

Reboot Your Life Phoenix Edition

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*I dedicate this book to my mum and dad, Marion and Brian. Without you
this would not have been possible.*

*I'd like to thank you both for my great start in life, which has given me the
firm foundation to build and achieve so many amazing things.*

I look forward to sharing many more years with you both....

Life is like a camera, focus on what's important, capture the good times, develop from the negatives, and if things don't work out, take another shot.

- *Unknown author.*

*Worrying is like walking around with an umbrella waiting for it to rain.
Always remember the greater your storm, the bigger the rainbow.*

- *Unknown author.*



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Welcome to Reboot Your Life Phoenix Edition



Change means reinvention. How often have we heard that phrase and not really taken the time to understand the powerful potential behind those three simple words?

It's an inescapable fact that for most of us (and I include myself in this) an unexpected, yet major, shift in our lives – whether it be changing careers, partners, country of residence, facing health issues or losing a loved one – means that we're suddenly faced with the task of taking control of how we adapt to a new situation or we risk losing ourselves.

In many cases our desire to change is a natural life evolution. As we get older, we also grow in experience and wisdom. The things we've done in the past no longer challenge or interest us.

I truly believe that life is a gift from God. How we choose to live our lives is our gift to God.

But in order to truly live life to the full we must make a conscious decision and commitment to reboot our lives. Waiting for the Universe to tell us what to do can often mean we spend a long time languishing with uncertainty, procrastination and pain.

By choosing to reboot our lives we forge our new identity with certainty and love. That is where this book will prove an invaluable guide. Over the course of this year we have spoken to sixteen professionals from all over the world about their experiences of rebooting their lives. Their stories are varied and, in some cases, poignant and humorous. All of the sixteen accounts are, in their own ways, uplifting and inspirational.

But, despite their differences, there are a number of consistent ideas running through all of these chapters like strands of golden thread: The realization that rebooting your life is neither easy nor always smooth.

We all encounter resistance from our old ways of living. Often we find it difficult to let go, even of things that cause us pain. Our limiting beliefs and negative stories we tell ourselves about who or what we are, can prevent us from taking decisive action.

This book will help you make the committed decision to change and reboot your life. It will be your constant companion as you take the first hesitant step towards a brighter future. A future, where you can realise your potential and of a new way of living and thinking.

Each time you find yourself slipping into old habits—isolating yourself, making excuses not to look for work, procrastinating on a task that might help you advance in your career— I would like you to pick up this book.

Read the personal accounts in the chapters over and over again. Take courage in the fact that you're not alone and the dream of rebooting your life can be your reality.

Jacqueline Rose

Publisher, Lovely Silks Publishing

Why Wait To Change?

The world is changing. Every day sees new demands and new expectations. It feels like we're stretched even thinner than we were the day before. We're out of control, our heads are spinning and we're connected 24/7, so our work and home lives are now constantly blurred. It's like there's no escape – and every day it gets harder and harder to breathe.

To make matters worse, we're hiding a deep, dark thought: that we're secretly, desperately hoping that our lives won't be like this forever. To the outside world we pull on our 'big girl pants' and go about every day, for no other reason than that we've been taught to accept our lot in life because there are plenty of others who are worse off than we are.

We constantly compare ourselves to everyone else and they seem to be so much more happy and successful, which leaves us feeling like there's something wrong with us. What we don't know is that almost everyone else is also hiding that same deep, dark secret thought – we just haven't recognised it.

Finding ourselves sadly lacking in the comparison game, we take on more and more to appear competitive – but we end up leaving ourselves behind. We give until we have nothing left to give – and then we find a way to give more!

How Do I Know This? Well, Because I Perfected This Way Of Life.

In fact, I was so successful at living this way that I ended up pushing myself so hard my mind snapped and I experienced a total breakdown. You could say that I created a situation where my mind and my body had to conspire against me to force me to stop ... it was that or die.

My name is Bronwen – and I am a recovering perfectionist.

I was the classic example of the saying "give something to a busy person and they'll get it done". I was the 'go-to-girl' who always got things done. I

didn't know how to say 'no' to anyone – I simply found a way to give everyone everything they wanted.

There was always only going to be one cost in this equation, and I realised what it was just before it was too late: it was my life.

I am living, breathing proof of what happens when you put your blinkers on and power through your life, ignoring the warning signs and refusing to acknowledge that something needs to change. My life was hauled out from under my feet in a matter of minutes. I went from being a fully functioning, award-winning executive to – in less than an hour – a puddle on the floor, shattered into a million pieces and unable to stop crying.

How do you begin to explain to others how you are feeling when you have nothing but blank space in your own mind? How do you get others to understand what you're going through when you can't understand it yourself?

The Simple Answer Is This: You Can't.

For me, the only way out of this situation was to start from scratch and try to piece together how I got myself to where I was, and to rebuild myself in a way that enabled me to decide on the direction I wanted to take moving forwards.

Here's What I Learned About Myself ...

I used to live my life by chanting the mantra "... it will all be okay ... just keep going ..." I ignored every warning sign my body gave me; I simply put the blinkers on and kept going. Until, I couldn't do it anymore.

Before the breakdown, I went to bed every night exhausted. I closed my eyes only to struggle to fall asleep, because even though I was tired, my mind was busy processing all the problems, issues and details that I would be facing the next day.

After finally falling asleep in the early hours of the morning, I would be woken by my husband after what amounted to maybe two or three hours of sleep – at best. I lived this way for over a decade.

My first thought every day was “... it can’t possibly be time to get up ...”.

My second thought every day was “... I’m so tired ...” which was then closely followed by “... just get up and keep going ...”

I’d drag myself out of bed and into the shower, trying to ignore the pain in my body caused by the sheer exhaustion of trying to hold myself upright. I’d force myself into the kitchen to wolf down a quick breakfast, because even though it wasn’t yet 7 a.m., I had to urgently get to the office.

I’d spend my working hours running around after everyone else – solving their problems – before heading home to log back into the company server to complete the work I should have gotten done during the day ... from home. Work- life balance? Non-existent.

There were never, ever enough hours in the day; there was always something that didn’t get done. I was harshly critical of my inability to sort everything out, and I constantly berated myself with the feeling of always letting everyone down.

I had endless buckets of empathy, understanding and kindness for everyone around me, and absolutely none of these things for myself. I was a harsh and demanding self-critic. I learned that I was a perfectionist who was driven by not being good enough and who was addicted to being busy.

I had no idea just how depleted my health was. As it turns out, it was nothing other than pure strength that had kept me upright. My energy was totally washed-out and I was seriously unwell. I was exhausted, running on fumes and I was extremely unhappy.

Worse than all of that: I would have been dead by age 45 if I had kept going like that.

Then ... The Breakdown

It dropped me from such a height and with such a force that I couldn’t get back up again. I was suddenly incapable of fulfilling the role of ‘go-to-girl’ – in fact I was barely able to manage basic daily functions. I was left

completely lost and unable to determine which way to turn to 'fix' my situation.

I was suddenly and forcibly thrown into a place where I had nothing to do, nowhere to be, no-one relying on me and no idea who I was or which way to turn to move forwards. I dropped every ball that I was juggling in the air, all at the same time, and I was unable to pick any of them up.

There was nothing else to do except to focus on myself. It's like the universe was conspiring for me to re-shape who I was – to reboot my life.

But What Is It Like To Experience A Traumatic Life Event?

By its very nature, a traumatic event hits you from out of the blue and creates significant havoc in your life. You have no control over what is happening to you and it rips you from everything you think is normal, chews you up and spits you out ... and you are never the same again.

Perhaps the worst thing about my breakdown was the way in which it hit without warning. After all, traumatic events are something that happen to other people ... or so I believed. They're things that I used to see someone else go through. They were the stories I'd hear at a conference, where someone explains how they turned their life around, and I'd think "Wow! How inspiring! Good for them!" Of course, then I'd simply go on with my day, ignoring the fact that the symptoms they had described were almost identical to mine.

All of a sudden, I was the one experiencing the 'life-changing event'. One minute I was engaged in my normal, everyday activities, and the next I was on the floor, thrust into the centre of a completely unrecognisable place. It's like everything I had learned up to that point no longer applied and none of my knowledge or experience could help me. In that moment, and for some considerable time afterwards, I was so totally and utterly lost that it was simply too overwhelming to even move.

In the early stages I had no comprehension of what had happened to me. I was broken, on the floor, in a million pieces and could not process thought

in any logical way. It was next to impossible to know which way to turn to start my world moving again.

In the space of minutes I moved from a place where I was full of confidence in my future, to one where I was completely lost in a black sea of abject terror and utter overwhelm. My head was spinning, I had no idea which way to turn and it felt like someone had clicked their fingers and everything worthwhile in my life had disappeared.

The best way I've found to describe this to people is to ask them to imagine that in five minutes time, everything they know about themselves and their life will be suddenly gone. To imagine that they are looking around themselves, seeing nothing that looks familiar. To imagine that their intelligence has evaporated in an instant. To imagine that they can't stop crying and they don't know why. Then, over the top of this, to overlay the fact that they can't explain any of this to anyone else.

That's what experiencing the breakdown was like for me.

Okay ... So How Do You Recover From A Traumatic Life Event?

Without a doubt, my recovery from the breakdown is the hardest thing I've ever done in my life.

It is one of the most invasive, vulnerable and painful experiences I've ever had. I found myself in front of strangers who were asking me questions that made me feel very uncomfortable ... questions that I simply did not have answers to. I suddenly found myself wanting to hide away and never be seen again. Every feeling of being unworthy I had previously experienced became magnified, and because I had lost all sight of who I was, I transitioned into a state where I believed that I wasn't fit to be in human company.

Every traumatic event is unique to the person that is experiencing it. No two events are the same and no two people experiencing an event are the same. Therefore, it is not possible for anyone else to understand what is happening to you when you are going through a traumatic event.

It took two long, hard, exhausting and frustrating years of working with counsellors, psychologists and energy healers for me to be strong enough – ‘recovered’ enough – to interact in normal, everyday activities on a consistent basis. It took three years of this work for me to settle into a routine that supports my every day.

And I’m not done yet. Every day I learn something new about myself. It’s a snippet of some conversation that I hear which reminds me of how far I’ve come. It’s the unconditional love from my cat which tells me that I’m alive and cherished. It’s the boundless support provided by my husband, friends and loved ones that ground me and help me to focus on what is important.

From the moment my breakdown occurred, I was forced into a situation where everything I had previously learned, including all my experience and knowledge, no longer applied. Nothing was the same any more, my whole world had collapsed and I had to start from scratch in every corner of my life.

Through many of those incredibly emotional, tough and confronting sessions with professionals, I learned to peek into all of those deep, dark corners of myself and find the strength to look at all of my pieces: the good, the bad and the downright ugly.

Once I mastered the techniques for looking at my pieces head-on, I had to learn how to make choices about which of those pieces I would keep moving forwards; which of them had a place in the new version of me that needed to be created, in order for me to be able to step back into life.

I had to learn to apply the empathy, wisdom and kindness that I had for others to myself first – to learn that self-compassion is the linch-pin of health and wellness.

It was also important for me to understand that it was okay for me to leave some pieces behind – and that in choosing to move forward without them I could still be whole. I learned to acknowledge that those parts of the ‘old’ me that didn’t serve me anymore could easily be left behind and that, whilst they had served a purpose previously, I would be better off without them moving forwards.

In the years that I have been in recovery I have ridden an emotional tidal wave that has enabled me to clean out old beliefs and thought patterns, and replace them with new ones that will serve me moving forwards. There were times when I didn't know if I was strong enough to survive what seemed like an insurmountable ordeal.

If I had to sum it up in one sentence, it would look something like this: you have to find the strength to do the hardest thing you've ever done at a time when you are at your most vulnerable, have no energy left and you feel like it might be easier to just curl up and die.

What Are The Life Lessons From My Experience?

If I can encapsulate everything I learned during my recovery into one single lesson, then it is this:

There is a very different way to live our lives and living differently is no more difficult than learning to ask yourself some very simple questions!

From the time we are born we are socially conditioned to respond in a manner that is approved by society. We're taught through positive and negative reinforcement to adopt the behaviours and beliefs of our family, our community and to some extent our country.

Taking this one step further, from the time we start to crawl we are taught to look outside ourselves for the answers to our questions. As we grow older, we rely on the responses we get externally to become the guiding light for our lives.

One of the biggest 'ah-ha' moments of my recovery occurred when I was watching a video in which international best-selling author Gregg Braden was speaking. During the video, I heard Gregg ask the question "What if they're wrong?"

I suddenly realised that I had been living my life by everyone else's rules, and that almost everything I did was on auto-pilot. My life was complex and I was completely disconnected from myself. I was stressed and

exhausted, and I had perfected a façade that showed calm, when the reality was that my life was totally out of my control.

Perhaps an even greater revelation was that I had meekly accepted my 'lot in life' and that my existence was something I simply had to bear.

When I first heard the words "What if they're wrong?" it was like someone turned the light on for the very first time. It was a lightning bolt of clarity that seemed so obvious ... yet something that I had never considered before.

This question opened the flood gates for me. It allowed me to look at what I had been doing, and start to question whether it had been working for me. I applied this question to every aspect of my life and that in turn led me to look at things in small, manageable chunks. Suddenly, I gained clarity in every aspect of my life.

"What if they're wrong?" then became the first in a series of questions that I started asking myself. Once I'd applied it to something, I could then clearly see whether that thing was working for or against me in my life. Once I knew that, it meant I could then start looking at the thing more closely and ask more questions, like "What is it about this thing that doesn't work for me?" or "How does this make me feel?" or "How do I want to feel about this?".

When you have nothing else to do, and there is only yourself to focus on, it can seem like a mammoth task, but once you learn to ask this question in your life the speed with which you can make changes is dramatic.

I went through most of my life pre-breakdown with blinkers on – reacting to life on auto-pilot and with no real conscious thought about what I was doing or the havoc I was wreaking to my health. Once I learned that every situation, every thought and every action is self-created and comes from a choice I have made, it became very clear to me that I could take back control of my life – *if I chose to!*

I realised that I may well have been programmed from an early age, but that I can step away from that programming and take control of my choices

any time I want to. The biggest lesson I learned around this was that taking no action around controlling my own life is still about me making a choice in my life.

During my recovery I learned a lot about the way Western society lives their lives. As children we're conditioned to understand what is 'right', 'wrong', 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' behaviour by our family, friends, schools, communities and the world at large. We squash ourselves into a format that is deemed acceptable by those around us.

The problem with this is that we become someone – and something – that we're not. We make sure we have the right job, the right house, the right car, the right partner ... and all to make sure we're meeting the expectations we think are upon us.

What this creates is a significant amount of pressure in our lives. Pressure to rise in your career – and quickly. Pressure, that invades every corner of your life – and slowly eats away your self-esteem. This lack of self-esteem then causes us to add more to our plate so we can feel more worthwhile ... until we're panicking about how we're going to fit everything in.

The panic then creates exhaustion and a secret terror that your life is going to be this way forever. Your head is constantly spinning, searching for your pathway to success – but you don't even really know what success looks like. When you're honest with yourself, you're completely overwhelmed and have no idea where or how to start to live life differently. Everything seems to be too hard ... which then adds more pressure into your life ... and the cycle starts itself again.

In reality, what all of this boils down to is that our social conditioning has been so successful that we are now more afraid of change than we are of death.

One of the key messages I now share with the world is that the long-held belief that we can't change without experiencing a traumatic event in our lives is one of the biggest furdies of our time!

I cannot begin to tell you how easy change is, and yet for some reason we're so scared of it that we've come to believe that we nearly have to die before we have permission to live differently.

It was such a relief to understand that I didn't have to run around with my head spinning and my life completely out of control so I could get ahead. Running myself into the ground achieved nothing other than adding an extra layer of complexity into my life ... aside from the brutal impact on my health.

I could finally drop my addiction to being busy – that is, deliberately put it down and walk away from it. I just didn't need it any more. I did this by creating new definitions in my life – definitions of things like what it means to me to be successful, to be happy, and to be whole.

No matter how strongly I had internalised that I could just get through if I kept going, no matter how many times I trivialised their impact on me, the truth is this: there is **nothing normal** about stress and exhaustion. Both conditions are warning signals that your body is suffering and that you need to stop, slow down and give yourself some attention. They are not things to brush aside. The mantra "I'll worry about them later" is a very bad idea when it comes to these two issues.

While ever my head was spinning I was never going to get anywhere. I may well have perfected the outward countenance of calm and 'in-control', but the reality was that I was on a one-way path to a traumatic event. I heard all the warning signals and chose to ignore them.

I was more worried about what people might think of me if I let them down than I was about what might happen to me if I kept going the way I was. I ignored every sign I was given until the choice was taken away from me ... by my mind and body, as it turns out.

Here's How You Get Ahead Without Needing A Traumatic Event ...

Hopefully by now my story has convinced you that recovering from a traumatic experience is significantly harder than making small, incremental

changes to your life along the way. So much harder, in fact, that it beggars belief that we all live the way we do.

The best advice I can give anyone is this: take the steps to simplify your life now – then you won't have to experience the terror and overwhelm of a traumatic event. You'll also avoid the painful recovery afterwards.

When we are conditioned in our early life, we are told by others what we should and shouldn't be doing, and how we should and shouldn't be doing it. As part of this process we naturally take parts of ourselves and hide them – because someone else has conditioned us that they're not 'good'.

When we do this, we diminish ourselves – we make ourselves smaller than we are because it's how we think we will fit in with everyone around us.

Shall I let you in on a little secret? **We're not here to fit in with everyone around us.**

We're here to fulfil our destiny ... and while ever we diminish ourselves we're holding ourselves back.

As we grow older, and we have perfected the art of hiding those parts of ourselves that have been conditioned as socially unacceptable, we find ourselves feeling like there is something missing – almost as though there is a hole in us that needs to be filled.

Then we find ourselves looking around for courses, conferences and life experiences that will provide to us the thing that is missing from our lives. However, because of our social conditioning we are almost always looking for our missing piece in the places that we've been told are appropriate – in the world around us. We don't ever think to find the missing pieces within ourselves.

If you're going to look for things externally, then do this: find the people, courses, places and experiences that teach you easy and simple ways to look within yourself – to teach yourself. Every answer you will ever need can be found within yourself.

Learn to become an explorer in your own life. We spend so much of our time attached to whether or not we are success or a failure. Thanks to technological advances (which are fabulous in so many ways) our lives are so much more visible now, and we find ourselves with the added pressure of needing to appear successful on a much larger scale than previously.

Delete the words 'success' and 'failure' from your life and replace them with 'explore' and 'adventure'. Why? Because it will take all the pressure out of what you do, and how you do it.

When your life is an adventure, you get to try new things, do them new ways, have fun and make a few discoveries along the way. If something works, or you find something new you love, then that's great – it's a positive outcome that enriches your life. Just as importantly, if something doesn't work for you then that's great too; it's also a positive outcome, because you now know that there is something you don't want much (or any) of in your life.

Adopting this perspective makes it much easier for you to make your choices moving forwards.

The way we currently live has us trapped in fear, exhaustion, overwhelm and anxiety. Learn to take a few simple steps – one at a time – and you can change the course of your life exponentially, often without even knowing you are doing it.

There Is A Very Different Way To Live. Change Is Only Hard Until You Know How.

Fundamentally, getting ahead and living a life full of fun, imagination, love and happiness is easy and readily achievable if you always remember that in every situation, in every moment in your life you have two choices:

*“You can choose to feel better or you can choose to feel worse”
(Esther Hicks)*

Why Wait To Change? The Time To Act Is Now. The Choice Is Yours.

Bronwen Sciortino

About The Author



Bronwen Sciortino is an Author, Simplicity Expert and Professional Speaker who spent almost two decades as a high-powered, award-winning executive in an industry that crushed her soul before experiencing a life-changing event that forced her to stop and ask the question “What if there’s a better way to live?”

Answering this question took her on a journey of discovery that gave her the knowledge and wisdom to develop the 'Keep It Super Simple' Principles and step away from a traditional life.

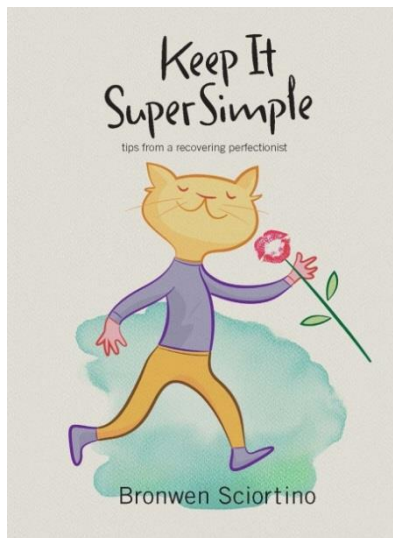
As part of her recovery, Bronwen wrote the book 'Keep It Super Simple – Tips from a Recovering Perfectionist' and now spends every day as a Simplicity Expert, running her own business and sharing her tips and tricks to show people there is a very different way of living life.

Bronwen works with people globally through corporate programs, conference platforms, retreats, professional mentoring and in the online environment. She shares her secrets to success and inspires individuals to simplify their lives and embrace the concept of an economy of enough.

Bronwen blogs regularly for Huffington Post and is often invited to guest blog on member sites situated throughout the world.

Want more info?

There are loads of tips and tricks on living and thinking differently in the book 'Keep It Super Simple' – you can buy a copy from www.sheqlife.com/shop.



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