

THE BRIGHT SIDE® OF CHANGE

Written by Donna Rae Smith

Reflecting for Growth

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.” Maya Angelou

Not long before I founded Bright Side, nearly everything that could go wrong in my life had. Work, marriage, my health: they were all in a ruinous state. I felt as though the universe was conspiring against me.

When you hit rock bottom, you eventually realize that you have two choices: stay there, or get up. I had done plenty of wallowing and feeling sorry for myself. I realized that something needed to give. You know the saying? *If you keep on doing what you've always done, then you'll always get what you've always got.* If my life were to change for the better, I would need to change.

Rather spontaneously I decided to start [writing my thoughts down](#) in a notebook. I had no idea what if anything it would yield. I carried the notebook with me throughout the day, and as I had time I would write in it. I made myself write each day, whether I felt like it or not.

I noticed that a few things started to happen. For one, it forced me to slow down. The process of sitting with a pen and a piece of paper and collecting my thoughts was very helpful. I had become so accustomed to the inner monologue running at full speed in my head that I didn't stop to actually listen to it. The process of thinking about what I wanted to write forced me to get out of auto pilot. Writing required me to *reflect*, something I had avoided doing until then.

Over time I also began to acquire perspective. I developed the ability to step back and see myself with more objectivity. I began to see that I was blaming everyone and everything for my situation, without accepting any responsibility. While I couldn't change what had already happened, I could control my responses to it. I could choose to replace the negativity that I was harboring with positivity, and an attitude of accountability.



Hand with Reflecting Sphere,
M.C. Escher

I'm not the only one to find benefits in keeping a journal. The list of famous journal keepers is long, and includes Ronald Reagan, [Harry Truman and Oprah Winfrey](#). In the last twenty years, various researchers have studied [its benefits](#).

Releasing the behaviors that hold us back doesn't happen overnight. For me the process took years. But it starts with a step toward awareness and recognizing the unhelpful behaviors and patterns of thinking that are holding us back.

The Experiment:

Carve out bits of time to write each day. Try it for two weeks. Write by hand, and don't censor yourself. If you haven't tried this before, accept that it may feel awkward and uncomfortable. That's ok. No one is going to read this except you! The point is to write with honesty, and to get into the habit of putting your thoughts on paper. At the end of the two week period re-read what you've written and see if any themes are beginning to emerge.

THE CONVERSATION: Share the results of your experiment in the comments below or contact the author directly at donnarae@bright-side.com.

ABOUT DONNA RAE SMITH

Donna Rae Smith is a guest blogger for Smart Business. She has forged a career, enterprise and an applied discipline on the practice of teaching leaders to be masters of change. She is the Founder and CEO of Bright Side, Inc., a transformational change catalyst company with an emphasis on the behavior-side of change. For more than two decades, Donna Rae Smith and the Bright Side team have been recognized as innovators in executing behavioral strategies coalesced with business strategies to accelerate and sustain business results. Bright Side®, The Behavioral Strategy Company, has partnered with over 250 of the world's most influential companies. For more information, please visit www.bright-side.com or contact Donna Rae at donnarae@bright-side.com.

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