

Praise for Julia Cameron and *The Artist's Way*

‘Cameron’s morning pages have shaped the lives of millions’

—*Guardian*

‘As she has done for nearly three decades, Cameron is simply encouraging her readers to be a bit more open, more patient and kinder to themselves’

—*New Yorker*

‘I picked this book up for the first time when I was twenty-one years old. It completely changed my life’

—Kerry Washington

‘If you have always wanted to pursue a creative dream, have always wanted to play and create with words or paints, this book will get you started’

—Anne Lamott

‘Cameron wants you to have a serious think about what you really want from your life’

—*The Times*

‘I talk about this book all the time – I use quotes from it when I interview people, I use techniques from it to improve how I work, I’m pretty obsessed with [*The Artist's Way*], it’s amazing’

—Fearne Cotton

‘It’s a big dog book . . . [morning pages] gets all the gunk out of my head so that I can just start afresh and focus on whatever is in front of me’

—Michaela Coel

‘This book has been revolutionary in my creative life. It’s a must-read for every artist’

—Ito Aghayere

‘Julia Cameron is the queen of morning routines [and] has been unlocking our inner creative spirits for more than two decades. Everyone is doing *The Artist’s Way* . . . it’ll make you more creative’

—*The Cut*

‘*The Artist’s Way* is great . . . the moment I [followed] that, that’s when [the music] started to flow’

—Ed O’Brien

‘I found my way to writing through *The Artist’s Way* . . . Being introduced to that book, over twenty years ago, really changed my life’

—Billy Porter

‘This is a book that addresses a delicate and complex subject. For those who will use it, it is a valuable tool to get in touch with their own creativity’

—Martin Scorsese

‘*The Artist’s Way* is my favourite book’

—Precious Lee

‘Everything creative I’ve done has led from the freedom this book gave me. This book truly changed the path my life was taking [and] I still go back to it when I feel stuck’

—Cariad Lloyd

‘It’s a great tool for any type of creative person. I’ve given away so many copies’

—Tayari Jones

‘A classic that never loses its power’

—Amanda de Cadenet

Praise for *Seeking Wisdom*

‘I promise you will come away with renewed creative zest and energy, as well as insight into your own spiritual possibilities as a creative person. Get this book; it holds magical wisdom and genuine truth’

—Judy Collins

‘A must-read for those who struggle finding a connection with a Higher Power, and creatives who want a more robust experience of their art. If you’re an artist – and we’re all artists – who wants a more dynamic creative experience, you want this book’

—*New York Journal of Books*

Praise for *The Listening Path*

‘As bold as it is gentle, *The Listening Path* takes readers on a journey of self-discovery and beyond – the latest step in Cameron’s mission to crack open creativity’

—*Financial Times*

‘Julia Cameron has done it again . . . she gently guides us to become more in tune with ourselves, our world, each other, and beyond – bringing more clarity, connection and joy into our lives. *The Listening Path* will guide you to access the treasure trove of wisdom that lives within, and in the world around you’

—Amber Rae

‘The potential rewards are boundless’

—*Vogue*

Praise for *Write for Life*

‘In this luminous new book, Julia Cameron whisks you so effortlessly along a six-week writing adventure that you will barely notice you have written the first draft of a book until she deposits you back on your doorstep. *Write for Life* is the gust of wind you’ve been waiting for’

—Mirabai Starr

‘A boon to those struggling to get started . . . aspiring writers will appreciate the solid advice’

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ARTIST'S WAY**

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Prayers for the Nature Spirits

The Quiet Animal

This Earth (also an album with Tim
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FEATURE FILM

God's Will (as writer-director)

LIVING THE ARTIST'S WAY

An Intuitive
Path to Creativity

A Six-Week Artist's Way
Programme

JULIA CAMERON



First published in Great Britain in 2024 by
Souvenir Press,
an imprint of Profile Books Ltd
29 Cloth Fair
London
EC1A 7JQ

www.souvenirpress.co.uk

First published in the United States by St. Martin's Essentials,
An imprint of St. Martin's Publishing Group

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound in Italy by L.E.G.O. Spa

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 80081 798 2
eISBN 978 1 80081 799 9

This book is dedicated to Jeannette Aycock,
whose firm belief in guidance bolsters my own

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INTRODUCTION

I'll begin at the beginning. This is a book about guidance, so I'll start with defining "guidance," and answering the most commonly asked questions. What is it? Can anyone receive it? Guidance is direction that comes from a higher source of wisdom than we ordinarily encounter. It is the response of the universe to a question, "What about *X*?" Guidance is available to all of us. It is not the specialty of an elite few. Rather, anyone can ask for guidance and receive it. All that is required is an open mind.

Guidance is the fourth essential Artist's Way tool. *Living the Artist's Way* is a window into my life and my reliance on guidance at every juncture. It's an invitation to use this tool—as I do—to help navigate all areas of your life.

In previous books, I have written about the creative art of listening and prayer, and how we can be led through these practices and through our Morning Pages. Now, I take you one step further. You will see how prayer sets the stage for guidance; how Morning Pages prime us for writing guidance. With *guidance*, we ask on the page and we receive answers on the page. I will

show you how this practice has bolstered my life and my art. My guidance and art have become how I think . . . how I make sense of the world. I'm listening for guidance every step of the way.

In this book, I will reveal a personal, vulnerable side, writing about how I use guidance to handle doubts in my life. Ultimately, I experience faith. Indeed, writing guidance makes for a happier, lighter life. It's reassuring; it grounds us and can quell our doubts, anxieties, and fears. It leads to our inner wisdom and authentic selves.

It is my hope in this book to be both charming and calming. I hope you will love the deep exploration and practical application of this essential tool. Maybe my experience will demonstrate that it can be meditative—and *fun*—to write for guidance.

"I wonder about *X*," we may think, and the wondering is a fertile ground for guidance. "What about *X*?" we pose the question, and we find our query being answered. *Something or somebody* responds to us. We "hear" information that satisfies our wondering. Guidance is simple and direct, yet powerful.

Romance, finance, tangled business affairs—all are fair game for guidance. What began for me as a limited affair was soon expanded into an adventure. I found guidance to be far-reaching and trustworthy. The wisdom I had previously sought from human sources was readily available from spiritual sources instead. I well remember my excitement at this discovery. "You mean I could ask about anything?" I exclaimed.

Yes.

And so I did. "What should I write about next?" became a frequent query.

Write about prayer, the answer might come back. Or, *Write about friendships*.

Or, in the case of this book, *Write about guidance. You've been using it for thirty years. Say more.* The guidance was right. I wrote

about guidance in *The Artist's Way*, and then spent thirty years writing without mentioning it again, although I was using it at all times. I came to think of it as a fourth essential tool—a sort of safety net that undergirded the three tools I already had in place.

My guidance has pointed me in fruitful directions for more than thirty years. I came to rely upon it. I quickly found that when used in conjunction with the other tools, it yielded me a surefooted path.

And so, a few words about the other tools are appropriate now. When we use all four tools in conjunction, we gain confidence in our creativity. Using the tools we attain a creative life.

THE FOUR ESSENTIAL TOOLS

The four essential tools of a creative recovery include Morning Pages, Artist Dates, Walks, and Writing for Guidance. Used in combination, they have helped people around the world become creatively unblocked, happier, and more productive.

I encourage you to use all four of these tools. This handbook is a deep dive into the fourth essential tool, Writing for Guidance. In diary form, it is a window into how I use it in all aspects of my daily life.

Morning Pages

Three pages of longhand writing, done every morning upon awakening. I recommend 8½ × 11 or A4-sized paper—any smaller, and I find you will crimp your thoughts. As soon as you can after waking up, write three single-sided pages about absolutely anything. If you can't think of anything to write, write "I can't think of anything to write." Yes, you can make coffee first, but don't spend forty-five minutes brewing the perfect cup. The faster you get to the page, the more effective the pages will be.

Very important: these pages are for your eyes only. Show them to no one. They are a completely private place to dream, wish, complain, muse, and dare. They are the bedrock tool of a creative recovery.

Artist Dates

Once a week, take your artist—the youthful, playful part of you that creates—on a solo date. This does not need to be expensive or time consuming. The point is that you commit to a chunk of time where you focus on your artist—and on fun. These mini-adventures are festive excursions that you do alone. It might be a visit to a museum, a solo trip to a new restaurant, a walk through a botanic garden, a movie. An hour or two is enough. Resist your resistance: it is easy to decide you “don’t have time” for this date. But artist dates have been known to give us insight, inspiration, and happiness. Choose an outing that enchants your inner artist. Expect your luck to improve and synchronicity to increase as you commit to regular artist dates.

Walks

Twice a week, take yourself for a solo walk, sans music, phone, friends, or dogs. Twenty minutes twice a week is enough to alter your consciousness. You may wish to walk out with a question and see if you return with an answer.

WITH THESE THREE tools in place, we are ready to ask for guidance. Guidance can be sought at any time, day or night, although many people find it best sought directly after Morning Pages. It differs from Morning Pages in that it asks a direct question: “What about X?” Where Morning Pages may yield

us information on a troubling issue, they are seldom as direct as guidance, asking point-blank for direction. Here, you have a choice: you can ask for guidance in the same journal you use for Morning Pages, or, perhaps better, in a separate notebook specifically for guidance. A question at a time, we ask, and listen for a response. In guidance, we may ask to understand a thorny issue. A simple sentence may unlock our difficulties. Guidance gives us an overview. A deep dilemma may be revealed and dismissed. For example, I wrote, “What about my writing?” I heard back, *Put sobriety first*, and I realized I was dealing with an issue of faith. My doubt about my writing was actually a failure of trust.

WRITING FOR GUIDANCE

When we write for guidance, we write out a question, and then write down what we “hear.” Following our guidance, we find ourselves led, gently and well. As we practice writing for guidance, we find that our guidance comes more and more easily. The novice at guidance may find themselves doubting its validity. “What if it’s just my imagination?” It is not, or—if it is—the imagination is far wiser and more benevolent than we had previously thought. The essential message of guidance is the assurance that all is well; difficulties will work out; we are safe, guided, and protected. Our guidance comes, and we come to rely upon it.

INTRODUCTION

The Artist’s Way was published in 1992. In that book, I talk about seeking—and relying—on guidance. Laying out a path for others to follow, I talk about the simple practice of asking for—and receiving—guidance. My tone, those many years ago, was matter of fact. Of course it was smart to seek guidance and to trust it.

In the years intervening, I have come to recognize the importance of confidence. We must work to have an open mind. Guidance is trustworthy, but we must do the work to trust. As we seek guidance more and more frequently, we recognize its wisdom on matters large and small. This brings us confidence. We practice having it.

In 1992, I wrote:

Anyone who faithfully writes morning pages will be led to a connection with a source of wisdom within. When I am stuck with a painful situation or problem that I don't think I know how to handle, I will go to the pages and ask for guidance. To do this, I write "LJ" as shorthand for me, "Little Julie," and then I ask my question.

LJ: What should I tell them about this inner wisdom? (Then I listen for the reply and write that down, too.)

ANSWER: You should tell them everyone has a direct dial to God. No one needs to go through an operator. Tell them to try this technique with a problem of their own. They will.

Thirty years later, I still seek guidance. I seek it and—despite my doubts—I trust it. I now have three decades of experience with guidance being trustworthy. And yet I have not written about it as much as the other essential tools. Perhaps I have a lingering fear of being too “woo-woo.”

And what exactly do I mean by that? I have a fear of having departed from our accepted rational path. Guidance, after all, lays out a spiritual path, an intuitive path, one taking us to believe in what we cannot, rationally, know. Is it any wonder we feel fearful, lest we be judged a little “touched,” a little “crazy”?

Over the years, I've collected my friends carefully. They do not think I'm “crazy,” or too woo-woo. Instead, like me, they believe in guidance. Specifically, they believe in my guidance.

“What does your guidance say about that?” my friend Jeanette will ask me when I bring up a tricky issue.

“I don’t know. I haven’t asked,” I will sometimes report miserably.

“Well, I think you’d better check in,” she will remind me, trusting my guidance to be accurate. And so I “check in.”

My friend Laura Leddy also trusts my guidance. Believing in her own guidance, she also believes in mine. And so, with her, I do not mince words. I say to her, “Guidance tells me,” and then I quote what I have been told. Laura listens with interest and no skepticism. I find her belief reinforces my own.

Jacob Nordby, another close friend, is also a believer. He seeks guidance daily and acts on what he hears. To him, my guidance is an accepted fact. When I pursue a direction guidance has given me, he assumes the direction to be correct. We often teach together and our guidance makes each teaching experience easy, even effortless. We live a thousand miles apart but our guidance brings us together across the miles.

Scottie Pierce, a close friend, believes in my guidance and her own. “You’re very tuned in,” she will assure me. “Your guidance is accurate, sound, and *exact*.” When I ask her to pray for me, she does so gladly, often remarking that I’m “already on the beam.”

Nightly, I check in with another friend, Scott Thomas. A Lakota elder and psychotherapist, he invokes his own guidance daily. Writing my daily passage, I often hear from him. “Just happy you’re having a creative evening,” he’ll tell me, trusting that my writing is “led.” He keeps his phone calls brief, not wanting to “interrupt the flow.”

And so, bolstered in my belief by my friends’ belief, I write out guidance nightly. I ask to hear from the Great Creator, and I ask also to hear from Higher Forces. My requests for guidance are always answered and those answers guide my life.

When I teach the tool of written guidance, the most common

question I am asked is “What if it’s just my imagination?” To that I reply, “Well then, your imagination is much more helpful and positive than you have thought.”

This book is my answer to this common question: “What if it’s just my imagination?” This book asks, “What if it’s not?”

Thirty years after *The Artist’s Way* was published, I am here to report that I still write for guidance daily, and on any topic I need help with. It is a practice I rely on, believe in, and use in every area of my life. *Living the Artist’s Way* is a window into my life—and my reliance on guidance at every juncture. As this book lays out how and when I use this tool, it will invite you, too, to apply the technique I depend on to navigate all areas of your life—from your relationships to your environment to your career. It is powerful, it is positive, and it is available to all of us.

Welcome to the creative act of writing for guidance.

WRITING FOR GUIDANCE

I believe in higher realms and higher forces. I believe our world is touched by them, needing only our consent. Swing wide the gate and all manner of spiritual aid rushes to our side. Clang the gate shut again and experience life without headlights. Guidance gives us high beams and we come to rely on them. As we ask to be led, we are led. Write for guidance, and our lives become friendlier. The future no longer looms hostile and unknown. As we ask to be guided we experience a benevolent guiding force, tutoring us as we move forward. This force “speaks” to us in a wise and kindly tone. Difficulties lessen as we are given the grace to handle them. We are *well and carefully led*. There is *no error in our path*, we are assured. We are told, *Do not doubt my goodness*, and our fears lessen. As we take our troubles to the page, our troubles decrease. We write, and a higher hand

“rights” things. Calamity gives way to opportunity. Our pen becomes an instrument of good.

“But what about *X*?” we ask, still seeking pessimism. However, optimism meets our hand. There is no trouble that cannot be tempered. Our misgivings, doubt, and despair are met head on. We are promised a sunny future devoid of drama. Our hand, moving across the page, yields us a handmade life. *All is well*, we are told, and we come to believe it. It is a matter of confidence. And confidence is born of practice. We try trusting the small, and we find ourselves trusting the large. “All is well” becomes a mantra. *All is well*, we come to believe.

Guidance comes to us through our own hand. We ask on the page and we receive answers on the page. We grow bold enough to inquire directly and our inquiries are responded to directly. Our guidance is straightforward. “What about *X*?” yields us information about *X*. We are told many things we have no rational way of knowing. Guidance peeks around corners, giving us a glimpse beyond. Our fears and concerns are eased. In the world of guidance, goodness prevails. So many of our fears are groundless, are imaginings. Guidance dismantles these fears, urging us to trust in a benevolent future.

We seek guidance in all arenas of our lives. Romance, finance—no topic is taboo. We ask to hear on a volatile subject and that subject is rendered open to us and without drama. Our wildly vivid imaginings are gently tamed. We will be loved. We will prosper. Guidance assures us our future is bright, not shadowed by fear. Slowly, gradually, we learn we are worthy. Guidance thinks well of us and we strive to do the same. In time, “What about *X*?” becomes drained of drama. Our guidance has offhand optimism and we come to trust it. Writing our guidance out, we reread it for reassurance. We “hear” our guidance over and its kindly tone sinks in.

All will be well, our guidance tells us. We come to trust, at first grudgingly, that this is so. Tutored in equanimity, we find ourselves responding rather than harshly reacting to life's cues. "You're so calm," we are told by our intimates. Our calm is a fruit of guidance. We are rendered more even-tempered. Our perceptions of life have altered. People and events are no longer seen as hostile. We have no need for barbed defenses. The world is not adversarial.

Of course we can pray for guidance and not put our request in writing, but there is something in the act of writing that renders the guidance we receive somehow more "real." It is our hand moving across the page, but our hand is an instrument in the hand of God. As we write for guidance—and write out the guidance we receive—our words may surprise us. They form in our consciousness as though we are taking dictation. A syllable at a time, a word at a time, we are given wisdom. Someone—or something—writes through us. We take down the words we "hear" and are often astonished. There is a wisdom apparent that is not our own. We sense that guidance takes the long view where we—shortsighted—see the short.

"What about *X*?" we query, and our guidance responds not only about *X* but about another issue that has been eddying in our subconscious. I ask for help with my writing, receive it, and hear the additional note, *Your sobriety is solid*. A sober alcoholic for forty-two years now, I had not realized that my sobriety remained for me an issue. Guidance, wiser than my conscious self, kept track of my years of sobriety and my need to remain conscious myself. That my sobriety is "solid" comes to me as welcome news. Guidance tutors me in my priorities.

DO NOT IMAGINE you are abandoned, guidance chides us. Instead, know that guidance is omnipresent, ever ready to guide and

guard us. Opening our minds and hearts to guidance is an act of will. We are willing to be guided, and guided we will be.

“Can I have guidance?” we come to ask, and a flow of guidance comes to us. Listening, writing it out, we may find ourselves surprised by the ease with which it appears. Who told us guidance would be difficult to access? I have found that receiving guidance is surprisingly easy and natural. The more we practice asking for guidance, the more normal it seems. We find ourselves relaxing. We begin to trust the flow of guidance, and further guidance comes to us. *Do not worry that you are off kilter*, we are tutored. *Instead, trust.*

Pen in hand, we transcribe the guidance we are given. Better than merely remembering, we write out our direction. Now we are able to read—and reread—our guidance. The words on the page sink into our psyche. We find ourselves led gently and well.

Over time, seeking guidance at all turns, we come to trust our higher power. Guidance that seems mysterious or abstract proves itself to be, in cozy retrospect, accurate and helpful. And it is a rarity for guidance to seem obscure. Most often it is simple and direct.

“Can I have guidance,” we pray, and the prayer is answered promptly. *You are led carefully and well*, we are told, and then the guidance gets more specific. In my case, I am talked to about my writing. *Write about hope. Write about control*, I am tutored, and so when I obey the guidance I am rewarded with writing of strength and clarity.

Write. Write now! I am sometimes urged when I am feeling resistance, not wanting to trust my guidance. Because sometimes I need to be told, *Resist your resistance*. And so I do and when I do I am given work with authenticity and power.

Do not imagine you are abandoned, guidance scolded me yesterday when I was, yes, feeling abandoned. *We are at your side always*. And just who is this mysterious “we”? I have come to

think of them simply as “higher forces.” I imagine myself talked to by great and benevolent beings. Angels? Who knows. “They” are content to remain anonymous.

Do not doubt our goodness, they remind me, faced with my occasional skepticism. This admonition casts me back through my years of guidance, years in which the guidance proved itself good. I have journal after journal filled with benevolent guidance. *There is no error in your path*, the entries assure me, adding this final comforting thought: *Julia, all is well*.

MY PHONE RINGS. The caller is my fellow writer Jacob Nordby. It has been for him a tumultuous day. His young daughter Meghan has moved out into a place of her own. In her absence, his house feels abruptly empty. Used to being a hands-on parent, Jacob now laments, “I will miss my weird little friend.” I sympathize, recalling how it felt when my own daughter, Domenica, flew the nest. That was twenty years ago and the memory still stings.

“I started my book on guidance,” I tell Jacob, shifting the conversation to less volatile ground.

“It’s certainly timely,” Jacob responds. “I think people could really benefit from using guidance right now. Maybe your book will nudge them into trying it,” he speculates.

“That would be great,” I respond, thinking that Jacob’s heartfelt wish may also be guided, giving me just the encouragement I need.

As we ask for guidance, we are well and carefully led. We find our wishes, hopes, and desires being met by the wishes, hopes, and desires of others. Increasingly, we find ourselves to be a worker among workers, a friend among friends. Listening to our guidance, obeying its cues, we have an experience of harmony. Guidance leads us to be an integral part of a larger whole. We experience synchronicity, the delightful intermeshing of our dreams

and plans with the plans and dreams of the universe acting benevolently on our behalf. Our “luck” improves and we come to count on it. We are ever more often in the right place at the right time. Chance encounters come to be seen as not chance at all, rather as the deliberate action of the universe on our behalf.

Over time, working with our guidance, we become increasingly cooperative. We are led in positive directions, the precise directions the universe intends. We have a sense of interlocking with the great and glorious gears of destiny. Our guidance gives us cues and we increasingly obey those cues, moving in unexpected directions as we are told. Our hunch or intuition becomes a working part of our mind. We come to depend on it, stepping a step at a time as it directs. “What’s next?” we may often query, listening for the subtle lead we are to follow. As we ask to be led, we are led. Seeking guidance, we are guided.

WRITE FOR GUIDANCE

When I teach, I am often met with questions about what to ask for guidance on. The short answer is “anything and everything.” A surefire way to discover topics you might benefit from asking for guidance on is to do one of my favorite exercises: the Wish List.

Quickly fill in the following sentences:

1. I wish . . .
2. I wish . . .
3. I wish . . .
4. I wish . . .
5. I wish . . .
6. I wish . . .
7. I wish . . .
8. I wish . . .
9. I wish . . .

10. I wish . . .
11. I wish . . .
12. I wish . . .
13. I wish . . .
14. I wish . . .
15. I wish . . .
16. I wish . . .
17. I wish . . .
18. I wish . . .
19. I wish . . .
20. I most especially wish . . .

Look back at your list. Any of the topics you just listed are fertile ground for guidance.

WEEK ONE

INVITING GROUNDING



In this first week, I invite you to try writing for guidance. The essays and tasks will help you to look at how you can benefit from using guidance in your immediate surroundings: your most pressing questions, your everyday life, and those people you interact with often. It is my hope that you will discover that there is nothing too small to ask for guidance on—and that your guidance is available, encouraging, and grounding. As you gain strength and faith in your toolkit, you will find yourself feeling steadier as you sense the support of what I call “higher forces.”

BELIEVING FRIENDS

My friend Scottie Pierce asks daily that she be guided. As her day unfolds, she is led, moment by moment. Attentive to the cues of the universe, she cooperates, connecting her actions to the guidance she receives. As a result, her days are indeed filled with ease and joy. When I ask her how she is doing, her reply is “excellent.” Guidance is the cause.

When I tell her I’m writing a book on guidance, she waxes excited. “Oh, Julia, that’s wonderful!” she exclaims. Guidance is a central fact of her life as it is of mine. “Listening to the Divine” sounds to her exactly like what I should be doing. “I heed,” Scottie says simply of her obedience to guidance. Heeding, she is graced with a graceful life.

The phone rings and it is my friend Jennifer Bassey calling. She is in sweltering South Florida where the heat and humidity have conspired to prevent her daily walk. “It’s simply too hot,” she says, missing her regular two-mile jaunt.

When I ask Jennifer to pray for my intentions, she responds by “white-lighting” me—imagining me surrounded in a protective white light, and asking that I be “guided in my words and actions.” When Jennifer prays, I do experience guidance. I often

*Friendship arises . . .
when one man says to
another, “What? You too?
I thought I was the only
one. . . .”*

—C. S. LEWIS

*There is nothing I would
not do for those who are
really my friends.*

—JANE AUSTEN

ask for her prayers when I teach, that I will be guided as I navigate the needs of the class. Teaching, I am led a word at a time, a tool at a time. When I ask for guidance in the wake of a teaching engagement, I hear back, *Little one, you did well. There is no cause for regret.* And so, bolstered by the optimism of the words, I “let go” and move forward to my next jump.

“I’m always happy to pray for you,” Jacob Nordby tells me. And so he prays when I ask and sometimes when I haven’t. Jacob relies on his guidance for cues to necessary prayer. He writes guidance every morning and as a result he receives more guidance throughout his day. “You were on my mind this morning,” he will tell me. “So I said some extra prayers.” Jacob’s “extra prayers” are always timely. His guidance for their need is impeccable. When I am worried, I know that Jacob picks up on my concerns. Across the miles from Boise, Idaho, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, he senses agitation and offers prayers for peace. “I believe in higher forces,” Jacob tells me. “Call them angels, call them whatever. They act on our behalf.” Listening for higher forces, Jacob believes that he receives guidance. “It’s a dialogue,” he tells me. “I speak to higher forces and higher forces speak back to me.”

Jacob would no more forego his guidance than he would skip a meal for bodily health. His guidance is nutritious, he believes, nourishing his spirit. A healthy man, Jacob nurtures himself body, mind, and spirit. His daily written guidance tutors him in self-care. He eats as he is directed to eat. His diet changes as his guidance directs. He recently became vegan, as his guidance directed. Obedient, he reports feeling greater energy and his weight is dropping a few welcome pounds. An excellent cook, he tailors his menus to guidance. The change in diet is “working out well,” he reports.

The phone shrills. The caller is my friend Laura Leddy, for twenty-five years an intimate. “You were on my mind,” Laura

says, her soft voice holding merriment. "I decided to see what you were up to."

"I'm writing about guidance," I tell her.

"Oh, goody," Laura breathes. Guidance is for her a favorite topic. She prays for guidance always and leads her days according to its dictates. "A new book?" she asks.

"How did you know?"

"It's a good topic."

I tell Laura that I have worried about being too "woo-woo." She laughs. Like my friend Jungian analyst Bernice Hill, she believes "woo-woo is where it's at."

"I want to urge people to try guidance," I declare, bold because I'm talking to Laura. "Written guidance is invaluable," I continue. "More people should try it."

"Maybe they will," Laura ventures. "You can be quite persuasive."

"Your mouth to God's ear," I reply.

"Oh, I think people are ready," Laura responds. Her optimism is heartening. Living in conservative Chicago, Laura herself is quietly "woo-woo." She believes in higher forces and turns to them for her many concerns. She prays for family and friends, making a special point to pray for those in need. I often ask her to pray for me and my intentions.

"I'm always glad to pray for you," she tells me. "But I sometimes need a piece of paper to jot down precisely what you've asked."

I picture Laura consulting her jotted notes. Her prayers are precise, careful, as she is herself. A tall, willowy blonde, she exudes grace and good humor. Now I tell her, "So pray for the book."

"Oh, Julia, you know I will," she says, ending our conversation. And I do know she will. Laura has been a stalwart friend for more than two decades.

Now it's my turn to call. I select Jacob, who is reading my recently finished book on prayer.

"So far, so good," he tells me, answering my call and my unasked question. I am eager to hear his opinion. The prayer book was written by listening to guidance. Each day's writing found me picking up a cue and writing what I "heard." The book unfolded smoothly, a guided passage at a time. I wrote the book daily during a cold and snowy winter. Jacob is my first reader and I am on pins and needles awaiting his verdict. An excellent writer himself, I trust him to be discerning. He tells me that he likes the book's opening and that he will read more "soon." "Soon," of course, is not soon enough. Having finished writing the book, I am eager for readers. But not just any readers. Readers whose opinions I value. Hence: Jacob.

"Your book is solid," Jacob tells me now. I'm relieved and delighted.

Outside my living room windows, dusk is settling in. The mountains loom dark and forbidding. Clouds wreath their peaks. It's 7:30 here, 8:30 in Chicago where my daughter Domenica makes her home. It's bedtime for Serafina, her daughter, and I phone to say, "Good night. Sweet dreams." Serafina is restless, not ready for bed, and Domenica has her hands full. Nonetheless, "Mom, I miss you," she carols. "What are you up to?"

"I'm writing my book on guidance," I tell her.

"I absolutely believe in guidance," she volunteers. "Sometimes it's very specific: turn left." Domenica's merry laughter twinkles over the line. "Serafina needs my attention," she says. "We'll have to have a whole conversation about guidance. It's so helpful to write 'I wonder what about X.' And then to write on."

"Mommy!" I hear Serafina's plea for attention. Tomorrow is her birthday, the fourth of July. She is wound up, anticipating the day.

"I'll let you go," I tell Domenica, looking forward to her further thoughts on guidance.

A three-quarters moon clears the mountains. Nightfall is upon us. Asking for guidance for a final page of writing, I hear back, *Little one, you've done enough*. Trusting my guidance, I believe I have.

IT'S A HOT and hazy summer's day. The mountains are wreathed in clouds. Rain is pending according to the forecast. It would come as a welcome relief, cooling the sweltering skies. Done in by the heat, my little dog stretches flat out on the cool Saltillo tiles. Out for a brief walk earlier in the day, she came back home panting, eager for her water bowl. My friend Nick Kapustinsky—writer, actor, director, jack of all trades—came by to give me a computer lesson. Too hot to concentrate, I aborted the lesson, talking to Nick instead about guidance.

Nick writes pages every morning. He depends on them to steer his day. His issues and questions are put to the page and in return he receives directives: try this, do that. A skilled poet, he welcomes poetry many mornings, guidance directing him how to shape his verse. His guidance is sometimes picky, tutoring him just what to do in no uncertain terms. A rigorous hiker, he sets out many mornings up the mountains and the mountains become the fodder for his poetry. Lean, muscular, he writes poems to match. He relies upon the daily inspiration that comes to him as he writes pages. Naturally disciplined, he very seldom misses a day's writing.

"I query," he explains and his questions meet with answers. He is open to guidance which is sometimes vague and sometimes quite specific. He acts on its cues and his actions lead to a well-led life.

*I would rather walk with
a friend in the dark than
walk alone in the light.*

—HELEN KELLER

*Out beyond ideas of
wrongdoing and
rightdoing,
There is a field. I'll meet
you there.
When the soul lies down
in that grass,
The world is too full to
talk about.*

—RUMI

"Here, girl. That's a pretty girl," Nick croons to my dog, Lily. She responds ecstatically, leaping up to balance her paws on his leg, "hugging" him. She never shows such ecstasy greeting me.

"It's because she respects you too much," Nick says. Respect or simple reticence, I'm jealous. I want my dog to greet me with such evident glee.

"Fresh water, girl?" I pour Lily an icy bowlful. Nick takes his leave, promising to come back tomorrow at four "for further conversation about guidance."

It's time for me to walk on the treadmill, a fifteen-minute stint, abbreviated from thirty due to the heat. I step on the machine, adjusting the grade and speed to moderate. I have a question I am mulling over and I know that my time on the treadmill will likely yield me an answer. "What place does prayer play?" I am asking. I "hear" my answer.

Prayer sets the stage for guidance, I am told. But when you ask for guidance, that, in itself, is a prayer.

It's a matter of receptivity, my guidance on prayer continues. When you pray, you humble yourself, and humility opens the door to guidance.

I think of my Morning Pages and the humility they bring, writing freely about anything and everything. Skipping topic to topic, they are, it seems to me, a prolonged prayer for wisdom. We enumerate our concerns and we ponder what to do about them. The pondering is a tacit prayer. "Show me," we are asking the pages.

The request to be shown is a prayer of petition. We are asking the universe for guidance. Without praying formally, we nonetheless are praying. The universe hears our plea for clarity. It responds with hunches, intuitions, direction. We come to understand what our next step is to be. Prayer—for the pages are prayer as well as meditation—has swung open the gate to higher

forces. We are led forward. We are led gently and well. So, by humbling ourselves in our pages, we are led to higher wisdom.

WRITE FOR GUIDANCE

Have you tried writing Morning Pages? They are my long-taught creativity tool: three pages of longhand morning writing about anything. They have swung open the door to creativity, inspiration, and, yes, guidance, for the millions of practitioners who use them each day.

I find that Morning Pages prime us for writing for guidance. Tomorrow, upon waking, try writing Morning Pages. See if they don't suggest some topics to ask for guidance on. Choose one, and after doing your MPs, choose something that came up for you, and ask for guidance on it. Write out what you hear.

CAREER GUIDANCE

It's a blue-and-white day but storm clouds gather over the mountains. They sweep downward, bearing their burden of rain. To my delight, heavy drops pelt against my windows. The storm is welcome but brief, cooling off the sweltering skies.

"You look cheerful," Nick Kapustinsky greets me as I swing open the door.

"It's a red-letter day," I reply. I tell him that a long-pending legal matter has just been resolved in my favor. "Cause for joy," I exalt.

Nick doffs his cap and sets to work at the computer. We have congratulatory emails to send out. For the better part of an hour we compose our greetings—notes of thanks to all who helped on my legal matter, a note of thanks to Emma Lively for her canny help on my prayer book. Finally wrapping up with a note to my daughter, Nick and I set out to walk little Lily, grateful that the day's heat has abated thanks to the brief storm.

"I take to the page when I have an issue that's difficult or pressing," Nick resumes yesterday's conversation on guidance.