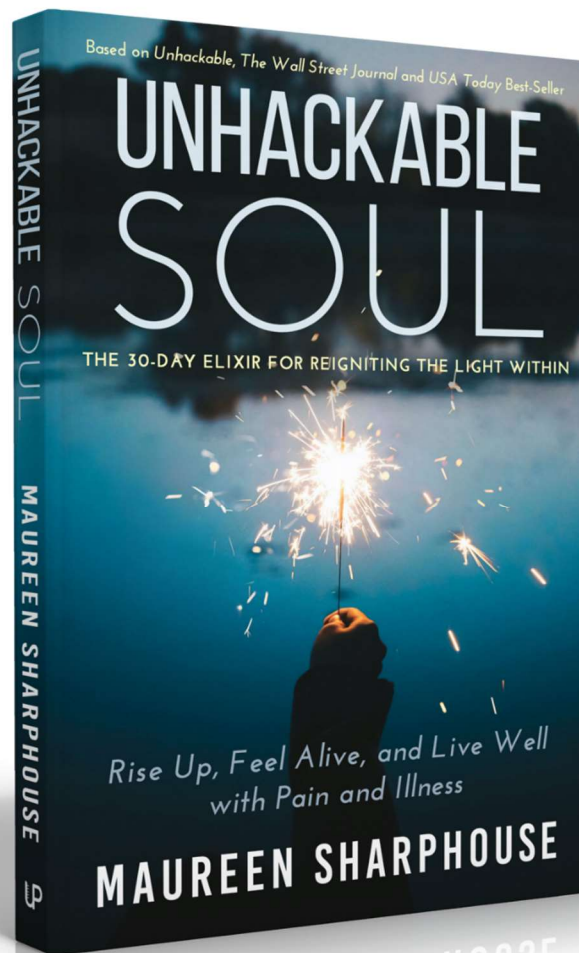


Unhackable Soul

A Sneak Peek!



Unhackable Soul

Rise Up, Feel Alive, and Live Well
with Pain and Illness

The 30-Day Elixir for Reigniting the Light Within

Maureen Sharphouse



Hello there. I'm Maureen Sharphouse. I am glad my book Unhackable Soul has found you. I invite you to have a sneaky peek!

Here is one of the Introductory Chapters—and a “little taster” of the first three days of the 30-day elixir to reignite the light within.

If you would like to find out more about the Unhackable Soul journey (and go even deeper and explore my Unhackable Soul Online Course), then make sure to pop by the Unhackable Soul page on my website, where you can find out what others have to say about my book, purchase a copy via Amazon or a personally signed gift-wrapped copy of my book directly from myself, and explore what the Unhackable Soul Online Course offers.

Are you ready to have a little preview of the 30-day journey to become Unhackable? Then let us begin!

Please note that the following text contains extracts from my book Unhackable Soul and is copyrighted material. All rights reserved.

The Day It Began

Recognising that you are not where you want to be is a starting point to begin
changing your life.

—Deborah Day

The morning of Wednesday, 27 November 2002 started much like any other day. Mike, my husband at that time, and our children shouted goodbye as they flew out the door for work and university. My care assistant Irene popped in briefly to help bathe and dress me and settle me in my usual chair in the front room next to the fireplace. She placed a cup of hot milky tea on the small table beside me. Looking through the window, I could see the day was still dark, although it was already after nine. It felt as though there had been no sun for years.

I picked up the television remote and flicked through the channels, but I had no appetite that morning for hearing about family breakdowns or watching home makeovers. Switching on the radio, a familiar song filled the room, ‘Though it’s darker than December, what’s ahead is a different colour.’ The hopeful words of the song *High* by Lighthouse Family had come to mean so much to me since I had become too ill to work some five years earlier. Usually, the song lifted my spirits, but that day, I shouted, ‘You’re lying! What’s ahead isn’t a different colour. For me, it’s all the same.’

I looked around the room at the wheelchair by the door, the Zimmer walking frame next to me, and the boxes of painkillers on the coffee table. The small carriage clock on the mantelpiece chimed. It was 9:30 a.m., and it would be another nine or ten hours before any of my family would return home for a quick bite to eat and then likely head back out to meet friends for the evening. Loneliness and pain were my life, and I knew it might remain that way for the next thirty or forty years.

That morning, the horrible realisation hit me as if for the first time.

I saw my life spread out in front of me, day after day—hundreds and thousands of days of sitting there, waiting for my mother to visit and take me out in my wheelchair, waiting for carers to help me get bathed and dressed. . . .

Nothing would be different.

It would be the same for years to come.

With my whole body, I cried out, ‘*No!*’

No to the doctors, *no* to the hospitals, *no* to the carers, *no* to the pain, *no* to the financial worries—*no* to everything.

I was only forty-six years old. I felt I had not yet lived.

That moment, I saw myself clearly. Although I was breathing and my heart beat steadily within me, my soul and spirit had been hacked—something had gained unauthorized access to my life. Despite being physically alive, I felt dead.

The harsh realisation that I had lost all passion and joy was my catalyst for taking ownership of my life and redirecting the story I was living. In that standout moment, I committed to doing all I could to crack the darkness open and let the light of a better future start to stream back in. For five years, I had retreated deeper and deeper into the darkness of pain, loneliness, and despair. But that was not how I wanted to live. I wanted to rise up, feel alive, and live well despite my pain and illness. I wanted to reignite the light within me.

You must do the same.

Retreat or Rise: Your Time Is Now

You have a choice. Will you retreat to the side-lines of life and let your pain and illness dictate your quality of life? If you have had enough of living a life that does not feel as purposeful and rewarding as you would like, I encourage you to rise and thrive from within your circumstances.

You and I are ever-evolving souls. At any point, we can choose to say, ‘Enough is enough; I am sick and tired of being sick and tired all the time. A life controlled by pain and illness is not how my story is going to end.’

That dark morning in my front room, I made the choice to rise. Today, although I still live with chronic pain, my soul, spirit, and mind are strong and vibrant. And as a result, my life is wholly different—it is much brighter and happier and no longer marked by feelings of numbness and isolation.

Are you ready to rise? Do you long to reignite fire in your soul and live a life fuelled by enthusiasm and purpose rather than dictated by pain?

I believe you can, and I am excited to come alongside you on this journey.

Let us begin. . . .

PART ONE UNVEILING

The Earth school is one of the most difficult in the Universe: only the bravest
souls sign up.

—Dolores Cannon

DAY 1 FACE YOUR STORY



Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until
it is faced.

—James Baldwin



Face

1. to confront and deal with or accept a difficult or unpleasant task, fact, or situation
2. to acknowledge and accept (facts, truth, etc.)
3. to accept the reality that a bad situation exists and try to deal with it

—Definitions sourced from 1) Lexico Dictionaries,
2) YourDictionary, and
3) Macmillan Dictionary.

In a Nutshell: To face is to realise and be ready to meet your circumstances, truth, and facts.

On the night of that pivotal day when I screamed ‘enough is enough’ to the life I was living, I went to bed feeling strong and powerful. A sense of excitement and purpose overcame me as I envisaged the possibility of a brighter future.

The next morning, I awoke feeling numb and weak once again. As I’d slept, my excitement had diminished along with my inner strength to fight for a more meaningful and joyful life. In truth, I felt stupid for having even considered change possible. I shuffled to the mirror where a hollow-eyed figure stared back at me. What on earth had I been thinking? I felt weak and childish and questioned my judgment, thinking that all that hope and enthusiasm were probably the result of overmedication. *How could I possibly have imagined anything other than a bleak future?*

I sat for a while, transfixed by the image in the mirror—and I felt horrified and uneasy. I hated *me* and what had become of me. I despised the downward spiral that had become my life. Seeing that pitiful figure staring back at me from the mirror was the sharp shake-up I needed. I saw that my happiness was *my* responsibility—it came down to no one else. If I was serious

about crafting change in my life, I knew I had to *start somewhere*. So, I rummaged around in the drawer in my dressing table, found some lip gloss, and for the first time in a long time, I put some on.

The simple act of putting on lip gloss may seem insignificant, but today, almost twenty years later, that moment stands out as a major turning point in my life. I realised that facing the reality of my circumstances and igniting a desire for a better life was never going to be enough on its own.

If I didn't take some positive action, my desire would remain only a wish and a dream. And what I have come to know is that even the smallest steps, when taken consistently, add up in time.

One Small Step

If you are not happy with the life you are currently living but do nothing to change it, you will only experience more of the same. Doing nothing while waiting on a golden day to miraculously transform your quality of life will leave you dwelling in your discomfort for an exceedingly long time.

You must *choose* to bring more heartfelt joy into your life and *take responsibility* for being the change you want to see in your world. Clinging to the darkness in your pain may inspire empathy, care, help, or support from others, but it will not encourage fresh opportunities for thinking anew about your circumstances—nor will it manifest a better life.

You *deserve* to be happy and experience success and joy in your life, irrespective of the pain or illness that accompanies you on life's journey. Dwelling in your discomfort and being the victim of it will never lead to your healing—in whatever form your physical, emotional, or psychological healing may come.

While it is important to work alongside doctors and medical professionals who understand your health condition, it is essential to recognise that medicine has its limitations. Surgeries, therapies, and prescription drugs can be helpful (and in some instances are vital to your well-being and survival), but medicine alone can never provide the complete answer to living well inside as well as out.

Know you are allowed to scream, grieve, or cry at times; you are allowed to shout and temporarily drop to your knees in despair. But you must not give up on life and especially not give up on *you*!

The path you must choose to walk may feel rough at times, however, you cannot wait for a day to feel ‘better.’ Don’t wait for your mood to seemingly improve before you decide to say *enough is enough* and start crafting meaningful and positive change in your life.

Sitting back and doing nothing is not going to make for a better today, better tomorrow, better next week, or better next year.

Today is Day 1 of your elixir, and it’s time to face your story the same way I did. Keep change simple and take small steps. Start by acknowledging current circumstances and who you are within those circumstances. This is the beginning of your story.

Keeping Things Simple: Do nothing now, nothing much changes. Crafting a brighter future comes down to you.

Rise: Face Your Story

When we deny the story, it defines us. When we own the story, we can write a
brave new ending.

—Brené Brown

Positive change isn't created by ignoring or denying what is happening; it comes from being honest with yourself. Your first *Rise* assignment is to get real by facing the truth of who you are right now and how you live your life. Use this book as your safe place to take notes, make admissions, and identify how you want your life to change. Be open and honest with yourself.

Review the following questions and circle the answer that is most appropriate to you at this present time:

How often do I feel enthusiastic about my day when I wake up in the morning?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

How often do pain and illness dictate my day?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

How often do I allow myself to have fun and hear myself laughing?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

How often do I have a sense of fulfilment and contentment at the end of the day?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

How often do I feel that life is passing me by whilst everyone around me seems to be getting on and having success and fun?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

How often do I feel down about my circumstances, sad, depressed, or anxious?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

When I think about my future, how often do I envisage it as bright, exciting, meaningful, and rewarding?

Never Hardly Ever Sometimes Most of The Time Always

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), how happy do I currently feel?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Be proud. Opening your eyes to your current reality is not always easy. If your answers have left you feeling somewhat raw and vulnerable, I want you to know that is okay. After I had made my 'enough is enough' decision, I felt as though I had been catapulted naked into a swirling abyss. I had no idea what I needed to do to change my circumstances. Being clear and honest about my starting point empowered me to face my reality. The same will be true for you. Truth is the best possible place from which to craft positive change.

Congratulations! You have made a great first step! Now it's time to take your first small action.

Celebrate your honesty and courage by rewarding yourself with something that uplifts you or makes you feel good. It does not need to be big, demanding, or difficult. Remember, I put on a touch of lip gloss. Your small step can be as simple as making yourself a coffee, chatting on the phone to a friend, putting on a bright coloured shirt, listening to a piece of uplifting music, or sitting in your garden for a few minutes. When you have done that, breathe in renewed energy.

When you are ready, join me for Day 2.

DAY 2 SHED YOUR LABELS



The root of suffering is attachment.

—Buddha



Attachment

1. a personal connection or feeling of kinship
2. the physical connection by which one thing is attached to another
3. a feeling of love or strong connection to someone or something

—Definitions sourced from 1) YourDictionary,
2) Merriam-Webster, and
3) Cambridge Dictionary.

In a Nutshell: Attachment is bonding or connecting with someone or something.

If you sneak a peek inside my handbag, you will find I am still a lip-gloss girl and that I love the Clarins brand. You will also discover that I am a lady who likes quality pens and notebooks, has a bladder and bowel problem (I carry a 'Just Can't Wait' card from the Bladder and Bowel Community), and has a disability or health condition (I carry a medical alert card with information about my illness, the medication I take, and emergency contact details for my next of kin). Until you truly get to know me, chances are these things would label and shape the picture of the person you think I am.

While all these things are *part* of my life, none of them *are* me. And they are not the only labels that are or have been associated with my name. I have worn numerous descriptive labels throughout the years. Some have reflected my personality traits, my hobbies and interests, family roles, work, and job titles. In relation to health issues, the labels are varied, lengthy, and make for complex reading. Some labels have led me to withdraw into my shell, and at the other extreme, some have propelled me to take such bold action I have surprised myself.

You, too, have acquired specific labels. We all do.

Society uses labels every day to describe our ethnicity, religion, race, creed, colour, sex, and sexuality. Some labels identify health conditions or appearance, some come with job or family roles or titles, and others we consciously or inadvertently give ourselves.

We don't have to allow ourselves to be defined by the labels imposed on us.

We get to define ourselves.

—Lizzie Velasquez

Your Labels May Be Different from Mine

Your labels may be quite different from mine; you may have different health conditions, physical challenges, or disabilities. People may see you as brave or frail, a born worrier, overweight or too thin. Maybe you are known as a health-food guru, a movie buff, an extrovert, or an introvert. The problem is not with the labels or titles themselves but with how we choose to interpret them and the burden any preconceived expectations, prognoses, or judgments these specific labels carry. It is all too easy to attach to our labels and start thinking, behaving, and acting in stereotypical ways.

Let me tell you about the day I was clinically diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) and the impact that specific label had on my life.

It was a bleak autumn day in 1998, and I had received a phone message asking me to come in and see my general practitioner (GP) after his typical consulting hours to receive the results of some tests I'd had done a couple of weeks earlier. It was a wild and windy day, and I did not feel like going anywhere—but the health centre receptionist insisted.

When I arrived at the health centre, I sat alone in the empty waiting room for what seemed like a lifetime before I heard my doctor's footsteps approaching. Without directly looking at me, he called me by name and beckoned with a wave of his hand.

He was usually a chatty man, and I had always got on well with him. But that afternoon, he didn't speak as we made our way to his consulting room at the far end of the long narrowing corridor. The uneasy silence made me apprehensive of what was to come.

Once in his room, he invited me to take a seat, took a letter from his desk, and handed it to me. Then, saying he would come back in five minutes, he left me alone to read it. At the top of the letter, I saw my name and beside it in bold black type the words **Clinical Diagnosis Multiple Sclerosis**. Underneath there was a list of medications to be prescribed for me; 'these may be helpful as Maureen's symptoms progress.'

The letter said my recent MRI scan had been straightforward, but there had been neurological findings on my physical examination. Therefore, considering my ‘prior and ongoing neurological medical history,’ the specialist’s opinion was that I had multiple sclerosis.

When my doctor returned, he asked me if my home had stairs. I told him it did, to which he responded, ‘You’ll need a bungalow with wide door frames. Most people with MS end up in a wheelchair within five years.’

He rummaged around in a drawer for a piece of paper. Finding one, he jotted down some figures and handed me the paper saying, ‘If you need to get a house built or adapted, that’s how wide the door frames need to be.’

I felt gutted, and at the same time, I felt a sense of déjà vu. Since I’d been told twelve years earlier that MS was a genuine possibility for me, the confirmation of the illness seemed inevitable. I had experienced debilitating fatigue and ongoing neurological symptoms for years after contracting a severe infection while on holiday in Mexico. My diagnosis was something I already felt prepared for and ready to handle. All the same, a massive wave of sadness washed over me as I thought of the life I was to lose.

My GP went on to tell me it was best I ‘accept’ my condition. There was no known cure for MS, and the most likely outcome would be that my illness would progress. I remember being asked several times if I understood the seriousness of his words and the impact on my future.

I said yes at the time (I guess it was what the doctor wanted to hear), and for the most part, I managed to keep my emotions together while in his consulting room. Ten minutes later, however, I could not help but notice how much heavier the health centre door felt as I left the building.

When I stepped outside, the cold air sliced through my body. I pulled my coat and scarf around me, desperately seeking comfort, and at a snail’s pace, I painfully shuffled my way back to my car.

I was not thinking anything.

I was not doing.

A surreal numbness took over.

I struggled to find my car keys, and by the time I finally managed to get my car door open, I slumped into the driver’s seat exhausted—as though someone had sucked the life out of me.

Instinctively, I switched on the radio and turned it up to full volume, as if the music might stop me from having to think or feel.

It was late in the day, so there were no other cars or people around me. I sat there and sat there with the music playing loudly. I was not ready to go home or face the questions that would surely come from my family. I wondered whether this might all be a bad dream.

Eventually, I uncrumpled the scrap of paper my doctor had given me, still clutched in my hand. Through a blurry haze, I read the door frame measurements that would be required to facilitate wheelchair access. In that instant, my mental picture of my future changed. I saw a life of progressive weakness and disability—a life confined by a wheelchair and defined by pain.

Images appeared one by one in conjunction with the MS label I had been given: I saw myself as an old lady living in a bungalow relying on carers to bathe and dress me. I saw myself hobbling around on a stick and Zimmer frame and a wheelchair in my hall. I saw my mother and family having to look after me. I saw my frailty, ill health, and weakness. The pictures were real—and they were lifelike. I felt I was already in them. That was the moment the tears broke free. I sat alone in my car and cried for the future that lay ahead, for my family, and for the life I had not lived.

Fast forward a couple of years from that day, and I was precisely where I had predicted. I was registered ‘disabled’ and living in a bungalow with wide, wheelchair-access doorframes. The government had awarded me disability benefits for life as doctors did not expect my health to improve. I had a Motability car and a disabled parking badge.

I used a wheelchair to get around and relied heavily on carers. I spent most of my days within the four walls of my front room spaced out on a concoction of potent muscle relaxants and opioid drugs. Toileting issues had resulted in bowel surgery and a permanent stoma. Nurses had taught me how to catheterise my bladder and irrigate my bowels.

All conversations seemed to revolve around my illness. Friends and colleagues had disappeared from my life. I rarely saw anyone apart from my close family, carers, and medical professionals. It is amazing how quickly others started referring to me in conversation as ‘Maureen, the lady with MS.’

That MS label stayed strongly attached to my name for the next fifteen years or so. And yet, today my doctors no longer use it. Medical opinions have evolved over time, and the MS label (previously seen as valid and applicable to me) has been unpeeled and replaced by several alternative health condition diagnoses. These diagnoses include degenerative disc disease and

arthritis, bi-lateral neurogenic thoracic outlet syndrome, and an incurable systemic neurological condition—multi-site multi-system complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS). This severe central, peripheral, sympathetic, and autonomic nervous system dysfunction has been dubbed the ‘suicide disease’ because of its intense and excruciating pain levels (rated as the most severe known level of pain on the McGill Pain Indexⁱ).

Decide Who You Are

For all the labels I have worn through the years, I have learned that I can choose what identifiers I want to accept or own. I believe that you and I become what we are by being *who we are*—not the person others think we are or expect us to be.

The great composer Beethoven wrote beautiful music despite being labelled *deaf*. A divine spark of magic and genius resides in each of us. Only when we remove the unnecessary weight of our associated labels can we release our magic to the world.

Statements beginning with the words *I am* or *I have* are some of the most powerful statements you can say to yourself, especially when you attach yourself to the identifying words or phrases that follow. Phrases such as *I am disabled* or *I have a debilitating health condition* can put undue pressure on you to feel you have to behave, communicate, or live in expected ways.

You and I are so much more than any health condition or diagnosis anyone could ever give us. The problem is the stories we tell ourselves concerning our illness shape and colour the world in which we live.

You are not the labels that either you or others have given to you. Whether you unnecessarily restrict your world or commit to do all you can to expand your world does not come down to any descriptive label that may be associated with you.

Keeping Things Simple: The colour and size of your world and how fully you choose to live your life within it are shaped, steered, and defined by you.

Rise: Shed Your Labels

I am not my hair. I am not this skin. I am the soul that lives within.

—India.Arie, “I Am Not My Hair”

It is Day 2 of your elixir and time for your next assignment. Below, list any labels (health or otherwise) that are currently associated with you and that you believe hinder the life you live.

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Once your list is complete, consider each label in turn and imagine peeling it away from the *true essence of you*. As you do so, imagine throwing each label away.

When you are done, breathe in some fresh energy and imagine dropping down deep within your body to reconnect with your soul, free of judgment and all labels. Finally, spend the next few minutes enjoying the newfound sense of freedom.

When you are ready, join me for Day 3.

DAY 3

REDIRECT YOUR THOUGHTS



Thoughts are boomerangs returning with precision to their source. Choose wisely which ones you will throw.

—Author Unknown



Thought

1. an idea or opinion produced by thinking, or occurring suddenly in the mind
2. aim-oriented flow of ideas and associations that can lead to a reality-orientated conclusion
3. a form of energy and living data that is a facet of human consciousness which can have a specific cause and effect

—Definitions sourced from 1) Lexico Dictionaries,
2) Wikipediaⁱⁱ, and
3) Definitions.net.

In A Nutshell: Thought is the action and process of thinking, which allows you to make sense of or interpret the world you experience and make predictions about that world.

Facing your current reality and shedding restricting labels has brought you to a fantastic fresh starting place. From here on in, you have two main choices: feed the darkness or nurture and nourish the light.

Often, we can stay stuck in our circumstances simply because we get our thinking wrong. When we say, ‘I am disabled. I suffer from fatigue. I am in pain and struggling,’ the only thoughts and feelings we are likely to muster will focus on being disabled, suffering fatigue, and struggling with pain. In other words, without changing our thoughts, our feelings will remain the same.

With thoughts fixated on your illness or disability, you will find it difficult to open your mind to the possibility that you can have something different or better—better overall health, better quality of life, more heartfelt joy, more passion, more purpose, deeper contentment, greater strength and courage, more feelings of living fully alive and well.

The bottom line is this: if you are feeling lost, trapped, or stuck in life, you are likely to stay there if you do not *redirect your thinking*. Otherwise, all you will generate is more of the same old, same old if you do not open your mind to potentially having and feeling something else.

To fully embrace life, you must come alive to the possibility that the perceived limitations, predicted progress of symptoms, or expected prognosis of your specific illness or health condition may not be set in stone or 100 percent accurate. There is *always* something you can do to improve the overall quality of your well-being and health. That ‘thing,’ however, may only become apparent when you steer your thinking away from focusing on your illness or the problem itself and consciously redirect your thoughts to discovering, exploring, and taking the next best steps.

With everything that has happened to you, you can either feel sorry for yourself or treat what happened as a gift. Everything is either an opportunity to grow or an obstacle to keep you from growing. You get to choose.

—Wayne Dyer

Small Tweaks Can Reap Rich Rewards

Making small tweaks to your way of thinking is not challenging to do, and the impact of your new thoughts on the quality of your life can be enormous. Rather than overcomplicate things or put undue pressure on yourself, make simple changes slowly and one at a time. Living in pain is exhausting in itself; it can leave you feeling weak and your soul depleted. Rotten hours, days, or weeks happen. Sometimes there is no escaping bad days. That is *real life*.

We are only on Day 3, and I urge you to be kind to yourself by putting no pressure on yourself and keeping things doable. No matter your health condition or the daily challenges you face, choose to let some of the joy back into your life bit by bit—the playfulness and the peace and contentment your soul is craving. The key is to let go of the picture and story you have been telling yourself (of what you thought your life could or should be like or what you expect it may be in the future) and learn to create joy in your life that is *here, real, and now*. Wasting your valuable mental power on negative or unhelpful thoughts only blocks the light from streaming in.

E + R = O

I often share with my coaching and mentoring clients the equation *Event plus Response equals Outcome*. Unfortunately, the Event part of the equation is usually set in stone and something that we cannot go back and change. *Our response to that event remains flexible*. We can choose to think about or see an event differently; we can change our attitude, perception, and response. Although living with chronic pain and illness brings many challenges, changing your perception or thoughts about your experience will change how you feel and impact your actions, your quality of life, and the outcome you'll get.

Be Willing to Start Somewhere

You *deserve* to be happy—and if you are serious about experiencing more happiness in your life, you must commit to make positive changes and start somewhere! So choose today to laugh more than you cry, to love more than you hate, and to be grateful for what you can do rather than groaning about what you cannot do. Choose not to dwell in the darkness as the angry or bitter fighter but to evolve as the wise, courageous, graceful warrior. *Whether you choose to sing in life or complain about life, that choice always comes down to you.*

Keeping Things Simple: A brighter future is only ever a better quality of thought away.

Rise: Redirect Your Thoughts

You have power over your mind—not outside events. Realise this, and you
will find strength.

—Marcus Aurelius

Minor changes to your way of thinking can significantly impact the quality of your life. Your Day 3 *Rise* assignment is simple: start becoming more aware of what you think and say. If a thought no longer serves you well or fails to bring you feel-good feelings, interrupt it, thank that thought for coming to your attention, tell it you no longer need it, and consciously choose to redirect your thoughts elsewhere.

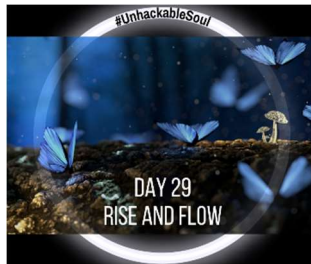


Want to know more?

**Here is a further taster of the
full Unhackable Soul journey!**







Are ready to rise up, feel alive, and live well with pain and illness?

Are you ready to start your journey and become Unhackable?

Then I invite you to visit any good bookstore, Amazon, or the Unhackable Soul book page on my website at MaureenSharphouse.com to find out more, and to purchase a copy of my book.

And when and if you are ready to go even deeper, you will find details on my website of the Unhackable Soul 30-day Online Course that I have created for you too!