

SEIZE YOUR LIFE



# SEIZE YOUR LIFE

HOW TO CARPE DIEM EVERY DAY

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# Introduction

During the summer of 2015, I made a new friend named Ms. Bea, who I met at a hotel in Ixatapa, Mexico. She was confidently speaking fluent Spanish to other guests, unabashedly animated, and she was wearing a stunning, bright coral blouse. Not soon after I noticed her confidence, she sauntered over and asked me about myself. The conversation we had changed my life.

At ninety-eight, she was a retired scientist who worked until she was eighty at the New York Academy of Sciences. An avid traveller, she had chased solar eclipses throughout the years, explored rivers and railways across the world, and spent her summers studying at Oxford University. She'd visited every continent, and more than eighty-five countries. I was in awe of her willingness to travel alone. Her two children and husband had all preceded her in death. Her daughter's death was more recent, and she shared with me how, at the age of ninety-three, losing her sixty-five-year-old child had been

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especially difficult, but she had still chosen to keep going, to continue living. The more we chatted, the more inspired I became by her passion and zeal for her life. With her one-hundredth birthday not too far away, not only does she have her next trip planned, she has her next several trips planned. “Live your life on your terms,” she said to me at the end of our first conversation. We’ve since had many more.

*Not only be present but embrace each moment—  
even the tough ones—with intention.*

Ms. Bea is an example of someone who has decided to seize her life. To not only be present but to embrace each moment—even the tough ones—with intention. We are often so consumed with planning our lives that we often forget to live our lives. And let’s face it, many of us complicate our lives with procrastination, hesitation, and fear. I believe that Carpe Diem-ing, or Seizing the Day begins with the decision to seize the moment. How do we do that? We miss an infinite number of moments that simply slide by each day. Ever notice how quickly moments become days, days become years, and years become decades? We have a choice, at any time, to recognize the distinctness of our moments—even the dull ones.

*In every moment, there is a possibility.*



## INTRODUCTION

Most people think Carpe Diem is about grandiose experiences, buying expensive toys or taking fabulous vacations. It isn't. To seize your life means deciding to live in the present, and to make the most of every day. After all, tomorrow is not promised. Your adventure is happening right in front of you. When you live Carpe Diem, you stand firmly in the adventure of today, while remaining empowered for the divine fortune you know awaits you tomorrow.

This book will share my principles on how to expect, attract, and receive all that life yearns to offer you. That's right. A Carpe Diem mindset doesn't believe in earned blessings that are beyond your reach if you aren't perfect, or if you've suffered severely in your past. A Carpe Diem mindset accepts that the Universe is seeking, longing for, and designing your best. You cannot carry fear or regret in your heart, and also seize abundance. Missed opportunities and mediocrity are only a few hurdles standing between you and the gift of Carpe Diem. By the end of this book, I believe that you'll not only be ready to live authentically, but to seize all that your heart desires.



# I

## BELIEVE, TRUST, AND HAVE FAITH

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*You get in life what you have the courage to ask for. –Oprah Winfrey*

Oprah, my self-proclaimed aunt, is someone I've always wanted to meet. I admire her tenacity, and, growing up, I watched her show every day. Once I declared that I would meet Oprah, I journaled what I might ask her, not *if*, but *when*, I met her. I believed that one day my dream would come true. In 2002, I visited the Oprah show for the first time, and was one of those fans who hung on the railing to

shake her hand as she made her way to the stage. I'll never forget it because it was a show where Oprah was raising money for nonprofits. The show was powerful, and it left the audience in tears, and me more inspired than ever. I knew in my heart that I would see her again someday.

Ten years later, after I was laid off from a corporate sales job, I found myself in a state of uncertainty, but I was ready to create the next chapter of my life. On a whim, after connecting with Oprah on social media, and admiring her from afar, I requested tickets for one of her Lifeclass shows. I thought I was dreaming when at the close of the show, Oprah asked, "Where's Carpe Diem? Where's Jasmine?" I nearly fell out of my chair. Was Oprah referring to me? I raised my arms and frantically screamed, "I'm here!" and Oprah responded, "I'll see you backstage."

"Did Oprah just invite me backstage?" *Yes, she did.* I had an instant sense that the Universe had gifted me an opportunity to know without a doubt that my intention was heard. I met Oprah backstage a few minutes later. We embraced as if we were friends who hadn't seen each other in ages. This moment was not only a dream, but a *want* come true. I was nervous, but I had always known this moment would come, that I would be speaking to Oprah one-on-one.

Two months after that meeting with Oprah, I had the opportunity to meet up with her for lunch. We have since connected several more times, and she recently gifted me a copy of her book, *What I Know for Sure*, with this

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inscription: *Jasmine, carpe diem indeed. Blessings in your life. Thank you for your unwavering support and being a carrier of the light.* For me, my relationship with Oprah was symbolic of something deeper.

*Remember: if you want something,  
there's no harm in declaring that you want it.*

There is power in *want*. What are some of the things you would love to see happen in your life? I love the line from Paulo Coelho's, *Alchemist*, "And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." Remember: if you want something, there's no harm in declaring that you want it. In fact, the real harm is in not acknowledging what you want it in the first place. You might be asking yourself, "What if I don't get what I want?" or "I know what I want—but is it reasonable?" Without faith, an intention or desire doesn't have a chance. Your faith is not only powerful; it pours fuel into what has already been promised to you. Oprah is a remarkable soul I was destined to meet. Sure life throws us surprises. Often, however, we're the ones in our way.

*When you want something, relentlessly desire it without apology or fear,  
especially if it aligns with your purpose, and propels you forward.*

**Carpe Diem Guidelines to Believe, Trust, and Have Faith:**

- Reflect regularly on your goals, and how you can bring them to fruition?
- Connect with your inner-child—the *you* you were before pragmatism told you what was safe to want. What were those desires?
- Make a list of five specific things that you want to happen in the next thirty days. Revisit your list regularly, and also add to it. Put a checkmark next to *intentions* as they become *realities*.

## BE PREPARED

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*Ask for what you want and be prepared to get it. –Maya Angelou*

Seizing opportunities as they present themselves requires preparation. And not the intense over-thinking and obsessive planning that makes many of us feel like we are drowning. Preparation is simply being ready.

*Before your next opportunity comes knocking,  
be ready to sprint through the door with all the tools and  
resources  
at the ready to make the opportunity not only possible, but  
affirming.*

During my freshman year, out of the blue I was invited to travel to Europe with the president of my alma mater and his wife. It was an opportunity to travel the steps of John Wesley, an eighteenth-century theologian responsible for the creation of the Methodist church. Our university president happened to know that I was a practicing Methodist, and so I suddenly had a tremendous experience placed in my path. In this instance, being prepared simply meant having a passport, which I had because I knew that travel was important to me.

I've met so many people who have put traveling at the top of their bucket lists, and yet, they don't have a passport, which by the way, is a phenomenon I've observed mostly in the United States. I can tell you from experience that you never know when a cheap ticket may show up to take you to one of your dream destinations.

You've probably brushed up against a marvelous opportunity simply by being at the right place at the right time, right? Well, I don't believe moments like those happen by accident. When an extra concert ticket suddenly becomes available, you're placed in first class after purchasing a coach ticket (real story), an offer for the perfect job position falls in your lap—this is evidence of how the universe wants to offer you the best that life has to offer. However, it'll be more rewarding for you, if when an opportunity presents itself, you're already positioned to receive it. The power of *Carpe Diem* is the expectation



that good things will always come your way. Be prepared when they do.

*Time and chance happen to us all, and the key is being prepared when your time and chance comes.*

### Carpe Diem Guidelines to Be Prepared

- Ask yourself, “Am I prepared for the surprises, gifts, and opportunities that come my way?”
- Make a list of what you need to become more prepared for when your dreams come true (i.e. if you want to travel internationally, get a passport; if you want a new job, upgrade your résumé; if you have dreams of starting a business, create a business plan).
- Reflect on how well prepared you were the last time an opportunity came your way. What might you do differently next time?

## FULLY ENGAGE

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*You need to let the little things that would ordinarily bore you, suddenly thrill you. –Andy Warhol*

My mom used to tell me: whenever you do something, do it right. For some of us, “good enough” is merely getting it done. Think about it. How many times throughout your day are you juggling multiple tasks, and are so intent on completing all of them that you’re jumping from one thing to the next, and simply going through the motions? In reality, it’s not practical to be one hundred percent engrossed in everything required of us; but when I really started to think about it, I realized there

were more things I should be fully engaged with—things I simply wasn't giving ample attention. For instance, I noticed that at dinner parties, I was prone to check my smartphone for emails that I felt needed an instant response, instead of enjoying an outing with a friend. I often allowed my mind to wander, contemplating the next appointment on my calendar, and how to make it there on time. I realized that seizing my life meant releasing myself from the pressure of maximum productivity, especially if I couldn't be fully engaged while being productive.

Now, I make a point to fully engage wherever I am. If I'm at the airport, it's not unusual to board a plane with several new friends that I've made while waiting because I've decided to enjoy myself. I view conversations with strangers as a way to engage throughout my day.

*Make a point to uncover the beauty often found beneath the surface of stories  
and the details shared with you.*

### Be in the Moment at Your Job

What would it feel like to fully participate in whatever you're doing, wherever you are in your life, even if the circumstance is temporary? For example, a woman I'll call Sheila, was offered a new job as an assistant manager, and was told that she would be promoted to manager the

following year. Sheila decided that since her new position was temporary, she'd put a limit on how much she was willing to do. After all, she knew that she was management material, and her promotion was right around the corner. While she did an outstanding job performing the duties of an assistant manager—she was pleasant to work with, and she completed all the tasks asked of her—she was never quite as engaged as she could be. When invited by other assistant managers to activities outside of work, she saw it as a waste of her time. She'd planned to be an assistant manager for only a year, after all. Why should she bond with folks she wouldn't be working with permanently? Sheila fell into a common trap. By not building a relationship with those colleagues, she missed the opportunity to get the most from her present circumstance. She focused so much on her next job position, which actually took longer than a year to materialize, she missed what her current position had to offer.

*Think about it: are there opportunities in your current circumstance that you're missing because you're too focused on what's happening next?*

### Be in the Moment with Your Family and Friend

There are plenty of reasons why we don't fully engage, and

we all do it. Our relationship with technology is perhaps the biggest reason we fail to be in the moment with our family and friends. We live in an age where we are constantly connected through electronics and at times our electronic connections take priority over our human-to-human connections and prevent us from truly engaging with our friends and family. Television is no longer the only electronic vying for our attention, now we have to contend with individual pursuits like email, social media, videos games, music and the never ending pulls of work that are easily accessible and that find a way to keep us from being in the moment with our family and friends. Most American families are starved true quality time in which family members are fully engaged. I've also heard countless stories about children whose families move frequently, and how, after a while, they don't even try to make friends or connect with the community because they know they'll be moving again.

*It's normal to try to anticipate what's going to happen next,  
but seizing your life means deciding to dedicate yourself  
to where you are right now.*

Fully engaging allows us to connect and build relationships with those around and with our community. Connection to others is a primal human desire and we can't fully engage if we're constantly electronically

connected or if we're unable to enjoy our present life stance.

### Carpe Diem Guidelines to Fully Engage

- Assess the areas where you know you aren't fully engaged. Decide where you need to take action, and where you need to let it go.
- Make a point each day to focus on one of the areas where you need to take action, and fully devote your attention to that specific area (i.e., a conversation with a friend, preparing dinner, or spending time with a loved one doing his or her favorite activity).
- The next time you notice yourself becoming preoccupied with the future, stop and remind yourself of what's happening in the moment, and why you're grateful for it.

## SEEK AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

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*Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued—when they can give and receive without judgment. —Brenè Brown*

I live in Minneapolis, a city with a reputation for being challenging for transplants like myself to make long-term friendships with the natives. Many Minnesotans remain close with their childhood friends, so that they don't always put emphasis on creating new friendships. I'm not a shy person, and I personally enjoy making new friends,

but when I moved to Minneapolis, I had to put forth more effort to make connections than I had in any other city.

I learned a lot in the process. Before, I hadn't paid much attention to how I connected with people and places. Now, charged with constantly being proactive, I was really beginning to take note of how and why my interactions occurred; it was fascinating to see all the new opportunities that those intentional connections created. You can't choose your family, but you can choose your friends, and I found that if you put in genuine effort, you can choose some great ones, and they really do make the world a better place.

### Stories Bind Us

Perhaps it's because I'm an only child, an extrovert, and the daughter of "older parents," but I get a major thrill making new connections—it's definitely one of the ways I *Carpe Diem* throughout my day. But over the years, I have had to come to terms with the fact that I'm not good at remembering names. I'd cringe when someone I'd met previously would recognize me and call me by name, but I wouldn't know his. After some time, I realized that while I might not be good at remembering names, I always remembered stories.

*Stories are where you can find your connection to a person,*



*and even to a new destination.*

So whenever I would get overwhelmed with the idea of having to create new friendships or bond with a new place, I would instead, focus on going on a treasure hunt for stories. Most of my friends, I've met by way of exchanging stories. I believe that our stories truly do bind us, and that connection is born from a mutual understanding that we're all in this together. My introverted friends would find that putting in the genuine effort to create authentic connections is an essential part of their lives. They might not enjoy large parties, blind dates, or networking events, but they enjoy the spontaneity of a walk around the lake on a brisk fall evening, as well as the right opportunity to share their story over a cup of chamomile.

### How Authentic Connections Happen

Unfortunately, when trying to build relationships both personal and professional, we often miss the mark because we over-complicate the process. We think connections come from dinner invitations, coffee dates, and joint outings that either lead to yet a deeper connection or fizzle out entirely. In reality, the most authentic connections often happen in reverse. After establishing common ground (most often through sharing stories), and going deep in the beginning, the bonding over a meal or coffee

happens organically. In this scenario, we're not "courting" a friend to figure out if we want him or her in our lives. No, we're deciding at the first story swap that we share a connection so our interactions thereafter are about learning and growing together. It can be scary.

There's risk in peeling back the layers of your soul, and bearing it before strangers. We all remember the feeling of being the last kid chosen for the kickball team, or having a close friend who compromises our trust. Seizing your life is a blast when you have friends who are also seizing their lives.

- Are you surrounded by friends who know you intimately, and who call you out when you're not being authentic?
- Are you consciously surrounding yourself with people and experiences that add dimension, perspective, and insight to your life?

*The opportunity for authentic connections in your life lies in your willingness*

*to be vulnerable, and to openly share your experiences—  
even the ones you hold close to the chest.*

*Within friendships lies one of life's ultimate gifts.*

## Carpe Diem Guidelines to Seek Authentic Connections

- Contemplate whether you over-complicate the process of making new connections.
- Make the commitment to offer a personal story in your first conversation with a new connection.
- Pick one day a month to follow up with existing important connections in your life.
- Visit one place that you haven't yet seen in your city or town. Journal the experience and reflect on what you loved most about it.

## ALLOW FOR FLEXIBILITY AND EMBRACE CHANGE

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*The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance. —Alan W. Watts*

Plans change, people change, expectations change, and routines change, and often, our pain comes from our inability to be flexible through change. This can be very difficult, since change is the only certainty in the world today, and the frequency with which things change increases daily. It seems that the more things change, the more we're tempted to keep things the same—the

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familiarity of our comfort zones is a tough animal to fight. And yet, truly seizing your life requires openness and more: rolling with the punches to get the most life has to offer. Have you ever noticed how you can't get to the next exhilarating chapter of your life without letting go of the current one.

*To truly seize your life, you must be open to rolling with the punches;  
that's how you get the most that life has to offer.*

My mother modeled the importance of allowing for flexibility and embracing change. Growing up, it was my responsibility to write our annual friends and family letter, and I often found myself writing, "My mom has reinvented herself again, and is now doing something entirely different." Throughout my childhood, my mom enjoyed careers as a flight attendant, a real estate agent, public school teacher, business consultant, and, most recently, an entrepreneur. Her ability to reinvent herself professionally through the years, due to corporate restructuring, as well as the evolution of her interests or our family's needs, taught me to embrace change.

*Being flexible and comfortable with change provides peace  
in the present moment.*

Just like I know that it's uncomfortable to throw caution to the wind; that's why we start with the little things. Add

intentional routine-changing practices to your every day. Instead of driving to work the same way, take another route. Instead of leaning on your comfortable evening activities, shake things up on purpose. Order something different from your favorite restaurant next time. Resist the urge to settle into a “norm” that doesn’t challenge, stimulate, or demand your joy day to day.

*Try this: Add intentional routine-changing practices to your every day*

### Carpe Diem Guidelines to Allow for Flexibility and Embrace Change

- Ask yourself, “Is flexibility tough for me? And if so, why?”
- Do one thing this week that is completely outside of your routine.
- Journal a recent instance when being flexible positively impacted an outcome, even though it felt uncomfortable.