

A photograph of several young green seedlings with two leaves each, growing in a field. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow, suggesting a sunny day. The seedlings are scattered across the upper half of the frame.

INSPIRED

C O L L E C T I O N



Thabisile Phumo



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INTRODUCTION



Thabisile Phumo



I have always been afraid of putting my thoughts on paper because of the stress of being wrong or right or uninteresting. Of late, it is the fear of my people that gets me to do things. I am blessed with a beautiful circle of people I genuinely need to be rescued from because they are bullying me into following my heart and living without fear of judgement. They know they are bullies because I tell them all the time but they have carried me and given me the courage to face my world on my own terms.

I love to write but I know I am not an author because I love quick reads and that is the intention of this collection.

This Inspired Collection is at the insistence of my special sister, Esther Haixwema and in gratitude to my beautiful girls and my special people, Ntate, Mando, Ronald and Purity who make sure 'I never walk alone' physical, spiritually and emotionally.

Love
Thabi



In Pursuit of Purpose



Four decades later, I was, until recently on the elusive journey to find my PURPOSE. Of course, being melodramatic, I was not going to settle for anything less than a neatly outlined mission and vision statement.

My search even led me to the salvage yard at the Purpose Centre, envy of those who wore the I am living my purpose badge – all because I found that I was doing and liking different things at different stages in my life – much against the grain of finding that one thing you are born to be. So I gave up the search (yes, I have), only to find that my purpose was not so much what I do but who I am to myself and, to and for those around me.

Following consultation with my sources of sanity – Eureka! I am for people and that is my purpose and what I do has to simply align with that; nothing more, nothing less (I could nurse them, counsel them, feed them or even sell them shoes!). Even if I decided to become a housewife or self employed or unemployed tomorrow, my purpose remains – the challenge is whether I am living into or up to it.

With that said, I am happier and at complete peace because I can be or do anything so long as it is aligned with my higher purpose: People.

Good luck with your pursuit knowing happiness and complete peace with who you are to yourself and others is most probably the right answer – and YOUR PURPOSE



NUGGETS

YOU

To live in and for your purpose is simply being that person and doing those things that are congruent with who you are (mind, soul and body) and align with your environment and interfaces...

FAMILY

To become a great family member or relative, you need to learn the art of stepping out – to allow those you love to live their lives without you, but in consideration of you

FRIENDS

A good friend is that one person you accept is different and much better than you will ever be, in who they are and what they do.

WORK

If you considered your ladder to be going sideways instead of upwards, what would change in terms of how you deal with ambition and success?



‘Honor Your Joy’



I recently stumbled upon an episode of ‘Fix my Life’ in my rare moments with the screen in my house. The vivacious Iyanla caught my attention when she called on her guest to take the time to ‘honor her joy’...that one thing that makes you happy and is the source of your joy.

It got me thinking and wondering how many like me struggle to articulate, let alone know that they have a joy that needs to be honored. It took me 40 years to finally know that my joy was in being and not in doing and having. Mine was nestled in a simple concept captured by a simple word – Inspired. My joy is in doing those things that get me and hopefully others inspired. It has been a year since I began my Inspired journey and I challenge you to look for that one thing that serves your being, and begin to honor it. It will require you to step aside from the survivalist existence to unlock it. You will need support from those who see beyond you and are willing to envelope your fear with their unwavering love. For the lucky ones, it is the day job that pays you in joy and in dollars, but for most of us it is in those things we classify as our passions.

Whatever it is, don’t plan, stop thinking about it, walk by faith and like Nike... Just Do It. Is **Inspired™** my joy? Absolutely. My wish is for you to find yours...I take this moment to thank you for helping me find and honor my joy...and for the shared the moments, which I will cherish until the day the Dreamgiver changes my course.



NUGGETS

YOU

When last did you make time for a strategy session with yourself about your life?

FAMILY

Family is like glue, it only works if you keep the lid on.

FRIENDS

Enemies are angels who are brought into your life to help you fight to keep your light burning.

WORK

Instead of competing, look at others for inspiration and learnings.



A Handbag of Joy



My sister asked me the other day for "happy thoughts" and "inspiration" because our world and lives are depressing at the best of times. She reminded me of a movie, "Yes man", in which Jim Carrey goes to a 'Yes' seminar and commits to saying 'yes' to everyone and everything – and his life became one big ball of joy. Right or wrong, both got me thinking... how many of us own or walk about with a handbag full of joy?

How many times are we able to look at our situations and unfortunate interactions, and instead of breaking into an insane fit or deep sadness, we rummage through our 'emotional and spiritual handbag' and pull out a wand of joy? Joy travels that you and you pull it out at the right time, refill yourself and put a glitter of joy all over your situations and interactions. Why is it important for you to become JOYFUL and ensure you walk around with a handbag full of 'joy sachets'? There are way too many miserable people, who due to their sorry state of lives, are wreaking havoc so they can have company in their lonely world of hopelessness. It is for this reason that when you meet the man in the situations they champion, you are able to 'zap' them with the 'spray of joy' and dilute their impact on your life and thoughts.

While joy is free and the exclusive boutique that sells the handbags of joy gives a lifetime 'use without payment', many of us don't know where to go to find our joy. Worse, we don't know how to rid ourselves of people around us who are allergic to joy. And the handbag of joy is too small to carry suitcase dosages that some of the 'sour bugs' in our lives need to join our 'joy-dom'. In despair

and wanting to fit in, we quickly abandon our quest for joy and become part of the 'sourbugs' team. It is easier to be one of the guys because becoming JOYFUL and walking around with a handbag of joy seems insane...BUT in this case insanity is good, embrace it!

Next time you go shopping for that 'must have' Burberry or Louis Vuitton handbag, don't forget to spare some change for the 'should have' hand bag of joy!

NUGGETS

YOU

Joy is the make-up of the soul

FAMILY

Families are made out of people who are different but find joy in creating a common legacy

FRIENDS

Declare anyone who steals your joy non-existent in your universe

WORK

A job will make you happy but living your purpose through your job, will give you joy



Know Your Worth



I am smart, beautiful, kind and downright all that. As you read this sentence, you are probably impressed, shocked or disgusted because my opening sentence is so "shallow, boastful, perhaps even sinful if not against the African culture"...Who makes such a declaration about themselves...really? At size 36? That height? With those marks at varsity? How she is at work?...You probably know people who are more beautiful (they were confirmed by being crowned Miss SA) or smarter (they completed their degrees cum laude at institutions like Harvard) or kind (they joined Mother Teresa). Before you miss my point, all I have done is to declare what I believe captures the essence of my worth.

Like a 1000 is worth more than a 100, do you know how much you are worth? With that in mind, what is happening to the investment called YOU? Where are you invested? those who are investing in you - should they hold or sell YOU? Any dividends? Are you fully valued? I believe, for a lot of reasons (which are valid), most of us don't know our worth and as a result are selling ourselves short or overselling in our relationships, at work and with the people we interact with in general. The lack of skills to do a valuation (or the fear of finding out we are a 100 instead of the 1000 we believe we are) is what is standing in the way of dreams, ventures and relationships.

My invitation is for you to make the time to do a proper valuation. If you already know what you are worth, re-evaluate your investment portfolio to make sure that you are investing in the right people or things, so that you can continue to yield dividends for you and those around you. It is probably easy for most

of you, but for some of us, it is easier to attach value to everything else but ourselves.

Like my 7 year old daughter once told me "I don't want brown money...it does not buy anything at the tuck shop".....knowing your worth will probably help you to believe in yourself and possibly begin to sell yourself at the right price to the right buyers.

NUGGETS

YOU

It does not matter what others think of you, it is what you think about yourself that fundamentally changes the price of your bread

FAMILY

Your family will add value to your life only if you help them see the value you want them to add

FRIENDS

Invest in genuine friendships, you have a much better chance of life time companionship and support that way

WORK

The best way to add value at work, is to become a colleague who values others and their contribution by pulling your weight.



Through Your Own Eyes



I was recently almost paralysed by the fear of seeing my own reflection through the eyes of the people around me. I could not believe that I seem to always find or rather land myself in the same situations over and over again. It was only until I recognised (after agonising and desperately trying to find ways to fit in), that what the world around me sees and in some cases has no appetite to accept, is ME - plain old ME.

With my initial disappointment with the fact that I wasn't as popular and as well liked as I had hoped I would be, I had to quickly accept that I valued being true to myself more and decided that the risk of being original and different was worth my while. It took me long time to figure it out, but I now appreciate that in life, you will have to stand for something or fall for nothing – if you have no special cause like Nelson Mandela or Mother Teresa, the least you and I can do is to stand up for ourselves. Yes, by deciding to love yourself enough to look at your life through your own eyes.

You may have been bullied at school for being odd or worked with colleagues who really think nothing of you because perhaps you don't know your place or don't conform to the workplace norms or have family members who think you are something I don't have the courage to put on paper – I don't know about you, but I am now in my forties and the majority of those people are a very distant memory because they were my season and not my lifetime, and generally passerbys who were serving their own interests with no consideration of my being, dreams or what I value the most - ME.

The difficult conversation I guess is to ask yourself whose eyes do you believe are worth using to define your existence - yours or theirs. My contention is that the other people will fall by the way side at some point and all you will have left, is yourself and the people who genuinely care about you and love you for who you are. I am not advocating for arrogance or a self centered approach or for anyone not to take into account how you are perceived because that is important. My perspective is simply, be considerate and respectful and get along with people, but not at your expense because half the people you are trying to please and half the people you are trying to annoy, will not be around long enough to make a difference in the big scheme of things...but you will be with YOU for a lifetime.

NUGGETS

YOU

Always look at yourself from a point of gratitude – grateful for your life and your uniqueness

FAMILY

Your family are passengers in the same train of life, but that doesn't mean you all have to fight to alight at the same destination

FRIENDS

As TD Jakes puts it...'Be with people who are with you and for you'

WORK

If you focus on delivering on your work to the best of the ability, your work will develop its own voice and begin to speak for itself



Strength in Weakness



My biggest fear has always been coming face to face with my weaknesses. In fact, after listening to a 1000 voices of reason on working on weaknesses, I had come to a sober conclusion that it was pointless to work on them, at least given the scale of mine. My theory on this is fairly simple; know my weaknesses, understand them and accept them so that I can manage them from overshadowing my strengths.

This is until recently, where I got to appreciate that my weaknesses are in a warped way, the best clues in understanding and accepting who I am and what I am truly capable of; good or bad. The vulnerability brought about by weaknesses and the complete loss of one's personal compass, can teach you a lot about absolute honesty – the honesty to be who you are in the worst possible way. And therein lies the strength – you do or say things society doesn't expect of you but in reality, are at best, you being true to your feelings, wishes with no judgement. While, I certainly don't encourage reckless behaviour and believe restraint is important, it might just be useful from time to time to allow your weaknesses to show up and manifest so you can confront your own truths – and become absolutely vulnerable (which is one of the best gifts you can ever give yourself) and completely honest (wrong or right is another story). I have learnt through my weaknesses; my extremes, my thresholds, my manic tendencies and breaking points, which if harnessed properly could help me push my true limits in my areas of strength.

I have done in moments of complete weakness, things I have never thought I was capable of. Imagine if I knew how to use that ability (things that I never thought I was not capable of) to make my lot better....and it is at that point that weaknesses are the strengths...

NUGGETS

YOU

Learn to love your imperfections.

FAMILY

Your family does not need your support more than the need to feel your unconditional love.

FRIENDS

Friends are like old books, sometimes they need to be left in the library of friendship with the knowledge that you will find them whenever you need them.

WORK

Sometimes it is not the environment, but some of the people in it who don't deserve you. Learn to leave the people (if not physically, emotionally and spiritually) and keep your environment and a difference.



Outsourcing Your Emotions



I recently lost it in a supermarket (all over the show and township type drama). At the time, I was provoked and the guy deserved it for abusing me the way he did, I had convinced myself. But as I sat in the car, I reeled at how at the drop of the hat, I didn't hesitate to outsource my emotions to a total stranger – a guy I didn't know, let alone care about. In pure shame, I could not believe how easy it was for me to abdicate my responsibility to be mature or kind to people, just so I can be right. I had to accept as I sat in the dimly lit parking lot, that I had surrendered my power to a stranger and gave him the permission to reduce me to an unredeemable idiot in full view of people who until that moment, had afforded me some sort of respect – they gave me and my sanity a benefit of doubt on the good side of the thumbs up.

As I shared my disappointment with my friends, I was stunned to learn that this was more common than I had imagined. In almost every situation, we are quick to outsource our emotions because 'they provoked me' or 'I am not gonna let anyone step all over me'...the explanations are justified and as plentiful as sand on the beach. But is it worth it? Everything is justifiable, but as we grow older and know better, we simply cannot afford to put an 'emotions for rent' sign on our foreheads. Besides it being simply 'low class' to throw tantrums all over the show, it neither helps the situation nor gives the satisfaction of 'sorting the person' out. Impossible! That is probably what you are thinking right now and actually unhealthy to hide your emotions – I mean when you are angry, people have to recognise that and stay out of your way! Fair enough! but is it worth the prize – annihilating the other human being like I did or making yourself feel

inadequate by acting like a 6 year old.

I am probably oversimplifying complex situations – I mean if a taxi cuts in front of you, almost bashing your German masterpiece, you gotta tell that ‘boy from Nqutu’ off or if your helper gives you grief, the ‘farm Julia’ needs to be put in her place’ or if at work your colleagues give you grief, ‘they will never do it again once you are done with them’. In all of these situations, smart people put their emotions on a platter and outsource them to complete strangers or people who are inconsequential in the big scheme of things – people who won’t lose sleep over you after your drama because you don’t matter as much as you think you do to them. So next time you get tempted to outsource your emotions, think again, you are worth a whole lot more than a messy scene in a show you are not really a cast member of....

NUGGETS

YOU

Always look at yourself from a point of gratitude – grateful for your life and your uniqueness

FAMILY

Your family are passengers in the same train of life, but that doesn’t mean you all have to fight to alight at the same destination

FRIENDS

As TD Jakes puts it...‘Be with people who are with you and for you’

WORK

If you focus on delivering on your work to the best of the ability, your work will develop its own voice and begin to speak for itself



When Your World Caves In



At some or other point in our lives, we will have to deal with a moment that is so traumatic, so unexpected, worse than death that we will experience what feels like our world caving in... literally and of course, emotionally and spiritually. At that point, what would have happened would be beyond our worst nightmare and if we had to sit and imagine all the worst things that could have happened to us, it would not even make number 1000 on our list.

Shocked and confused, we look to the universe for answers and find none but an acceleration of events that strip us of our being at all levels. At that point 'why me?' partners with a sea of tears and pain that carves deliberate slices out of heart. We float forth at period interchangeably between anger and fear. Please indulge me as I share how my world caved in but with support, acceptance, prayer and love, I now know that anything and everything can be rebuilt. A couple of years ago, I found myself in an untenable situation—I slept as a beautiful, kind woman and woke up to find out that I had won uncontested the title of 'Witch of the Year'. While it initially started out funny, as it unfolded and grew its own wings, I realized that I was socially and emotionally in trouble. Of all the things I had prepared to deal with; this was never part of the curriculum of my life. After all, I was well brought up, adequately educated and socially appropriate. I felt tested at a scale that was beyond measure because things like that don't happen to people like me. Well, now that it is all behind me, I want to confirm that at some point, your world will cave in.

It has to happen so you can understand that the world is bigger than you and will help you learn what it means to genuinely tap into the Higher Power and directly receive what I call 'Fax from the Higher Power'. For the religious, this is when your belief has to go beyond the Joyous Celebration music and the charismatic pastors who refill you spiritually every Sunday. This is an episode that will get you to recognize the voice and the hand of the Higher Power for what it is and not what you want it to be. At that point, you learn to surrender to the universe and live each day as if it is your last because you had a sneak preview of your last day or at least wished you were dead rather than deal with a world that, without notice, stopped making sense. And when your day comes...I wish you a 'why not me?' moment because you will be able to rebuild your world and finally get your 'I am beautiful, worthy and much stronger than I look and feel' T-shirt.

NUGGETS

YOU

The strength to deal with any and all seasons of your life lies within

FAMILY

Teach your family how to support you so they can serve you well in your hour of need

FRIENDS

Friends should allow you to drench them with tears or talk to them without fear or judgement about your fears.

WORK

Resist the temptation to be the catalyst of chaos in your workplace



A Product of Support



I often wonder why some people are more successful than others. While hard work is an obvious starting point, the 'hidden' recipe must be support – I believe supportive family, friends and colleagues are the magic behind a lot of people whose lives are on track.

So do you have support? and if yes, what kind of support do you have? Do you have the kind of support that is not afraid to tell you when you are being an idiot - the kind that doesn't care whether you will retrench it or not, because it has such a high level of integrity that it cares about who you are, what you want and what you stand for or should stand for. If you have this kind of support, then you are truly on your way. If you don't, it is time to start interviewing for a group of people who love you enough to give you NO when you need it, to encourage you when you are down and cheer you on when you are making it. They should be the kind that will be a compass that leads you to the best version of yourself. All of this is necessary because we are all a product of the support that we have around us.

It is almost half way through the year, and perhaps time to either fix your current support or reaffirm it for helping you become that you are.



NUGGETS

YOU

Are you committed enough to your own happiness?

FAMILY

Being part of your family means doing things that are not always about you and for you, but about the collective.

FRIENDS

Be aware enough to know when your role has been written out of a friend's script.

WORK

Recognition is the consequence of work and not the reason why you work.



The Polka Dot Existence



I don't particularly like the polka dot fabric and as a result, anything made out of it. The last time I owned a polka dot dress, was in my days of "Christmas clothes" and I vowed never to make my way in that direction from the day I could afford to pay for my own clothes.

After along lecture from an aunt who could not understand my bad relationship with fabrics and colour, I parked at the library (yes, I know about Google but I love the smell of books!) to find out the story behind the fabrics and got fascinated by the history of the polka dot fabric. There are many theories, predominantly; the Bohemian and Czech dance called the polka and secondly, back to the fabric, by the 1800s, a fabric with dots in various colours that had become a trend. Whatever the story is, life is a lot like the polka dot fabric—a solid colour with lot of dots in shapes that are proportioned to the reality of the owner. At this time of the year, we tend to have a conclusive approach to life, reflecting on who we are or should be, and where we are or should be. Not a lot of us understand that our lives are based on a solid foundation—good values, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes.... BUT we all have dots that symbolize all the not so good things that are part of who we are. The dots represent the things we have done that we are not proud of, but have shaped us consciously or subconsciously. The challenge is how we respond to the polka dot in our lives. Some of us beat ourselves up so much about the dots (failures, errors in judgment, etc) that we don't get to see the enhancements added by the dots on to our plain existence.

And if you considered the polka as a dance, that should take your view of your life to another level. If life is a dance, it means you will generally waltz or samba across the floor of your life flawlessly, but sometimes will have your feet stepped on, your heel might break, you might fall and worst of all, you will at any point you decide to take a break from dancing, be fatigued and drenched in sweat. The dance is beautiful but some of the after effects are the dots that are uncomfortable and sometimes, discourage some of us from pursuing our dance with vigor—we stop after the first break because it is hard to face up after the embarrassing fall or get up from a tiring dance with partners, family, colleagues, and friends.

What ever your perspective, my wish for you is to consider a polka dot existence—bold with well positioned dots that have the potential to shape the journey of your life into something beautiful and an acceptance that you need dots in your life!

NUGGETS

YOU

Muster the courage to face up to your flaws and embrace them

FAMILY

Resolve to give your family the space to be themselves

FRIENDS

The difference between a friend and an acquaintance is imperfection

WORK

The challenge for anyone in any workplace is to navigate relationships and situations authentically



The Magic of 40



We never stop learning, by choice or by coincidence. My biggest learning this month, is that we all have to walk our '40 days or years in the wilderness' before we can truly mature into our true selves. Now, this is not about the number of years, but about the fact that we all are given a choice by the Higher Power to walk a journey of our own design and desire. While there is nothing wrong or right about walking this type of journey, the reality for most of us is that, an own choice journey that primarily serves us leaving little room for anyone or anything else has a defined destination – a natural conclusion. Those who walk it longer than the '40 years' are probably circling around like a plane waiting for a space to land.

The beauty is that at the end of this life detour, we have the opportunity to 'come out of the wilderness' and step into our own light. How does this manifest in real life? It is that passion you know you are supposed to make into a career but has been lost in the wilderness of jobs and bills that you have deferred; it is that relationship you know you have to pursue but have been stuck in the socially acceptable relationship that you can't come unstuck and follow your heart.

The principle is that you have to put in your 40, be it seconds, hours, days, months or years. This you cannot circumvent or change, hence you have to work for 40 hours a week at least to make an impact. The trick is to know that you have to put in the full 40 to make it out of the wilderness and the idea is that you must know you have to spend the time, have an exit strategy because

sometimes an oasis in the wilderness looks like a paradise for the thirsty. Coming out of the wilderness perhaps means, giving yourself the permission to be where you are supposed to be because you are done being someone else, doing something else and being somewhere else.... Take the opportunity to stop wandering....take the first step of our your wilderness.....after you do your 40!



INSPIRED

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