

The  
Big  
Peace



# The Big Peace

Find Yourself Without  
Going Anywhere

Suzy Greaves



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*To Paula and Nik*



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## Introduction



*'All I know is I'm losing my mind,' Franny said. 'I'm just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everyone else's. I'm sick of everybody that wants to get somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be someone interesting. It's disgusting – it is, it is. I don't care what anybody says ... I'm not afraid to compete. It's just the opposite. Don't you see that? I'm afraid I will compete – that's what scares me ... Just because I'm so horribly conditioned to accept everybody else's values, and just because I like applause and people to rave about me, doesn't make it right. I'm ashamed of it. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of not having the courage to be an absolute nobody. I'm sick of myself and everyone else that wants to make some kind of splash.'* – J D Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*

The year 2007 started well for me – the *Daily Mail* named me as one of the top ten 'gurus' in the country – whatever that means – on New Year's Day. Just ten years earlier, on New Year's Day in 1997, I had woken up hungover and dribbling on a stranger's shoulder, as I had slept though my stop on the train. This catapulted me into making some

big life changes: from being health editor of a glossy magazine to hiring a life coach – and then becoming one myself.

And here I was, a decade later, being hailed as a life-coaching ‘guru’! Yes, my life was immeasurably better on every level – I had my lovely little four-year-old boy, a career I loved, money in the bank. So why, then, was I scanning the horizon for more? If I was supposed to be this clever-clogs ‘guru’, why did I feel so restless?

I started my Big Leap life-coaching business almost ten years ago. The focus had been on setting goals, achievement, creating ‘the life you really want’. And it worked. My clients fronted prime-time TV shows, wrote best-selling books, created businesses and babies. And, as I supported my clients to make their leaps, I made my own. I established a successful life-coaching career, had a baby, built my business, moved to the country and wrote my book *Making the Big Leap*.

And that was wonderful. Goals were achieved, boxes were ticked, but what I noticed – in myself and in some of my clients – was that, once we’d achieved our goals, we were still itchy. We still wanted more. We were victims of what I call ‘I’ll be happy’ thinking. (‘I’ll be happy when ... I’m thinner/richer/more successful, achieved x, y, z,’ etc.) And it was

exhausting. So when I tried to set my goals for 2007, I completely stalled. What did I really, really want? I asked myself. I wanted to feel that inner peace, that sense of ‘I’m there,’ to be able to appreciate all that I had in my life without planning the next big thing.

So I set my ‘goal’ to ‘find’ my ‘missing peace’, and it’s been – and still is – one of the most exciting journeys of my life.

The timing couldn’t have been better. We are at a revolutionary point in history where we have an explosion of groundbreaking psychological research introducing the scientifically-based idea of ‘positive psychology’.

The ‘happiness scientists’ are focusing for the first time on the question ‘How can we be happy?’ rather than the old model of ‘How can we be less miserable?’ and they are providing us with scientifically proven methods of cultivating contentment.

Science and spirituality have also begun to have an intelligent dialogue, as spiritual leaders such as the Dalai Lama meet some of the world’s most distinguished scientists to discuss how humanity can become less destructive and more peaceful.

Combine this with the new pioneering science named ‘neuroplasticity’, which is revealing that the brain can change its wiring and its childhood

emotional and genetic ‘programming’, and can alter its actual physical circuitry, if we think different thoughts and take different actions – and this was the perfect time to embark on my journey inward.

One of the most exciting discoveries I’ve made is that the decades of scientific research and dogma that said the brain was fixed in form and function have been overturned. It turns out that our brains are like gardens, and our neural pathways blossom the more time we spend tending them – be it practising a violin, which expands the part of the brain that controls the fingers, or restoring mental health by thinking thoughts in a different way.

Conversely, it’s been found that if we *don’t* take control of our thoughts and actions, weeds of negative and destructive thinking and behaviour can easily take over.

The good news is that the scientists say that, with consistent tending, we can vastly improve our ‘set point’ of happiness and peace of mind. It’s what the self-development industry has been saying for years, but now we finally get a little scientific credibility – plus a host of new, proven, practical techniques. We do not have to be victims of our upbringing or even genetics – we can change our lives by thinking and doing differently. And that’s without going anywhere. We can do it from the comfort of an armchair.

And that's where I've been for the last couple of years: On a journey without going away. Finding what I've come to call my 'big peace' from my armchair.

My background is in journalism, so I've had the privilege to interview some of the most influential self-development experts in the world and pick their brains – plus I have had access to the most cutting-edge scientific research on neuroplasticity and happiness.

With all this information I have developed a 90-day course that aims to bring together this research, new and ancient techniques, and ways to make your brain bloom with new, positive neural pathways.

What I've discovered is that you don't 'find' your Big Peace, you grow it. We are not stuck with the brain we were born or brought up with. We have the capacity to decide which functions will flower and which will wither – which emotions will blossom and which will die out.

So I'm going to throw all my (and others') best stuff at you – and hopefully you will exercise your brain a bit, which will actually change its structure, which in turn will make you feel calmer, lighter and generally more peaceful on the inside – no matter what drama is going on on the outside. So hopefully you will laugh more.

The Big Peace 90-day course is all about stopping all the effort, stress and jumping through hoops to

be liked/successful/happy/thinner and living the ‘I’ll be happy when ...’ life, and starting instead to live in the creative present, where you can choose to be dynamic and fabulous right here, right now. All by changing your thinking.

I’m going to give you different techniques to try out day by day. Some of them are mine, some are adapted from people I consider to be the best self-development gurus in the world – everyone from Martha Beck (one of Oprah’s favourite life coaches) to Dr David Hamilton (my favourite scientist).

It’s quite a journey, and a process, to get focusing differently and ease yourself into a new way of being. And it’s a journey with no destination. The Big Peace is not a place; it’s a choice we make every second of every day. The Big Peace is a daily practice, so the good news is you’re setting off on the journey but really you’re already there. That’s what I like – success before we’ve even set out!

My aim has been to create a practical guide to inner peace. I’ve read some very inspiring books and listened to some very inspiring people, but sometimes I’ve become frustrated because I couldn’t figure out how to make what I was learning about part of my life in a practical way. The Big Peace is a very practical transformational course with daily tasks and practices to try. My hope is that you will

find a handful of practices that you like and that can fit easily into your day, and so create a new positive practice for life.

This 90-day Big Peace course is not about self-improvement. We're not trying to make ourselves bigger, better, faster or richer. It's more about – dare I say it – loving ourselves and loving other people, too. With a great big dollop of self-acceptance.

And yes, that's accepting yourself right now, just as you are – with all your lumpy, bad, fabulous and brilliant bits – and all your nasty little habits, too.

We will be working from where you are right now – however awful you think you are. Sorry, there are no qualifications necessary to get on this programme. We're working with what we've got – with all our imperfections and ticks and tricks and bad childhoods, good childhoods ...

We all have histories – our personal tragedies, heartbreaks, rejections, our successes, love affairs, pain – that got us to wherever we are now. But that is the past. That is history.

The Big Peace is about living in the moment. Right here, right now. And working from that very second of Now – a very creative, dynamic moment in time. Because that moment is the moment of transformation, when you can choose to think or do things differently.

## How to Read This Book: One Day at a Time

Over the next 90 days I'm going to be challenging you to think differently, asking you lots of questions and helping you to experiment with new theories and exercises to delve beneath your usual ways of thinking and allow you to try out different ways of being and doing.

This, in turn, will literally change the circuitry in your brain. My intention for the next 90 days is for us to have some fun, to experiment, to laugh at ourselves rather than judge ourselves and generally enjoy exploring a new world inside our heads.

I make the request that you don't read this book in one go. Instead, read and work through the exercises one day at a time. This book is a process, and nothing will change if you don't actually try out the exercises. I hope you will be able to do one task per day. If this is too much, then drop it down to one task per three days. I want you to be able to keep up the momentum but not be overwhelmed.

I've split the course into 12 weeks and have themed each week. Each week follows on from the next and, if you can, follow the course in sequence:

**Week 1:** Who do you think you are?

**Week 2:** Who do you want to be?

**Week 3:** Who's in charge?

**Week 4:** What's your story?

**Week 5:** What do you want?

**Week 6:** Are you happy now?

**Week 7:** How slow can you go?

**Week 8:** Are you willing to let it out?

**Week 9:** Are you willing to let go?

**Week 10:** Who loves ya, baby?

**Week 11:** What else?

**Week 12:** Who are you *not* to be?

There is one exercise to try per day. Try to stick to the programme if you can. But I'm going to make the assumption that you will read the days you need to read and find the right way for you. I want you to find a series of practices that you can make your own, that work for you. But obviously the more exercises you try, the better. Start from where you are and do the best with what you've got.

It may take only one of these exercises to change the way you think. So, if you're already thinking that this won't work for you, that you haven't got the stamina or patience to last 90 days, don't panic. The only rules in this book are:

## **The 5 Rules for Creating an Utterly Miserable Life or How NOT to Find Your Big Peace:**

### **1. Strive to be perfect**

Remind yourself at every occasion that you've got to get this perfectly right or you will never be approved of/loved/included or respected. That sounds like a fun way of going about things, doesn't it?

### **2. Compare yourself to others**

By judging yourself and others, you'll get to feel either smug or crap (but how often will you really allow yourself to feel smug?).

### **3. Make happiness conditional**

Constantly tell yourself, and others: 'I'll be happy when ... I'm thinner/richer/more successful', etc. You're putting your happiness on hold and living in fantasy land.

### **4. Try to prove that you're someone by pretending to be someone you're not.**

A great strategy for constantly proving to yourself that you're not good enough as you are.

**5. Spend all your time and energy trying to make someone else happy.**

Some of the time, perhaps? But notice how much energy you spend focusing on other people's lives – mind your own business!