AFRAID	ANNOYED	ANGRY	AVERSION	CONFUSED	DISCONNECTED	DISQUIET
apprehensive dread foreboding frightened mistrustful panicked petrified scared suspicious terrified wary worried	aggravated dismayed disgruntled displeased exasperated frustrated impatient irritated irked	angry enraged furious incensed indignant irate livid outraged resentful	animosity appalled contempt disgusted dislike hate horrified hostile repulsed	ambivalent baffled bewildered dazed hesitant lost mystified perplexed puzzled torn	alienated aloof apathetic bored cold detached distant distracted indifferent numb removed withdrawn	agitated alarmed discombobulated disconcerted disturbed perturbed rattled restless shocked startled surprised troubled turbulent turmoil uncomfortable uneasy unnerved unsettled upset
EMBARRASSED	FATIGUE	PAIN	SAD	TENSE	VULNERABLE	YEARNING
ashamed chagrined flustered guilty mortified self-conscious	beat burnt out depleted exhausted lethargic listless sleepy tired weary worn out	agony anguished bereaved devastated grief heartbroken hurt lonely miserable regretful remorseful	depressed dejected despair despondent disappointed discouraged disheartened forlorn gloomy heavy hearted hopeless melancholy unhappy wretched	anxious cranky distressed distraught edgy fidgety frazzled irritable jittery nervous overwhelmed restless stressed out	fragile guarded helpless insecure leery reserved sensitive shaky	envious jealous longing nostalgic pining wistful

Needs Inventory:

CONNECTION	HONESTY	PLAY	PEACE	PHYSICAL WELL-BEING	MEANING	AUTONOMY
Acceptance Affection Appreciation Belonging Cooperation Communication Closeness Community Companionship Compassion Consideration Consistency Empathy Inclusion Intimacy Love Mutuality Nurturing Respect / Self-respect Safety Security Stability Support To know and be known To see and be seen To understand and be understood Trust Warmth	Authenticity Integrity Presence	Joy Humor	Beauty Communion Ease Equality Harmony Inspiration Order	Air Food Movement/ exercise Rest / sleep Sexual expression Safety (protection from life threatening situations) Shelter Touch Water	Awareness Celebration of life Challenge Clarity Competence Consciousness Contribution Creativity Discovery Efficacy Effectiveness Growth Learning Mourning Participation Purpose Self-expression Stimulation Understanding	Choice Freedom Independence Space Spontaneity

