

MORE TO LIFE STORIES

I took the *More To Life* weekend course in November 2000. Many things have changed since then that have had a huge impact on my life. Firstly it helped me to let go of my first husband. My relationships with my children also improved to such an extent that almost all of them have now done the weekend. More significantly, having remarried a few years ago, I use the tools I have learnt over the years to keep my marriage fresh, alive and joyful. *More To Life* taught me to live in the moment, and to be grateful for every breath that I take. And that is the message I take out into the world.

For many years now I have been working with the issue of violence against women; telling my story, campaigning for women's rights, and writing books and papers in the hope that I could make a difference in the lives of women not as fortunate as I. Learning to take full responsibility for how I am in the world no matter what happens to me externally, has changed the way that I now work.

Now I advocate for an approach that builds relationships and works with individuals on a more spiritual level that transcends gender. I left my job to pursue a PhD to study how this could be done more concretely and am now working with a Southern African regional programme which works with partner organizations throughout Southern Africa to build peace in the region. We are already planning how to use the *Self Esteem* course to start the process first on the team and then with the partners. I am also involved with teaching peace-building skills to e-combatants in South Africa and will be talking to people who have taken *More To Life* about how to take the training to this group of very traumatized people. And there's more...

Anu Pillay

*Peacebuilding Programme Manager
Centre for the Study of Violence & Reconciliation
Braamfontein, South Africa*

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I took my weekend in November 2002. On Sunday, I really was hung up on one of the exercises. For the first time, I realized certain things still had great power over me, but I was consciously aware that I was not willing to give them all up.

I was, however, willing to work on my relationship with my mother. Less than two weeks later, I had a very rare opportunity to visit her alone (in a nursing home 1,700 miles away). I went through the exercise with her. As I started to cry, I asked her to forgive me for everything I had done to intentionally hurt her. I told her that I loved her, and that I knew how much she loved me because I have children of my own. This is the only time I ever remember crying with her. I thanked her for having me, for giving me life. She forgave me, and asked me for forgiveness, too. When my husband came in the room, he could feel the connection between us. It was palpable.

This is the deepest connection I have ever had with my mother. As joyous as it was at the time, it has brought me even more peace since then. Because my mother died 3 months later. Without knowing she was going to die, my last time with her was everything I could ever have wished it could be. I would never have received this wonderful gift if I had not attended the *More To Life*. Thank you for sharing your gift!

Anonymous

Colorado Springs, Colorado

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I was inspired and awakened after completing the basic weekend in March 1991. My senses were awakened and I smelt many new smells in my environment for the first time. I reconnected with my passion and vision for a fair and free South Africa and found a place to contribute in the struggle for freedom. I feel deeply touched today to see a thriving and diverse group of people in and around Johannesburg who have taken *More To Life* courses, and I am proud of my contribution towards this success.

This vision and passion for a free and fair South Africa was further ignited at the Advanced Course *The Sixth Sense* in Sani Pass in 2004. When I returned from the course to Hout Bay (a microcosm of SA), I was empowered and ready to champion a team of 70 diverse residents to conduct 300 interviews in order to find out what we all want for our future. This survey led to the coming together of more than 350 Hout Bay residents with the Mayor of Cape Town and her delegation. A Community Forum was formed and people came together to explore a way forward in order to achieve a sustainable Hout Bay for all.

Bronwen Lankers-Byrne

Hout Bay, South Africa

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I used to live under the yoke of the deepest fearful imaginings, disliking others and myself, and believing that I had to save the world from a life of misery and torment by exercising a fearful control over life itself. Twenty years ago I took the *More To Life* weekend and began a process of a profound change of perception that was to affect every area of my life.

I have learned to let go of the desperate and despairing fears, and to trust and behold the wonder of Life itself and all its mysteries. I believe, joyfully, that I am upheld, loved and cherished, and that we all are. I also appreciate the greater trust and intimacy that is generated in the family when I relinquish the over-responsibility I adopted in the past (they're grateful for this too!).

As a Mentor of *The Power of Self Esteem* and *The Power of Purpose* courses, I have mentored approximately 1200 people. I have worked in partnership with The Well Women Centre in Harlow, Essex, England, on a pioneering project to secure European Social Funding for women who were unemployed, in low-skilled, or in low-paid work, to support them to take *The Power of Self Esteem*. More than 280 women have benefited so far, and I am proud and grateful to have been part of this.

Colette Stevens

Woodford Green, Essex, England

I am an entertainer. Before doing *More To Life* and some of the follow-up courses I had a sense that something was missing. I loved what I did but was struggling with my self-esteem and often thought I was only good enough if I was working and had money. I also sometimes acted in a way that did not honor me and my values, but I thought that was what I had to do to become a success. I often kept 'playing the part.' I was being who I thought people wanted me to be, instead of being real and myself.

This led to a lot of distress and I found myself in situations that I didn't want to be in, like accepting work when I wasn't happy with the conditions but being too afraid to say no. After taking the courses, I got to know what is important to me. I got to understand how rich life can be if I was real with myself and others. I got to practice how to ask for what I need and how to be authentic, especially when surrounded by work that is largely based on pretence. I learnt to discern when I was acting and when I was being real. I realized through my work with the courses that being real was a lot more freeing.

Then in late 2002 I anchored a TV music show. From the onset it was very important that I be real and that the person the people saw on TV was the same person they would see on the street. I am happy to say that for the most part I succeeded. I was able to be there and be real, and on occasion got moved to tears by a caller's trust in me. Callers started confiding very personal details on live TV, and I think that is largely because they knew I really cared. I never pretended to be perfect, and I think viewers responded well to that.

I am so grateful that I was blessed to come across these courses so early in my life. I have come a long way and I know that I have a full life ahead of me. One of my big purposes is making a difference wherever I go. I feel free, full of hope, and love life.

Eloise Cupido

Johannesburg, South Africa

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In 1985, I lived for a short time in Austin, Texas. About a week before returning to our home in Bozeman, Montana, my husband Claud and I took *More To Life*. I was 37 years old at the time, and the impact of that experience on my life has been immeasurable. After the weekend, I felt a lightness in myself, an ability to connect with others, and a reassurance that was transformative. I remember sharing my experience of the *More To Life* weekend with friends in Bozeman as one that equaled the birth of each of our three children. Certainly it was a rebirth for me.

Claud and I talked all the way home that Spring as we drove through Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and finally Montana, sharing our amazement and joy about the *More To Life* weekend and exploring the possibilities before us. One particular moment I remember on that long drive was when Claud suggested I apply for graduate school in counseling.

Before the *More To Life* weekend I had assumed I would be rejected, but now I went through the application process, not knowing what would happen, but with a renewed sense of confidence. Three years later, in 1990, I graduated from MSU with a Masters degree in Mental Health Counseling.

A colleague and I started a private practice in Bozeman where I counseled people for fourteen years. All of this was the fulfillment of a dream I had, to use my talents to contribute to the well-being of others. I am grateful for this one story and a thousand others about how these courses have enabled me to live my life with an open and willing heart.

Jan Matney, Sr. Trainer
Bozeman, Montana

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As I sit here reflecting, it is difficult for me to believe that it has been nearly 10 years now since I took ‘the training,’ at age 55. I can clearly see two very different me’s – the before and after, if you will. I was raised in an alcoholic family and, at age 18, my entire goal was to escape. Marriage ‘rescued’ me from that situation, but though the next 16 years produced my two beautiful children, the relationship with my husband was rocky and finally empty. I filled that emptiness by divorcing and remarrying in a short 30 days, then spent the next 20 years in an abusive, co-dependent marriage. I took the *More To Life* weekend after my second set of divorce papers was served.

I have looked back only to ‘measure’ my journey. I am continually in awe of how easily and joyfully the changes in me have occurred. Has my life been easy since then? No, not at all, but the honesty, openness, willingness, compassion and acceptance with which I have been able to meet and greet the events of my life since then fill me with gratitude over and over again. Knowing how to ‘drill down’ and take a stand has enabled me to move through events with grace and gratitude. Sometimes my mind wants me to believe that this sense of gratitude simply comes with age, but I ‘know’ differently. It’s because of what I now know, and am awake enough to notice!

Jeanenne Tucker

Richmond, Texas

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I stepped out from a rather insulated church environment as a pastor to greet life in its fullness in the program's first course in self-esteem. Since then I've stepped into *More To Life* to acknowledge the grace in everyday, and have continued to be regularly involved with teams, mentoring and participating in courses and area leadership for more than 22 years.

I transitioned from parish ministry to the ministry of helping to feed the hungry, supporting people who want to help feed others, and educating people about hunger in their communities. I am grateful and joy-filled for the experience of the *More To Life* – the training that was the prime mover in my developing deep and lasting friendships and multitudes of moments to be truthful, fully alive, and in love with life and others.

Jim Roessler

Santa Rosa, California

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My daughter, Shelley, is eighteen, has Down's Syndrome and is mainstreamed at the local high school. A few weeks ago she didn't want to go to school. I sat with her and asked why not. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she told me it was because she had no friends. I was able to be with her as she was, sharing in her sadness and feeling my own. We talked about how it was for her at school, and together we told some truths. She saw that even though she wasn't spending time with some girls she used to spend time with, they still cared about her, looked out for her and chatted with her when they met; and they were still her friends. She made some choices about what she could do if she felt lonely at school and what she could do to make new friends.

Then she smiled and said 'My mind was tricking me. Laura and April and Hannah are my friends.' Hearing that, I was filled with gratitude for her having the words and the ways to such understanding.

Thank you for creating and sourcing this material. Thank you for this precious work that is such a gift to have and to share.

Jo O'Sullivan
Whitianga, New Zealand

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I, Ken, had an affair in 1996. When Loyd found out, her pain was almost unbearable. One of the More To Life trainers lovingly supported us in our decision to remain together while working it out, saying, 'You have chosen the way that works for you. Friends who say Ken should move out are thinking in the "world's way." You have chosen another path, and good for you.'

Our therapist was also active in *More To Life*. We agreed to make no decision about our marriage until after six months working with him. We worked intensely on our relationship, feeling emotions from rage to relief. I determined to listen fully to Loyd, using the process of writing down in her own words what she said to me.

This was painful due to her anger and knowing I had intentionally betrayed her, taking advantage of her trust. Read it all in Loyd's book, *Beyond the Affair: The Healing of a Marriage* and learn what we now teach couples in distress. We built our relationship to be better than ever, in love, affection and being best friends. We celebrated our 50th anniversary on 7 July 2006.

Ken & Elizabeth Loyd Kinnett

Flat Rock, North Carolina

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Since taking the *More To Life* weekend in 1989, I have had more peace in my life and am more patient and loving. I can also think of many instances where I stepped forward instead of shying away in fear.

The most recent example I can think of is a current relationship. We have religious differences, and we recently broke up because of them, after dating two and a half years, and yet we are still in love. My writing revealed thinking that was preventing me from really listening and sharing about what really mattered for both her and myself. Regularly and systematically being realistic, I learned to focus on loving her and myself, and taking my next step instead of worrying about getting back together or not.

As a result, our communication with each other improves daily, and our friendship deepens. Even if we don't get back together, I am deeply grateful for our friendship that continues to deepen, and so is she. I can keep my heart open, and can continue to see us as the human beings we are, and it doesn't have to be any certain way. I am truly grateful.

Michael Swartz

Houston, Texas

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I took the *More To Life* weekend in October 2003. I had beliefs that I had nothing of importance to say in the world. During the Completion Evening I shared that I had learned during the weekend to tell the truth and see myself the way others had been seeing me – as a woman with a lot to say, with a vision for eliminating poverty, and with the qualities of a leader.

Through *More To Life* I have discovered not only myself, but a way of being that gives me hope for the future. Since 2003 I have stepped forward as a leader in *More To Life* in Knoxville, and also in my profession as a law professor and scholar. I have experienced deep connection as a way of being with people in general. I experience myself as a connecting presence in the world.

Paula Williams

Knoxville, Tennessee

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I needed hip replacement surgery and kept putting it off because of fear. After being in a training, I worked through my fear and went ahead with the procedure. I called and got support for my thinking all along the way. It was life-changing and life-turning.

On another course which I took just after my former wife died of cancer, I became very emotional at a particular point in the training. I will never forget the trainer's facilitation of me, so that I could work with my beliefs about how that should have been and it wasn't and never was going to be the way I wanted it to be. Another life-changing and life-turning moment.

More To Life will always be a wonderful part of my life.

Peace,

Pete Guild

Dallas Texas

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More To Life has helped me find my creativity, my courage, and realize my potential to constantly grow. At *Way of a Warrior II* in 2005, I discovered a dream: to develop a program to assess and treat quality-of-life issues (such as depression and fatigue) for patients and caregivers at the hospital where I'm employed. One of the departments I'm involved with is currently developing its 5- to 10-year plans. During the most crucial time of the brainstorming, I was out of town, but although I felt scared, thanks to the work I acknowledged that I have something to offer and enrolled the chair of the department into my ideas.

I'm proud of myself, and I'm excited each day as I watch like a newborn baby waiting to see what happens now, and now, and now....

I am grateful for practical material, which enables me to constantly rediscover my joy and myself, and helps me realize again and again that the process of discovery and growth is as important (and as fun) as the results.

Richard Swartz

Houston, Texas

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At 13:32 (SA time) 20 Nov 2006 a quite unspeakably beautiful and precious gift arrived: our much anticipated and loved little 3kg daughter was born, with a midwife assisting my wife and me with an active birth in our home. It was a week of heart-cracking joy. And then on Thursday night we admitted her to a hospital neonatal ICU because she was having mild, brief, but regular seizures.

The ensuing barrage of events (watching my 10-day-old firstborn have a lumbar puncture, hearing the paediatrician say she needed to check for brain damage, receiving love and support from friends across the globe) and what we have done with them these last few days are, I believe, a defining moment for the 3 of us in our new family. My wife and I met through *More To Life*, and continue drawing immense value from it. Apart from those blessings, the many friends we've made through it, and the shift this organization is offering my entire country, I also want to speak of this new, immediate, personal experience.

Obviously it has been a hugely worrying time for us. But the tools I've internalized these past 15 years have been a lifeline for me in the last 2 days. I've told myself the raw truth in the face of such gut-clenching fear, over and over. I've savored the simple and undeniable power of this and kept creating my path in partnership with Life, just as it is - bringing an adorable daughter with an as yet unspecified, possibly permanent 'condition'. I'm embracing such a hard unknown right now, as together with my beloved wife I reverently hold and embrace my darling new child, with whom I am helplessly and willingly in love.

I know I could not have dealt with this in the same clear and open-hearted way without the exposure I've had to *More To Life* courses. For this I am speechless with gratitude and awe. Thank you for the humanity, depth, wisdom and creativity of this work. It has quite simply altered the way I can see things, and thus the quality of my entire life.

Peace, joy and more peace

Rob McLeod

Johannesburg, South Africa

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China has been a wonderful place to notice how much I have changed since taking *More To Life*. I just love how I can be. It is exemplified by a time recently when my host turned to me and apologized for the poverty and squalor that we were driving through on our way to a factory in China.

I explained to her what riches and connections were available to me, because each encounter with a way different to mine is not a cause for apology but another opportunity. I am grateful for the opening of my eyes and heart that this material has facilitated.

My connections with all of those I have met in this different land have been enhanced by the learnings I have gained, and I have no doubt that I touch people in a more human manner.

Stephen Allan
Christchurch, New Zealand

For me, living in New Zealand, far away from my place of upbringing, calls for a long journey to meet my parents, family and old friends [in Germany]. And in 2005, after several years I was much looking forward to meeting my mother and father again.

It was not to be. At the hour of my arrival, on November 25th, my father unexpectedly died of a heart attack at the age of 80. We 'missed' each other by less than a few minutes and meters. However, while I may have missed my father in the normal sense, I really met him in a 'for-ness' that was new to me. And more, because there was not only a deep and rewarding connection between me and my now deceased father, but also hundreds of precious connections between many friends and family came to life, even reaching across the globe. There were renewed connections of people who had not seen each other for a long time or have been separated by grievances and resentment. New beginnings were made possible and triggered by his farewell.

I am grateful for having been able to accept not only the death of my father, but also for having found acceptance of the circumstances. I was able to grieve fully, cry, shout, reflect, and be quiet, sad, alone and with others. There was even joy in celebrating his life. I remembered some of my childhood moments with him and I was grateful that for several years now we have managed to be complete with each other. I am grateful for all of it.

By getting over my rejection of the event, I have received much, including peace with it. I love him; I miss him. This journey didn't go my way; it went much bigger than that!

Ulrich Bergler
Christchurch, New Zealand

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What is most significant to me RIGHT now is how much more honest and connected my relationships are. I really understand how others' points of view are as valid as mine – even and especially when I see things differently.

I also pass this on to other people. A good friend of mine sometimes calls to discuss her trials in her relationship with her husband. Instead of urging her to leave him as I know other friends do, or say how awful he is and how he should be, I encourage her to hear him and to try to understand his process, pain and things he is believing/fearing. I know she takes these conversations forward and uses some of the issues to make a big difference in their relationship.

So I know not only am I doing this for myself in my own life, but that I can also help others in their lives, whether or not they have done – and in fact may never do, the *More To Life* weekend. I feel enormous gratitude for the awareness, understanding of our common humanity and struggles in all their traumas and glory, and I am deeply enriched by the depth of true human connection when we are for each other rather than against.

Victoria Rose

Twickenham, Middlesex, England