

Acknowledgments

I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL TO the individuals whose stories are in this book. Bravely, you opened yourselves to me and to the world. You spoke freely, honestly, and poignantly of the most difficult challenges you have faced. You inspired me. You touched me. You were teachers to me. For that I thank you.

To Barbara Brodsky and Aaron, Pamela Kribbe and Jeshua, Corbie Mitleid, and Staci Wells and her spirit guide: Thank you for being my teachers as well. Your wisdom and love flow throughout these pages. You have given so much of yourselves in service to the world. It is my great honor to collaborate with you.

To Liesel, the love of my life: Thank you for your love, encouragement, and insights. Thank you for believing in me and my work. I chose well in my pre-birth planning when I chose you. Though I'm a writer, I will never be able to express in words how much I love you.

To my sister, Deborah; my brother-in-law, Jerry; and my adorable nieces, Sydney and Riley: Thank you for all your love and support throughout the writing process and, indeed, throughout my life. Thank you for always being there.

To Debbi Mayo and Dr. Greg Karch: Thank you for reading and commenting on some of the chapters. Your insights were invaluable, and your healing touch will be felt by all who come to these pages. Thank you for caring.

To Deborah Bookin: Thank you for allowing me to write much of this book in The Crystal Bee (www.crystalbee.com), a place of sweetness, warmth, and inspiration. Thank you for the walks, the lunches, and the wonderful conversation.

To my cousin Emily Fleisher: Thank you for your eagle-eyed proofreading and extraordinary kindness and generosity. To Debbi

Mayo and Kathleen Webb: Thank you for your invaluable proof-reading as well.

Thank you to Sue Mann for yet another brilliant editing, to Jan Camp for yet another exquisitely beautiful cover, and to Jill Ronsley for yet another gorgeous interior design. Working with all of you once more was like reassembling an all-star team. Thank you to Jaine Howard, the newest member of the team, and to Edna Van Baulen for your wonderful transcriptions.

Thank you to Rita Curtis and Sylvia Hayse for helping me to bring my books and an awareness of pre-birth planning to the world. Rita, I wish you much joy in your retirement. I will miss you.

This book would not have been possible without the contributions of many others who shared their wisdom and offered their support. In particular I thank John Friedlander, Bob and Cynthia Dukes, Jill Caro, Serenity Meese, Omiri, Kathy Long, Joyce Fricke, and Josh Mendel.

I often say that I am not the sole author of the books I write, but simply the member of the writing team who happens to be in body. Thank you to the many nonphysical beings who work with and through me. This book is as much from you as it is from me.

Prologue

“I WAS FOUR OR FIVE years old when the nightmares started. On some nights a huge, black spider dropped from above, its underbelly opening to devour me as its talons curled around my face. On other nights a massive shark rushed up from somewhere below, with rows of glittering, razor-sharp teeth around a mouth that became an immense dark abyss about to engulf me. Another time, a primeval bird of prey, with a beak like a knife, swooped down from the ceiling to plunge into my heart. Sometimes my nightmares didn’t coalesce into creatures, though. Instead, the walls of my bedroom crawled, or foggy clutches emerged from the night air. But always I felt the certainty of death.

“Terror surged through me as I awoke in the middle of those nights. Then I knew I was in my bedroom, but the creatures were still there—I saw them, heard them—clearly impossible, but just as clearly still about to kill me! Screaming, I clawed the sheets as I scrambled across the bed, until finally I found myself on the floor: heart pounding, gasping for air, in a dark, empty room.

“In Harry Potter’s world, a creature called a Boggart erupts from its hiding place to take the form of your deepest fears. To conquer it, you have to imagine the object of your terror in a way that you will find silly or laughable. My decades of nightmares (accompanied by crushing depressions and inescapable obsessions) seem that way to me now: a bad horror movie, ridiculous. I wish Harry Potter’s techniques had been around when I was that terrified little girl.

“Many people imagine that the goal and reward of true healing are to be found in peak moments of divine ecstasy—an opening onto eternity as the Universe lifts us into its galactic swirl ... or as a profound stillness breathes with us—and we know God. But

no, that isn't it. Those moments come out of nowhere and usually disappear as mysteriously as they arrived. Awakening is inspired by such moments, and we all seek to prolong them. But in my experience no therapy, meditation, knowledge or practice will invariably take us to the mountaintop, much less keep us there.

“Evolving to reach a place where we are serene, joyful and enthusiastic about daily life, every day (or almost): that's the real goal and the real reward. The day I knew I had ‘made it’ was the day I realized that I had not had any nightmares in ages. Even more important, I also realized that I had not felt depressed, obsessed, invaded or out of control for years. It dawned on me that I was no longer a seeker. I had found what I was looking for, and it had become a way of life where I am happy nearly all the time, and often for no particular reason.

“Life requires much less effort now. I appreciate the people, places and things that give color and richness to my world, as I see that all of them do. I often feel joyous and free. This is the kind of healing that happens when we follow our soul's plan. This is the kind of healing that is possible, not just for me, but for everyone.

“It is the kind of healing that, for me, has created a Heaven on Earth.”

—Mikéla Christi
(Chapter 13: Mental Illness)

Preface

AS A CHILD I WAS severely emotionally abused by my mother. I planned this abuse before I was born.

When I say that *I* planned the experience, what I really mean is that my soul planned it. I am not separate from my soul; my soul contains my body, energy—indeed, the entirety of my consciousness. Yet, my soul is also more than me, just as the sun is more than any one ray of light it emits. My soul, like yours, is vast, expansive, limitless, and ever aware of its oneness with all beings. As I learn and grow, I bring my frequency closer to that of my soul and thus allow my soul to express more of its wisdom, love, and joy through me. My soul, your soul—in fact, all souls—are literally made from the energy of unconditional love. I *know* this to be true, because as you will read in Chapter 1, I have experienced it myself.

My greatest challenges, including the abuse I suffered as a child, were planned at the soul level before my birth to foster my evolution. If my soul is love, why would it plan for me to be abused? A fair question, one I have asked repeatedly throughout my life. In many ways the search for an answer is the driving force behind this book.

The abuse was intense and extreme, and though not literally unremitting, it was enough a part of daily life to feel so. The details are not important here. What is important is to understand how and why such things happen. For millennia humanity has learned through suffering. If we want to move beyond the learning-through-suffering paradigm, then such an understanding is essential.

Much of the planning between my mother's and my souls was based upon a past life in which I was a woman and my current mother was my son. In that life I was in a very difficult

marriage. I eventually managed to extricate myself and take my son with me, but my decision to leave my husband resulted in our impoverishment. My son blamed and deeply resented me for our poverty. I died at a relatively young age, and my son, though an adult at the time of my death, was then left both poor and alone. He felt abandoned by me.

Before he died, my son (my current mother) was unable to resolve the rage he felt toward me for the poverty and perceived abandonment. His anger, therefore, became part of his soul, an energy his soul wished very much to heal. Out of love my soul chose to give his soul the opportunity to heal that anger in a relationship in which our roles as mother and son would be reversed. Symbolically, this reversal represents the soul-level intent to “reverse” (heal) the rage. Such healing could perhaps best be accomplished, and is perhaps most meaningful, in circumstances in which my former son would have the power to act on his anger. Why? Because profound healing occurs *in the moment* in which negative emotion is felt but not acted upon. (Suppression is the choice to push “negative” emotion out of conscious awareness. Here, I refer instead to feeling the emotion but not acting upon it.) Had my former son not been in a position of power over me, he might not have had the opportunity truly to choose whether or not to express his anger. Such was our souls’ plan—a plan to which I agreed before I was born.

My soul had other motivations for creating this plan. In at least some of my other past lives, I was unable to love myself. Because we as souls learn through opposites, my soul chose for me to cultivate self-love by having an abusive mother. (Both our souls felt that at least some abuse was highly likely but hoped that healing would eventually occur.) From the level of the personality this decision may appear to be contradictory, even nonsensical, but it is not. Often, our souls forge life plans that are intended to get our attention, to put our “issues” front and center where we simply cannot ignore them. My mother’s *apparent* lack of love—she did and does, in fact, love me deeply, just as I love

her deeply—mirrored to and for me my own lack of self-love. My soul intended to motivate and even force me to learn to love myself through the seeming lack of love from my mother. In choosing my former son to be my mother, it was as though my soul had placed an enormous billboard in front of me that read: “Self-love is what you are here to work on.”

My father, who died during the writing of this book, was a key part of my soul’s plan. Though he utterly loved (and loves) me, and though he was not abusive, he was unable during my childhood to tell me that he loved me or to show affection in a way I could recognize as love. In addition, at my soul’s request he agreed to judge me repeatedly over the course of my life, and many of his judgments felt quite harsh to me. His judgments and early lack of affection were intended by my soul to have the same effect as my mother’s abuse: to drive me inward, where I would discover, and then spend a lifetime fanning, the flame of self-love. That flame, once but a small, barely perceptible spark, has grown considerably. As I continue to learn more about my life plan, I see ever more clearly both the courage it took for me to agree to it and the courage it takes for me to live it. And so, self-respect blossoms, and self-love grows stronger still.

Significantly, and also I believe by mutual pre-birth agreement, my father was unable to fathom the idea of pre-birth planning. Nevertheless, during his last years, as he sensed death approaching, he became increasingly supportive of my life path and writing. (He also told me often that he loved me, and I told him that I loved him, too.) In the weeks before he returned to Spirit, I read passages from this book to him. Each time he listened attentively, then looked at me and said, “I don’t understand a single word you’re saying, but your writing is brilliant!” He genuinely meant both parts of that statement. I couldn’t help but laugh, and I was deeply touched by his support. After his death, in a gesture that is both wonderfully loving and delightfully ironic, he joined the team of nonphysical beings who helped me write this book. Indeed, these words may very well be his.

In other incarnations I have been unable to achieve emotional independence, and these lives, too, played a role in my soul's decision to choose my mother. What is "emotional independence"? When I put that question to Spirit, I was told that it means looking to oneself as the primary source of one's well-being. By designing my life as it had, my soul had created circumstances that would powerfully motivate me to become, and know myself as, the primary source of my own well-being. Like self-love, emotional independence is a life lesson I am still in the process of mastering.

In yet other past lives I believed myself to be powerless. Our souls seek to heal false beliefs, including, most certainly, beliefs that contradict what the soul knows about itself to be true—and the soul knows itself to be tremendously powerful. My soul designed for me, and I agreed to incarnate into, a family that would reflect to me the belief in powerlessness. Again, my soul had placed squarely before me an issue in need of healing.

There were also lives in which I felt and believed myself to be unworthy. Our souls are sparks of the Divine, and because we are sparks of our souls, we, too, are Divine. As you will read, feelings or beliefs of powerlessness or unworthiness are primary motivators of a soul's decision to plan experiences that will mirror these aspects of self to us. Such feelings and beliefs are often largely or entirely subconscious, but as life reflects them to us, they trickle into the light of conscious awareness, where they may then be healed. Life blueprints that are intended to shine light on issues of powerlessness or unworthiness are often some of the most difficult learning-through-opposites plans, and experiences such as child abuse, incest, and rape are among them.

This book is the second I have written about why before we are born our souls plan to have specific experiences during our lifetime. It differs from my first book, *Your Soul's Plan*, in three ways. First, although in *Your Soul's Plan* I explored only the planning of life challenges, this book looks at two topics, pets and

spiritual awakening, that do not necessarily fall into the category of challenges. The pre-birth planning we do with our beloved animal companions is the topic most often requested by readers. Because we live in a time of widespread spiritual awakening, that subject, too, is worthy of inclusion.

Second, this book focuses to an even greater extent on healing. Our souls do not wish us to become permanently enmeshed in trauma. If a traumatic experience does occur, however, regardless of whether or not it was planned before birth, our souls will seek to guide us to and through healing. Healing actually taking place depends upon many factors, not the least being our tenacity and resourcefulness, but our souls are always there, nudging us, leading the way. The fact that you found this book indicates you are open to the promptings of your soul.

Third, this book explores the pre-birth planning of several particularly difficult subjects, among them incest and rape. You may be repulsed or horrified that a soul would plan to participate in such experiences as either perpetrator or victim. But know that my intent is not to repulse or horrify, but rather to bring an awareness of this aspect of soul planning into the collective consciousness so we can heal the wounded parts of ourselves—the underlying issues of unworthiness, powerlessness, and rage—and in so doing bring an end to incest, rape, and other forms of violation. Whether to include these chapters was a decision I agonized over for a very long time. In the end I felt a responsibility to share what I had found. We can, if we like, deny that the Earth is round, but that will not make it flat. It will still be round. Similarly, we can deny that these traumatic experiences are often (though certainly not always) planned before birth, but that will not mean such planning doesn't occur. It does. If we wish to create a world that is free of such trauma, then we must look bravely and honestly at what motivates the pre-birth planning of those experiences. And then heal.

I have not experienced either incest or rape in my current lifetime and so cannot possibly know the suffering that results. Yet,

as someone who was abused as a child, I do know what it's like to feel oneself to be a powerless victim, and I am intensely motivated to learn and heal. My childhood experiences have focused me on what I need to do, and what my soul wishes me to do, during my time on Earth. But, in addition to motivation and focus, my awareness of pre-birth planning has given deep *purpose and meaning* to what I experienced as a child. I know to the very core of my being that none of it was random or arbitrary. I know that I was not being punished by a wrathful God or a cruel Universe. I know that what happened is ultimately for my highest good.

In the Prologue you read about Mikæla. Her suffering was beyond anything I can imagine, yet it led her to a profound realization of herself as soul. When I asked Mikæla how she felt about everything she had gone through, she replied, "To get here, it was worth it."

That is how I view my childhood experiences: may they be a path to healing and awakening for me as Mikæla's experiences with mental illness were for her. May we also take all other challenges, and rather than misperceive them as empty, meaningless suffering, see them instead from the perspective of our souls and heal the wounds that underlie them. May all the experiences discussed on these pages and offered by life serve as tools of healing, awakening, and enlightenment for each and every one of us.

Introduction

IN THIS BOOK I OFFER to you a perspective that has been immeasurably helpful and healing for me. My hope is the same for you. You will know if this perspective is part of your spiritual path if the words on the pages ahead resonate with you. *Resonance* may be thought of as a feeling of intuitive rightness. But, what is it and where does it come from?

It comes from your soul. Your soul is aware of every thought you think, every word you speak, every action you take. Certain thoughts, words, and actions feel good; others do not. These feelings, these intuitive promptings, are communications direct from your soul. It is right there, peering over your shoulder, saying “Yes, this is the way” or “No, this path is not for you.” Trust these feelings. Notice when a feeling of resonance is present and when it is not. If it is not present as you read this book, then gently lay the book aside. But if it is present, I ask you to consider the possibility that your soul has guided you to this book. And I ask you to keep reading, even if your logical mind has difficulty with the notion that certain experiences, or perhaps any experiences, are planned before birth.

A Course in Miracles teaches that “perception requires the right instrument.” To read—that is, to perceive—this book with your mind is like trying to perceive weight with a thermometer or temperature with a bathroom scale: it’s the *wrong instrument*. What is the right instrument? Quite simply, the heart. The heart has a higher form of knowing than the mind. It may not make logical sense, but it will feel right. Trust that feeling.

You will read stories of people who—like you—planned their lives before they were born. I talked with these individuals at length about a particular life experience, then researched their

pre-birth plans with the assistance of four exceptionally gifted mediums and channels. In most instances I provided them with the person's full name and birthdate, the names of the family members and relevant others whom we wished to discuss, and a brief description of the life experience on which I wanted to focus. This information was necessary so the medium or channel (and the channeled consciousness) could access the relevant portion of the Akashic Record, a complete nonphysical record of everything that transpires on or is related to the Earth plane, including our pre-birth planning.

The Akashic Record is not static like a physical library on Earth; it is a living, dynamic tapestry that, when queried, responds to the specific needs and intentions of the questioner as well as the specific circumstances under which the questions are posed. Too, mediums and channels are unique in their gifts and in the ways in which they access information from Spirit; consequently, different mediums and channels will access different elements of the same person's pre-birth planning. It is for this reason that most interviewees had sessions with more than one medium or channel. In this way we were able to bring forth a fuller, richer picture of why a particular experience was planned before birth.

In the sessions with the mediums and channels, I typically began by asking Spirit this central question: "Was this experience planned before birth, and if so, why?" Further discussion and inquiry evolved organically from the response. Often during these sessions, the interviewees permitted me to ask most or all the questions. Both the individual interviews and the sessions with the mediums and channels are presented in dialogue format. I begin a new paragraph each time the interviewee or channeled consciousness starts to speak about a new subject. In keeping with convention, the preceding paragraph does *not* end with quotation marks, thus indicating that we are still listening to the same speaker.

Both in the discussions with Spirit and in other sections of the book, I use terms such as *higher* and *lower*, *good* and *bad*, and

positive and *negative*. These terms are used to reflect and discuss our human perspective, but they are not intended to indicate judgment on the part of our souls. Our souls do not judge, rank, or view the Universe in hierarchical terms; rather, they are acutely aware that all is One.

From the moment we are born, we have free will and are therefore able to deviate from our pre-birth plan whenever we like and as much as we like. All of us do so, and in doing so we create—we vibrationally attract—experiences that were seen as unlikely before we were born. As you read the stories, you will be tempted to ask if you planned a particular experience in your own life. A more helpful question to ask is, “If I planned this experience before I was born, why would I have done that?” Asking this question empowers you to extract from the experience all the learning and expansion of consciousness you sought if you did, in fact, plan the experience. This growth is more important than knowing whether the experience was indeed planned.

To understand the stories in the pages ahead—and, indeed, to understand life—it is helpful to know that everything in the Universe is energy vibrating at a certain frequency. Every person, animal, plant, object, word, thought, feeling, belief (whether conscious or subconscious), and action has its own unique vibration. The food you eat and the clothing you wear vibrate at specific frequencies. The car you drive has its particular vibration. If you were to paint your car a different color, it would then have a different vibration. In a Universe based on vibration, like attracts like; that is, the vibration of your words, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions magnetically draws to you experiences that are the same vibration. Colloquialisms like “Everything’s coming up roses” and “When it rains, it pours” reflect an intuitive understanding of this principle. When you are happy or unhappy, you draw to yourself experiences of equal vibration that perpetuate your happiness or unhappiness. Vibration plays an important role in both pre-birth planning and healing, and we will explore its role in the pages ahead.

You may be inclined to proceed immediately to the chapters that appear to be directly relevant to your life. Yet, because the stories build on each other, you will gain the fullest, richest understanding if you read them in order. Moreover, very different sorts of life experiences are often planned for the same or similar underlying reasons; therefore, you may gain greater insight into the deeper meaning of your experiences by reading the story of someone whose life is—on the surface—completely different from yours.

Some experiences in this book are highly traumatic. If you have had any of these experiences, please have social support around you when you read about them. The stories are offered to you in loving support of your soul's journey, but there is no substitute for the loving, in-person support of one who cares for you. Before we are born we choose with great wisdom and care those we will love and who will love us. We intend for our lives to be a shared voyage. I encourage you to extend your hand to a loved one and ask to walk this path hand-in-hand with you.

That, too, may be part of your pre-birth plan.

Your Guides

In deciding to read this book, you have embarked on a journey that will shine light on, and therefore bring deeper meaning to, your life. As you begin this journey, you may naturally wonder who your guides are. The following are the wise and loving mediums, channels, and spirit beings with whom I was honored to collaborate and from whom I have learned so very much. It was through them that I discovered what the people in this book planned before they were born—and why. Because this book focuses primarily on the pre-birth planning of life challenges, I asked the mediums and the beings they channel to speak openly and honestly of their own challenges.

Barbara Brodsky and Aaron

“I lost my hearing suddenly in 1972, when the first of my three children was born. Losing the ability to hear was a traumatic experience for me—imagine not being able to hear the laugh or cry of your newborn baby!—and also for my husband, who could no longer speak to me easily. I had the love of my husband and some good friends, and I continued to teach sculpture at my local university, so my life was full and joyful in many ways. Still, I felt cut off from the world. I was living a nightmare of isolation. ‘Why me?’ I asked. ‘Am I being punished? Has God abandoned me?’ Finally, in a place of great anguish and anger, I prayed for help.

“Sitting in meditation in my living room the next morning, as had been my daily practice for over two decades, I was aware of a strong energy presence. I could actually see his face. I thought, ‘Either I’m hallucinating or this is real, and I don’t know which possibility is more frightening.’ He radiated a white light so brilliant that at first I had to look away. It was hard to tell if he shined out of that light or if it radiated from him. His features were clearly visible: piercing blue eyes, high cheekbones and forehead, and white hair and a flowing beard that came to his chest. I trembled in his presence, yet I felt a deep love pouring from him, a love so familiar but unlike any I have known in this life. There was a comfort and joy in his presence that washed away all fear.

“I’m not going to suggest that I took this casually. I went into the kitchen to get a cup of tea. When I returned, he was still there. I wondered if I was hallucinating. But every time I looked, I saw him patiently waiting for me to be ready to move ahead. There was both power and ease in his presence. I wasn’t frightened because I felt so much love from him, as well as a gentleness and a connection dimly remembered from some unknown past. The white light was also comforting, like a brilliant torch in the darkness.