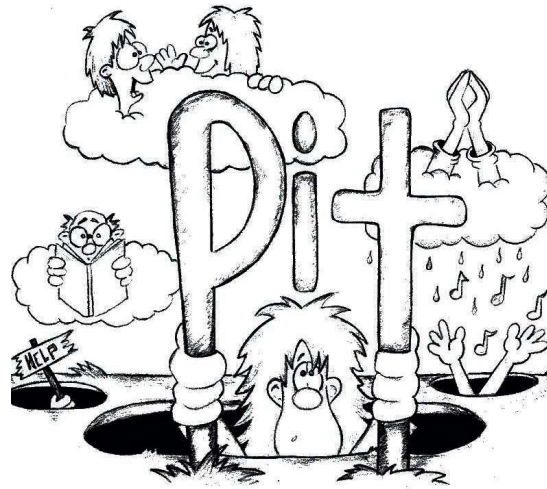


***Soul Friends Guide to
Surviving the Pit
A Workbook for Surviving and Thriving
Through Tough Life Changes***



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AN INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ***Soul Friends Guide to Surviving the Pit!*** This workbook is written for anyone who has faced (or is facing) a difficult life transition. In the year 2000, I went through a divorce and in the process of sorting my way through this very traumatic event, I had a deeply spiritual, life altering experience. What I learned through that experience and the tools I've gained since are what this book is all about.

I chose the title of this book because during my own life crisis, I came up close and personal with the "pit." This is the name that the Soul Friends and I have given to the lowest of emotional lows. When you are in the pit, you feel complete and utter despair. It is feeling such overwhelming sadness and fear that even poisonous snake bites and swerving into oncoming traffic seem inviting. It is our definition of "Hell."

Maybe some of you have never really experienced the pit. Maybe you've skirted around it or maybe you've had a toe slip over the edge. This workbook is for you too. This workbook is for anyone that has faced their deepest fears. It's for anyone that has suffered from loss, death, divorce, illness, or who have made life altering "mistakes." It's also for those of you who have lost yourself. This

workbook was written to teach you how to stay away from the pit or how to get out of it if you are already in it. It is also to help you remember who you really are.

And what about the "Soul Friends?" The Soul Friends are a group of people I have met over the course of my life. They are the ones who have shared their sorrows, failures, and triumphs with me. They are the friends that don't judge, don't criticize, don't blame, and who cry and laugh with me as we walk through the peaks and valleys of our lives. They are the friends who know who I really am and remind me when I have forgotten. Some of them I have known all my life. Some I have known only for a short time, and some I have never really met in person. These "unknown" friends are the many gifted writers whose books have touched my heart and changed my life. This workbook is filled with their wisdom too.

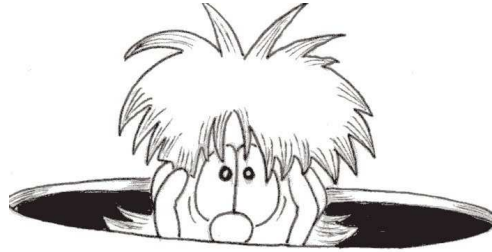
So what do the Soul Friends look like? Well, some of them are men. Some are women. Some are Christian. Some are Buddhist. Some are Native American. Some aren't any religion at all. Some are married. Some are divorced. Some are parents. Some aren't. Some are engineers. Some are teachers. Some are construction workers. Some are artists. Some don't work at all. Some write.

All, though, are human. All are part body and part soul. All are Soul Friend.

So, my friend, you too are a Soul Friend. This workbook is written for you. It is written for all of us. It is written to help us remember what to do when life goes crazy. Most importantly, it is written to show you that you are not alone. The pit has many tunnels connecting it to many, many more pits. The Soul Friends have been there. They've added on rooms. But we've decided its time to fill in the pits. It's time to banish all black curtain sewing and head first dives. It's time to live, love, laugh, sing and smile. It's time to turn the pit into a swimming pool. Read on and we'll show you how it can be done!

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Step One: Block Your Ears



Okay, to get us started, I need to share a little story. I'd like to take credit for writing this one, but I can't. Unfortunately, the author is unknown, so whoever you are, thank you for this little gem! Here it is.

FROGS

A group of frogs was traveling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around the pit. When they saw how deep the pit was, they told the unfortunate frogs they would never get out.

The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead.

Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and simply gave up. He fell down and died.

The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and suffering and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out.

When he got out, the other frogs asked him, "Why did you continue jumping? Didn't you hear us?"

The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

Packs a powerful punch doesn't it? So how does this story connect to step one? Well, it has to do with those "friendly frogs" on the side of the pit. Did you notice how they were telling the frogs in the pit they couldn't make it? Ever feel like you've got that kind of "friend" cheering you on? I don't know about you, but usually that kind of friend isn't out there somewhere. Usually, it's right between my own ears.

Yeah, you guessed it. It's me. A part of me anyway. A part of you. A part of all of us. So why is a part of ourselves telling us to give up?

Well, the answer can actually be found back in the early days of your life. Sometime, somewhere, something happened to you that frightened you. Suddenly, you felt vulnerable and in danger. The fragile, innocent infant self wasn't able to handle that, so your psyche developed a new part, a new persona that could. Sounds like a good thing right? Well, it was back then. If that part hadn't developed you wouldn't be here today reading this book. It developed to save you from things you weren't able to handle. So what's wrong with that?

Well, the problem is that this part of yourself, the one who's "taking care" of you is still a child. It never grew up. While you grew and developed into a capable adult, this part of your personality remained at the age it was when it was first created. For most of us, it continues to operate in much the same way, even though our needs have changed considerably.

Ask yourself why this part of you seems to be trying to hurt you at this point and you'll begin to see that what worked back then, doesn't work now. Now we need to use the wisdom we have gained to keep us safe and realize that our

young inner child deserves a chance to be free, to be happy. Which means, we need to let a higher part of us begin doing the leading, instead of our ego-self (another name for the part of the psyche we develop to keep us safe).

Now, since you are reading this book, I'd bet you already know this experience tends to be painful. I'm not going to lie to you. It is. But you know the saying "no pain no gain?" Well, it fits in this instance. But hang in there. You aren't alone. Your Soul Friends are here to help you through it. And once your higher self gets a little stronger and gets back into the driver's seat, even life's biggest bumps won't throw you in the pit. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Step number one is **BLOCK YOUR EARS!** Why? Because your ego-self is probably already filling your head with a bunch of excuses. She's (or if you're male, replace with "he's") probably telling you to put this book down. That it can't possibly help you with your problems. She's probably telling you this is all a waste of time. That you couldn't possibly feel better. Remind you of anyone? Maybe those Doubting Thomas frogs in the opening story?

Well, follow the little deaf frog's advice. **DON'T LISTEN!** WE, your Soul Friends, know the truth. You can get out of the pit. You can feel better. You can live a happy and peaceful life! Trust your heart. What does it say? Refuse to hear anything and we mean **ANYTHING** that makes you doubt your abilities or your intuition. If it makes you feel fear, **DON'T LISTEN!** Your ego-self is telling you to give up.

We know it isn't easy sometimes to ignore the insistent voice telling you to give up, so here are some practical steps you can take to help you through. The

first thing we recommend is to come up with a list of physical activities you can do. We've discovered that the ego gets distracted by physical activity. I know it is hard to convince yourself to get up and move when you are feeling stressed out, but it is actually the best thing you can do.

Not into exercise? That's okay, though if you are, getting a workout in is an excellent way to keep your ego under control. If not, you can always revert to the old standby of housework. Don't groan. It's not my favorite activity either, but it actually comes in handy in this situation. I've found that if I get up and clean the kitchen (or any of the other messy areas in my house), I feel a bit more sane. I think it is because I feel more in control since getting the floor clean is something I can do. Another favorite technique of mine is to do yoga mudras. These are yoga hand postures that you hold for three minutes. Sabrina Mesko has several books out on yoga mudras (see the reading list at the end) and she includes mudras for almost every situation you can think of (even natural disasters like being on the edge of the pit!). On the lines below, list at least five physically active things you can do right now.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Got your five? Great! Put a star next to the one you are going to do the next time your ego (i.e. *You Know Who*) makes you block your ears.

Now you are ready for the next step, a positive affirmation. I use these to help keep my ego distracted and to calm myself down. An affirmation is just a simple saying that you can repeat over and over. It should be something that makes you feel peaceful and it needs to be something you can easily memorize. Louise Hay is my favorite source for positive affirmations. She has several wonderful books out and also a card set called, *I Can Do It!*. Here are a few from her cards:

“It is safe for me to speak up for myself.”

“I let go of all negativity that rests in my body and mind.”

“My good comes from everywhere and everyone.”

Here is one I made up for myself:

“I am relaxed and peaceful at all times and all circumstances. I am safe.”

Now it is your turn. You can come up with your own original affirmation or you can borrow from another source. I’ve got a list of my favorite sources in the recommended reading list at the end of this book, or you can do a search online. Once you find them (or make them up) write them on the lines below.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Got it? Go ahead and put a star next to your favorite and then take a few minutes to practice it. You want to commit it to memory, so that it is easily

accessible when you need it. I also recommend getting into the habit of practicing it whenever you have a few spare moments. I do it on the way to work or in the shower. Another good time is when you are having trouble falling asleep. Go ahead and give it a try and then move on to Step Two.