

## Praise for LOVING WHO I AM

“ Lisa’s passion, enthusiasm and dedication to working on herself is evident everywhere in *Loving Who I Am*. Through her own journey she has cultivated the skilful means to transform suffering and difficulty into wisdom and love. It is just such encouragement by example that we all need to make efforts to live lives of integrity, creativity and love. The great work of cultivating love for ourselves eventually extends towards the whole of our suffering world and the medicine in this book supports this with insights and articulations based on the author’s own experience.”

— **Tristan Stark**, editor, writer and astrologer

“ *Loving Who I Am* is a concise study guide on the process to finding oneself. Letting go of the past, establishing trust in who we are, developing insights into our patterns of sabotage or negative behavior, all these things and more are looked at in easy to digest, step-by-step chapters. For anyone already on the journey, it is a great reminder and can fill in any gaps that one might have overlooked. For the person just starting out on a healing path, it is a resource to treasure and an excellent helper on that journey.”

— **Lauren Trimble**, homeopath DHom, ND

“ While reading *Loving Who I Am*, I often wanted to share passages and exercises with people in my own life. I know many who would benefit from them. Alongside the clear instructions, there are stories from Lisa’s own life experiences that create the backdrop of her book. These are very moving and help put the exercises in context. Throughout her book, the reader is in Lisa’s loving guidance. The program offered in these pages is very well thought out and will certainly help those who take the time to do the work described here.”

— **A.G. Middleton**, writer and teacher

“ Lisa’s multi-faceted approach to self healing has provided so many tools to work through some of my greatest difficulties. The concept of ‘self-love’ had always seemed esoteric and arrogant to me, and was not how I wanted to invest my time and energy. I wanted a quick fix for the pain and anguish I had felt since childhood. In working with Lisa, I learned how I was keeping past traumas alive inside me and what a toll this was taking on my body, mind, spirit, and creativity. The exercises are designed to dynamically move negative energies and thoughts through and out of the body, making space for the self love and compassion that I now know are absolutely imperative for living a life of joy and purpose. Because of Lisa’s experience in such a wide range of healing modalities from around the world, I was able to discover which exercises worked best for me. The work is organic, challenging, and practical, and I’m so glad that Lisa has created this book to share her knowledge and healing with the world.”

— **Paula Jean Hixson**, actor, writer, producer

# LOVING WHO I AM

*A journey to the heart*



LISA-FRANCESCA LEWAK

*Loving Who I Am: A Journey to the Heart*

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Please note that *Loving Who I Am* is documentary and reflects the personal experience of the author. The book is not to be interpreted as a guide for self healing. If you intend to follow any of the exercises or suggestions of the book, do so only under the supervision of a medical doctor or other healthcare professional.

The author of this book does not dispense medical advice or prescribe the use of any techniques as a form of treatment for physical or medical problems without the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The intent of the author is only to offer information of a general nature to help you in your quest for emotional and spiritual well-being. In the event you use any of the information in this book yourself, which is your constitutional right, the author and publisher assume no responsibility for your actions.

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This book is dedicated to my parents  
Irene and Daniel Lewak.

# Acknowledgements



I would like to thank all the people who have come into my life to advise and encourage me in writing and completing this book. I thank all my teachers and guides for imparting knowledge, walking by my side and sustaining me during this seven-year journey.

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Of particular importance, I thank my father who motivated me throughout the process. And most of all, I wish to thank the heart spirits who brought me home to where I truly reside.

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“ I’m starting with the man in the mirror  
I’m asking him to change his ways  
And no message could have been any clearer  
If you wanna make the world a better place  
Take a look at yourself, and then make a change

If you wanna make the world a better place  
Take a look at yourself, and then make the change  
You gotta get it right, while you got the time  
Cause when you close your heart  
Then you close your mind!

I’m gonna make a change  
For once in my life  
It’s gonna feel real good  
Gonna make a difference  
Gonna make it right...

*Man in the Mirror*,  
Sung and recorded by Micheal Jackson  
(Written by Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett).

“ As human beings, our greatness lies not so  
much in being able to remake the world –  
that is the myth of the atomic age – as in  
being able to remake ourselves.

Mahatma Gandhi



## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

*Loving Who I Am* focuses on healing the heart. Our heart is the core of our selves and the heart is about love. Many of us grew up in an atmosphere that on some level lacked love. As such, our heart has been impacted by everything that love is not: hate, envy, trauma and disappointment. This deficit affected our hearts and caused blocks. In order to protect ourselves we closed our hearts down.

*Loving Who I Am* offers a blue print for healing your heart. Its primary purpose is to take you on a journey of personal discovery and self-transformation, and to provide a systematic model to address the pain and suffering that has touched your heart. The book helps you identify the obstacles and limitations that you create in your life, and shows how you can track yourself and start to let these go. The easy-to-follow exercises guide you through different aspects of your life, and help you see the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that no longer serve you. As you engage in the exercises, they can help you reconnect to yourself in a whole new way and allow you to learn to love yourself again.

*Loving Who I Am* is based on my life story of how I healed my heart. Throughout the book I share my personal experiences and some of the challenges I had along the way. This book was inspired by a major life crisis and tells about my own healing path, full of struggles and turning points. My journey has brought wonderful teachers into my life. These are teachers of mind, body and spirit. You will find their inspiring teachings on many of these pages. The creation of this book has been for me

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another inner process of discovery and healing. I hope that in reading this book, you will find the journey as transformational as I did.

*Loving Who I Am* is divided up into five parts:

### **Part 1 – The Work**

“The Work” prescribes measures and actions as primary steps in personal development and transformation. The path unfolds by realizing that, to make change in your life, you need to become an active and willing participant on your healing journey. For many of us, the heart has been hidden under all of our armor, buried beneath all the layers of pain and trauma. Here, you make a commitment to yourself and begin to look at aspects of your life that are holding you back. This is the initiation phase where you recognize and understand the effort needed to change your life.

### **Part 2 – Resistance**

For many of us even though we set off with the best intentions we often get stopped in our tracks by obstacles and challenges. In part two you learn how to move through these with more ease. You identify your personal style of sabotage, in other words understanding how you get in your own way. You explore how you have overcome challenges in the past and recognize the tools and skill sets you already own. This is the place where you are offered keys to troubleshoot and ways to find your own solutions to your blockages.

### **Part 3 – The Circle: stepping into your power**

At various places in the book I make reference to the circle. The circle is a form of presence. It is an abstract yet palpable space; it is your own personal space. This circle is who you are. It is in you and around you, and yet it is much more. A few of us seem to have a larger, sometimes stronger and more powerful space

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than most. Such people, for example, can walk into a room and everyone knows they are there. They have learned how to cultivate their personal circle. Everyone, however, is capable of doing the same. Part three is where you can learn to develop this space. The circle is about remembering your true self, taking your place and stepping into your power.

### **Part 4 – Cultivating Self**

Cultivating self is the process of re-sculpturing your new found self and rewriting your story. Part four is where you acquire tools and abilities to create and design your life anew.

### **Part 5 – Loving Who I Am**

*Loving Who I Am* is the place where you reconnect to your heart. You have undertaken and completed much of the work, broken cycles and patterns, and reclaimed many parts of yourself. With all the changes you have been making, you will have started to feel your heart again. Part five offers you opportunities to forge strong ties to your heart and to start living your life from your heart space.

There is no single blueprint for what love is and that is what makes it rather intangible. Learning to love yourself is a choice. When you commit to *Loving Who I Am* you are learning what love is. *Loving Who I Am* guides and supports you along the way, encouraging you to open any door as you explore your path with heart.

Note: All names and specific details have been changed to protect anonymity.

## CHAPTER 2

# How to use this book

### **The Story**

The origins of *Loving Who I Am* are first and foremost about my personal healing journey. The anecdotes in it are autobiographical because this is the only real story I can tell. By reading my account and working with the exercises in the book, I encourage you to look at your own story. When you connect to your history and know where you have come from, you can start to heal your heart. Shamanic teachings say we are reflections of each other. So, even though you have not lived my life, you can resonate and empathize with aspects of it. The Indigenous peoples lived their lives through stories and held these in great esteem.

### **A Guide**

If you wish to bring change and transformation into your life, self healing is possibly the most powerful tool you have. *Loving Who I Am* will allow you to go on that journey of self exploration and discovery which may completely change your life. In this way, the book acts as a guide to accompany you on that path.

### **The Exercises**

Working with the exercises found throughout the book will give you plenty of opportunity to ask questions, to reflect on your life and to review your story. They provide occasions for you to make decisions, to plan and to begin to integrate change into your life in a systematic way.



### **Valuable Resource**

*Loving Who I Am* is written for individuals who are engaged in their own healing processes and are on a path to self discovery. It may provide a new perspective to anyone who is interested in well-being and healing.

For therapists, practitioners and healers *Loving Who I Am* is a valuable reference and resource book. The whole text can be used as a complete guide for healing. It is broken up into clear and defined parts for students and clients to work with.

### **User Friendly**

*Loving Who I Am* is written to be “user friendly.” The content is divided up into parts, sections and exercises to make all the information accessible. The book can be read from cover to cover. Or, you can read the parts that are pertinent to you. In life there is no one particular starting point, every moment can be conceived as one. For those of you who prefer to be free of structure every page can be viewed as a starting point.

### **Expectations**

Most of us have expectations about everything in life. Some of us are never satisfied because of our expectations; life does not quite work out how we would like and we sometimes feel disappointed or unsatisfied. I would like to add a precaution here regarding how you use this book: what to and what not to expect.

It would be easy for me to say do not have any expectations but this is rarely the case. Due to the subject matter of the book and the work encouraged through the exercises, I feel it is important to share with you that *Loving Who I Am* is not a program that will “fix” you. As with any health training program, what *Loving Who I Am* has to offer needs to be incorporated into your everyday life and be used on an on-going basis. Change and self transformation take time. For this reason revisiting some of the exercises over different periods of time is strongly advised.

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You are welcome to read this book in a piecemeal fashion, but I believe you will have the best results if you approach what is offered here systematically. This holds both for how you read the book and doubly how you incorporate the material into your life. Taking the project of “you” seriously will bring significant rewards.

### **Outcome of the tasks**

Expectations you have about the outcome of the tasks will be different for everyone. I recommend you to take some time to reflect on your approach towards working with the exercises. Following are some potential consequences that you need to be aware of when working with the exercises.

*Overwhelm:* if you try to do too much too soon you risk becoming overwhelmed. This might lead to frustration and you might not go any further. How can you do the exercises in such a way that you do not get overwhelmed?

*Being Afraid:* if you approach the exercises based on your past experiences and failures you are already setting yourself up for disappointment. How can you deal with the work in a more neutral fashion?

*Being Skeptical:* you are reading the book, but you do not believe what you are reading. Unfortunately, being skeptical does not allow you to engage fully. You are holding back. Ask yourself why you are skeptical? Where did this viewpoint come from? While being skeptical can be very healthy and a protective instinct, you must decide, on a case-by-case basis, if it is appropriate. Consider the material here and weigh your reaction. Where possible lower your guard to welcome the benefit of the exercise.

*Fear of Change:* change is the only constant in life. Fearing it can be a form of resistance and lead to self sabotage. Then you

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wonder why nothing ever happens in your life. It is as if you are not allowing for change to happen. Facing your fears will allow for movement. What do you need to do to face your fears?

### **Change**

*Levels of change:* throughout the book you will work on several aspects of yourself: emotional, mental, physical and spiritual. All these layers are interwoven, so when you focus and work on one particular field do not be surprised to see change happen in another field too.

*Making change:* as there is no “normal” rate of change you might want to consider what change you would like or need: short, medium, or long term, and set goals for one or more of these. Try setting timelines as objectively as possible, bearing in mind your daily, weekly and monthly responsibilities. Remember that scheduling is a key to any strategy for change. Being ambitious for change to happen, is as important as getting yourself ready to do the work. Your determination is then needed to drive that ambition.

*Incremental change:* we actually have little control over the rate of change. At the same time, by doing too little or too much, we can impact the amount and speed of change. There will be people who will want to do all the exercises rapidly or those of you who will do none. There is no right or wrong here only to know that what you do will have an effect on the outcome. I suggest you find your own momentum, pace yourself, and go step by step. Integrating the work you do with *Loving Who I Am* is best done progressively.

## CHAPTER 3

# How to work with the exercises

To gain the most from *Loving Who I Am* requires a commitment to yourself, and to working on the exercises. Self-transformation can only happen when you devote time to it. This is the case for any discipline. So, regular practice of the exercises is key to bringing change into your life.

### **The Set Up**

The set up in each exercise will explain what you need to have with you for example, a note pad and pen, and will state how much time is required. Each exercise is related to a particular topic, and reading the text will give you the background to the topic.

For each exercise or session, you will need to find a quiet place where you can be on your own and uninterrupted. If you live alone, I recommend unplugging the computer and switching off any phones and other machines so you will not be interrupted. If you have a partner or family, I recommend you negotiate a time and a space for yourself on a regular basis. Having your own time and space regularly is indispensable for your own healing.

### **The Timing**

I propose an amount of time for each exercise, usually no more than ninety minutes. I suggest this because it is more advisable to complete shorter, in-depth sessions more often, than one very long session, once in a while.

In some exercises, there are multiple parts and I recommend that each part be a separate session. Trying to do too much in one session could turn out to be counterproductive. It is preferable to do less in the allotted time and complete that part of the exercise than try and do too much and never complete it. It is far more satisfying to finish a task.

### **Revisiting Exercises**

Any of the exercises can be revisited at any time. In fact, I would highly suggest exactly that. When you do an exercise for the first time, it is new and you are testing it out. The task might take a while to engage with. However, when you return to it subsequently you already know what to expect and can enter into the subject faster and go further.

After having completed an exercise, it is also distinctly possible that ideas, insights and memories will surface in the hours and days that follow. These are good reasons to repeat the same exercise because it means you will be working at a newer and deeper level of yourself.

I suggest, for the sake of continuity, not leaving a gap of too much time in between sessions. One session a week is advantageous and will enable you to stay in the flow and the energy of the topic.

Coming back to redo one or some of the exercises a few months later, when aspects of your life have changed, can also be positive. You will be returning to the task from a new perspective and this will allow you to see things you might not have considered before.

### **Professional Support and Guidance**

Some of the subjects and tasks will require you to delve deeply within yourself. This could lead to a lot of emotions emerging. If you feel you need support and guidance, I strongly recommend you look for a professional. This person may come in the form

of a therapist, practitioner or teacher to accompany you on your journey to the heart.

When searching for someone to work with I suggest you follow your intuition rather than how many diplomas the person has on their wall. Find an individual who you feel comfortable with. Listen to your heart, it will guide you.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Relaxation Protocol

This exercise helps you relax your body completely, from head to toe. It will help you let go of stress so you can get the most benefit from the exercise. As you work through the exercise, imagine your body in your mind and each part of your body relaxing as you relax that body part. Throughout the exercise your focus stays with your breath. When you bring your focus to the breath you begin to relax.

Learn this sequence by heart. Practice this exercise everyday.

**Set up:** Find a place where you can be on your own and uninterrupted. Take ten to fifteen minutes.

**1. Sit and make yourself comfortable.**

**2. Close your eyes.**

**3. Focus on your breath.**

**4. Become aware of your breath.**

- Follow your breath in and follow your breath out.
- As you practice focusing on your breath, you will find yourself becoming more relaxed.

**5. You are now going to relax your whole body.**

- Keep your eyes closed and visualize your body in your mind.
- Work through all the parts of your body, from your head to your toes, until every aspect of your body is relaxed.

## **6. Bring your breath into your chest.**

- Take six breaths here.
- Follow your breath in and follow your breath out.
- On the exhale you are going to relax your body more and more.
- Relax your head and your face.
- Relax your neck and your shoulders.
- Relax your arms and wrists.
- Relax your hands and fingers.

## **7. Now, bring your breath down to your abdomen.**

- Take six breaths here.
- Follow your breath in and follow your breath out.
- You are going to continue to relax your body more and more.
- Relax your chest and upper back.
- Relax your abdomen and your middle back.
- Relax your hips and your pelvis.

## **8. Finally, bring your breath down to your navel.**

- Take six breaths here.
- Follow your breath in and follow your breath out.
- You are going to continue to relax your whole body.
- Relax your legs.
- Relax your thighs and calves.
- Relax your feet and toes.

## **9. Your body is now totally relaxed.**

- Stay in this space for 5 minutes
- Focus on your breath.
- Follow the breath in and follow the breath out.



**10. Bring the exercise to a close:**

- Come back to your breath.
- Come back to your body.
- Come back to the space.
- Move your fingers and toes.
- When you are ready come back and open your eyes.



## **PART 1**

# The Work



“The Work” prescribes measures and actions as primary steps in personal development and transformation. The path unfolds by realizing that to make change in your life you need to become an active and willing participant on your own healing journey. For many of us, the heart has been hidden under all our armor-ing, buried beneath all the layers of pain and trauma. In part one you make a commitment to yourself and begin to look at aspects in your life that may be holding you back. This is the initiation place, where you recognize and understand the effort needed to change your life.

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## **1. Healing Crisis**

I clearly remember the turning point in my life when my healing journey began. I had been living in Canada for about two years, when one weekend my partner came home from work and told me he would be leaving for the week. His company was sending him to work in another city. This had happened regularly when

we were living in France, but had not happened since we had arrived in Canada. This news had such an unprecedented effect on me that I cried solidly for three days. I had no idea what was happening. Something inside me had been triggered. At the time, I was studying natural health at a local school, so I decided to see the director for advice and help. She recommended I work this crisis through with one of the teachers.

What I was experiencing, I later found out, was known as a “Healing Crisis.” What is a healing crisis? It is a moment in one’s life when the bottom drops out of your world and you are no longer capable of holding everything together. An issue rises up from the depths of your being to a place of awareness, asking to be looked at, resolved and transformed.

A deep part of me had been affected by my husband saying he was going away. This was a place of suffering lodged in my sub-conscious that had been registered as “abandonment.” I had been holding this inside since my childhood. Crying non-stop for three days was the sign that this state and its associated pain had finally risen to the surface of my consciousness telling me that I was now ready to deal with it. So began my healing journey. I was lucky. This crisis occurred when I was surrounded by people who could help me and at a moment when I was prepared to seize the opportunity to heal and change my life.

The process of self healing started that particular weekend. I did not realize at the outset how much work would be involved in the years to follow. However, I was ready to make the commitment, especially as my intuition was showing me that this path would change my life in many ways.

All of us have grown up put through a process which has structured us into the adults we are today. The work we need to do is to become aware of the parts of our lives that no longer serve us and aim to change the conditioning and beliefs that are holding us back. The work I refer to here involves observing, understanding and letting go of one’s pain and suf-

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fering, and working with the different processes to shed all that is weighing us down and not allowing us to live happy and healthy lives.

One essential part of the healing process I have named “Shit Shoveling.” This entails digging into those spaces of ourselves we do not necessarily want to go to and are afraid to see. These are places within us where we have buried our hurts. These wounds, however, can be found anywhere in our physical, emotional, mental or energetic bodies. When someone decides to heal themselves, they will need to look into these uncomfortable places, see how it happened, why it got shelved, how it is festering inside, dig out the muck, and understand why it is so difficult to face. Once this part of us has been acknowledged, the healing process has already begun.

In order to make change you need to see and understand where you have come from and decide where you want to go. This implies looking back at the events and people who have been in your life up until today and identify what is keeping you on this same track. If you feel this is not working for you anymore then it is time to, either accept to change it, or to let it go. Once you do this you can now choose where you would like to go and start walking that path

Life does not just happen. It is not outside of you. You are your life. Each of our lives is a process, made up of various phases and, along the way, there are several crucial junctures. These are moments of potential change, that, if we embark on them, our lives will never be the same. The changes we undertake now will allow healing to occur that will have a lasting impact on the rest of our lives. A personal crossroad of mine came in the form of that healing crisis. All of us come face to face with moments of transition, yet, each one of us will deal with these decisive times in our own way. How do you manage these key moments in your life? Do you see them as opportunities so that you can move on with your life, or do you try and put them off for another day just hoping they will go away?

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A healing crisis can come in many shapes and forms: an illness, an accident, an injury, losing one's job, separation, divorce or death. How can these be healing crises, I hear you say. Are they not just bad things that happen to good people? These and many other difficult moments happen in all of our lives. The way most of us have been conditioned to believe and deal with these problems, is that we have to suffer and put up with our lot. Many of us do, some of us all of our lives. If, however, we try to see beyond the pain and view these situations as moments of potential change, take up the challenge, our lives could turn out very differently. Treating circumstances as such may bring us more clarity, joy and tranquility.

In the last few years I have had my share of critical events: I went through a divorce, one of my close friends disappeared, my mother attempted to commit suicide several times and I have suffered a lot of physical pain. This is not a poor me story, but just to show you that we have all been through adversity and distress. These life experiences have changed me as these events have stopped me in my tracks, begging me to re-examine and question my life. I have been blessed, that ever since that fateful weekend I have been surrounded by people who could and would guide and encourage me to go beyond what I thought was possible. They have helped me become the person I am today. They have shown me how I could feel the pain, learn what it was about, what it had come to teach me and finally understand and integrate the lessons. Choosing, doing, implementing and integrating the work have been the pre-requisites in changing my life.

I believe we all have these personal life experiences because we are meant to learn something. For me life is a school. Are you ready to learn your lessons and go beyond your pain and suffering in order to heal and love yourself? Are you ready to do some serious, inward looking work to create a happier life? Are you prepared to take advantage of your turning points and crossroads when they appear?

### EXERCISE 1

## Assessing crossroads in your life

**Set up:** Take time for yourself. Find a space where you can be on your own and uninterrupted for maximum of one hour. Have pen and paper. Read through the questions and note down your answers.

1. Think about and identify a healing crisis, trauma, illness or loss that has happened in your life:
  - a. What happened?
  - b. How did it manifest itself?
  - c. What else was going on in your life at the time?
  - d. How did you deal with the crisis?
  - e. What did you do?
  - f. How did you change?
  - g. How did your life change?
  - h. How and where do you still need to heal?
  - i. Is there anything you now need to do the complete this healing process?

If you need support or guidance to help you heal this process, who around you can help? What do you need to do to find this support? Depending on the type of crisis you are working through you might want to target specific professional people, for example if you have a psychological issue - a psychologist, physical issues – an osteopath or massage therapist. Someone who comes recommended as a personal reference is probably the best.

Regarding my healing crisis, once I was able to calm myself down and assess my state I realized I needed help and that this situation was beyond what I could handle alone. The teacher I had been referred to, I later found out, was a shaman. This

was one of the first professionals I worked with on my healing journey. We worked together for many years, eventually leading to my own training, and working with shamanism.

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## 2. Abandonment

What does it mean to be abandoned? It is when we feel the people we most trust and love, who have brought us into this world or who are bringing us up, have not been available for us in ways we needed. Unplanned pregnancies, unwanted children, absent or dead parents, separations or divorces, all these situations create a feeling of abandonment. Sometimes parents are very sick when children are young and are not physically or emotionally available or capable of taking care of them. Other parents are just not able to spend enough time talking or listening to their children. Perhaps they are often away, preoccupied with work or tied up in their own histories. How is a child affected by all this? How does a child cope with these situations? Many children feel abandoned and have trust or security issues. They are often left to fend for themselves without knowing how.

It was much later on in my life when I started searching for information about my birth that I learned my mother had been very ill during the pregnancy. When I was born she had been unconscious and I had been taken away for special care by the hospital staff. My mother's sickness made it so she was not able to nurse or feed me and the two years following my birth she was in and out of hospital. Neither of my parents had been there to greet my entrance into the world (at that time fathers were not allowed in the delivery room) and following this all the attention had been focused on my mother as she was so sick. My parents just could not be available for me in the ways I needed.