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**Welcome to SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS™ — THE E-ZINE**  
**A Newsletter About Creating What Matters Most in Life & Work**  
**Bruce Elkin, Personal/Professional Coach**  
**<http://www.BruceElkin.com>**

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"What is it you plan to do with this one wild and precious life?"  
— Mary Oliver

Hi Folks,  
Greetings from not-so-sunny Saltspring Island! It looks like the fall storms have arrived early. I hope not. September and October can be beautiful, sunny months here. This is too early for winter's rains!

This issue features stories of three exceptional women in "Embracing Scars, Transcending Pain," the third of a 3-part series called YOUR ORDINARY SELF IS GOOD ENOUGH.

Please forward the intact newsletter to friends and associates. It helps me grow and ensures the viability of the newsletter. Thanks to those who do so!

If you reading this for the first time and would like to receive the newsletter regularly, please e-mail me at [belkin@saltspring.com](mailto:belkin@saltspring.com) or go to <http://www.BruceElkin.com/newsletter.html> and sign yourself up.

You can also remove yourself at anytime at the above URL.

Enjoy!  
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**1. PLEASE SEND ME FEEDBACK ON MY NEW ARTICLE**  
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My article "CHORDS OF LIFE: Creating Simple, Integrated, & Successful Lives -- In Harmony With Life Itself" is featured on The Simple Living Network's on-line newsletter. I want to shorten and revise it for further publication and I could use some feedback. To access Chords of Life, please go to  
<http://www.simpleliving.net/news/default.asp?category=Article>  
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**2. FEATURE ARTICLE: EMBRACING SCARS, TRANSCENDING PAIN**  
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"You need only to claim the events of your life to make yourself yours. When you truly possess all you have been and done ... you are fierce with reality."  
— Florida Scott-Maxwell

In Parts 1 and 2 of *Your Ordinary Self Is Good Enough*, we looked at how misplaced problem solving can lead to results that are worse than the original problem. We also saw how many people shift the burden of their difficult and challenging lives to experts and how some even get "lost in therapy."

In this concluding piece, we will look at how three remarkable women embraced their scars and then rose above the pain and circumstances of their lives to create what most mattered to them.

### PART 3: EMBRACING SCARS, TRANSCENDING PAIN

"The world breaks everyone," Ernest Hemingway observed, "but afterwards, some are strong in all the broken places."

Remember the 1973 Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of Kim Phuc? She was the naked nine-year old Vietnamese girl running toward the camera through the smoke and dust of a terrifying US bombing attack. Arms outstretched, her back ablaze with flaming napalm, her mouth stretched in an agonizing scream of pain, Kim was truly wounded. It is a miracle that she did not die. All of her family and ninety-percent of the residents of her village were killed. Yet, I recently saw Kim on CBC television's *Witness*, a strong, grown woman who tours the world, working to create peace.

One scene featured Kim and the photographer who shot the dramatic photo. They were at an exhibition of photos he had taken of her over the years. One photo, a portrait of Kim cuddling her new baby, moved me deeply.

The photo framed the back and side of Kim's bare upper body. The baby gazed lovingly into her mother's eyes. Contrasting the baby's smooth, silky-soft skin, Kim's back was a dark, knotted mass of thick, raw-looking keloid scars. They looked more like pine bark than skin. I had to force myself not to look away.

Later, Kim visited her plastic surgeon and told him the scars still hurt. "Like a needle," she said, "like a needle." The surgeon comforted her. He told her that is how scars are. "It is fully healed," he said, "but the scars are tight and they will sometimes hurt."

The most gripping scene occurred after Kim spoke to a Veteran's Day gathering in Washington, DC. "We cannot change history," she said, "but we should try to do good things for the present and the future."

She also shared her deep desire to meet and forgive the pilot who dropped the bomb that burned her. Although no one can know which B-52 pilot did so, the officer who called in that air strike was in the crowd. Captain John Plummer, retired, now a Methodist Reverend, worked his way to the ring of park police surrounding the dais and passed a message to Kim. A meeting was arranged in a room nearby.

They sat side by side on a couch — the warrior and the wounded. Kim wore a nervous smile and tugged at her skirt. Captain Plummer wiped his hands on his pant legs and knitted his damp brow into a rigid furrow. As they turned to face each other, his Adam's apple worked up and down and his chest spasmed slightly. Tears burst from his eyes as he blurted out, "I am so, so sorry." Kim smiled, took him in her arms, and told him she forgave him. Although tears rolled down her cheeks, her beatific smile lit up the room. They talked quietly for some time.

James Hillman would recognize Kim's journey into her own creativity. He would recognize her scars as the stuff of character. So did she. Rather than waste energy trying to get rid of scars and pain, she embraced them. She transcended them by working for peace. She did, I think, what the writer Florida Scott-Maxwell urges us all to do.

"You need only to claim the events of your life," she says, "to make yourself yours. When you truly possess all you have been and done... you are fierce with reality."

### Embracing Reality, Transcending the Past

Susan Swan is another wounded woman who became fierce with reality by embracing and transcending a traumatic past. Susan's story was documented on the CBC-TV program, *Man Alive*. A dark-skinned, part-Ojibway, single Mom with striking native features, she expressed a powerful sense of love for her equally striking blue-eyed, blonde-haired daughter, a child conceived when a stranger picked Susan up off Toronto's inner city streets and raped her.

Susan described how she had lost her parents. Tearfully she shared a tale of abuse at the hands of foster mothers and fathers. She denied her Ojibway heritage, ran away to the streets, did drugs, drank alcohol, became promiscuous, and was eventually raped.

As she grew into her twenties, she realized that if she did not get off welfare, get a job, and care for her daughter, she was headed for the "scrap heap of humanity." One day she heard that the police force was looking for women and natives to broaden its diversity.

"Hey!" she thought, "I am a woman. I am native. What the hell?"

She applied, took the recruitment tests, but did not hold much hope that she would be selected. Her personal and cultural history had taught her not to hope. Then, one morning she answered her phone and was shocked to hear the person on the other end ask, "Hi! Is this Constable Susan?" It was her new commanding officer.

Now Susan works the mean Toronto streets with teen girls that she affectionately calls "little Miss Cool's." She has a way with these girl/women who, as she did at their age, seek solace, community, and ersatz love in the company of those like themselves who are running from their demons.

Susan's scars are psychic scars, soul scars. However, she too embraced and transcended her pain. "I would not change any of it," she said, speaking directly into the camera, eyes glistening with held-back tears, jaw jutted forward. "I am really grateful for all the abuse I have suffered. It has made me to be the person I am today. You see the kids, you tell them, 'Shit happens. Hang in there. It can get better.'" Because of who she is, the kids believe her.

### Your Ordinary Self Is Good Enough

"A pearl," wrote philosopher Stephen Hoeller, "is a beautiful thing that is produced by the injury of the oyster. The treasure of our being is (similarly) produced by an injured life. If we have not been wounded, if we have not been injured, we will not produce the pearl."

Why did Kim and Susan produce pearls but Gail's problem solving did not? Why did Kim and Susan experience the fierce focus and contentment of the simplicity on the other side of complexity while Gail got lost in therapy?

Because, Kim and Susan took a creative stance toward their lives. Both realized that their ordinary self was what they had to work with. Both knew what mattered to them. Both claimed the events of their lives, became "fierce with reality," and brought into being the results they cared about.

So, eventually, did Gail.

After a workshop and six months of coaching, Gail left therapy. Instead of trying to fix her past, she focused her efforts on developing her capacity to create what mattered in the present and the future.

She developed her basic creating skills and applied them to her life. Slowly, she learned how to accept rather than fix the complicated mess of feelings she had struggled with for ten years. As

regular practice increased her skills, Gail was able to define and bring into being her "dream job" as a part-time teacher and part-time graphic artist. She met a man she enjoyed being with, who enjoyed her company, and who shared her simplifying goals. She also thoroughly enjoyed the process.

"Since I learned to create," Gail told me, "my life is way simpler but also way richer. I do more, achieve more, and get more involved yet it all seems to flow. Sure, there are ups and downs, but I no longer dive into the pain pool and wallow. I know now that I can feel bad and still create what matters. Gradually the pain is fading."

By shifting to a creating stance, Gail, Susan, and Kim transcended the pain and frustration of misplaced problem solving. Rather than shifting the burden of her own well being to experts or drugs, each empowered her self by accepting that her ordinary self was good enough. By developing and mastering their capacity to create what truly mattered to them, they were able to create profoundly simpler, more successful, and deeply fulfilling lives.

Your situation may be far from those that Gail, Susan and Kim had to deal with but the same principles and processes apply. You too can create what matters to you. And you can start with your ordinary self. It is good enough.

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### **3. NEED A SPEAKER? PLEASE CONSIDER ME**

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I'm, fun, entertaining, educational, and can challenge conventional ways of thinking and doing in positive, constructive ways.

"You have a remarkable ability to communicate."  
- Richard Yank, Senior VP, ALCAN

To get a sense of my background and competency as a speaker, please go to <http://www.prospeak.com/speakers/elkin.html>

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### **4. SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: The Book**

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Reviews for my book *Simplicity and Success* continue to be great:

- "Wonderful!" says Greg Seaman, Editor of Eartheasy on-line Magazine
- "Highly Recommended!" says David Heitmiller, co-author of *Getting A Life*
- "Exciting and Challenging," says Wanda Urbanska, Host of the PBS Series, *Simple Living With Wanda Urbanska*
- "The gift-book-of-the-year," says Paul O'Brien, Sacramento, CA

#### **DISCOUNT FOR SUBSCRIBERS:**

*Simplicity and Success* subscribers get a 22% discount on my book.

If you'd like a personalized, signed copy of *SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS*, send me: Canada: \$18 plus \$4.00 S&H; or US: \$14 plus \$4 S&H.

Cheque, MC or VISA. Deeper discounts on orders of three or more.

For more information about *SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR*, go to: <http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>

### **5. ASK THE COACH OR COMMENT ON THE NEWSLETTER**

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I love questions and comments. Please feel free to send me questions, suggestions and feedback on the articles. Some I'll reply to in the newsletter, others I'll reply to by e-mail. Send your questions to [belkin@saltspring.com](mailto:belkin@saltspring.com)

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**6. MY BASIC COACHING PROGRAM**

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" Bruce is a unique and special person, with a varied and eclectic background that equips him with a unique and effective viewpoint of life planning. As my coach, he has had—and continues to have—a huge impact on my life."

Jim Fitch, College Administrator, USA

I'm interviewing now for new clients for October to December. I have a few spots left for September.

I help you create what your heart truly wants and accept and transcend your current circumstances as you do. I help you integrate life and work and create results that make them both simple and successful.

My basic 8-week coaching program is a great launch platform for independent professionals and for those starting new businesses or wanting to integrate their business and/or career needs with their greater life goals and plans.

It is useful for anyone in mid-career who is stuck or stalled, not living up to what they know is their potential but don't know what do or where to go next.

It is also a great resource for those in transitions of any kind

If you would like more information about my Basic Coaching Package, send me an e-mail at [belkin@saltspring.com](mailto:belkin@saltspring.com) with "Coaching Package" in the subject line.

**FR\*E 30 MINUTE COACHING CONSULTATION:**

You can also e-mail me to set up a 30 minute coaching session to help you clarify whether coaching would help you create what most matters to you. There is no charge, no pressure and no obligation.

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**7. THE LAST WORD: Quotable Quotes**

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" If I live intentionally, being true to my own personality, serving out of my God-given giftedness and calling, I no longer feel a need to envy anyone else's career, marriage, ministry, talents, or mission."

--Joan C. Webb and Carol Travilla

" Our task now is not to fix blame for the past, but to fix the course for the future."

-- John F. Kennedy

" Find the good. It's all around you. Find it, showcase it and you'll start believing in it."

--Jesse Owens

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**8. THE SMALL PRINT: Copyright; Getting On and Off the List**

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To add yourself to the list or to remove yourself, please e-mail me at [belkin@saltspring.com](mailto:belkin@saltspring.com) I'll do it immediately.

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Well, folks, thanks for reading. Please pass the intact newsletter along to friends, family, and colleagues. It really does help and I appreciate your efforts on my behalf. Thanks!

I hope you have a great week. Enjoy the changing seasons, wherever you are. Until next time, all the best.

Cheers!  
Bruce

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Bruce Elkin: High Performance, Full Potential Coaching  
Author of SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: Creating the Life You Long For  
< A book about organizing life, work and relationships around what most matters to you.

<http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>

" Find what you really care about and live a life that shows it."  
— Kate Wolf

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