



**Trusting Yourself:
How to Stop feeling Overwhelmed and Live More Happily with Less Effort**

Notes: by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, Ph.D.

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Author's Bio: M. J. Ryan is one of the creators of the Random Acts of Kindness series, which has sold more than one million copies, and the author of *The Power of Patience*, *The Happiness Makeover*, and many other titles.

Author's big thought: In trusting yourself, the author reveals how the long forgotten virtue of self-trust lets us feel less overwhelmed and happier every day. Trusting yourself makes choices easier, lets you express your unique talents, and gives you greater optimism and joy. In this book, Ryan teaches us how to start learning what is right with us.

Notes:

Part 1: The Power of Self Trust

- People are overwhelmed. The reason we can't seem to get a handle on things is that we haven't gotten to the heart of the problem: that on top of all we have to deal with, we fundamentally don't trust ourselves.
- We don't trust in our capacity to deal with life as it comes to us, so we are in a perpetual state of fear and worry.
- We take on too much because we don't trust our judgment of what we should be doing, or we don't trust that we will be acceptable to others if we say no. We don't trust ourselves to make the right choices, so we spend tremendous energy deciding and then second guess ourselves after the fact.
- We don't trust our parenting instincts, so in our self-doubt we overwhelm our children with too much, which overwhelms us in managing and paying for it all. We don't trust our feelings, so we stay as busy as possible to avoid them.
- Much of the advice we're bombarded with reinforces the message that we are screwed up and that the answer to our problem lies in following this particular expert's idea of what's right. Rather than being helped to understand how we best function, how to find the solutions that work best for us, we have become a people who look to others to define who we should be,

how we should feel, and how we should live. This has led to an increased incapacity to deal with life.

- So many of us are unaware about the riches we hold or how to use them to be happy and contribute our gifts to the world. We were pre-approved at birth. Each and every one of us is a miracle of creation.
- Through genetic resources and personal histories, each and every one of us has precious unique attributes to draw upon, sterling qualities that we were born with or have developed, as well as a lifetime of experience that is our treasure store of personal wisdom. These inner resources lie in wait, ready to be used on our behalf at any moment in our lives. We need to believe that they are there – in other words, we need to trust ourselves.
- Self-trust is a virtue, like patience, that has been lost. It is a combination of three emotional and spiritual qualities: self-awareness, the accurate assessment of who we are and what we care about; self-acceptance, the embracing of who we are in all our complexity; and self-reliance, the ability to use what we know about ourselves to get the results we want in our lives without constant worry about the approval or disapproval of others.
- Genuine self-trust is about coming to understand how you are great, where you want that greatness to manifest, and how to use that greatness when one encounters the big and little difficulties of life.
- Self-trust has always been an important quality of heart and mind, but it is even more crucial in these fast-paced, challenging times.
- When we trust ourselves, we can better navigate the waters of challenging emotional times—when we feel lost or grieving, angry, or afraid – believing somewhere in our hearts and souls that we will make it, even when we’re not sure how or when.
- We learn from our mistakes instead of beating ourselves up about them, because we understand that life is about learning and therefore seeing errors as valuable information about how to go forward. We don’t consider ourselves bad when we screw up and not yet as skillful as we would like to be.
- Precisely because we accept ourselves exactly as we are, we are more able to change.
- Given the training we’ve had in listening to everyone but ourselves and believing we are broken and bad, we start by understanding that the capacity to trust ourselves is not a fixed state we either have or don’t, but rather as a quality of heart and mind we can cultivate.
- To begin to cultivate greater trust of ourselves, we must turn inward, and look at ourselves without fearing what we will discover, without minimizing our gifts, or beating ourselves up for our learned self-destruction patterns.
- You’ll know you trust yourself when you feel less tense and more positive, when you feel lightness in your daily circumstances, when you feel more accepting of yourself and others, when life is less drudgery and more joy filled.
- This book is an invitation to look inside in a new way and awaken. Not to detail what is wrong, but to come to deeply treasure what is right. And to use what you discover to make your way more happily in life and to offer the gifts that only you can provide. The more you trust yourselves, the more you will know just what your place in the grand design of life is and what your matchless contribution might be.

Part 2: the Gifts of Trusting Yourself

- The author begins with looking at what cultivating self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-reliance will bring into our lives.
- *We Blossom Into Our Fullness* - Without trust in ourselves, we're so full of ideas of how we are supposed to be that we don't even understand who we are. Each of us is unique, and we are here to grow that uniqueness for the benefit of all. Joseph Campbell said that the spiritual imperative to be ourselves is so strong that the soul would rather fail at its own life than succeed at someone else's.
- *Choices Are Easier* - Life is crammed full of choices. One could say that our lives are comprised of the choices we make on a daily basis. And we must make them in the midst of all kinds of pressures – pressures from kids who want certain things, money pressures, time pressures. Then there's the pressure to sort through all the data to make the right choice among all the options out there. Each choice saps energy, takes time, makes a big deal out of what isn't. Choice is about the capacity to make our wishes known, to ourselves and to others, act on that knowledge, and then deal with the consequences and revise if necessary. Trusting ourselves allows us to do that more swiftly, comfortably and with less regret. Given the number of choices we must make in a day, that's no small gift!
- *We Don't Have To Worry So Much*. Worry is always about the future even if it's in the next minute. And what we're really worried about is our capacity to deal with that future: our child's disappointment, the test results, or our work performance. We're anticipating that we won't be able to cope. So we worry – as if that will help create a good outcome. Mostly it just frazzles our nerves and wears us down. The more we come to deeply know our thinking talents and trust in our capacity to cope, the less time we have to spend in worry. We take action on those worries that we can and know that we'll somehow figure out how to cope with the ones we can't or get appropriate help if they come to pass. For most of us, trusting ourselves comes with experience- having the opportunity to prove to ourselves we can handle a particular situation. And it comes through reflecting afterward on that experience and using it as a resource when a potential worry arises. It also comes from being flexible – understanding that there is a variety of possible responses to any given situation and relying on our capacity to find an appropriate response. The relief from worry is profound. We don't have to expend all the emotional energy any more. We don't have to live in fear of the future. We're free to be in the present moment. When we trust ourselves, now is a place we can rest happily in.
- *We Can Let Go Of Shoulds, Musts And Oughts* – When we live from a list of shoulds, we end up in a tremendous amount of self-recrimination and regret, which is a great energy sap. Without them, we would have more time and more mental energy.
- *Creativity And Success Flourish* – No matter what culture you come from, going against the crowd can be challenging. That's where trusting yourself comes in. Self-trust gives us the capacity to say to ourselves, I think I'm on to something. With this capacity, we are able to “go where no man has gone before.” When we stick our neck out and succeed, we get a sense of pride that is attainable in no other way. Precisely because we did it ourselves, against the odds, we feel victorious, powerful. That sense of accomplishment fuels us to trust ourselves even more, creating an upward spiral of increasingly joyful satisfaction in ourselves and our efforts. The bonds of perfectionism are loosened- perfectionism is impossible. Perfectionism carries a

huge price – in the ways we treat ourselves, our spouses, and our kids. Perfectionism keeps our world small because it doesn't allow us to learn and therefore grow. We agonize over decisions in advance because we are so afraid of doing it wrong. We hold others to impossible standards, we're fearful we'll be discovered to be an imposter. When we trust ourselves, we know that we are good enough as we are. We are not fearful of making a mistake because we know we'll survive; maybe even grow from the experience. All that is being asked of us is to be as real as we can be. To become fully ourselves and to offer that fullness to the rest of the world.

- *We Live More Happily With Life's Messiness* – Most of us believe in that mythic place of peace and prosperity, when we will finally have all our papers sorted, and our emails answered. In reality, we never get our lives totally under control because so many factors that influence them are not under our command. Most likely we will never get to the end of our to-do lists. The more we give up our illusion that "someday" we will have it all together, the more we can relax into the reality of our lives as they are. Trust in ourselves is not about feeling invincible, infallible, or in complete control of our lives. Rather, it's knowing that the messiness of life is not our fault. It's just the nature of life itself. With self-trust, we understand that power and peace is found in "response-ability", our capacity to meet life as it comes at us. When we believe in our ability to respond, we don't fight against the wildness of life because we know we'll handle what comes our way when it arrives.
- *We Can Say No When We Want To* – When we trust ourselves we know our limits, express them to others, and survive disapproval if it should occur. Occasionally we will disappoint others. When we believe in ourselves, we don't have to prove anything to anyone about our worthiness of love or attention or time off. A sinking or numb feeling is our body saying no.
- *We Can Trust Others* - trusting someone else is really a matter of trusting ourselves. When we trust another person, what we are really trusting is our evaluation of his or her trustworthiness. And when our trust in another person is shaken, what is shaken is our capacity to trust our own judgment. The trust always resides in us. What we are saying to someone when we say we trust them is: I trust in my capacity to make myself safe with you or leave if need be. This understanding is profound. When we realize that ultimately trust is an inside job, we don't have to be suspicious. Trust is earned as we evaluate our experience with another person and adjust our judgments based on what we learn. We absolutely can't control another person's thoughts, intentions, or behaviors. That's why our ultimate safety is found in our capacity to trust ourselves- our hearts, our minds, and our spirits – in a relationship with anyone else.
- *We're released from the rules* - when we trust ourselves, we don't need to cling so tightly to "rules." We are guided instead by the desire to be "a wholehearted me."
- *We're More Optimistic And Trusting Of Life* – there is a strong relationship between self-trust, trust in a friendly universe, and happiness. People who believe the universe is friendly tend to be optimistic and joyful. They also tend to trust themselves. Things that go wrong are seen as temporary setbacks beyond their control. Consequently, they enjoy their lives. Our attitudes have a tremendous effect on our lives: expect happiness and you'll experience more of it. Expect misery and that's what you'll tend to feel. That's because our minds are filtering our experience all the time – we tend to perceive what we believe – and therefore the more we trust in the goodness of life, the happier our lives will actually be.

- *We Experience Love In Its Magnitude And Majesty* – when we trust in our capacity to meet our own needs, we are truly free to love. We experience true interdependence, the give and take of two beings in love, each offering his or her particular talents and gifts to the other.

Part 3: The Attitudes of Self- Trust

- In a recent study of happiness, it was found that the number of good or bad events that happened to you is a poor predictor of happiness. A better indicator is the attitudes you hold about these events, no matter how many.
- *I'm Me – And That A Good Thing* –As children, most of us take the uniqueness that is our birthright and try desperately to hide it so that we are just like everybody else. At some point in the journey to trusting ourselves, we are called upon to reclaim the uniqueness that once so embarrassed us. To not only accept ourselves with all our idiosyncrasies, but actually embrace and celebrate our individuality. It is our differences that most define who we are and therefore what we have to offer the world. Accepting ourselves is no small thing. It requires that we differentiate between who we are and what we do. It's a paradox – true self-acceptance actually increases our capacity to confront our negative behavior and learn from it rather than excuse it away. Each of us needs to embrace and utilize our originality and uniqueness as well as confront our destructive behaviors. The more we do, the more reliable, trustworthy, and contributing we become- to ourselves, our loves ones, and the world at large.
- *I can handle what life dishes out* - the world is full of people somehow making it. No matter how smart or lucky or talented they are, most people do get through life and handle their responsibilities, if not perfectly, at least adequately.
- *We Learn Through Trial And Error*. Brain research tells us that the human organism learns through experimentation which occurs through trial and error. We can't improve unless we are willing to learn from our mistakes. When we see mistakes as an inevitable part of learning any skill, developing any talent, we cultivate trust for ourselves. What we trust when we trust ourselves is that we have the wherewithal to learn from our errors and will deal kindly with ourselves in the process. Instead of mistakes, think of them as course corrections.
- *What Do You Want to Say Yes To?* It's crucially important that we know what we want to say yes to. The reason is that our passions, wants and desires bring us joy; they lift our spirits and enliven our hearts. They are signals that we are following our path, rather than imitating someone else's. Our zest, our joie de vivre, comes from the yeses we say in our lives. To find our yeses, we have to trust that we are worthy of receiving our heart's desire and capable of discovering what will make us happy.
- *I'll Cross That Bridge When I Come to It*. Anticipatory worry is just a waste of energy. Reminding ourselves that we will deal with the situation when it occurs, so we might as well not waste precious energy on it in advance – that's the essence of self-trust.
- *No More Bank Camera Eyes*. How many times in our lives do we hesitate to follow our dreams because of what everybody might think, when in fact they really could not care less? When we get worried about what everyone will think, we start looking at ourselves from the outside, as if we were the audience. When we view our lives from this perspective, it's impossible not to be critical. The solution is to get behind our own eyes, to see out at the world and experience our choices from inside ourselves. From the inside perspective, we get in touch with what matters

to us most. Behind our eyes, we live our lives based on what we care about: cultivating our potential, living our dreams, and fulfilling our purpose in being alive.

- *Don't Take Life Personally.* When we accept that life is imperfect, our self-trust can flower. It's not our fault that life is full of sorrow. It just is. When we say stop fighting the way life is, we stop fighting ourselves. From that acceptance, change is more likely to occur. And even if it doesn't, we're at peace with ourselves and with our lives, which frees us up to feel more joy moment to moment and more compassion for ourselves and all the other beings.
- *Fear's the Sign You're at a Growing Edge.* Self-trust is built on risk taking. We stretch beyond our idea of ourselves a bit and learn that we can do it, which gives us the ability to stretch more. The process is an ever increasing awareness that we can rely on our capabilities, which makes each risk we take easier. Self-trust builds on itself. The more we do it, the easier it is to rely on ourselves the next time. When we truly trust ourselves, we trust our "no"s, too. We know where our limits are, where we are not yet ready to risk. So many of us got the message either that we should never take a risk or that if we feel fear, it means we should give up. Others of us were forced to take risks we weren't ready for and experienced so much failure or fear that we got the message that we were losers. Still others see risk taking as a way of defying authority and take harmful, self-destructive risks. When we see risk taking as a way to grow our capacity to count on ourselves, it puts the process in a whole new light. We need to know that our trust in ourselves is reliable and successful risk taking offers the proof.
- *I'm Practicing.* The notion of practice is crucial to our capacity to change. Often changing a habit takes a few tries. Many people have the intention to change long before they try to. In these instances, it's easy to lose trust in our reliability, to see ourselves as failures. But when we see our behavior as practice or preparation, then our faith in ourselves is engaged and we can use the confidence and knowledge we gained from the practice to try again. When we practice or prepare internally, we may find that once we do make the change, it's quite easy.
- *Doubt Is A Condition of the Process.* It doesn't seem to matter how many times we have succeeded in the past. Each time we venture into an unknown territory, we're not sure we will have the wherewithal, the smarts, to find our way successfully. The feelings of doubt are signals that we are stretching, learning, growing. These qualms are a kind of fear – a fear of failure, perhaps, or of inadequacy. If we aren't experiencing them, it may be that we are stuck in the safe zone, doing the same things over and over, not risking growing. When we understand that doubt is a signal that we are extending ourselves in new ways, we can accept it as inevitable and let it get in our way. When we experience doubt and keep going anyway, our trust in our capacity to find our way through the unknown grows exponentially.
- *Labels get in Our Way.* We have been flooded in recent years with a barrage of labels. Everything, it seems, is a disorder or an addiction. And often, the definitions of these problems are so general that we fall into them. Labels prevent us from perceiving our wholeness, and they often prevent others from seeing it as well.
- *Trusting Ourselves Doesn't Mean We Have to Go It Alone.* Rather, it is a coming to rest in the knowledge of who we are and being able to act from that awareness and that is an act done in community. Because the rest of who we are is so often invisible to ourselves, we can't do it all on our own. We need others to act as mirrors, reflecting back our brilliance so that it becomes visible to us as well. We are not weak or needy or lacking in self-esteem because we need one

another. We are social beings who develop best not in isolation but with others, where we can learn by example and be encouraged and assisted in the noble task of becoming ourselves.

- *Feelings Are Natural.* We're afraid of our feelings. We treat them like terrorists coming out of nowhere to blow up our lives. The problems we create by avoiding our feelings are almost worse than facing and feeling them. Because we don't trust ourselves to experience them and live through it, we continue to avoid and deny them. In our culture, we're taught either to suppress or deny them, to feel guilty about them, or to vent them in full view no matter the damage to self or others because we feel like it. What we label feelings are actually sensations—the sensation of energy moving through the body. These sensations are born in thoughts. The more we focus on the actual sensations without labeling, the easier it is to befriend our own experience, particularly when the emotions are strong. When we experience our feelings as sensations, we come to see that we are more than our feelings. The more we trust our selves, the more we understand it can hold the feelings without being swamped by them or needing to push them away. We can also learn to glean the wisdom from our feelings in order to respond appropriately to situations that have us all stirred up.
- *Performance Equals Potential Minus Interference.* We all have different capacities for a task (potential). We learn a new skill or behavior by increasing our awareness so that our brains can make the right adjustment. If we can become aware without judging or beating ourselves up (that just creates more interference), then we begin to move toward increased performance in that behavior. When we remember that performance equals potential minus interference, we can at least stop adding to the interference through self criticism and well meaning advice.
- *Since We Must Compare, Compare Well.* The number one killer of self-trust is the oh-so-human tendency to compare ourselves to others. Even though we know comparison is harmful, we can't help but do it. That's because there is a specific part of the brain that exists to do nothing but. What we need to do is use our comparison capacity to bring us closer to what we want in ourselves rather than to increase self-doubt and self-hatred.
- *Our Lives Are Like The Seasons.* When we understand that dissatisfaction or unhappiness in love or work are signs that we are shedding what is no longer working for us, we rest in the awareness that under our loss or despair is the promise of growth. A variety of things triggers the coming and going of our personal seasons. An external event, like a divorce, another staggering loss, can, of course, plunge us into the deepest of winters. But it can also be a significant birthday, the going off of children to college, or some completely internal happening that isn't tied to any specific event. Winter is the time to discover what deeply matters to us now. For ultimately it is the reconnection to a meaning or purpose in being alive that creates the energy of a new spring time. When we realize we are always somewhere in the seasons of renewal, we can let go of assuming that there is something wrong with us.
- *It's A Balancing Act.* Trusting ourselves is a balancing act that, taken too far, can result in egotism and the belief that we don't need anyone or anything. Each of us has areas where we may need more or less support. We can never know until after the fact whether in any given moment we've relied on ourselves too much or too little. But we can be aware that we need to rely on ourselves and others. It is just as foolhardy to not even seek advice as it is to always be looking outside of ourselves for the answers. Somehow we must strike the right balance without knowing for sure if we've found it until after, sometimes long after.

- *We're All Making it Up as We Go Along* – even those professed experts. It's the same unknown for everyone. Some of us respond to the uncertainty of life with fear, others with excitement. Still others try to deny or ignore it. But the future is always unknown. Life must be lived forward, but it is understood only by looking backward. All we can do is make educated guesses and trust in our capacity to respond to life as it presents itself over time.
- *It's never Too Late to Start Again*. We've all done things that lead us to wonder if we are trustworthy. That's why it is so important to hold the attitude that we can always start again. We trust ourselves because we have the capacity to evaluate ourselves. In any moment we can say, "This isn't working so well, maybe I should make a course correction." And in doing so, we increase our sense of our own reliability. We don't have to be perfect to be trustworthy. We can, and will, screw up over and over.

Part 4: The Practices of Self-Trust

- *Cultivate Your Thinking Talents*. Each of us has unique thinking talents or strengths, and one of our tasks as human beings is to come to understand, develop, and utilize these mental capacities. Because they are so intrinsic to us, they are often invisible. Research by the Gallup Organization on a sample of two million people has revealed that each of us has five or six talents out of a possible thirty-four that have identified. They are thinking capacities like achievement, deliberateness, communication, adaptability, analysis, strategy, and harmony.
- The more we know what our thinking talents are, the more we can use them intentionally, train even more in them to become truly excellent, and use them to work around the things we're not good at. But the most important reason to know them is that when we're using our thinking talents, we experience joy. Discovering our thinking talents is one of the main keys to self-trust. Every one of us, man and woman, becomes great when we understand and utilize how we are unique.
- *Claim Your Spiritual Gifts*. Each and every one of us has precious gifts of the soul. We may take them for granted. We may consider them weaknesses or have been criticized or ridiculed for them by unaware others. They are different from thinking talents. They are spiritual attributes that we were either grace with at birth or grew very young through the challenges of life. They are qualities of heart such as graciousness, steadfastness, devotion, humility, purity, integrity, idealism and loyalty. Merely acknowledging our gifts can be a courageous act. It is our birthright to celebrate these soulful attributes. They are the vehicles by which we bring joy to others and consequently to ourselves. We are usually challenged in our soul gifts. That's how we grow them – by refusing to give them up, despite outside pressure or inward doubt.
- *What Really matters To You?* Understanding what really matters to you is crucial because it helps you figure out where you want to aim your thinking talents and spiritual gifts. When we know what matters deeply to use we can trust ourselves to make wise choices because we know how to use our values as the centering point.
- *Stop To Reflect*. Without time for reflection, we greatly hamper our capacity to grow or change in our lives. That's because when we stop to reflect on ourselves and our experience, we make conscious what we are doing so we can do more or less of it, rather than just run on autopilot. Self-reflection amplifies our capacity to change because it brings to awareness what is working or not so that we can use the information to get out of old ruts and become more of who we

want to be. It is the key way we learn to trust ourselves more. The more we reflect on and track our progress, the more successful and happy we become.

- *Seek Help That Connects You to Your Wisdom, Not Theirs.* The problem with most advice – it almost always comes from the other person’s idea of what is correct for him or her. Others may help by listening without interruption as we work it out on our own. Other times it can be helpful to have someone ask us open questions so that we come to understand what we want to do. We can help ourselves and one another by seeking and offering help that connects us to our own wisdom.
- *Ask Yourself, What Worked Before?* Often when you’re overwhelmed or stuck, it’s because you’ve become disconnected from your own resources. As soon as we are aware that we are awash in fear or panic over something, we ask ourselves, “What worked before?” When we ask those questions, we get out of our feelings and engage our neocortex, the thinking part of the brain that allows us to respond rationally to the situation. Unfortunately, not many of us have been trained to access this wisdom account. We have been so habituated to looking outside ourselves for answers that we aren’t even aware of the immense wealth we carry around inside our heads. So we ask everyone we know what we should do, give up in fear, or blow up in frustration rather than drawing on the unlimited resource available to us night and day: our past experience. When we remember how we’ve solved problems, we can do it again.
- *Thank You For Sharing.* The negative voices that we have in our heads are dangerous because they get in the way of our learning to trust ourselves. They create interference that blocks awareness and the possibility of change. The practice of getting rid of these critical voices is very simple. When you catch yourself at it, just say “Thank you for sharing.” When we do this, we don’t add to the interference. We give the negative voices the minimum energy possible and are then free to make our decisions regardless of them. Ultimately we have the choice to continue to give the voices power over us by trying to push them away or agreeing with them, or to minimize their dominion over our lives by regarding them as mere predictable annoyances.
- *Go beyond Either/Or.* When we believe our only option is to choose one thing or the other, sacrificing or compromising something important to us, our mind is “bifurcating.” The next time you are caught in either/or challenge yourself to come up with seven other ways you could resolve the situation, no matter how silly or useless they may appear on the surface. The more we practice with alternatives, the more we come to rely on our capacity to find a solution to even our thorniest problems.
- *Fail On Purpose.* If you are afraid of failing, learn to fail in such a way that minimizes injury and maximizes trust in yourself because you are choosing to do it. We can make a mistake on purpose and realize that we can survive. This practice can go a long way toward helping us loosen the bonds of perfectionism and grow more trust of ourselves just as we are. Just make a small intentional slipup and notice what happens.
- *To Get Unstuck, Notice Where You’re Not Stuck.* When we are going around and around about something, we are stuck in a particular mental mode, which can be very difficult to get out of. The best thing to do in those situations is to recognize where we’re not stuck and switch to that. Sometimes when we get stuck, we’re caught in our feelings and what we actually need to do is become *more* analytic. What often happens when we are stuck about something is that

we're either flooded with feelings and can't reason our way out, or we are stranded in analytic thinking, trying to reason our way into the future, a function best done by our imagination. Once we figure out where we're caught, we can intentionally move to the other side. Shift modes and experience the relief that comes from thinking about your problem from a different perspective.

- *What's Your Process for Making Good Choices?* Each of us has a particular way of making choices that are right for us, but most of us are not aware of it. Once we bring it to consciousness, we can use it any time we need. Everyone's formula is different. By reflecting on the differences between the beneficial choices we have made and the ones that are harmful to ourselves and others, we can make more healthy choices in the future.
- *Turn on Your Internal Navigation System.* We each have an inner compass, the voice of our soul that is our internal navigation system. It's just a matter of paying attention to it. For some people, tuning in is a feeling in their chests, one for yes, and another for no. For others, it's a feeling in the gut, or having the hair on the back of their neck stand up. The more we come to understand what our signals are, the more we can rely on them as we confront the myriad choices and turning points a life inevitably contains.
- *Trust others to Solve Their Own Problems* – if we try to solve them the message we give is that they (our spouses, our children, our friends) are too weak or too incompetent to find their own answers.
- *Put It on the Back Burner.* When we are paying attention in an extremely focused way, our brains are producing more beta waves. This state of mind is great when you are doing a task that requires detailed attention or when doing something you've done before. But when you are trying to come up with something new- an original idea, a creative solution – this kind of thinking is not useful. It knows only how to give you what you've already done or thought. Alpha waves are what our brains produce more of when we are sorting something, working through alternatives. When our brains are producing more theta waves, we are paying attention almost completely internally. It's the state of mind we are in when we meditate or when we are driving late at night and can't remember the last 10 minutes. This is where intuition and creativity reside. This is the state of mind where we discover the new and perceive what is important to us.
- *"This Is What's True For Me Right Now"*. For each of us, our truth is our truth. It exists outside anyone else's opinions, desires or feelings. When we trust ourselves, we honor our truth, even if it goes against the wishes and hopes of others, even those we care deeply about. What we can do, once we have understood what our truth is, is to state it in a non-confrontational manner. "What's true for me right now is..." the precise phrasing is purposeful. When we say it like that, we tell ourselves what our need in this moment actually is. We acknowledge that our need is ours and we are making no assumptions or request that it be theirs; they are free to have their own. Using this wording is powerful. Because you aren't asking for agreement, it increases the possibility that the other person will speak his or her truth rather than try to argue you out of yours.
- *What's the Question You Want to Be Asked at the End of Your Life?* Purpose is a mystery of the soul to be lived into, and that can be extremely challenging. Only you can know what your question is. And when you it, for however long it works for you, you can be sure that if the

questions is your through line, you will be fulfilling your unique purpose, offering your irreplaceable gifts to the rest of the world.

Recommendation: Since you take who you are everywhere you go, the notion of trusting yourself is at the heart of everyday living and loving. M.J. Ryan has an easy conversational way of getting her points across.

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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

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