

# Finding Your Way in a Wild New World: Reclaim Your True Nature to Create the Life You Want

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Finding Your Way in a Wild New World is a remarkable path to the most important discovery you can make: the knowledge of what you should be doing with your one wild and precious life. It's a journey to the thing that so fulfills you that, if someone told you, "It's right outside-but watch out-it could kill you!" you'd run straight toward it, through the screen door without even opening it. Life coach and bestselling author of Finding Your Own North Star Martha Beck guides you to find out how you got to where you are now and what you should do next with clear, concrete instructions on tapping into the deep, wordless knowledge you carry in your body and soul. There are certain people who sense that they are called to do something fulfilling and significant, but who often get caught in self-destructive, unproductive cycles. This is the book that will lead you to unleash your incredible creative energy-and fulfill your life's purpose.

With her inimitable ability to translate inner life into accessible, witty, sparkling prose, Beck draws from ancient wisdom and modern science to help readers consciously embrace their skills and create the life they really want. What she's found is that these people with great passion, empathy, and creative potential often sense a higher calling-in a society where that calling isn't even recognized as real. They often have within them a quiet power that could change the world; they lack only the tools. Beck offers real, actionable methods to tap into that power. She shows how to find your inner identity and your external "tribe" of like-minded people. She demonstrates the four simple tools for transformation: Wordlessness, Oneness, Imagination, and Creation. With clear step-by-step instructions and guided reflections, Beck shows how to drop into the wordless state of communion with nature and self, how to experience for yourself the oneness between yourself and the universe, how to be empowered by the spark of inspiration, and, finally, how to take action and realize creative potential to make a lasting impact on the world.

Compassionate and inspirational, Finding Your Way in a Wild New World is a revolutionary journey of self-discovery that leads to miraculous change.

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From Finding Your Way in a Wild New World:

The mother rhino paws nervously, and I feel the impact tremor in the ground beneath my own feet. She is huge. She is nervous. She could kill me as easily as I clip my fingernails. But my mind is filled only with wonder, distilled into two basic questions.

Question 1: How the hell did I get here?

Question 2: What the hell should I do now?

Both issues seem equally mysterious. . . . But it all seems to clear now- it was my true nature that brought me face to face with a rhinoceros. . . . I'm finding out what it feels like to reclaim my true nature. It's one of the most wonderful things I've ever experienced. And, because ecstasy loves company, I want you to experience it too. The wild new world of the twenty-first century is the perfect setting for reclaiming your true nature. And your life will

work much, much better if you let it direct your choices. It will bring you freedom, peace, and delight; give you the optimal chance of making a good living; and help you create the best possible effect on everything around you. I'm not certain exactly how it will play out in your case, but here's what I do know: it's time you met your rhinoceros.

Martha Beck is a life coach and monthly columnist for O, The Oprah Magazine and author of the bestsellers *Finding Your Own North Star: Claiming the Life You Were Meant to Live* and the memoir *Expecting Adam*. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona. INTRODUCTION: MEET YOUR RHINOCEROS, HEAL YOUR LIFE

The imminent possibility of being killed by a rhinoceros isn't bothering me nearly as much as I would have expected. True, my heart fluttered when I first saw her, but from awe, not fear.

Well, maybe a little from fear.

Until this exact second, my friend Koelle Simpson (her first name sounds like "Noelle," but with a K) has been so focused on the rhino's footprints that she forgot to look up—a common mistake for people who, like both of us, are just learning to track. By the time Koelle raises her eyes and leaps backward six inches, nearly bumping into me, we're within about twenty feet of the rhinoceros.

Trust me on this: observing an animal in a zoo, particularly an animal the size of a Subaru Forester, is very different from encountering it on foot in its own neck of the woods. I can be startled into a cardiac emergency by a reasonably robust spider, so realizing that I'm close enough to spit on a mountainous animal who has two enormous pointy horns is . . . disconcerting. I open my mouth to yip like a wounded poodle. But then the awe kicks in, and I simply stare.

The rhino, half hidden behind a thorn bush, cocks her primordial-looking head—which is roughly the size of a grocery cart—and swivels her satellite-dish ears toward us. She seems edgy. I soon realize why. A rustle in the brush reveals the presence of a second animal, her calf. He's tiny in rhinoceros terms, no bigger than, say, Shaquille O'Neal. He appears to be circling around behind me, putting all four of us humans between himself and his loving mother. I'm no woodsman, but I suspect this means Mamacita will soon have not only the means and the opportunity, but also the motive, to commence goring and stomping.

And I feel just great about that.

It's like waking up in Ionesco's absurdist play *Rhinoceros*: instead of panicking, I find the possibility of death by skewering in the African wilderness weirdly pleasing. I mean, how many middle-aged moms from Phoenix get to go out that way?

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Both issues seem equally mysterious. Oh sure, I could follow the breadcrumb trail of choices that brought me on this jaunt into the African wilderness. But how did I even stumble into the opportunities to make such choices? I defer answering this first question in favor of the second, which seems more pressing: How, exactly, does one extricate oneself from the close proximity of an alarmed rhinoceros? I hope my African friends have at least a two-pronged plan for such emergencies, seeing as how the rhino is tossing her own two prongs repeatedly in our direction, like a placekicker warming up for a field goal.

As if reading my mind, my friend Boyd Varty, who grew up here in the African bush, outlines Escape Plan Prong One. "Breathe," he whispers.

Oh. Right. After an initial gasp, I've been holding my breath, a typical fight-or-flight reaction that's spiking my adrenaline and heart rate. Technically I know better than that, but I forgot. Most of my knowledge, after all, is secondhand. I've spent the past few years interviewing all sorts of experts on human consciousness, from neurologists to psychologists to monks to medicine women, and prosaic as it sounds, they all agree that deep breathing is a profoundly powerful act, the cornerstone of everything from longevity to enlightenment. This is especially true when dealing, up close and personal, with a wild animal that outweighs your entire family.

Breathe. Just one long exhale will transform my whole body: change my brain, my hormone balance, my intuitive abilities, and my effect on other creatures. I know this intellectually. My friends know it viscerally. Koelle might look like a fitness model, but thousands of hours as a real-life "horse whisperer" have made her super-cool when dealing with large, nervous animals. Boyd is so tuned in to the wilderness he's practically a wild African animal himself. The fourth and final member of our party, Solly Mhlongo, is a Shangaan tracker of legendary skill and courage. He once sprinted across a river to drag Boyd from the jaws of a crocodile who was gnawing his leg like a drumstick until Boyd, thinking fast, shoved his foot down its throat, opening the membrane that keeps water out of its lungs (the so-called gular flap or pouch), setting Boyd free and inspiring the song "Kick Him in the Gular Pouch," which is sung by Boyd's entire family on festive occasions involving alcohol, and would make an excellent hip-hop number.

But that is not my point.

My point is that, of the four people in our little expedition, I am definitely the weakest link. Nevertheless I'm feeling as bubbly and joyous as a four-dollar box of sparkling wine. I give Boyd a clumsy thumb's up, and he flashes me his movie-star smile. (It seems unfair enough that these people are brave and smart-do they also have to be good-looking?) As the rhino mother squares up with us, snorting, and her baby continues to mosey toward our rear flanks, Boyd silently launches Prong Two of our escape plan, which is to edge sideways into a thorn bush. We place our feet carefully to avoid rocks, animal burrows, and snakes.

The thorns rip at my clothes and hair and skin. I'm well aware that any misstep could result in exceptionally stimulating consequences. I can't stop smiling.

How the hell did I get here? What the hell should I do now?

It occurs to me, as I tiptoe, that I've been asking these questions all my life, certainly by school age, when I began to suspect I'd disembarked from the universe's light-rail system onto the wrong planet. Slowly evading the rhinoceros, I flash back several decades, to other moments when my hair was full of sticks, my arms covered with scratches, and my attention fully invested in some animal—a bird, a squirrel, a feral kitten—for whose friendship I would gladly have risked death.

HOW I GOT HERE

At age four, when most of my memory begins, I still half-believed my favorite books: fairy tales with talking mice and deer; Arthur, the Once and Future King, whom Merlin could change into any beast; Tarzan and Mowgli, who were raised by animals. When people asked me, "What do you want to be when you grow up?," I said, "An archer," not because I wanted to shoot things with arrows, but because I thought that that job title would qualify me to live like Robin Hood, hanging out in a forest with a bunch of idealistic friends.

This felt not only like a normal life ambition, but like the one, inevitable occupation of my core being, my "true nature." I thought it up myself. No one ever told me to think that way, to learn the names of several hundred mammalian species or to spend hours outside watching birds and munching random plants to see what happened. No one even urged me to read—but I did, obsessively, because how else could I travel to distant wildernesses, have great adventures, learn about animals I could never hope to see in real life? The great gift I got from my family, as the seventh of eight children, was the absolute freedom to read what I wanted, dive into any patch of wilderness I could find, and assume that I'd keep doing it my whole life. Unlike thousands of clients I've counseled in adult life, no one ever tried to stop me from following my true nature. Until I was five, anyway.

Perplexingly, once I started school I found that my first teachers were not convinced I'd grow up to learn animal languages and live in the woods. After a few quizzical, critical responses from adults, I realized that none of my literary heroes or their sylvan lifestyles was real. Chasing stray cats around empty lots wasn't going to get me anywhere in polite society; to succeed I had to focus completely on my education. Which I did. In fact, I focused long and intensely enough to grind my way through three Harvard degrees. By my late twenties I was well on my way to being a professor of sociology or social psychology or organizational behavior or sociobehavioral organopsychology or whatthehellver.

There was one tiny fly in my career ointment: the thought of spending my life writing for academic journals and attending faculty meetings made me want to beat myself to death with my own shoes. So in my early thirties I went back to that five-year-old self, the one with dirty fingernails and a passion for field biology, and asked her what she'd like to do. Within reason, of course. She said that she wanted to write hopeful thoughts for other people who felt imprisoned by offices, bureaucracies, or family pressures. She wanted to

write books that made people feel free, the way Tarzan and The Jungle Book made her feel free. She wanted to tell readers they could create their own rules.

This sounded marginally acceptable to my schooled self. I pictured myself living The Writing Life in the country, wearing a billowy blouse, churning out prose, and collecting checks from a quaint, rustic-looking mailbox down by the front gate. By the time I realized I'd joined the entertainment industry, it was sort of too late. But as writers go, I was lucky. I ended up on a kind of endless book tour, traveling constantly to give luncheon speeches, conference addresses, and TV appearances. Then the Internet arrived. Information was being spread in fabulous new ways. Now, in addition to writing, speaking, and doing media interviews, people told me I had to blog, tweet, and post on Facebook. I did my best, but whenever I tried to join the Internet revolution, I felt like the creepy middle-aged high school teacher showing up at a student kegger. I was running as fast as I could while again becoming miserable and overworked, defined by rules about How to Succeed in Business by Really, Really Trying.

In the midst of this I'd received an unusual request. A man named Alex van den Heever, who was a game ranger (whatever that was), invited me to come see what was happening at a game preserve in South Africa called Londolozi. I'd been to Londolozi once, during a book tour, and fallen utterly in love with the place. Because of this, Alex's email had forcefully grabbed my attention—or rather, the attention of my thorn-scratched, twig-haired, four-year-old self. The very word "Londolozi" had sounded a clear tone somewhere inside me, a note that resonated purely and perfectly with my true nature. I'd begun to cry as I read Alex's email, not quite knowing why.

But at this moment, having responded to Alex's email, become a frequent visitor to Londolozi, and arrived face-to-face with Mama Rhino and her calf, the reason for those tears dawns on me. As I carefully pull a thorn from my cheek, hoping the rhino won't charge but not really minding if she does, things start clicking together in my mind, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle settling into their proper positions.

Londolozi is a Zulu word meaning "protector of all living things." The people who gave that name to this wilderness have spent their lives doing something they call "restoring Eden." The land under my feet was once a bankrupt cattle farm, almost devoid of life. This ecosystem was restored to its original state by just a few people, including Alex, my friend Boyd Varty and his family, and Shangaan trackers like Solly. These folks have already helped restore an area of the Earth larger than Switzerland, and they have no intention of stopping.

So-it all seems to me clear now—it was my uncivilized four-year-old self, with her passion for animals and love of running around in places with few humans, who dragged me ten thousand miles to this wild, magical place with these wild, magical people. Right now, I'm creeping into a bush with an African tracker, a conservationist, and a woman who really can talk to animals. The reality hits me as hard as any rhinoceros: the world I believed in, back in my most innocent, uninformed, childish mind—the world I long ago stopped hoping to find, the one I'd buried under decades of thankless work toward "civilized" goals—is real.

That's why, right now, I could die happy-happier than I've been in forty years. My life will have been worth living for this one moment, with these friends, this place, those primordial animals, this joyful pounding heart. I'm finding out what it feels like to reclaim my true nature. It's one of the most wonderful things I've ever experienced. And because ecstasy loves company, I want you to experience it too.

The wild new world of the twenty-first century is the perfect setting for reclaiming your true nature. And your life will work much, much better if you let that nature direct your choices. It will bring you freedom, peace, and delight; give you the optimal chance of making a good living; and help you create the best possible effect on everything around you. I'm not certain exactly how it will play out in your case, but here's what I do know: it's time you met your rhinoceros.

HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NOW?

Your "rhinoceros" is anything that so fulfills your life's real purpose that if someone told you, "It's right outside-but watch out, it could kill you!," you'd run straight out through the screen door without even opening it. Barefoot. Right now, you know what your rhinoceros is, but you may not yet know that you know, because the part of you that clearly sees your right life is your true nature, and it doesn't talk much (as we'll see later). Your rhinoceros may not be quite as attention-getting as mine. But it will awaken in you such happiness you'll want it to return again and again.

Maybe you'll have a rhinoceros moment while playing a cool new video game, or decorating a room with your soul mate, or helping a toddler grow a flower, or nourishing a circle of friends who rarely stop laughing and never stop helping one another. Maybe your rhinoceros hasn't been invented yet. When the younger of my two daughters asked me what to choose for her college major, I told her, "Design your own major. Then take all the classes that make you want to jump out of bed in the morning-or afternoon, or whatever-because your real career probably won't exist for a few more years."

As we begin the second decade of the twenty-first century, the pace of technological and social change has reached what statisticians call "the knee of the curve" in an exponential growth pattern. That means that, after many centuries of slow progress from basic fire-making to the Industrial Revolution, we are now inventing more powerful technologies at such a pace that soon the human brain won't be able to keep up with the machines it has built. Even professional futurists have no idea what the world will look like in the coming decades, though they do highlight a few key trends that will almost certainly continue. For example:

- ☐ Individuals like you and me now have the power to do things, such as getting information to billions of people, that only large organizations, like governments and corporations, could do at any earlier point in human history.
- ☐ The means for achieving objectives like this are becoming cheaper, more accessible, and more ubiquitous by the day.

Knowledge is no longer power, because knowledge is no longer scarce. What is scarce is human attention. Directing human attention is the way people trade goods and services- thus how they survive financially-in the wild new world.

The q...

Other Books

New Moral World.

. Sir , -The following is an exact copy of what I proAdd to which , neither remedy is free from . objection , THERE is no ... Wild desolation follows ; 2 O O And your oxen , upon a reasonable calculation , And ignorance , her partner ..."