

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHORS OF *THE PASSION TEST*  
JANET BRAY ATTWOOD *and* CHRIS ATTWOOD,  
*with* SYLVA DVORAK, PH.D

# YOUR HIDDEN RICHES

UNLEASHING *the* POWER *of* RITUAL  
*to* CREATE *a* LIFE  
*of* MEANING *and* PURPOSE

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Janet Bray Attwood  
and Chris Attwood  
with Sylva Dvorak, Ph.D.



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YOUR  
HIDDEN  
RICHES

## INTRODUCTION: WHY RITUALS?

**W**e—Janet and Chris—spend our days doing the most exciting work imaginable: showing people they possess a unique Life Design that runs through every part of their life. When this design is uncovered, things that seem random and accidental, or the product of bad luck and misfortune, suddenly make sense. This also applies to you. Instead of being the victim of circumstance, tossed around by forces you can't control, you can discover how fulfilling life is meant to be. Your Life Design makes everything click into place. Suddenly you are at the center of purpose and meaning. You matter in the most precious way possible.

This book will take you many steps deeper into your unique Life Design. It will help you reveal your hidden riches: the untapped potential that is disguised by the haphazard way most people live. Our approach is rooted in the most ancient traditions of our world, based on daily ceremonies, celebrations, and practices for deepening heart and mind—in short, a host of *rituals* that give your days shape and meaning. A lifetime is nothing but a series of days, and when you can uplift each one, you can discover heights you never thought possible.

But why rituals? The very word may bring up bad memories of empty rituals, like Thanksgiving dinner with family members who don't really want to be there, or saying grace as fast as possible to

get down to the business of eating. Rituals imply formality, like a Japanese tea ceremony. Beautiful, but not suitable for the fast pace of modern life.

Contrast those moments with a formal wedding, at which ritual, ceremony, and celebration lay the foundation for an unforgettable experience. Janet recalls the day she married Chris in a small chapel: “I watched from the back of the hall as all our friends assembled in a mood of happy expectation. My six bridesmaids walked down the aisle, along with twelve little flower girls. Chris had to rush to get there on time, but there he stood, still slightly red and winded, waiting for his bride.

“It would be my turn in a minute, and suddenly I realized that I wasn’t myself, not the self who had been frantically organizing this event and trying to make sure every detail was perfect. I’m a confident person who is used to performing in public. But I was trembling, on the verge of tears. There was something so profound in the atmosphere. It went beyond the joy of the ceremony. I almost felt like I was outside my body—and then I realized why. I was experiencing a sacrament. Organized religion hadn’t been a part of my life for a long time, but at that moment, I peered into a kind of spiritual mystery: how the assembly of people gathered to join two souls creates a sacred space.

“I’ve never forgotten that little epiphany, and now, years later, I believe that creating a sacred space, not just in a chapel but in your own being, is one of life’s most precious attainments.”

Our intent is to help you unfold the richness of ritual that Janet glimpsed that day. We ask you to set aside your preconceptions. In reality, rituals have deep meaning that has been largely lost. Every day has the potential to unfold an epiphany, but few people know that they have this choice. In a moment we’ll tell you an amazing



story about one woman's experience of uncovering a layer of the mind she never dreamed existed. But first, a bit more about why this book is called *Your Hidden Riches*.

Your hidden potential is woven into the secret patterning of your life. The answers to your deepest questions and most cherished hopes aren't somewhere outside you. Life is the answer to life. You must connect with that part of you where these answers, your riches, lie.

What keeps people from finding their hidden riches? We've thought long and hard about that, and here is our conclusion. One of the happiest parts of anyone's life is connected to one of the saddest. The happy part is the dream you have of how your life is going to turn out. Beginning as children, we all assemble bits and pieces of an ideal picture, which is based on getting what we really want. To a six-year-old, what you really want is mostly within reach, because there is food and protection provided by your parents, friends and games, with lots of time to play. But if we fast-forward thirty years, often the dream has crumbled, and is now associated with sadness instead of hope.

Are you getting what you really want? Are you happy, fulfilled, and living life as you'd like it? If so, you have achieved something rare: You have found your Life Design, probably through much trial and error. Your destiny is being lived through work, relationships, and recreation. What could be more ideal? Life isn't really like a box of chocolates, despite what Forrest Gump's mother told him. It's rather like an enormous jigsaw puzzle that promises a beautiful finished picture, only the top of the box is blank. You are expected to assemble the pieces with no model to follow. To make the puzzle even harder, new pieces arrive every day.

It's actually quite amazing how well most people put together

some kind of happy picture. But let's face reality. We all settle. Our ideal life has been switched out for something less, and even the happiest picture has its ragged edges, missing pieces, and hidden places where forgotten dreams have died.

In the United States, people hold on to an image of total freedom, the open road, and rebels without a cause. Living this way has become a goal for many young people the world over. Reality isn't like that. Beyond adolescent fantasies and romantic daydreams, real joy comes from knowing that you've built the best life possible, using your intelligence, creativity, and every fiber of your being.

As you'll soon read, rituals can be applied to small, everyday actions in order to make daily life rich and rewarding. Rituals can also be formal ceremonies that transform, connecting you to deep meaning in every aspect of your life, and may even change your entire life's direction. (We've gathered a rich collection of both everyday and ceremonial rituals to support your exploration of this remarkable world at [www.thehiddenriches.com](http://www.thehiddenriches.com)).

So how are your hidden riches revealed? First, by knowing that they exist. Second, by bringing your mind to a deeper level of attention. Third, by channeling your life energy in new directions. We'll show you how to do all three, using rituals as the key, since they provide a natural route to a deeper reality, one that already exists within you. Attention is really the main focus, because all day, every day, you place your attention on one thing after another. If your attention is distracted, overwhelmed, stressed, and worried, then your daily life is being pulled this way and that by outside influences. For many people, just getting through the day is a form of barely organized chaos.

But if your attention is clear, open, relaxed, and fully present, everything changes. You see what is most important and meaningful to you, and you go for it. Rituals focus attention in a very practical

way, as we will show in Part Two, where specific rituals are tailored to the major needs we all share. They are:

*Relationships:* Attracting your ideal partner and forming a loving bond between you.

*Health, diet, and beauty:* Bringing your body into harmony at every level so that it becomes your strongest ally in reaching a state of optimal well-being.

*Money and wealth:* Matching your inner riches with external abundance.

*Ceremonial rituals:* Creating a sacred space and entering it for healing and renewal.

*Family:* Bringing parents and children into a closer circle of security, understanding, and love.

All of these areas are expressions of your Life Design and when you are fully aligned with your Life Design, they create what we call “enlightened wealth.” These are areas where fulfillment is meant to come naturally and in rich measure. We know you don’t identify a higher state of fulfillment with rituals—not yet, at least—but that’s been their purpose for thousands of years. Rituals work by organizing your attention in a new and better way.

To give you a sense of what’s possible as you dive into the world of ritual, allow us to introduce Lynne Twist. For twenty years Lynne had been working tirelessly to end world hunger as chief fundraiser for the Hunger Project. She had worked side by side with Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu; she trained thousands of volunteers. She had traveled throughout Africa and Asia, working with those most in need.

In 1995 Lynne got a call from one of her largest donors. He had a pet project he wanted her to help him with. When large donors call,

fund-raisers listen. Lynne found herself on a flight to South America, where this client's work was under way. There she was joined by John Perkins, a longtime colleague and best-selling author of *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*.

Nothing she had done prepared her for what lay ahead.

One evening Lynne and John were invited to join a small group in an ancient ceremony. Sitting around a bonfire, they and the group were led by a Mayan shaman, who instructed each person to "enter your dream" as he drummed. Expecting nothing to happen, Lynne did her best to follow his instruction. Suddenly she was transported into the body of a huge bird swooping and soaring over the jungle below.

"I didn't experience the dream of a bird," she recalls with excitement years after this occurred. "I *was* the bird. I could see the trees below and feel the wind in my wings." How could this be?

She surrendered to the experience, and as she continued to fly, she began to see faces rising from the jungle. They were strong faces, the faces of an ancient people painted in dramatic patterns that were not easily forgotten. Lynne has no precise idea how long her experience lasted, but when she felt herself return to her human body, she was deeply shaken.

"All of us sitting around the fire started relating our experiences. Each person had been transformed into some kind of animal—a jaguar, snake, or bird. The shaman explained that these were our spirit guides, and through these guides we could receive messages."

As it turned out, among the whole group, only Lynne and her colleague, John Perkins, shared the same experience of flying high over the jungle as a huge bird. John had also seen the painted faces that haunted Lynne after the ceremony. A few days later, she left for Africa to attend an important board meeting. She got caught up in

new events, and they shoved aside the memory of her strange ritual experience.

She entered the boardroom and sat down with her papers. Looking around, she saw familiar faces, until, shockingly, the men began to assume exactly the same geometrical, orange painted designs she had seen in her “dream.” Shaken, Lynne hastily excused herself from the meeting and went to the ladies’ room, trying to make sense of what was happening to her. Still agitated, she quickly finished up her work in Africa and boarded a plane back to San Francisco; her husband, Bill; and the familiar hustle and bustle of city life.

But her visions wouldn’t leave her alone. The painted designs reappeared, this time on the faces of the male cabin crew and other passengers. Lynne squeezed her eyes tight shut, praying this was nothing more than temporary burnout from a hectic work schedule that had consumed her for years. Nonetheless, when she got off the plane in California, she wasted no time phoning John, but he was traveling in South America, so she had to impatiently wait for two weeks until he returned.

When she finally reached him, the first thing he said was, “You’re seeing them, too, aren’t you?” The silence between them was the only confirmation both of them needed. While Lynne was in Africa, John had been trying to piece together what was happening. In his research he had already identified the distinctive facial designs belonged to the Achuar people, an indigenous tribe in Ecuador who had little interaction with the modern world.

“They are trying to make contact with us, Lynne. We need to take a trip to Ecuador.”

A trek was organized to a remote area deep in the Ecuadoran jungle where contact was made with the Achuar, a remote tribe who confirmed something astonishing.

“It was their intent,” Lynne says, “to find a few souls whose hearts were open enough to receive the invitation they were sending. Oil companies were encroaching on their ancestral land, destroying everything in their path.”

The only way the Achuar could contact the outside world was through spirit messages. They recounted for their visitors the prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor. “It was a powerful prophecy,” Lynne says with feeling. “The Eagle represents the people of the world who have used their intellect to create modern technological advances, bringing themselves great wealth. But in the process, the people of the Eagle have become disconnected from the heart and the deeper spiritual values that sustain life.

“By contrast, the Condor represents the indigenous peoples of the world who have used traditional wisdom to keep their connection to values of the heart. Their reward isn’t money but the riches of a powerful spiritual life. A life so powerful, it can send visions to someone far away, like John and me.”

Lynne was deeply moved hearing the Achuar tell the rest. The prophecy predicted that at this time in history, the peoples of the Eagle and the people of the Condor must come together to ensure the survival of humankind.

“Part of this I already believed, that the so-called civilized world must protect indigenous people and reach out to them for the wisdom we’ve lost. But the Achuar told us something else: It is equally critical that the people of the Eagle awaken from their ‘dream.’”

Lynne’s experience, which emerged as she participated in a ritual, led to her resigning from the Hunger Project and changing the entire direction of her life as she, her husband, and their colleagues joined with the Achuar to found the Pachamama Alliance. This unusual partnership has led to saving over ten million acres of

Amazon rain forest from destruction and training more than three thousand facilitators to lead the Awakening the Dreamer symposia.

The warning described by the Achuar has been echoed by representatives of the oldest civilizations on our planet, from the Aborigines of Australia and New Zealand to the North American Anishinabe and other tribes to the spiritual teachers of the Vedic tradition in India and Nepal. They all convey the same message: Our world is at a turning point. Those of us in the developed world must find ways to reconnect with the spiritual dimension and interconnectedness of all aspects of life if we are to continue to thrive.

Yet the world is just a reflection of each of us. If you have had the feeling your life is at a turning point, that there is some important element missing that is essential to your happiness and sense of purpose, then you are not alone.

In Lynne's remarkable story there is a lesson for all of us. The essence of a meaningful life lies in reconnecting with the unseen spiritual forces all of us have access to. If you see yourself as only a single isolated part, you will never realize the whole. What holds true for the planet holds true for each individual—in other words, you and me. We aren't trapped in the comings and goings of the everyday world. Something rich and mysterious lies beneath the surface. Ritual is the time-honored way to reach that hidden treasure.

Our first book, *The Passion Test* ([www.thepassiontest.com](http://www.thepassiontest.com)), was gratifying because so many readers said that it opened their eyes to the simple fact that life could be passionate, not just in romance but in the pursuit of their own personal vision. This new book focuses on the nitty-gritty, the daily rituals that bring out your best self and allow it to flourish.

We will show you, step by step, a way to assemble life's jigsaw puzzle. There is a design to your life. You were born with it. Uncovering

your unique role and purpose in the world lies in uncovering that Life Design.

Our world is at a turning point. It needs you doing what you came here to do. When you achieve that, you will be living your ideal life, reaping the inner riches that are your birthright.



Part One



RITUALS *and*  
*your* IDEAL  
LIFE

## A VISION OF FULFILLMENT

**R**ituals are tools to access your hidden riches. They can take you to the heart of your problems as well as to the heart of their solutions. This may be a new message for many of you, yet one of the purposes rituals have served for centuries is healing. They also served as the sacred connection to a higher reality. Why should you take such a journey yourself?

Rituals are all about reconnecting. When mind, body, and spirit are truly connected,

You feel more energetic.

You feel centered and powerful.

You are in the flow.

You emanate a glow, inside and out.

When you are connected, your life energy doesn't flow aimlessly like a river overflowing its banks. It's not like a jolt of electricity or a super-energy drink loaded with caffeine. Life force is integrating; it infuses the body and mind with exactly the right amount of energy to create flow, so that you are "in the zone" when doing what matters most to you. It guides your life when you are attuned to it and leads you on the path to fulfill your unique and special purpose for being alive. A vision of these energies is vitally important. In ancient India they were called *shakti*. In the Chinese tradition they

were referred to as *chi*, and they go by other names in other ancient traditions around the world. Specific rituals were performed to increase these energies.

The words shakti or chi may sound esoteric, but what really matters is that everyone was born with it—you can see how vital, happy, curious, and vibrant a baby is. By contrast, when a grown-up feels dull, lethargic, anxious, or depressed, their life force is at low ebb. It only makes sense that maximizing your vital energy will improve your life.

Our aim is to modernize this ancient vision. The rituals that originated in ancient cultures can be adapted to our lives today. They are all about reconnection. When you are fully connected in mind, body, and spirit, you will be whole. This is our model of the ideal life.

## THE DESIGN OF YOUR LIFE

If you look around, you can easily tell which person is leading a life with high fulfillment and performance. How? It's a state all of us would like to be in. Performance psychologists like Jim Loehr spend their careers helping multinational companies and Olympians connect with this life-force energy, creating breakthroughs, triumphing over crippling challenges, and achieving unusual success—all with the help of conscious, positive, consistent rituals. You can fashion the same kind of life for yourself.

It is the formal structure of ritual that allows participants to connect with the deepest aspect of their own inner nature. Look at the yoga movement, based in ancient ritual yet adapted to modern life to create connection among body, mind, and spirit. Or consider pilgrimages of the kind depicted in the popular movie *The Way*, which is about the famous pilgrimage route in Spain, Camino de

Santiago. The lead character, played by Martin Sheen, discovers that making a pilgrimage isn't solely about the holy place at the end. It's about finding yourself, connecting with your inner peace, and hopefully touching a sacred place inside you.

These are a few examples, but there's a much larger design that rituals fit into. Imagine if there was a built-in structure to your life that, when you align with it, will automatically create every day the experience of flow, ease, peace, and success. Imagine this as a structure that connects you with your unique purpose and role, immersed in a sense of belonging, at peace with yourself and the world. We call this structure your Life Design.

It's no accident that you love the things you love. What you are drawn to, what you are passionate about, what you are good at, are all part of the unique design of your life. When you are aligned with the design, you feel joyful, fulfilled, and purposeful. When you are out of alignment, you start to get unhappy, to suffer and become miserable. This discomfort is a sign that your life is off track from fulfilling your unique purpose. Something needs adjustment.

Through the life energy that sustains you, your Life Design is constantly unfolding within every cell of your body and every part of your being. Every cell is structured in a dynamic way, bubbling with thousands of chemical reactions per second. It's not a static structure like a blueprint or the schematics of a computer chip.

Because the structure of a cell is dynamic, it can respond to every change in the body—how much you've just eaten, how well you slept, whether your mood is elated or depressed. There's a tiny energy shift in every cell that reacts to these changes. Thus, every cell displays the perfect balance between order and spontaneity.

The same should be true in your life as a whole. Everyone knows the famous elevator scene in *Jerry Maguire* when Tom Cruise turns to a hopelessly smitten Renee Zellweger and says, "You. Complete.

Me.” (Really? Tom Cruise looks like a guy who only needs some cool shades and a Maserati to be complete.) How is life made complete? By love, certainly, but also by investing in the things your hidden riches want to express. If every cell in your body yearns for something, that thing will make you complete. You were designed that way biologically.

Your cells thrive by exquisitely controlling the flow of energy that they use, extracted from the air and food they take in. In ancient wisdom traditions, the use of vital energy was carefully mapped out on every level. This provided an objective way to understand why

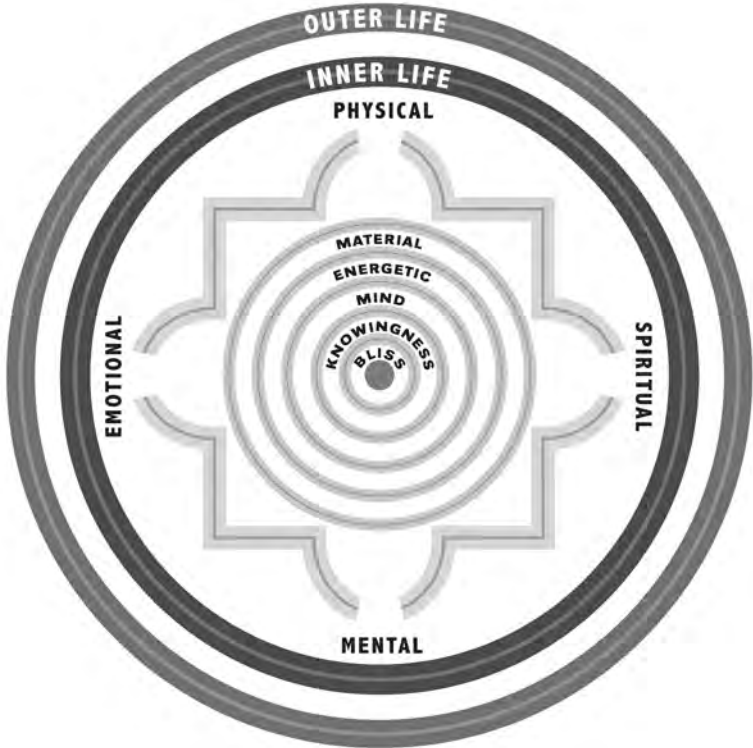


Figure 1: Model of Your Life Design

being aligned with one's life energy produces an optimal flow while being out of alignment produced struggle. The infinite potential at the center of every life was expressed through five levels, from the most subtle to the most physical. The overall design looks like this:

From your transcendent center, or spiritual core, the infinite potential that exists there radiates out through five layers. Life energy transforms into new forms before finally flowing through what are traditionally called “the four gates” of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual expression. All of this activity represents your inner life. You also lead an outer life, as represented by the ring that would encompass your social role and the appearance you give to others. Even those who know you best can't be fully aware of your inner life, and yet when you uncover your Life Design, inner and outer begin to match much more closely. There is no question of wearing a mask or assuming a public persona that is far from the real you.

The five layers through which the potential of your life expresses itself are:

*The level of Bliss*—This is the place from which the joy, the aliveness, the pure delight of being alive arise. Shakti flows from this invisible source.

*The level of Knowingness*—This is the part of you that can “feel” whether something is right or not without having to think it through. It is from here that intuition arises.

*The level of Mind*—This includes both thoughts and emotions and is where many of us stumble. When our thoughts and emotions are self-destructive, they block access to the levels of bliss and knowingness.

*The level of the Energetic*—It is the energetic level that attracts or repels. Ever meet someone and feel instantly attracted, or instantly repelled? You're responding to the energetic

field that person is projecting. When someone is dark and depressed, you feel it. When people are loving and happy, you feel that as well.

*The level of the Material Form*—This is the physical expression of the previous levels. You will be able to see distortion in a person's Life Design by their physical condition. When people are well-aligned, they look vibrant, healthy, and happy.

When you are aligned with your Life Design, the two outer rings—one representing your Inner Life, the other your Outer Life—are perfectly symmetrical. Now we have a template for the ideal life. The laws of nature and the organizing power of your life force are structured within your transcendent center. Depending on your spiritual tradition, you may refer to this transcendent center as God, Allah, Jehovah, or Brahman, but we feel more comfortable using a value-neutral term: the source of infinite potential. The flow of energy that begins here travels and transforms into body, mind, emotions, and on through every level. Since this flow is natural and effortless, the ancient seers affirmed that life as a whole can be effortless.

This is such a sweeping claim that we need to unfold it in detail. We want to show that the key to turning struggle into ease, which includes every aspect of your life, is a set of rituals that reconnect you to the flow of your life energy. Let's consider exactly what that means.

## WHY IS LIFE SUCH A STRUGGLE?

You may agree with the saying that everything happens for a reason, but do you actually see the reason behind the things that happen to

you? From the first shock of having a beloved pet die when you were five to hearing your parents fighting behind a closed bedroom door, from standing by helplessly when a family member contracts cancer to watching a grandparent suffer from Alzheimer's, there are random traumas you have no control over. They don't seem to happen for any reason at all. To get anywhere in life requires personal power and inner strength that enable you to weather the storms.

This brings us directly to the mind. Imagine a huge warehouse whose doors are open. You step inside and look around. The space is empty, and in the dim lighting it seems to run on forever. The warehouse is so vast that anything and everything could be stored inside it.

This warehouse is your mind. The vast space waiting to be filled is your potential. No one told us as kids that filling this warehouse isn't voluntary—it's a requirement for every single person. Every experience, good or bad, from the moment of birth, has been adding to your mind. Now that you're an adult, you've gone a long way toward filling your mind with thoughts, feelings, memories, and all kinds of things. Nobody fills the mind in exactly the same way.

The most fortunate, happy, and successful people have discovered a secret about the mind. For these people, the mind isn't just a warehouse for random thoughts and feelings, impulses and desires. It's a place of hidden riches. All the love you will experience in your whole life—past, present, and future—is experienced here. Your hopes will be fulfilled here. Joy is here in abundance, once you know how to uncover it. The most valuable thing anyone can learn is how to find these hidden riches.

Failing to uncover these riches results in a life marked by disorder and confusion. Many people have turned the warehouse into a teenager's bedroom. Everything's a jumble. The floor is littered with whatever got picked up and tossed back down. The walls are



cluttered with posters, stickers, perhaps a stolen stop sign, or sports logos. A teenager enjoys the luxury of a disorganized bedroom because his mother will usually get exasperated enough to come in and straighten out the mess. Unfortunately, if you keep filling your mind this way, no one is around to straighten out the jumble for you.

Your first reaction will probably be, “My mind’s not like that.” But we know lots of people who live their lives hoping to find success and fulfillment, yet who have no idea that their inner world is keeping them from reaching their goal. They have developed the habits of a disorganized mind, and the evidence can be seen in their typical day.

There’s never enough time to get everything done.

Accidents and distractions crop up unexpectedly, pulling them this way and that.

At work and at home there’s too much random activity.

Stress mounts up.

Deadlines keep pressing down on them.

Other people constantly drain their time and energy.

If you recognize this picture, it’s not the outside people and events that are robbing you of your hidden riches. Your riches are getting lost in mental clutter, like a wedding ring dropped in a patch of weeds. It’s hard for most people to see this. They work incredibly hard to get external rewards like money, the right job, a beautiful home. But despite the best planning and motivation, they feel frustrated. Too much of their inner potential has gone wasted or undiscovered.

This makes us think of Jonathan, now in his mid-forties, who followed his vision of being a self-made success. Jonathan knew as

a teenager that he was a born salesman. He could talk to anyone. His outgoing personality quickly lowered social barriers, and he had tons of enthusiasm for any project he started.

And he started a lot. His mind was always whirling with the next bright idea. Having skipped college to start selling land in Florida, he quickly became restless. As much as his co-workers and bosses liked him, Jonathan gained a reputation for not following through. Contracts bored him, and so did seeing to all the nitpicking details of punch sheets and the complaints of renters. He moved on—to land sales in Colorado, car sales in California, then back to real estate. His restlessness ended only when he settled down with Karen, a loving wife.

A good period followed, in which Jonathan was able to start his own boat business, with a dream of one day selling yachts. “If you’re a born salesman,” he told his friends, “try and sell the biggest-ticket item you can. It’s no harder than selling used VWs.” But with all this enthusiasm and personal gifts, Jonathan never made his dreams come true. The telltale signs were always there:

He was impulsive, always following the next bright idea.

He hated being tied down to an orderly routine.

He left follow-through to others.

His financial affairs were always a mess, leading to money shortages and tax problems.

Above all, Jonathan’s life didn’t teach him any valuable lessons on which he could build a better future. Now divorced and falling back on low-level sales jobs, Jonathan is an example no one wants to imitate. But we feel a lot of sympathy for him, because millions of people are victims of mental messiness, lack of impulse control, and the inability to really develop their natural gifts.

In many cases this is a result of failing to discover and understand their own genius (yes, we all have genius) embedded in their Life Design. Discovering that genius allows you to connect with and partner with others whose genius is complimentary, so that each of you is able to focus on your strengths—just as we (Janet and Chris) have done.

The things that block success and fulfillment aren't a mystery (although it feels like one when you're inside the chaos). Fulfilling your potential happens in the present. Here and now you must meet daily challenges, find solutions, and move forward. That's where the benefit of rituals begins, at the practical level.

## SMALL RITUALS, BIG RESULTS

You already have your own personal rituals, small repeated routines that work for you. When the star NFL quarterback Tim Tebow knelt in prayer before a game, his ritual reconnected him to God and dedicated his playing to a higher power. When champion golfer Phil Mickelson closes his eyes and visualizes how he will play the next hole, his ritual focuses his mind in order to get the results he wants.

We were fascinated by a May 2013 article in *Scientific American* titled, "Why Rituals Work." The authors note that personal rituals, "the symbolic behaviors we perform before, during, and after a meaningful event are surprisingly ubiquitous, across culture and time." On the surface, the ritual can seem irrational, as in this example:

I pound my feet strongly on the ground several times, I take several deep breaths, and I "shake" my body to remove any negative energies. I do this often before going to work, going

into meetings, and at the front door before entering my house after a long day.

We may keep it to ourselves, but most of us resort to some similar small rituals, and yet it would surprise us to hear that researchers have been examining the real benefits of personal rituals, which turn out to be quite rational. “Even simple rituals can be extremely effective. Rituals performed after experiencing losses—from loved ones to lotteries—do alleviate grief, and rituals performed before high-pressure tasks—like singing in public—do in fact reduce anxiety and increase people’s confidence.”

Before you assume that this must be a matter of faith, here’s a surprising point. “Rituals appear to benefit even people who claim not to believe that rituals work.” To back up these conclusions, the article cites an experiment in sports performance. Some subjects were given a “lucky golf ball” while others received an ordinary golf ball. When they were asked to perform a golf skill, the ones with the lucky golf ball did better, thanks to enhanced confidence. Performance also increased if the researcher merely told one group, “I’ll keep my fingers crossed for you.”

Is there a cause-and-effect connection between seemingly superstitious rituals and better outcomes? The authors of the article, who are professors and social behaviorists at Harvard Business School, leave this as an open question. But they conclude that rituals work, especially in situations where someone feels anxious or insecure. “Despite the absence of a direct causal connection between the ritual and the desired outcome, performing rituals with the intention of producing a certain result appears to be sufficient for that result to come true.” Remember the key words “intention” and “desired result.” They are going to play a huge part in this book.

Some of these private rituals are so valuable that they can make a difference out of all proportion to their size. Here's an example, given to us by a self-made millionaire who is a model of efficiency. His ritual isn't superstitious but highly rational, a comfortable place to begin. "I look at everything that happens to me in three ways. If I can answer a question or solve a problem in less than two minutes, I do it immediately. If the question or problem takes longer, it goes into two boxes. The first box holds the things I can resolve today or tomorrow. The second box holds everything else, the long-range things. It's a simple system, but you'd be amazed how well it has served me over the years."

This small ritual is actually quite brilliant once you look at the alternative. We've all had days when a thousand things need doing. The first thing might be a task that takes an hour or more, such as paying the monthly bills. You get started, but right in the middle the mail arrives. There's an overdraft notice from the bank, which is surprising and alarming. Anxiously you run after this problem just as the kids come in and say they're hungry. While trying to get them fed, the phone rings and a friend wants to know when she can come over to talk about the charity bake sale.

The ritual our millionaire friend follows won't solve the whole mess, but consider its application here: You don't start paying the bills because that takes too long. It gets put in the box for things to do today or tomorrow. Fixing a snack for the kids takes about two minutes, so you do it in advance. The bank notice should take less than five minutes on the phone, so you address it next. When your friend calls about the charity event, you put that in the second box, for things that need long-range planning. You don't waste today's precious time when you are not in the right place for dealing with a long-range activity.

Highly successful people have discovered such time- and labor-saving rituals. They apply them every day, and thus they feel in control of their hectic, busy lives. Even better, they enjoy a platform of inner calm from knowing that distractions, chaos, and stress don't have the upper hand. (What's happening would be very clear to an ancient sage: Successful people are aligned with their Life Design. The modern twist is that we give our attention to externals first, while the ancients began with their inner world.)

Incorporating rituals into your life is very personal. There are three major areas where rituals can greatly benefit you.

The first is *time* and how you manage it.

The second is *energy* and how you expend it.

The third is *thought* and how you organize it.

A useful ritual improves at least one of these three things—and hopefully more than one. When you go to the check-in counter at the airport, you stand in line, wait your turn, and talk to the agent once you get to the front of the line. This may not seem to be a ritual to you, but visit a country where people don't form a line but instead clump together, each pushing and shoving to get to the front (we won't mention names, but we've been caught in such places).

The ritual of lining up saves time, energy, and thought. It seems obvious that it takes more time and energy to fight your way through a mob than to line up. But how is thought saved? The answer is that you don't have to worry about clawing your way to the front or plan ahead for the chaos or risk missing your flight, which would lead to spending thought and energy on all kinds of backup plans.

All effective rituals eventually come down to using your mind in a better way. But let's consider time and energy first.