



Full Tilt Living



Full Tilt Living

Live in the moment,
even when it STINKS!
Find the juicy parts and
let the world know Y OU ARE HERE.

Maureen Smith



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Dedication

To Sydney, the woman with wings,
and Frank, the wildest child on Chestnut Street.

Acknowledgments

This book would never have happened without the imagination of my publisher, Jan Johnson, and the support of my daughter, Sydney, who gave Jan my newsletters. I also want to thank Sydney for having so much faith in her mom that she set up a Web-site for me. And one more thank you to Jan for finding a way to squeeze four more chapters out of me and then enduring my embarrassingly prima donna-like behavior during the editing.

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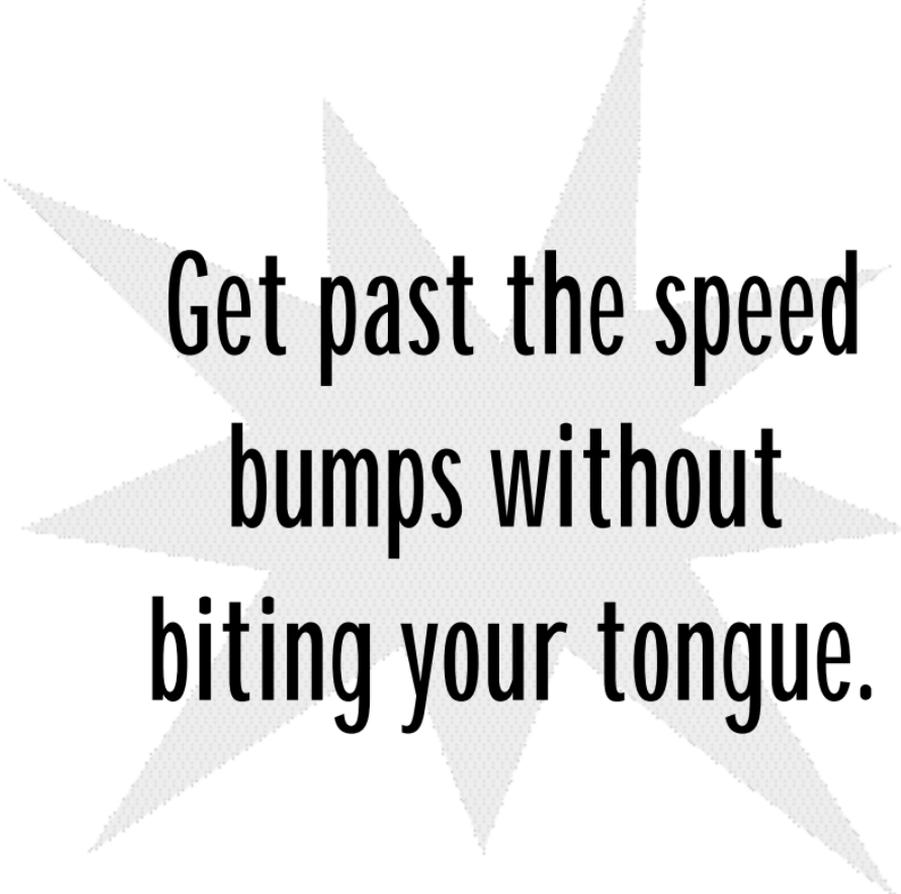


Introduction

From where I stand, experiencing life as full and rich is a moment-to-moment kind of thing. That means getting the most out of day-to-day, business-as-usual living. Being as centered and healthy and fully alive on all levels for as long as possible every day.

The ideas I offer in Full Tilt Living are based on what I have learned along the way. Some of them come from my own personal road testing. Some from issues I have helped clients wind their way through. Many of them started as a newsletter I wrote for my clients as a vehicle to give them encouragement and fresh insights.

The first chapters address the day-to-day things we all encounter. These run the gamut from getting



Get past the speed
bumps without
biting your tongue.



up and going in the morning to guidance on managing more hair-raising “Mother said there’d be days like this” stuff. Then what follows are some invitations to explore and expand the way you are in the world. The last chapters present doorways to what I might call finding your bliss: meditation and connecting with sources of strength outside the everyday world.

I suggest you work your way through the chapters a few pages at a time, in the order they’re written. If some idea appeals, try it, play with it for a while before you go on. If it doesn’t appeal, feel free to skip it.

I am hoping that you will find chapters here that will help get you past the speed bumps and other such diversions that might break your stride and take you away from finding the delight in your life. It is my wish that these pages will give you the opportunity to discover ways to find a richness that you did not know could be yours. Full tilt living! Ours to enjoy!



chapter 1

Tapping Your Power Source

What kind of steam do you use to drive your engine? I mean, how do you go about getting up and running every day?

Unless you are a Disney character, you've probably felt that "I can't do another day of this" sensation. It usually hits me right after the alarm clock beeps (they used to ring, but this is a new age, believe me).

I admit that it isn't every day I encounter that urge to spend the day with the bedbugs. A day when my whole plan is spending big chunks of money on things that have absolutely nothing to do with dentists or auto mechanics, or getting to roll out to the redwoods for a full day of air and trees and ham sandwiches with root beer (anybody



**Instead of seeding
your fear clouds,
take a walk
in the sunshine.**



who comes along usually brings their own food in self-defense) gets me past that first blast of “what am I doing here?!!” consciousness pretty quickly.

But let’s say it’s a day when under the covers looks like the best place to be. What then? It could be that you let a fat, threatening cloud of fear hang over you. It is pretty easy to let that fear cloud with all of the “what ifs” you have so skillfully seeded it with rain right down on you: “I have to get up now and get to work in that rattle trap of a car. I just know the grinding noise it’s been making is going to cost me a bundle to fix. What if it takes all the money I’m saving for my vacation?” Or “What if I do such a horrible job at work today that I get fired? I’ll have to move to a dumpy little hovel on a dirt road and live on beans and whatever I can grow in the garden—that is if I can get anything worth eating to grow—and wear clothes from the thrift store and live without cable.” This is a little over the top, I realize. But I wouldn’t be surprised if you have your own version of the “Fear Engine.”

No one can terrify you quite as well as you can. And after one of those little sessions with yourself, you have so much adrenaline pumping through your system, the only thing you can do is rocket out of bed. You head off to work steaming like a

demon. You have shot past “I think I can, I think I can!” and straight to “This train’s a-comin’!”

Make no mistake, though. Being fueled by fear causes some heavy emotional wear and tear. And it may not keep you going past lunchtime. So another terror session over lunch, right? If you use the Fear Engine often enough, you can completely destroy your natural, healthy work-rest rhythm. And you will very likely lose the sense of joy and accomplishment in what you do along with that natural rhythm. Life might, as I have heard it said, begin to seriously suck.

Wouldn’t it be great to tune into a different frequency altogether? How about replacing the fear with a more natural fuel? Give the Power Check List a try. And you can stay right there in bed to do it if you want.

The basic idea behind the Power Check List is to connect as completely as possible with your immensely valuable gifts and strengths—so what gives you a jump start on the day and fuels you right on through to the end comes from your deepest, truest source—not from skimming off the adrenaline you manufacture for yourself from a good scare.

In some ways, your Power Check List is similar to what you hope the mechanics are doing before your plane takes off. It’s best if you write your own

for exactly the same reasons that your personalized Fear Engine works so well: Nobody knows what counts the most for you as well as you do yourself. But I've created a little outline to help you get started.

THE POWER CHECK LIST PROCESS

Step 1: Tuning into Your Physical Power Plant

Begin with the breathing part of you and fill your lungs with a slow, luxurious, deep breath. Now hold it for a couple of heartbeats and then as you slowly let the breath out, check into how basically good it felt to fill yourself up with oxygen. Repeat this until you can notice the heaviness leaving your body.

At this point I usually find myself wanting a good stretch. So do that, taking time



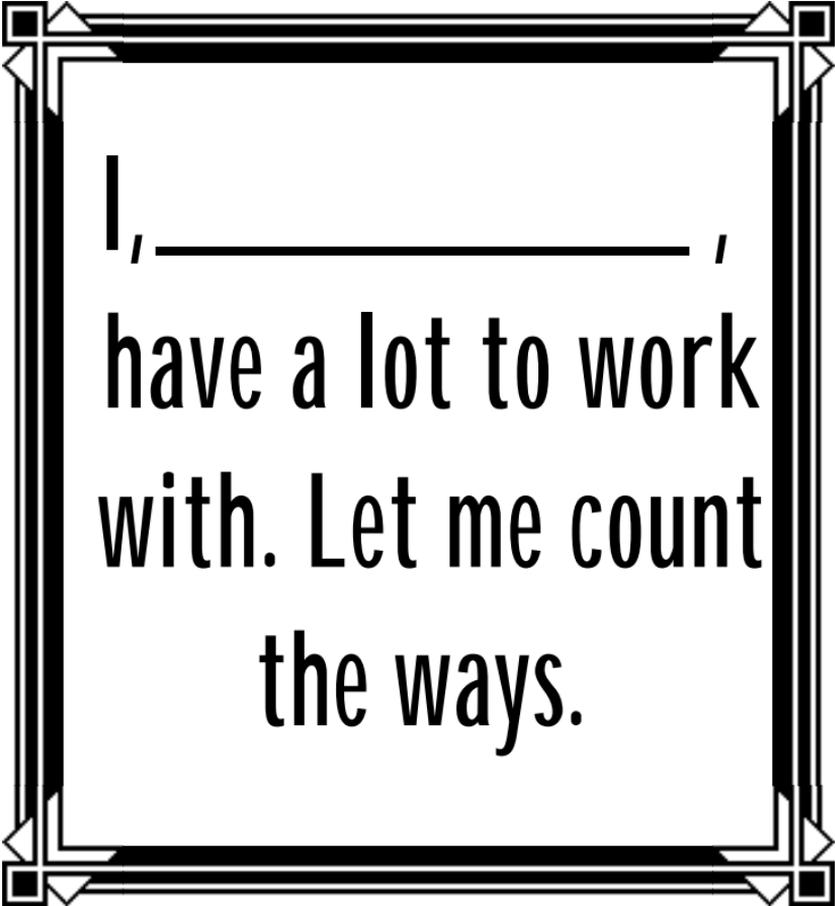
admire how responsive your muscles are. Spread your arms out as far as you can, make fists, and tighten all the muscles from your fingers to your shoulder blades. Now that you've done horizontal, do vertical. Squeeze toes, feet, calves, thighs, buns, abs. Then pull your shoulders down away from your ears as far as you can. Of course, you are getting some good breathing in here too.

Feeling awake? Great! Do not be tempted to let your mind jump in here and tear off in other directions. Stay with your waking-up body. At this point I like to play with seeing if I can “hear” it humming, like the well-tuned engine in an Indy racecar. If you’re alone, or if you don’t mind looking a little silly to whoever might be with you, go ahead and make some car sounds. Or if you see yourself as more the locomotive type, try some train whistles.

Step 2: Count Your Inner Blessings

Now while that motor of yours is humming, count your inner blessings. These are not the same as the outer ones that everyone tells you to count when they want you to cheer up. Those aren’t the blessings that matter. You are going to let the wonderful stuff that you admire about yourself bubble up—your fine way of conquering computer glitches, your pinpoint accuracy with figures, your uncanny ability to be at the right place at the right time, your fabulous sense of humor.

These may change from day to day. And really, I find fresher is better. It lets me keep pace with what might be going on for me on that day so that I can reference my inner blessings checklist if I hit a rough spot later on. For example, if I pointed out to myself just that morning that I can be incredibly calm even when I’m completely lost, it makes



I, _____,
have a lot to work
with. Let me count
the ways.

it much easier to deal with the confusion that happens when I lose my sense of direction.

I have to say that this is no guarantee that the people with you will admire your ability to stay calm in such a situation if you are the driver and they are the drivees. Misreading two exit signs in a row, thus causing you to wind up in the wrong city, can really put a strain on people. Everything has its limits . . . but I digress. What are your inner blessings today?

Once you have a healthy list of things that you admire, do it. Admire yourself. Say, “Wow! I’ve got some great stuff to work with here!”

Step 3: Find Your Core

Find your core and notice its strength. Some imagination is useful here. You might experience your core as an energy located in the center of your body, or as an energy “rod” running from the top of your head down to the soles of your feet. It may have a sensation of warmth for you, or it may have a color that it radiates, or a note that it sounds.

Once you have a sense of your core, let it travel out until it makes a sort of energy field or envelope around you. You might notice it as beams of light radiating. It might seem similar to electricity. It might have a sensation of a spreading warmth. You might even notice sounds. The size of the envelope can change from day to day.

Check it out and see if you can find its outer edge. Stay with this for a few minutes if you can. You may find that you can call it up during the day if you need to recharge, or you might not notice it at all as things get busy.

Step 4: Connect with the Positive (optional)

If it suits you, you may want to finish up your power check by spending a moment tuning into what you draw strength from in the world around you. I'm very conscious of my environment—so I like to tap into the power of the “atmosphere” around me, sort of drawing energy up through the soles of my feet and all the way up through my core, then letting it make a fountain out of the top of my head. It sounds a little silly, like I've turned myself into a giant sprinkler, but it is kind of fun. Your final check may involve connecting with the universe or people who are important to you, or being prayerful.



By now you may be thinking, “Sure, this Power Check List sounds great, but it's going to take a lot of time I don't have!” It actually can be done in very few minutes.

Here's an outline you can use if you like that kind of thing:



1. Tune into your physical power plant with full, slow breaths; stretches; and appropriate vocalizations.
2. Review your checklist of your abilities and what you admire about them.
3. Tap into your core energy and allow it to radiate out.
4. Connect with the positive elements/relationships in your universe.



How often does it make sense to do this? I leave that one up to you. More is probably better. If you decide to use the Power Check List on a daily basis, remember to keep it fresh for yourself.

Vary your stretches. Gathering into a ball and then letting everything fly out at the same time is a good one. Some sideways rolls might be fun to try too.

The abilities or inner blessings you choose to note can be targeted at the day's projects, of course. You will probably find that the experience of your core energy and the way it radiates out changes on its own. And connections with positive elements will probably adjust themselves as well.

Mostly, this is a time to be playful and spend a few moments with the best parts of yourself before your focus goes to the million things that make up your day.



chapter 2

Living in the Spaces In-Between

It seems that the really juicy parts of living happen not in the big chunks of time that we all spend taking care of the business we must do to earn a living and keep ourselves and our living spaces and those we take care of whole and happy—but in the smaller time segments in-between.

Like the night this summer that I looked up at the sky just before I pulled into my driveway and saw the hugest, most spectacular moon I have ever seen hanging over the city and making the skyline look like a picture postcard. It did take a few heartbeats to soak it all in. I was a changed woman by the time I parked my car.

What I am saying here, without getting any more dramatic, is that those few seconds with the

moon in my eyes (like a big pizza pie, yes) were so rich and so revitalizing and so very unexpected. And very likely the best part of that day. So why not have moments like that more often? The opportunities for them are all around. I can tell you that if I'm playing reruns in my head, I miss out on a lot. What I mean is that if we're rehashing stuff that happened recently or re-worrying about the things we always worry about, with our needles stuck in one of their familiar grooves, we're not there for those tiny spectacular happenings. We have to be ready for them, and at times we have to make them happen.

Like yesterday, when I was standing in a long cafeteria line with a huge number of other shoppers longing for a bowl of hot soup and a place to (YES!) sit down.

I took myself up on an uninspired thought to count the number of people between me and my lunch, and when I got to the folks just in front of me, my thoughts and my energy level were skidding into an all-time low.

But wait! There in front of me, all snuggled into his baby carrier, was a hairless little lump of baby with scrunched-up fists and eyes that said he was about to go critical in his mother's arms. I got down low and looked in his eyes and gave him my best smile and coo. I could tell he was checking



out this new thing. (I was hoping he was reading me as “friendly woman” and not “creature crouching for attack.”) His mouth went slack for a moment, and then he let loose with one beautiful toothless baby grin. I lost count of my place in line and shared an “Isn’t he just wonderful?” smile and

nod with his mom, and the world didn’t seem nearly as prickly a place.

What’s in your spaces in between?

What do you say to giving this living in the spaces in-between a run?

The big chunks of your life—getting a work project done, losing twenty pounds, quitting smoking, taking care of a houseful of people—are going

to go smoother if you take a few moments to dive into those in-between spaces.

I warn you in advance that if you let on to what you’re doing, people might suspect you of being on some kind of drug trip, (“WOW!!! Do you believe how great this flower smells?? I mean it’s unreal!!!” could give people the wrong impression.) so I suggest keeping it to yourself. They’ll

get the benefit of the aftereffects without you saying anything.

SEVEN-DAY PLAN

How do you find time to make those spaces in-between happen? Plan, of course! No, I'm not talking about a spa weekend. I don't know about you, but the work it would take for me to pull that off would probably put me into so much stress overload that I'd be lucky to break even on the stress scale by the end of it. Take out your weekly planner (of course you have one—they're great stress reducers) and treat yourself to a special "in-between event" every day. Plan the event and the time and write it in, just like any other important activity you might have on your schedule.

Here, I'll do the first week for you:

Day 1: Give yourself three uninterrupted minutes to enjoy looking at snapshots of people who bring joy to your life. (Notation in planner: Snapshots)

Day 2: Do the Mona Lisa: Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and briefly turn up the corners of your mouth like Mona Lisa. All the muscles



in your face will relax, and that's where you carry the most tension. (Notation in planner: Mona Lisa)

Day 3: Do that old-fashioned thing that gentlefolk used to do: "Take in the air." Simply put, go for a walk and breathe deeply, getting good and oxygen-rich. You'll feel renewed! (Notation in planner: Take in the Air)

Day 4: Make yourself a hot cup of tea and do nothing but drink it. No distractions, just you and a fragrant, hot cup of tea. (Notation in planner: Tea)

Day 5: Read jokes for three minutes. Laugh out loud. It could be the funnies. Better yet, get a joke book and keep it close by. Laughter is healing, you know. (Notation in planner: Jokes)

Day 6: Buy yourself a flower. Go for a color you find irresistible and also your favorite fragrance if you can tolerate scents. Put it in a vase close by you so you can touch it and inhale its perfume all day. (Notation in planner: Flower)

Day 7: Give your hands a massage, both the backs of your hands and your palms.

Then massage each finger, starting at the base and working out to the fingertip. This is even more wonderful when you use lotion! (Notation in planner: Hand Massage)

I'm sure by now you're getting the hang of this and can create a Seven-Day Plan that is tailored to your taste. Try it for a week. If you like it, make it part of your weekly schedule.

MAGICAL PLACES

If you find that the pace of your life becomes overwhelmingly challenging and there is no such thing as “in-between,” lay out some locations in your landscape that let you shift out of overdrive. Make some magical places, little islands to be delighted in, where you can recharge. Places of light for yourself. Let them be just yours. Let them be simple. Take pages from your cat's book and spread them through your daily “territory.” And

if you have never lived with a cat (there is no such thing as owning one, you know), ask someone who has how it works, this seeding of your territory.

Their doorways can be objects that lead you to places where you can mentally hunker down into for a few





safe, unobserved seconds of respite. They can be treasures in the giant size or treasures that look to the naked eye more like trash.

Or they can be memories. Make the memories sweet ones, with maybe some nostalgia mixed in. One of my favorites is a memory as a four-year-old visiting San Juan Capistrano Mission with my grandmother, who was never without a dark blue, velvet hat pinned firmly to her head when she was outdoors. I actually have a snapshot of her wearing it as she lounged with us (in a dress and black grandma shoes) on a blanket at the beach. So we were in the Mission garden, she and I, when she sat me down on a bench. I looked up just as a flock of predatory pigeons came in for their usual dive at the tourists. There were wings everywhere, and in the middle of them all was Grammy with a very fat pigeon plopped right in the middle of that blue velvet hat. What I remember best is how she laughed and laughed. It's an in-between moment I can go back to time and again.

Treasures large could be favorite breathtaking views in photos, or wearing jewelry that you would not otherwise show up at work in. Treasures small might be a rock you love, an origami bird made with newspaper, your favorite marble. Touch them, let them be your focus and lift you into the magic they hold for you, just long enough

to let that magic soak in and fill you up. So you go from prunish to plump, like a raisin magically turning back into a grape. Well, you get the idea, I'm sure.

TIPS FOR FINDING MORE IN-BETWEEN SPACES

Now that you have the idea, here are a few more ways that you can discover in-between moments:

Getting Warm Inside When It's Cold Out

Set up a special place for yourself to acknowledge how you enjoy the relationships you have with the special people in your life. You can make it virtual, as in a space you visualize and go to in an imaginative way to "tap into" the richness of those relationships, or you might want to make it actual. A table with pictures or momentos, a wall of photos for remembered moments.

Let more warmth in by snatching a few moments to enjoy the warmth of a good friend's voice on the phone, with feeling the flood of warmth in your favorite music, with the unmatched warmth of sharing laughter, with touching in on your own heart, vision, personal passion.

Making Your Way through the Holiday Party Muck

This is one for the big holiday party season. It must be that lots of folks like lots of parties, because there are so many between December and January. I have noticed a pretty high level of grumbling about having to go to yet another party,



however, so you party lovers may be in the minority. If you belong to the grumbling segment of the population, let me suggest that take it a little easy on yourself.

You have lots of company, you know. So when you get to the party that you dragged yourself to, look for the person in the crowd that looks like they're enjoying it about as much as you are and spend a little time lightening their load. Tell them something sincerely nice you noticed about them. Share a funny anecdote if you have one. Look pleased to meet them if you don't. Then move on and do it with someone else. It should make the event more fun for you. It could possibly cause you to shift from well-tuned party grumbler to that oh-so-coveted category, Life of the Party. Watch out, lampshades!!!

Relate to Air

Blow bubbles. Every now and again, sneak a chunk of bubble gum and blow yourself an occasional bubble when the coast is clear. It's hard to say whether it's the pleasure of being bad or the exquisite moment of forming that filmy, soft mini-cushion that does it. Or get a jar of bubble soap and blow a long string of them. Blow them in the air and watch them float and dance. Blow them on friends. Hope they laugh. Let them blow some too.

Just Feel Good

Spend a day thanking people and telling them why you appreciate what they did. Or skip the thank-you and just tell people what you appreciate. Do this for your own benefit—it will make you feel pretty great. It will also point out to you that: (a) people do caring things for you, and (b) you often miss the caring things people do. You can enjoy those caring acts much more if you see them. It may lead to some of your own.



chapter 3

Slicing through the Fog

You got a problem? Can you imagine a day in your life without one? We manage hundreds with hardly a wrinkle in our forehead. We are in control and loving it! Isn't that what success is all about? Isn't this how our lives should be?

Yes, it is. I believe that's why a problem we can't see our way through can throw us off balance and make us feel so powerless. Confusion may be a higher state, but it sure is a bumpy ride.

So what can you do when your usually crystal-clear vision suddenly becomes a tulle fog so dense you can't see your hand in front of you? It's a real challenge to know what your next move should be when you're trying to work through that emotional haze you encounter when you can't see a

**MOANING, SIGHING,
weeping, tearing
at your hair and
clothing are
SADLY underrated
these days.**



good solution on the horizon. That particular challenge can loom large and seem especially threatening to your well-being. It can produce a nasty twisted feeling in your stomach and cause you to jerk awake in the middle of the night. It can make you edgy and short-tempered. Definitely not yourself. And you want your breezy I-love-life-and-everyone-in-it self back! What can you do? Here are some ideas:

➤ Talk it out. You are not alone. (Isn't that a song by a well-known artist?) Find someone who will listen and talk about it. If the listener you have chosen isn't acquainted with how powerful listening in a compassionate, non-problem-solving way can be, you'll have to educate him or her. Be clear that you need someone to bounce some ideas off of. Just to listen to you, not give advice. Then let 'er rip.

You might have to gently remind your listener once or twice that you just need a chance to vent if this is a new experience for them. It often happens that you begin to see some solutions by the end of the session. You will definitely feel lighter. And that's good, right?

➤ Give yourself room to feel absolutely horrible. Do a fine job of it. Moaning, sighing, weeping, tearing at your hair and clothing are sadly under-

rated these days. Part of what is creating the “fog” for you is an emotional overload that you have created by imagining that your problem is either not solvable or will be much too painful for you to deal with. You need to dump some of that stress that is paralyzing your problem-solving skills. So try outdoing Elmer Fudd and his “Woe is me!” Promise yourself as you start that you will get down to business as soon as you’re finished gnashing your teeth.

➤ Do some visualizations. Energy work pays big dividends when you’re problem solving. This works best when you can be as far removed from “ordinary reality” as possible. Choose a time and place where you can be quiet and uninterrupted for a half hour or so.

1. First get very calm (the opposite of your ranting and raving self). Put on some soothing music; turn down the lights; and do some slow, deep breathing. If you like to use candles, get them out. A little incense might not hurt, either. Use them to help you set a mood just for you.
2. Now allow the issue that is before you to appear as energy. Take a little time with



- this. Try to suspend your judgment of how things should look. People have seen big, oozy blobs; a jumble of twisted, wiry lines; a dense gray fog; monsters. You name it.
3. When an image has formed, choose a color of light and wrap it all around it. Simply put light around it and hold it, completely contained in that strong, clear light for a few moments.
 4. Now let the whole thing go.
 5. Once your visualization has faded and while you are in such a wonderful, nurturing frame of mind, take a few moments to acknowledge your inner strength, the wisdom you have gained, the skills you have achieved. Enjoy who you are! End your session with a tension-relieving stretch. Repeat this process as often as it seems right to you.

➤ Chart it. Write your problem down as a heading on a sheet of paper and underneath, write the date you want to have the final solution. Then list solutions as they come to you. You might have some right away, or they may dribble in over days. Don't reject any of them. Make yourself a nice long list. If one of them lights up as you are reading

Take a deep breath
and make the
 **BEST** 
choice you can!

them over, voilà! Problem solved! If it's a particularly gnarly problem, circle the solutions you like the most and take them to someone whose judgment you trust on the date you have assigned. Discuss the pros and cons of each. Then take a deep breath and make the best choice you can. Sometimes doing the best you can at the moment moves the problem forward and gives you an opportunity to approach it again with more resources or insights than you had on the first go-around.



Oh, and remember that old standby, imagining your problem as the heading on the front page of the newspaper. Doing this can sometimes knock it down to a manageable size for you: “Neighborhood Mutt Impregnates Champion Rotweiler,” “IRS Writes Threatening Letter,” “Front Teeth Must Be Replaced,” “Employee Files Lawsuit,” “Entire Family Drops in for Surprise Visit While Flea Infestation Reaches New Heights . . .”

Here's the condensed version:

- Get someone to listen. No advice, just listen in a compassionate, nonjudgmental way.

- Weep and wail and gnash your teeth. Feel completely, overwhelmingly, noisily sorry for yourself.
- Visualize!
- Chart out potential solutions.
- Acknowledge that problems sometimes can only be tackled in steps. Honor yourself for making the best decision you can at the time. Recognize that sometimes issues need time to evolve. And so may you.