

P R E F A C E

In the winter of 2016, I saw a commercial for the opening of the Broadway play, *Come from Away*, about the little town in Newfoundland that housed, fed, and supported the 9,000 passengers marooned there when planes were diverted from various airports as a result of the attacks on 9/11.

A glimmer of hope flashed in my mind: Were people finally ready for a positive story about the event that single-handedly changed our world forever? I had been gearing up to talk about my post-9/11 discoveries for years. Now with the opening of the play, it seemed the time had finally come.

Having studied and processed my unique experiences from micro to macro, local to global, personal to general in the years that followed, I had arrived at some uncommon theories and thoughtful insights. With the 15th anniversary of 9/11 coming that September, I decided it was time to step out with my story.

As a social outlier, I have always seen things differently. This is something I struggled to understand about myself until 9/11 when I was jettisoned to a new, emotional place with the

heartbreaking loss of my husband and the massive devastation of the attacks themselves.

In the fall of 2013, I started a company, a tactical and philosophical brand of kindness, and began teaching women to knit as a functional meditation. While it was great to connect with people one-by-one and share my vision, I was itching to spread the word on a larger basis.

Time was of the essence, and I decided that the best, most effective way to share my message would be with a public speaking platform. That summer a publicist friend wrote and distributed a press release based on the prompt: *Can we see 9/11 in a new light? Maybe it was a catalyst to open our world.*

Thirty-five radio and television stations, in small- to medium-sized markets from across the country, responded. My status and story as a 9/11 widow was newsworthy enough to garner some attention. From these interviews I became more confident that enough time had passed that people could hear a different story of 9/11. I also learned that, in order for my message to be considered credible in the world, I needed to write a book.

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In the years that followed 9/11, two questions emerged: Why had we been so emotionally unprepared to handle 9/11? And where was all the wise counsel to help us through it? These questions became the foundation of my emotional, intellectual, and psychological analysis over the past seventeen years.

Seeking answers to these questions, I visualized a three-legged stool with a physical, an intellectual, and an emotional leg. Prior to 9/11 our American culture focused on the intellectual leg with the result being that many kids now achieved

4.0 grade point averages and perfect scores on their SATs. We focused on the physical fitness leg resulting in professional and Olympic athletes regularly setting new world records. But we had done nothing to develop the emotional leg. Because of this imbalance, when we were attacked on 9/11, our three-legged stool tipped over, and it seems we have been stuck there ever since. Now, seventeen years later, we can decide to make the effort to set that stool upright.

We haven't done anything wrong intentionally. We just haven't chosen to apply our resources to the emotional education of our children and ourselves. Seventeen years in the scheme of history is not much. But maybe enough time has passed that we can begin to look at our post-9/11 world from a more emotionally educated point of view.

Finding the positive light in this dark situation became my life's work. My view of life changed completely when I realized that struggles happen *for* us, not *to* us. We can actually choose to not be victims. All it takes is a shift in perspective.

Was 9/11 a birth canal to a new future? As chaotic and frightening as that might sound, great change always comes with great pain. Perhaps the extreme pain of 9/11 also means that the positive outcome and social correction can be equally extraordinary.

Life is not about just surviving. It is about thriving. "*Surviving*." Life presents us with traumas and life presents us with tragedies. Living on the planet in the third dimension is about how we learn to handle these situations and better manage ourselves in the face of our challenges.

As human beings we have free will—we always have a choice: Do we want to live in fear and chaos, or do we want to live in

our *personal power* and find positive solutions for a happier and more peaceful life? *Personal power* means finding our strength from within and learning to trust our inner knowing instead of looking outside ourselves for answers.

What if we learn from our experiences and become better for having lived them? We have a choice to shift from the fear-based paradigm that started when The Towers fell to a more positive mind-set. We can choose to see the light. But first we need to calm down and rationally consider the situation.

The Light in 9/11: Shocked by Kindness, Healed by Love is part of a thirty-year campaign to bring *Cozmeena Enlightened Living*, a brand of kindness, to the world. The vast and intricate story of how the *Cozmeena* concept came to be and where it is going will be presented in three books.

The Light in 9/11 is the first of the three. It is the microstory—my personal memoir of life and family and how the events surrounding 9/11 became the catalyst for my dramatic personal change. I hope that in hearing my story you will begin to trust me because I have so much more to share. Book Two will be the macrostory: the story of you and of our world together. Book Three will be about how we can create our beautiful future.

It is my sincerest wish to be able to help people to feel better, to see what they have instead of what they don't, and to live lives of joy and grace instead of fear and suffering.

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One of the themes of my story is how the insidious effect of many “small” slights—accumulated over years and coming from many different relationships—can profoundly undermine the development of a child's self-esteem and self-confidence

creating insecurity and self-doubt. Large traumas such as physical or sexual abuse are obvious, but it's the subtle, insidious, emotional *slights* that no one sees—but a child feels strongly—that can have devastating short- and long-term effects becoming deeply rooted in the child's psyche and emotional mind. They can cause self-hatred, depression, and personality disorders, and can build to a point of rage and violence. In their extreme, they can lie at the root of suicide.

Siblings, parents, extended family members, friends, classmates, neighbors, coaches, teachers, and any others that have access to the child's emotional self can make "subtle slights" through off-handed, thoughtless, poorly-timed remarks and/or negative expressions. To the child or person receiving these messages, they can feel like an emotional gut punch, adding another negative story to their painful internal dialogue of how they don't fit in—that they are unlovable, worthless losers.

It is in this context that my story begins. But first, 9/11.