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She studied psychotherapy and counselling at Regent's University in London and is certified in NLP and Hypnotherapy. Jo is a graduate of The Four Winds Society specialising in the traditional teachings and energy work which has been used by Native American and South American shamans for thousands of years.

After graduating, she continued her training in Peru with the Q'ero elders (Inka Shaman) in the Andes and the medicine men in the Amazon rainforest.

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Introduction

Adventure is not outside man; it is within.

– George Eliot

Of all the amazing things we can learn at school, how to be happy is not one of them. The focus is more on expanding the mind, rather than understanding it; and preparing you for what you want to do in life, rather than how you want to be. Happiness is treated more as a by-product of life or, like luck, an uncontrollable disposition that you are either blessed with or not. But that is not true. We all have the potential to have a very happy life, it is just a matter of learning how.

In this book I share what I consider to be the best life-enhancing skills that I have learnt from my time spent with some extraordinary wise men and women around the world over the last thirty years: Shamans living high in the Andes, medicine men and women in the Amazon rainforest, Buddhist scholars in India, mystics, gurus, philosophers and psychologists, all dedicated to sharing their wisdom on the art of life. Through these encounters I was able to gather a body of timeless wisdom which has underpinned my client work as a Shaman and spiritual coach/mentor over the last fifteen years.

I have always been the type of person who likes to find the point of something, quickly. I was the child, much to my teachers' irritation, who always asked, 'Why?' A born sceptic, I like proof not hearsay. This is perhaps what drew me to the ancient spiritual traditions. They don't ask you to believe anything or care whether

you consider yourself spiritual or not. There are no rules, just maps to guide you so you don't get lost in the mind's labyrinth. They are there to support you in your own experience.

These ancient teachings are not the cute overused adages we see on car bumper stickers, but empowering insights and highly effective practices which can be life-changing. They come from experts who devoted their lives to understanding not just what makes us tick, but what makes a truly good life.

This book is my cherry-pickings from an enormous body of work. You might like to see it as a crib sheet or an executive summary. You will find everything that you need to create an empowering skillset to help you navigate life's inevitable twists and turns, allowing you to thrive in the good times and quickly recover when life knocks you off balance.

I have included lots of quick and easy practices for when you feel anxious, stressed, overwhelmed or mentally frayed, as well as gentle steps to guide you back to a deep sense of connection when you feel alone, hollow, lost or depressed.

This is not an empty promise. Everything in this book has been tried and tested over thousands of years. The practices work, and this is why more and more people are turning to the ancient spiritual traditions to help them flourish in their lives today.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is an overview introducing Spiritual Intelligence, or SQ; a wisdom of life we recognise in the great sages and spiritual teachers that we are all able to develop. It is the missing ingredient to lasting happiness. Using ancient maps, I will paint a picture of our inner world landscape. Knowing this is a game changer because, regardless of the life we lead or the world we come from, our happiness and, for that matter, our entire mental well-being is entirely dependent on our state of mind.

The second part leads you through the actual process of how to develop your Spiritual Intelligence – the ten steps to gaining

spiritual wisdom, a clear mind and lasting happiness.

About the Process

What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality.

– Plutarch

The SQ Process is an adventure in self-discovery which opens up you to you and brings you face-to-face with everything that influences, affects and inhibits you; all the stories and personal fears which limit you and keep your world small. Until we can get ourselves and all our stuff out of the way, we will never see anything except for the limitations of our reality from our own perspective. To really come alive and embrace the magnitude and magnificence of life, we first have to let go of some of our unconscious safety blankets.

When most people think of a ‘process’, they think of something which is linear, with a set starting point and finishing line. A beginning and an end. But when it comes to a process of self-discovery, there is no end point where we can say, ‘OK, I’m done and dusted, I now know everything there could possibly be to know about myself and life.’ We are constantly evolving. We are not finite.

The SQ Process has a similar flow to the ancient medicine wheel, variations of which are used in many traditions to guide the seeker on a personal journey of development and transformation. It is made up of a series of steps and practices. It is a circle of letting go and bringing in, of facing fears so we can tap back into our own power of vision and feel safe to let our imagination fly. Each time we go around the wheel each layer becomes easier and the work faster.

The SQ Process takes you through ten core steps which will give you an insight into understanding why you are the way you are

and how to become the person you want to be:

- Step One is about letting go of all the stories and beliefs we have about ourselves which keep us tethered to the past.
- Step Two digs a little deeper and goes into the shadows of our psyche, where our fears live, and empowers us to face them head-on.
- Step Three uncovers all the different masks we hide behind, because only then can we embrace our individuality and start dancing to our own drumbeat.
- Step Four is about coming off autopilot so that we are not left wondering where the day, year or life went.
- Step Five helps us to see that reality is not fixed, but, like a kaleidoscope, it morphs depending on which lens we use.
- Step Six teaches us that nothing in life is permanent and everything, from our own bodies to nature, is in a constant state of change.
- Step Seven is about being able to tap into your inner stillness, even in the midst of the chaos of daily life.
- Step Eight will show you how to read and direct energy, how to avoid having your energy depleted and how to replenish when you need more.
- Step Nine reveals how through nature we can find a profound connection which allows us to transcend our own life and rediscover a sense of awe.
- Step Ten is about becoming the author of your own destiny – understanding that we are all the hero in our own epic tale.

Throughout Part Two there are a range of exercises and practices taken from different spiritual traditions as well as modern-day psychology. The meditations are, in the main, from Buddhism and the reflections and questions of self-enquiry are typically Zen. Some are to help you in the moment, while others are questions to reflect on. The Shamanic exercises take us into a moment of ritual

and ceremony, evoking something deep and heartfelt within us. They are designed to help us to break through the hold of the intellect, so we can get to a place beyond words. They are incredibly powerful and can shift the energy around an issue or belief without the need to intellectually understand it.

The SQ Process is something we can all do at any stage in our lives, wherever we are, whatever we are doing. It is really the ultimate adventure; a personal odyssey we all need to take if we wish to find our own voice, step into our own power and live life to the full.

Remember that this is a process and you will need to take an active part. It won't just happen to you. Set an intention as to what you want to gain from the process and from developing your own Spiritual Intelligence. This is really important – an intention gives you direction and is something to remind you when you are in the process why you are doing it. Your intention becomes a personal mantra, it brings both meaning and purpose.

PART ONE



Mind Matters

The Ultimate Intelligence

When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life.

– John Lennon

When asked what the purpose of life is, His Holiness the Dalai Lama simply replied, 'to be happy'. It may seem a bit of a glib and insubstantial response to such an earnest question, but isn't happiness what we all want and strive for? Nobody wants to suffer, and if you strip back why we do everything we do, it is pretty much all driven by the hope or belief that it may lead to happiness, whatever that might mean to each of us.

To be clear, His Holiness is not talking about the momentary happiness which comes from buying an ice cream or a Ferrari. Nor is he talking about the happiness you get when you take a short break from the humdrum of daily life. He is referring to a deep and profound happiness; an inner peace, a strong sense of well-being that underpins all of your life, throughout your life, in good times and bad. This is true happiness.

You may be thinking that this is a nice ideal, but a pretty unrealistic dream for anyone living with the pressures of modern life. But the truth is that it is within all of our grasps – each and every one of us – regardless of whether we live in a palace or a prison cell.

We can all achieve this blissful inner stillness and deep-rooted happiness His Holiness the Dalai Lama is referring to by developing something innate in all of us called 'Spiritual Intelligence'.

Contrary to its name, it has nothing to do with religion. Nor does it have anything to do with faith, hope or belief. It does, however, have everything to do with seriously enhancing our total well-being and giving us what we need to have a happy, fulfilling and meaningful life. Once developed, Spiritual Intelligence gives us an empowering knowledge, not only of ourselves, but of the nature of life itself, and this revelation, when it comes to our happiness, is a game changer. It is like understanding the magician's trick. Once you know how the trick is done, you can still enjoy the illusion, but it can no longer fool you.

We are not taught anything about Spiritual Intelligence at school. Most people know little about it or what it can offer us. But the fact is that it has been around for thousands of years; an open secret which has been held by all the ancient spiritual traditions.

We might learn bits and pieces of it here and there, just by living through the ups and downs of life, but we are really only forced to develop it when we have a life crisis, a loss or a tragedy. But, it shouldn't matter whether we are on a roll and finding life a breeze, or in a mess doing our best to just make it through the day, living life without Spiritual Intelligence is as unnecessary a challenge as jumping into a turbulent sea without first learning how to swim. Not knowing about it is definitely a wasted opportunity, as by developing our own Spiritual Intelligence we gain a valuable advantage in life.

Another way to see Spiritual Intelligence is spirituality put into action, which gives us a practical and effective skillset to enhance the great times and get us swiftly through the tough times. It is the core intelligence which runs through all spiritual traditions, as well as the modern schools of psychology. It is the foundation stone which supports our mental and emotional health, because it helps us in understanding everything – from how our life is dictated by our private inner world (aka the mind) to our ability to transcend our own life and see our place in a bigger picture. Most

of all, it is about realising that although we like to think of ourselves as independent beings, none of us actually is. Even the yogi sitting in his little cave high in the Himalayas is dependent on the river for water, the cave for shelter and the air for breath. Because we are all part of the web of life, we are all part of a planetary cooperative, and our relationship and interdependence with both nature and our fellow human beings is crucial to our overall well-being.

Unlike Intellectual and Emotional Intelligence, which gauge our ability to acquire and process the day-to-day stuff in our lives, Spiritual Intelligence is the understanding of life itself. One way of seeing it is if you imagine yourself sitting watching a play in a theatre. Your intellect is helping you to make sense of the plot, whereas your emotions are letting you engage with the characters and the story. Spiritual Intelligence encompasses the two but also means you can see everything which goes on behind the scenes. It is like having an access-all-areas pass. If you see Intellect as left brain and Emotions as right brain, Spiritual Intelligence is the whole brain. Really it is the sum of all other intelligences. You could call it the 'ultimate intelligence' and the good news is, we all have the seed of this intelligence within us. For exactly the same reasons we might exercise regularly to develop our muscles to keep our body healthy, we need to develop our Spiritual Intelligence to keep our mind healthy.

Knowing Your Mind

I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet.

– Mahatma Gandhi

If we want to look after our mental well-being, the first thing we have to do is get to know our own mind. When we think about the mind, we tend to think about what's on it rather than the actual

mind itself, which is a little like focusing on the clouds and ignoring the sky. The mind is much more than simply a house for our intellectual thoughts and academic prowess, it is the very essence of us – it is our heart and soul.

Our whole world – absolutely everything to do with our life and how we live it – is governed by our mind. Every thought, fear, emotion, belief and perception that we have is controlled by it, which, in effect, makes our mind our intangible and invisible boss. It is certainly elusive in nature. Not just because it goes by a number of different names – the psyche, the inner self, the internal world, ‘awareness’ and ‘consciousness’ – but also because no one can quite agree on what exactly the mind is or, for that matter, *where* it is.

If we are asked to point to where we think it is in our body, most of us would probably point to our foreheads. It feels like it is possibly in our brain, or at least within our skull somewhere behind our eyes. But if a neurosurgeon were to open your head up and have a little poke around your brain, they wouldn’t find it. Perhaps because the mind is not the brain in the same way as the evening news is not the television. Just as we need a TV or a similar device to access the programme, we need the brain to access the mind. And just as the flashiest TV is pointless without programmes to stream through it, our brain is pretty pointless without the experience of our mind.

Quite simply, without our mind we cease to exist. Without our mind, everything disappears.

One of the reasons the mind remains elusive is because it is not a finite organ like the brain, but a free-flowing energy. It is a conscious energy which gives us our personal experience of life, and it is maybe the very thing which connects us to a universal objective intelligence, a universal consciousness. The mind is the personal part of this objective, pure consciousness which holds our

experience of life. Where the two merge is as indefinable as knowing exactly where the sky merges into space.

When it comes to our minds, there is one thing everyone does agree on, and that is that we all have one and life is immeasurably better when it is working with us rather than against us.

Too Busy to Be

Beware the barrenness of a busy life.

– Socrates

The flip side to the mind-blowing advancements we have made over the last century is that, rather than life getting easier and happier, it is becoming increasingly stressful and overwhelming. More and more of us are struggling to cope with the pressures, the noise and the overwhelming pace of modern life. We live in a world which never switches off and there is little to no respite from the constant 'doing'. Busy is seen as good and a sign that we are valued and needed. Whether it is an impenetrable to-do list, balancing work and home life, bringing up a family or a day of non-consequential but seemingly essential appointments, we are all busy. We are constantly juggling our needs, desires and expectations. There is a collective belief that if we are flat out, we are not only important, but we are doing well in life. Busy is considered normal and a good way to live.

The problem is we are living in a speeding world that carries on getting faster and faster year on year like a runaway train. In a bid to keep up, we are starting to resemble crazed children on a permanent sugar high. Wherever we are at, whatever we have achieved, it is not enough. We need more. We need our fix. We are perpetually looking forward to the next thing. There is an unrelenting pressure from others, as well as ourselves, to do more, be more, make more. Our ability or desire to concentrate for long

periods has gone out the window – we like to have everything in short bursts and quick soundbites. We need to get to the point quickly so we can get on with whatever is next. We are in a permanent unsustainable state of alert. We are addicted to constant stimulation and we don't know how to come down from always doing something or always being entertained, and the stress on our mind, body and soul is taking its toll.

Our modern lifestyle is coming at the expense of our health, in particular our mental health. Our minds never get a chance to rest. We are mentally exhausted. Anyone with young children knows that an overtired child equates to tantrums and tears. Well, we are no different, except, unlike the child, we can learn to decipher our own emotional signs. When our emotions fray, our sleep pattern goes awry, our moods start to get darker and we find ourselves barking at everyone around us, we have a choice. We can either ignore the signs and keep going until the side effects literally stop us, or we can take it as a signal that it is time to take stock and make some adjustments.

If you can't remember the last time you had a full night's sleep or the last time you watched a movie without checking your phone every five minutes, there is a high chance you are caught in fight or flight: a primal survival state of emergency.

A lot of people are talking about fight or flight nowadays because it is widely accepted to be a common cause behind a range of mental and physical illnesses. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, chronic fatigue syndrome and insomnia, as well as gut issues, are just a few examples of its effects. Also known as 'acute stress response', it is the body's automatic response to anything it perceives as life-threatening. It allows us, for what was only intended to be a brief moment in time, to be superhuman. It heightens our awareness to acute levels and gives us superfast reflexes and speed, so we have the best chance of fleeing from danger. It is exactly the same survival reflex we can see

throughout the animal kingdom, except there is one crucial difference. In this instance, our evolved mind is actually our downfall. Our ability to remember and to analyse means it can be as harmful as it is helpful for us.

Imagine, if you will, a young zebra calmly grazing with the rest of its herd on a huge open plain when, all of a sudden, a lion starts to make chase. With the sense of an imminent threat, the fight or flight reflex is triggered in each of the herd. The young zebra's heart rate rises, its breathing quickens, its blood gets redirected away from digesting grass, as well as its other vital organs, to its muscles and limbs, so it is able to react and flee for its life. If it is lucky enough to outrun the lion, as soon as it senses the threat is over, its stress hormones will drop and its system will return to normal. It may do a violent body shake as if removing the fear energy and then, in a matter of moments, it will go back to calmly eating grass as if nothing ever happened.

We, on the other hand, have lost this art of recovery. We can't shake the stress off quite so easily and it is all because of our ability to conceptualise. Although most of us are unlikely to come under threat from a lion, the fight or flight reflex can be triggered from any perceived traumatic event. It is a primal system which doesn't differentiate between a lion on the attack and a yelling boss. Our ability to replay a threat to our lives – real or otherwise – over and over in our minds means we remain triggered. Our stress levels stay elevated and we remain locked in a state of high alert. Our bodies are braced ready to react like a soldier on the front line. The effect is physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting; it literally starts to wear us down. (Later in the book I will give you some exercises which are really effective at getting the whole system to completely relax at a deep level.)

This triggered fight or flight reflex helps to explain why many of us find it so hard to get our minds to stop racing and switch off. The average human has over 2,000 thoughts an hour, which is over

twice as many as the breaths we take in the same time. It is tiring just thinking about it. Welcome to what Buddhists call the ‘monkey mind’. The experts reckon we have between 60,000 and 90,000 thoughts a day, which makes for a very busy monkey. We are constantly thinking, but rarely do we see any of our thoughts through to the end. Something within the thought makes us think of something else and off we go randomly swinging from one thought to the next, and the next.

Next time you catch yourself lost in a stream of thoughts, try retracing back through each one to see how you ended up there. Find the original thought and see if you can hold it long enough to actually finish it. This is a powerful little exercise in taming the monkey mind. It can also be quite fun seeing how random the leaps in thought can be!

Unlike us, our ancestors had no choice but to abide by the laws of nature. However, this meant they had the chance to relax at the end of the day. They didn’t have luxuries like electricity, so they had to follow the circadian rhythm. The equivalent of their TV was sitting around watching the fire they slept by, letting their minds stretch out and unwind from the stimulation of the day. They had a natural opportunity to harmonise, to find themselves again within the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. Unlike our ancestors, we have to make time in our diaries to do this. One of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves is to stop for a few moments in our day to simply check in on ourselves – to come back into the moment – because it is all too easy to lose ourselves, flying from one thing to the next in everyday life, to get lost in the doing. It is important to take time in our day to press pause, so that, even if it is just for one moment, we can find our feet, we can ground ourselves, we can land.

Deep breathing meditation

Here is a simple one-minute meditation to help you catch your breath:

situation or forms a choir of voices to tell us how pathetic or useless we are, we take it as fact. We completely trust that whatever our mind tells us is an accurate and objective representation of reality, and it is this blind belief which is at the root of a lot of our mental anguish.

Our mind as we know it is neither pure nor objective, because when we think of the mind we are thinking of what's in it, not the mind itself; the clouds in the sky, not the sky itself. It is stamped with our personal experience and interpretation of pretty much everything – not just from our own lifetime, but also beliefs and conditionings we have inherited. Plastered in our mind, like the clouds in the sky, are the footprints of past reactions to past experiences, each one affecting how we interpret the world around us and how we experience life.

If you grew up playing with My Little Pony and dreaming of one day owning your own horse, a best friend with whom you will have lots of adventures, your feelings about horses are going to be in stark contrast to the person who as a child was kicked or bitten by an angry horse. Or the person who was forced to enjoy riding simply because their parents did and spent a childhood being told how lucky they were. How we see horses is entirely based on what kind of experience we have or haven't had with them. These experiences and how we interpret them become emotional imprints. Just like dirty footprints, they mark our mind and will continue to hold an influence over us until we remove them. As we go through the process of developing our Spiritual Intelligence, we start to recognise and clear these imprints and, as we do so, we start to live less at the mercy of our mind. We cease being thrown about like tumbleweed by every thought, fear and emotion.

As soon as we cotton on to the fact that what is on our mind is not objective but made up of personal interpretations, we can start to reclaim control. Because if the mind is subjective then it is malleable. It means our mind is not a fait accompli which we have

to manage or endure. We have the power to not just tame and train our mind but actually befriend it, which means we have the power to flourish with its support.

We can't stop negative emotions from ever getting a grip on us again or avoid moments when the gaggle of voices in our head catches us unawares. However, there are plenty of things we can do to disempower them and regain control.

One easy but very effective way to break any toxic thought pattern or to shut up the voices in your head is the five senses meditation. It doesn't matter where you are; it can be done in bed, on the bus or during a meeting. By going through the five senses – vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch – you effectively come out of the virtual reality of your thoughts and into your body for just long enough that it is impossible to go back to the exact place you left off. You can do this meditation without even putting this book down.

Five senses meditation

- First, look around and in your head name anything you can see: a chair, a window, a red car ... five or six things you can see right now.
- Then notice what the furthest sound is that you can hear. It may be traffic, the sound of an aeroplane or somebody's voice.
- Next, notice what the nearest sound is that you can hear. This could be a bird outside your window or, if you are very quiet, you may be able to hear a sound in your ears or your own breath.
- Then notice what you can smell. If you can't smell anything, smell the back of your hand or your sleeve.
- Now notice what you can taste in your mouth.
- Finally, notice how your body feels in the seat, the bed or wherever you are.

This whole exercise needn't take more than thirty seconds, but you can string it out for as long as you want. Once you have finished, feel free to go back to whatever it was you were thinking, if you can. The thought pattern will not have the same hold on you the second time round. This is an exercise that you can do as and when you remember to. It can be done as often as you want, on the hour every hour or whenever it is helpful. Coming out of our heads and back into our body is an effective way of creating some distance between our self and any negative self-talk.

Potholes on the Path

Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you.

– Aldous Huxley

Spiritual Intelligence definitely gives us an advantage in life, but it doesn't mean that even when developed we have a free pass from our share of trials and troubles. As much as we might like to think otherwise, we cannot control what life drops on our doorstep. However, we do have full control over how we react to it. How we let life shape us is our choice. We can take it as a given that part of life's course is to continually chuck us challenges and it is inevitable that there are going to be times in all our lives when we are not only going to get knocked off balance but floored. Our happiness and our well-being are not pinned on never coming off balance, but Spiritual Intelligence gives us an empowering resilience when our life turns south, which means we have the ability to recover fast.

One of the most powerful realisations which comes from developing our Spiritual Intelligence is accepting that nobody is flawless, not even the most esteemed spiritual teachers of our time.

When we develop our Spiritual Intelligence, we realise that we alone are responsible for our life, and rather than this being a harsh truth, it is actually both liberating and empowering. We get to choose how we live our life, not someone or something else. For this reason, the better informed we are, the better chance we have of our life panning out the way we want it to. Spiritual Intelligence puts our destiny firmly back in our own hands. It reminds us we are the authors of our own story and not simply a bit-part player in someone else's.

But What Does It Mean?

Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.

– André Gide

Spirituality has become burdened with so many different connotations and misconceptions that it's hard to know what someone actually means when they refer to being 'spiritual' or having a spiritual practice. On that note, it's just as confusing working out what someone means when they claim not to have a spiritual bone in their body. Nowadays the term can refer to a smorgasbord of schools, traditions, practices and processes, from the ancient to the brand new.

Spiritual speak doesn't help matters either. Aside from the new-age phrases and meaningful looks which have carried through from the Summer of Love in the sixties, it is overflowing with metaphors which, by their very nature, are open to interpretation. As with any world, spirituality also has its own lingo. However, unlike most lingo, which acts as a shorthand and once explained is easily understood, spiritual speak tends to do the exact opposite. It is made up of enigmatic words and phrases which can do more to confuse than to clarify. Ask a hundred spiritual practitioners to define 'enlightenment', 'higher consciousness', 'awakened', 'awareness', 'true nature' and 'being at one with the universe' and there is a strong chance you will come away none the wiser.

So it is understandable that the word 'spiritual' has driven many to avoid it altogether or to keep their interest a secret for fear that they aren't going to be taken seriously and simply be dismissed as