

Meandering Mind

Eva Dillner

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If you love something

set it free

if it comes back to you

it is yours

if it doesn't

it never was

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One

Rumination pays off

For months I have been chewing on the structure and approach of this book. At first I thought I would write a book with meditations and instructions on how to live life in the flow. But that wasn't it at all, at least not now.

It felt to me as if two books wanted to come through, one on business and one on relationships. Was I meant to write two books side by side? Quite a challenge, one book is quite enough of a project. I pondered the similarities in the books. In both, the premise would be to discover the potential of a group, individual or relationship rather than try to pound people into pre-determined roles and organization charts.

I experienced tremendous resistance to the idea of writing two books simultaneously. Self worth issues surfaced that took me into a very deep and dark place. I questioned once again if writing was really my path. I painted, hoping to unclog the creative flow. How was this to get off the ground?

I pattered with God knows what. I sorted papers, made phone calls, cleaned house, sat and stared into space, put my photo albums in order, played with my computer, daydreamed, had temper tantrums, you name it. I sure wasn't doing any writing. I felt frustrated. I laid on the couch and cried, feeling worthless and unworthy. I just couldn't get going. I could feel the stream of words just waiting to come out my fingertips into the books. But I couldn't find the end of the thread that would start to untangle the whole ball of yarn. I could see the whole ball, lots of threads here and there, all tangled together into a ball. But no start!

Then one day, while I was doing the dishes, the answer fell into place. I had assumed that in being given two subjects I was to make two books. The problem was that I had tried to separate relationships from work,

to structure life into some compartmentalized cubes. I didn't live my life that way. My work and relationships intertwine into a whole flow. The two subjects were meant to be in one book. As this thought crystallized in my head, I saw how writing one book could be done as a diary, with one topic following another. I could explore thoughts, experiences and theories without having to have the answers, without having to make a "how to" book. I could be the philosopher that I really am. I could ponder and observe and weave together my blend of life observations into a new whole. I would also have the opportunity to seed new thoughts, to pose new questions as well as share my wisdom. Best of all I wouldn't have to write from an expert point of view, like I knew it all. I could just be myself. What a relief! Yes, that was it!

I want to stimulate you, the reader, into your own exploration and to provide the tools you need, in the book. My goal is to set you free, to help you discover your own inner authority and guidance.

So yes, *ruminatio*n pays off.

What then, do I mean by ruminatio

n? I first encountered the term in a book about writing. Unfortunately I don't remember the author or book title, but I do remember the concept. This writer, a woman, had finally created space in her life for writing. Her husband would take the kids on Saturdays so she could write. He would come home and ask, "Honey, what did you write today?" Some days she had not managed to write anything, and she felt tremendous pressure from herself and her husband to produce. He was nice enough to enable her to write, but where was the product?

She finally realized that good writing needs time to come together. That lots of time needs to be spent in what she called ruminatio

n. She even got herself a ruminatio

n chair. It's where you sit and ponder different approaches and play with thoughts and ideas. You give your mind free reign to explore and wander and wonder.

Once she got her ruminatio

n chair, she was at peace when the inevitable question came, "what did you accomplish today?" She could joyfully answer, "I ruminated." And sure enough, the ruminatio

n led to writing. Good quality writing.

I suppose that is true with most things - much of the work is done in the preparation. If you are going to paint a house for example, about 80% of the time is preparation work, and only 20% of the time is actually spent on painting.

It's when we let go that the answer comes. I had done all the stewing

about how to get the business/relationship books off the ground - then I went to do the dishes and *bingo!* the answer just fell into place. I do believe that the stewing around is just as important to the process as the letting go. So yes, rumination pays off.

How to work with this book

I see my role as a catalyst. I'm an idea generator. I seed new thought. Many of the concepts and ideas I toss out in this book may be new and foreign to you. They may turn your previous beliefs about how things should be upside down. If you find yourself getting upset with some of the ideas, pause, and let your emotions and thoughts percolate for a while. It's ok to stew about it. Notice if you feel resistance or if you find yourself defending your current way of doing things. There are no right or wrong answers.

My hope is to stir your thinking and beliefs, to give you a chance to see things a different way. The solutions to our problems never come from the same level they were created. We have to shift our perspective to see a new solution.

Some ideas are covered more than once. I am aware that there is repetition in this book. It is the way it is supposed to be. If you think about it, when we're exposed to a new idea, we rarely accept it, or even hear it, the first time. New ideas have to be seeded several times before we can take them in. Then we need time to think about them and digest the new material. Only then do we proceed to accept the new thought.

I recommend you read through the book first, then go back through the book a second time and do the exercises. My hope is that you will go back time and time again for many years to come, and that each time you experience a new insight.

Use the exercises that appeal to you. Then, just for kicks, try the ones you really resist. Exploring the very thing you normally wouldn't do, can lead you into some very interesting breakthroughs. You free up a lot of energy by going to that very place you won't allow yourself to go. More on this later.

This book may upset you. You may find yourself questioning your own life. You may vehemently disagree with some of my ideas. You may find some of my views shocking. On the other hand, some of the material may be old hat to you. The ideas in this book are my own. I have no wish to force them on you. I offer my ideas as seeds for pondering. Take what works and leave the rest.

May I teach the exercises in this book?

Not long ago, one of my colleagues asked for permission to teach an exercise from my first book. I was elated she liked the exercises. *Of course you may teach anything that is written about in my books!* I want you to. I encourage you to incorporate ideas and exercises into your own practice, for whatever reason. Just be sure to mention where you found the exercises. Whether you are a consultant, teacher, therapist or manager, please feel free to adapt the material as you see fit. Refer your students to my books. Knowledge is not static. It grows and develops when we use it. As we use it the understanding changes. This is the natural flow of life.

Two

A woman on a mission

My spiritual name is *Pathfinder*. My mission in life is to find new paths, to discover new ways to do things, to seek new solutions, to meander down a different path than the traditional one. I was a groundbreaker in business as one of the first women engineers in the paper industry so it should not be so surprising that I have a different approach to relationships and organizations. If you're looking for traditional ideas and models for organizations and relationships, then this book is not for you.

I don't believe in cookie cutter formulas or rigid step-by-step procedures. I do believe in living, breathing, changeable processes. I want to give you the tools to do your own thinking, feeling and analysis. Each case is unique and has its own unique solution. So this book is about discovering new paths, new ways to look at relationships and organizations with much help along the way to stimulate and expand your thinking.

Organizations are relationships

This may be a new concept for you, that *organizations are relationships*. We traditionally think of relationships as love relationships, such as in marriage or relationships with children, siblings or parents. Truth is we have many different kinds of relationships, which form our experience of life. We have relationships with friends, with neighbors, with colleagues, with clients, with suppliers as well as with clerks at stores. Some relationships may be at the level of exchanging a few niceties across the counter, others plunge much deeper depths and last for lifetimes.

Perhaps you are used to thinking in terms of organization charts, where

there are boxes with people's names and titles in them. These organization charts are often hierarchical in nature and problems arise when the natural energy flow between people is inhibited.

“Natural energy flow,?” you ask. Well, I see organizations as living organisms with a natural energy flow. If you organize the work in a natural way, the organization functions at its optimal level. I will give plenty of examples of this as we go along.

For an organization to perform well, the relationships within it have to be functional. Unfortunately, we bring all our baggage and dysfunctions to work and many organizations are hell to work for these days. I call it *managing to mediocrity*. It is this way only because there is a limited understanding of how it all works.

Relationships are organizations. You can't have one without the other. Whenever two or more people get together it's an organization, even if it's only two friends getting together for dinner or a movie. Families are organizations. Social events are organizations. Our relationships form our work organizations.

Stunned into silence

I would have written this book a long time ago, but there have been obstacles in the way. There has been a lot to work through therapeutically. I have published two books on therapy and personal growth. But the book you are holding in your hands is the one I wanted to write first.

I had completed a fifteen-year corporate career with an assignment in France. We spent two years building a new factory. It was an intense and difficult project in any language and culture. We pulled it off on schedule and under budget and had really done a terrific job. My boss wrote a promotion recommendation for me, got it signed off by the entire European management team and sent it off to my boss-to-be at headquarters, who put it in his desk drawer.

My new boss made it crystal clear he could care less what I had been up to in France. He refused to even look at the promotion recommendation. He just put it aside, with no interest whatsoever. I was stunned. I was speechless. At the time there were so many things to deal with that I glossed over it emotionally. That's what happens when you get a shock. Your system shuts down and with it the emotions get buried. Complicating the problem was my wish to continue with international work and our company was closing the international division. I was also getting strong signals from my body that I needed to take a break.

I had been going non-stop at a fairly intense pace since I started university, where I carried a heavy course load. I went straight to work when I finished my Master's degree. I had wanted to take time out during my studies, but my practical parents convinced me to wait until I graduated. Turned out it was practically impossible then, you might as well throw your degree away if you took a time out.

So there I was twenty years later, feeling like I needed a break, my new boss didn't want me and there were no exciting projects on the horizon.

I had been toying with the idea of writing. In my mind I saw myself writing books. I was terrified to just quit outright. I asked for a leave of absence for three months. At the end of those three months, my boss, the one who didn't want me in the first place, called to tell me I had been laid off.

But back to the stunned into silence. It's now fifteen years later and I have finally uncorked the emotional trauma at not being seen or acknowledged by my new boss. I know I'm not alone. The damage done to people in organizations that downsize, restructure and reshuffle is enormous. There is a whole army of emotionally crippled people out there trying to hold their lives together. Can you imagine what a different world it would be if we could take our issues into therapy and resolve them as we go?

Had I been emotionally whole at the time, I could have stood up for myself, said how I felt and dealt with the emotional pain of being ignored. My accomplishments are very important to me. Obviously, the whole European management team thought I had done a very good job. It was beyond my comprehension that you could just ignore such a glowing recommendation. Perhaps he was jealous or it reminded him of a sister who got all the attention, who knows? Point is, it hurt me tremendously. I experienced excruciating low back pain, my root chakra locked up and I developed uterine fibroids. My whole sense of self had been invalidated. This end-of-career incident wasn't the only one that contributed to my difficulties, but it was a major one.

Unfortunately there are few therapists who understand how to work with work and organizational trauma. Their training and experience tends to focus on traditional relationship issues and physical traumas. For more information on how to work therapeutically with life's difficulties, see my other books. In these books you will also find many useful exercises for personal and spiritual growth.

I took a long rest after being let go from my corporate job. Then I start-

ed writing. I titled my book *Managing to Mediocrity*. After all, that was my experience. So much garbage went on that had nothing to do with doing a good job or making profits for the company. With all the reorganizations it was every man (or woman) for himself with lots of petty politics and behind the scenes manipulations. However, I didn't get very far with my writing, at that time...

Managing to mediocrity

In many countries there's been a reality show on TV called *Survivor*. The competitors go to an island and are pitted against each other individually and in teams, in survival and other games. Each week a loser has to leave the island until there is only the winner left. You would think that the strongest or most capable would win. Not so. In the early stages, the competition is between teams. The focus is on cooperation and support, so that the team can win. At this stage it's the weaker participants who end up leaving. Then the competition turns individual. Each to his or her own. Now the game is to get rid of the strong ones, so there is less competition at the end. As one astute winner said, "the trick is to hang in there while not looking like a threat to anyone." Quite the opposite of being capable or strong.

So the fittest don't win. Much like it has become in the corporate world. It's not about being capable. It's about blending in and making it to the top. To make it easier to advance, you work to get rid of anyone who looks better than you do in the accomplishment arena. In other words the system produces *managing to mediocrity*.

It makes me very sad to think of all the talent that is sidelined, not because they are not capable, but because they are perceived to be a threat to those who want to climb the ladder. It's a very sick system. My goal is not to belabor what is wrong in the world, but rather to show ways we can make organizations and relationships right again. I'm sure it was the Divine plan that I not write this book when all I could see was managing to mediocrity. I needed to grow and develop first. The book I'm writing now is about *transformation*, how to release what doesn't work and introduce new ways of being and doing at home and at work.