



ALL WILL BE WELL

Whenever I'm in a situation where I need to introduce myself, my answer will be something along the lines of:

"Hey, I am Mariët! I am a photographer living in The Hague with my husband and our dog. I mainly shoot weddings, but I'm always working on various side projects."

But let me really introduce my Self now.

I am the woman who still feels like a little girl on a daily basis. I am also the woman who is wild to the bones. The girl who is insecure, and the queen who conquered her land. I am the one with the angry hamstrings. I love smoothies. I am the one that is transitioning into a vegan lifestyle and wants to be an activist, and I am the one that avoids conflict. I have been struggling with a lot of things a lot of times, and am still struggling with things every day. Waking up is not my favourite part of the day, neither is going to bed. I never fall asleep easily, my dreams are so vivid I sometimes wake up laughing or screaming or crying. The creative muse in me is big and wild and untamed and like a small child, free and wondering and wandering. But it is also afraid to take up space. Afraid to say *'Hey this is me, this is my love and my heart and my soul poured out in writing, this drawing or a photograph.'* I believe dogs make this world a happier place.

I am the woman who feels like the sea is always the best place to be. Sand between my toes, wind in my hair and tears rolling down my face because of ... because of what? Sometimes I don't even know. I am the compassionate one, the strong one, the hard one and the soft one. Totally in love with making healthy food and doing yoga and then crumbling down between cookies and chocolate and crying over my belly that is too big and too soft. I am the one that loves her body and loves swinging through the living room with sexy music and no bra on. I am the successful entrepreneur and forever in doubt about what I want to do. I am a feminist. An earthling. I have created many beautiful things and have also broken some. Music is everything. So is silence. Or the sound of waves. There is one thing I can not stand and that is fakery. No, there's more. Injustice. Sexism. Racism. Speciesism. Violence.

I am a healer, I believe in magic and I believe touch and skin to skin contact can sometimes be all one needs. I believe in God and I call it God because that's what I was raised with. I believe I am part of a beautiful creation and it is my responsibility to take good care of it. I believe God is the sea and the trees and the wind and the sun and the moon and me. I love the male and the female and the light and the dark and everything this universe holds. I am the one that can judge others so very harshly and then cry because I am sorry and because we are all one. I can never have enough plants and flowers in my home. I am sometimes yearning for the simplest life, for being a stay-at-home-mom and never worry about anything else than what to cook and kissing scraped knees. I am also yearning to travel the world and make documentaries and fight for human rights and animal rights and never give up and never pull back.

I am the one that can spend days on end scrolling through beautiful pictures and quotes and then feel guilty for doing that because I could have been the one making these beautiful pictures and quotes. I am the one that loves. Endlessly. Unconditionally. There are many things that scare me, but death is not one of them. I do not believe death is the end, it's just a new beginning.

I love colours and sometimes all I need is black on black on black. My favourite colour is a blueish, greenish, greyish thing that doesn't have a name because it has a thousand names and I can never just pick one. And on some days it's yellow. I am most comfortable in my own home, which sometimes is the whole world. And sometimes it's these four walls between which I'm writing this.

I am the one that started writing a million books and never finished one. I am the one that is scared to write this one and is doing it anyway.

So, there are a few things I want to talk about. Living a calm life by taking the responsibility of choosing what is in it. Living a good life by taking the responsibility to heal and to spread your light and living a happy life by allowing it to be one. These aren't the easiest things, and yet they are. Because they all come back to you, your choices and your mindset. And yes, sometimes that is hard. There are days where you just can't muster up the strength to be calm, good and happy. And that's okay. We can always, always start over. Right now, right here, every second of every day. It doesn't matter what went wrong this morning, yesterday or last week, it matters what you choose now. Today. I've spent a lot of time feeling guilty about past choices, and there is only one thing I learned from that: it serves no one.

That's why, before we dive in deeper, I want you to read this list of things you need to stop doing, and stop doing them. They serve no one.

STOP

- 1) Feeling guilty about past choices, even if it was just this morning.
- 2) Worrying about the future, you'll deal with it as it comes.
- 3) Thinking everything you do should be perfect, it never will.
- 4) Procrastinating the good stuff, 'someday' does not exist.
- 5) Running from your problems, they will follow right behind you.
- 6) Spending time with the wrong people, you've got better things to do.
- 7) Wasting time faking things, whether they are orgasms or Instagram pictures.
- 8) Buying stuff you don't need, the more stuff the more to worry about.
- 9) Comparing yourself to others, you never know everything.
- 10) Multitasking, do one thing at a time, with full attention.

(And smoking. Always stop smoking.)

Of course, there are some things I want you to start doing as well. Read on.

From here on out, we are honest. From here on out, we are real. From here on out, it doesn't matter if we fit the standards of our society or not. Here, we pour our hearts out. Here, we heal. Here, we honour the fire within us, the earth below us, the sky above us. Here, we fly over the waters of our souls and here we howl to the moon. Here, we embrace. Without restraint. There are no rules here. Welcome.

Oh, and do me a favour. Write an Introducing-Your-Self-Piece (like I did) about yourself. It's freeing. It's interesting. It's hard and it's lovely. It's fun. It can help. It will help.

LET'S START COMMUNICATING. TRULY COMMUNICATING. NOT JUST (IM)PATIENTLY WAITING UNTIL THE OTHER PERSON STOPS TALKING SO YOU CAN START, BUT TRULY LISTEN. TRULY RESPOND TO WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS SAYING. STARTING A CONVERSATION JUST TO ASK SOMEONE HOW THEY'RE DOING, WITH THE INTENTION OF TRULY HEARING THE ANSWER, WHATEVER IT MAY BE. LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT OURSELVES FOR A FULL CONVERSATION (AND FIND OUT HOW DIFFICULT THAT ACTUALLY IS) AND THEN BE MORE OPEN THAN EVER IN THE NEXT. ABOUT THE THINGS THAT TRULY MATTER. BECAUSE HOW ARE YOU REALLY FEELING? WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY, OR SAD? WHAT ARE YOU DEALING WITH IN YOUR LIFE? HOW DID YOU SLEEP LAST NIGHT AND WHAT WERE YOU THINKING OF WHEN YOU WERE IN THE SHOWER THIS MORNING?

HOW ARE YOU?

LIVING A CALM LIFE

We all come from different corners of the world, but if you are reading this I am guessing you at least have a smartphone, probably a computer or laptop as well as a tv. Maybe a radio. Perhaps you sometimes read a newspaper or magazine, check Instagram and Twitter daily. You know it can be crazy. Crazy good and crazy mad. There is so much! Impulses all over the place. Constantly. There is this ongoing stream of stuff finding its way into your life, your head, your heart and your soul.

If you are even a little bit like me you can feel completely overwhelmed by this. If you are a lot like me, all this information makes you feel restless, as if it's ripping you out of your own soil, roots and all. And we need calmness. We need to tend to the soil with the right equipment. Create the best landscape for us to grow in, form the most beautiful environment in which to ground, expand our roots deep into the earth and stand strong and tall. Sunshine, a cleansing rain shower every once in a while and, of course, good things to feed on.

You are in charge of this. Let me say that again. You are in charge of this. You are in charge of what is in your life, who is in your life. You are in charge of what is in your feed, who is in your feed. You are in charge of what you hear, see, read and who you invite over. It is your responsibility to plan and shape your life in a way that serves you. This is different for every soul but I do believe there are some things we all need and some things none of us need. None of us needs endless tweets and 'news' articles about people we don't even know and will never meet. None of us needs loud, flashy commercials promoting deodorant or the newest gadget. None of us needs to look at the picture perfect (and mostly fake) lives of people on Instagram we, again, don't even know. None of us needs sexism. None of us needs body shaming. None of us needs reality tv (which we all know deep down in our hearts is completely fake anyway) and gossip. None of us needs this constant stream of visual and audial stimuli. None of us needs people in our lives who do not make us feel loved.

What we do need is silence every once in a while, to hear our own mind and soul whispering. Music that touches our heart. Articles that inspire us to do better or to rest and take care of ourselves. Documentaries that show us the truth. People who fully support us, make us feel loved and put their arms around us when we need it the most. What we do need is truth. Love. Warmth. Time to think. What we do need is to learn. Learn how to take care of ourselves, our bodies, the world. What we do need is to not be constantly interrupted by our phones.

Let me say it again: You are in charge of what you hear, see, read and who you invite over. Every visual, aural thing that finds its way into your life is your choice. It is your responsibility to plan and shape your life in a way that serves you.

And so I highly recommend turning off your notifications. Turning off your phone every once in a while. Close your laptop, unplug your tv and go outside. Take a walk, go find yourself some nature to wander around in. Touch a tree, close your eyes and feel nature's pulse. Go to the beach, take off your shoes and feel the sand between your toes. Listen to the waves. Let the sound of the sea and the wind clear your mind.

Do everything you do with your full attention. Focus. Be mindful about every step. Every breath. Every word. Every movement. Every choice.

Unsubscribe from all channels that make you feel restless. That give you information you do not need. Unsubscribe from drama, gossip and 'reality' shows. Turn off your radio and listen only to music that you actually totally like, without being constantly interrupted by DJ's and stupid commercials for stuff you don't need. Unfollow that which makes you feel bad about yourself and those who do not inspire you. Cancel your tv subscription and watch only that which truly amuses you, educates you or helps you unwind. Again, without being interrupted by noisy, flashy commercials that encourage you to buy stuff you don't need. Throw out the magazines that tell you that you are not thin / fit / smooth / sexy / happy / successful enough. Read good books. Stories that take you to the most beautiful worlds, stories that educate you. Follow the social media accounts of people that are true to themselves, that care about showing you the truth. The ones that address the truly important matters. Shape your days around tending to your soil. Whether that is getting up early to run, or sleeping in because you need it. Whether that is crying in your mother's arms, or staying up late laughing with friends. Journal. Write it all out, whatever you think, whatever you dream of. Meditate. Take the time to listen to your heart. Don't believe everything you see on the news. Always ask questions.

And lastly, close your doors to people that do not support you. Stop dealing with people that make you feel bad about yourself. Those who suck the energy out of you because you have to pretend to be someone you're not or because they are a constant source of negativity. Break bonds with people that try to put you down. Search for better people to be around. Find your tribe. Find likeminded people who wish the very best for you. People that support you, make you feel good about yourself and inspire you to reach for the very best version of yourself. People that understand when sometimes, you can't. Don't spend one more minute, don't waste any more energy trying to meet any expectations but your own. And limit those as well. Just be. Exist.

THE OTHER DAY I WAS TALKING TO A DEAR FRIEND AND DURING THIS CONVERSATION I SAID: "YOU GOTTA ASK YOURSELF – DOES MY LIFE SERVE ME?" THE MOMENT I SAID IT I KNEW I HAD TO REMEMBER THAT QUESTION BECAUSE I WANTED TO BLOG ABOUT IT. I DID, AND I WANTED TO SHARE IT HERE AS WELL, BECAUSE I REALLY BELIEVE THIS IS IMPORTANT.

A LOT OF US HAVE THIS PICTURE PERFECT LIFE IN OUR HEADS AND WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. WHETHER YOU ARE THE GRADE A STUDENT WHO STUDIES LAW AND WANTS TO HAVE A HOUSE WITH A GARDEN, A FAMILY AND A GOOD JOB BY 30, OR THE #FITGIRL WORKING TOWARDS A SLIM BODY AND ALWAYS THE NEXT MARATHON (AND THE NEXT, AND THE NEXT), THE HIPPIE TRYING TO ALWAYS VIBRATE ON THE HIGHEST FREQUENCY OR THE INSTAGRAM MODEL TAKING HUNDREDS OF PICTURES TO FIND THAT PERFECT 'CARELESS' ONE FOR HER NEXT GIG. BLOGS ABOUT HEALTH, FITNESS, PRODUCTIVITY AND HABITS ARE SHOOTING UP OUT OF THE GROUND LIKE WEEDS AND THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE BEING BURNED OUT, COLLAPSING UNDER THE PRESSURE OF BEING PERFECT IS SHOCKINGLY HIGH.

WE ALL WANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT, BUT WE ALL WANT SOMETHING. WE ALL FEEL THE PRESSURE TO BE THE PERFECT STUDENT, WIFE OR FITGIRL, TO HAVE THE BEST INSTAGRAM FEED, JOB OR HOUSE. TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT WE ARE DOING GREAT, THAT WE ARE BUSY, BUT HAPPY AND NEVER STRUGGLING. ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD, CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND HABITS TO KEEP DOING THIS. TO KEEP STRIVING. AND THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH WANTING TO ACHIEVE THINGS. WITH WANTING TO GROW IN LIFE AND WISH FOR CERTAIN THINGS. BUT PLEASE, BE VIGILANT ABOUT THIS.

BECAUSE HOW DOES THIS LIFE YOU'RE WORKING SO HARD TO ACHIEVE SERVE YOU? YOUR SOUL? DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL TRULY HAPPY? DOES IT MAKE YOU LOVE YOURSELF? DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL SAFE? GROUNDED? ARE YOU ACTUALLY THRIVING, OR ARE YOU SECRETLY CRUMBLING DOWN BEHIND THAT PICTURE PERFECT WALL? IS ALL THIS TRULY WHAT YOU WANT, OR DO YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT YOU FEEL PRESSURED BY YOUR FAMILY, MAGAZINES OR SOCIAL MEDIA? WHY DO YOU WANT ALL THIS? DO YOU GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME TO ENJOY, REST, PLAY, LAUGH AND JUST... DO... NOTHING...?

BECAUSE YOU SHOULDN'T SERVE YOUR LIFE, YOUR LIFE SHOULD SERVE YOU.

LIVING A GOOD LIFE

I also believe we have a responsibility to live a good life. Not only do we need to be good for ourselves, but we need to be good for each other. For the earth. For the ones without a voice. If we want to continue to enjoy this beautiful world we live in, we have a responsibility to take care of it. If we want our children to be able to enjoy that same beautiful Mother Earth, we need to stop tearing her down. Ask anyone what they would wish for if they were granted a wish by a genie and the answer is 'world peace'. Then why is there no world peace? We are not even close to world peace. And there are a lot of things you as an individual and we as a group can do to help achieve world peace. On all kinds of levels.

“DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
TRY SLEEPING IN A ROOM WITH A MOSQUITO.”

- DALAI LAMA XIV

We can spread love. We can live in kindness. We can stop hurting each other. We can smile and brighten someone's day. We can help when help is needed. We can stop body shaming. We can stop gossiping and hating on each other or people online. We can stop killing and eating other species. We can stop giving tons and tons of food to our food and give it to the hungry people instead. We can stop the cutting down of rainforests. We can inspire other people to do good. We can adopt a dog instead of buying a puppy which supports breeding. We can buy fair clothes. Yes, they are more expensive but that is only in our minds because we are used to low prices and buying so many things we don't need. We can stop exploiting children, animals and the earth. We can make the right choice. We can educate ourselves. We can make way for everyone to be accepted as they are, no matter their preferred gender, sexual orientation, skin colour or (non)religious beliefs.

These are just some things that come to mind but let it be clear: there is so much we can do to get us closer to world peace. To help the world heal. We can stand up, speak up, fight. We have a responsibility to no longer accept sexist or racist comments, to no longer close our eyes to all the violence. We can all be activists, all in our own way.

And yes, people will call you crazy. But they called the first people that wanted to stop slavery crazy. They called the first people that fought for women's voting rights crazy. Let's be a little crazy, shall we? Let's connect. Let's educate ourselves. There is an endless list of books you can read, documentaries you can watch to learn about what's going on in the world. To dive deeper into a subject that touches you. We all have something.

Maybe you can go vegan, maybe you'll never buy cheap and bloodstained clothes again, maybe you'll help out at the local pet shelter. Maybe you'll photograph disabled kids for free, maybe you'll use your talents to write beautiful songs that inspire people to change. Maybe you'll go into politics. Maybe you'll protest naked outside a factory or maybe you'll pray.

But there are a few things we can all do. We can all be kind. We can all smile. We can all choose our words carefully and not hurt the ones around us. We can all choose not to support the things we don't believe in. We have a responsibility to do so.

This world is our home, the earth provides for us everything we need, it is time to start returning the favour.

WE TAKE BETTER CARE OF WHAT WE FEEL CONNECTED TO. THIS IS SOMETHING WE SEE IN ALL KINDS OF AREAS IN OUR LIVES. THE DOG WE PET, THE PIG WE EAT. THE WRAPPER WE THROW ON THE SIDEWALK OF THE PARK BUT NOT IN OUR OWN GARDEN. WE TAKE BETTER CARE OF THE NECKLACE WE INHERITED FROM OUR GRANDMA THAN THE ONE WE BOUGHT FOR \$3 AT SOME SHOP WE CAN'T REMEMBER. WHEN WE HEAR ABOUT A CAR CRASH ONE TOWN OVER WE MIGHT MURMUR ONE SENTENCE ABOUT HOW HORRIBLE IT IS AND THEN WE GO ON WITH OUR LIVES LIKE NOTHING HAPPENED, BUT WHEN WE SEE A CAR CRASH HAPPEN RIGHT IN FRONT OF US, WE ARE COMPLETELY SHOCKED, EVEN IF THERE'S NO RELATION TO THE VICTIMS OTHER THAN THAT YOU JUST SAW THEM.

THE ANIMAL WE FEEL CONNECTED TO BECAUSE IT'S SO MUCH LIKE US AND LIVES AMONG US, OUR GRANDMA WE LOVE SO MUCH, SOMEONE WE SAW DRIVING BY JUST NOW... THE CONNECTION CAN BE STRONG AND PROFOUND OR SUPERFICIAL AND FLEETING, BUT AS LONG AS THERE IS ONE: WE CARE.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FORMS OF CARING FOR US AND THE WORLD TO FUNCTION PROPERLY, TO SURVIVE, IS SELF CARE. WHEN WE FEEL DISCONNECTED OF WHO WE ARE, A POSSIBLE FIRST SIGN OF DEPRESSION, WE STOP TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES, OUR BODIES, OUR HOMES. THEN WE STOP TAKING CARE OF RELATIONSHIPS, WORK AND EVERYTHING AROUND US. WE NEED THE CONNECTION. TO OURSELVES, TO OTHERS, TO NATURE. TO LIFE.

WE ARE ONE. SO LET'S CONNECT. LET'S LOOK AT EVERYTHING FROM A CONSCIOUS POINT OF VIEW. LET'S GRAB OUR OWN HANDS AND THANK OUR BODIES FOR BEING HERE, FOR KEEPING US SAFE. LET'S PROMISE OUR BODIES TO KEEP THEM SAFE, TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF THEM. LET'S TAKE A WALK WITH MOTHER NATURE AND BE GRATEFUL FOR THE BEAUTY, OXYGEN AND PEACE SHE PROVIDES. LET'S PROMISE HER TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF HER, TO KEEP HER CLEAN AND HELP HER THRIVE AND BLOOM. LET'S NO LONGER CLOSE OUR EYES TO WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ANIMALS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS AND PROMISE THE ANIMAL KINGDOM TO LOVE AND PROTECT IT. TO NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT AND DO IT NO HARM, BECAUSE ANIMALS ARE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH, JUST LIKE US. BECAUSE THEY FEEL FEAR AND PAIN, JUST LIKE US. LET'S CALL OUR LOVED ONES AND TELL THEM WE LOVE THEM AND NEED THEM, AND PROMISE THEM TO BE THERE, ALWAYS. LET'S LOOK AT EVERYTHING WE OWN, FROM THE BIG, WARM SWEATER WE BURY OURSELVES IN WHEN IT'S COLD TO THE PLANT THAT'S ADORNING YOUR LIVING ROOM. LET'S PROMISE OURSELVES TO WASH AND WATER THEM CAREFULLY, SO THEY CAN CONTINUE TO WARM AND ADORN. LET'S PROMISE OURSELVES AND THE WORLD TO BE NICE. TO OUR MOM, OUR NEIGHBOUR, THE MAILMAN AND THE WAITER. EVERYONE.

DOING ALL THIS IS SELF CARE IN ITS PUREST FORM.

BECAUSE WE ARE ONE.

“I WOULDN'T HAVE TO TEACH MY PEOPLE TO LOVE THEMSELVES
IF THEY WEREN'T TAUGHT TO HATE THEMSELVES FIRST.”

– KING EMARE

We've been taught so many bad things over the years, the centuries. Things like it's okay to hate your body (actually, we need you to hate it so we can sell you crap), it's ok to poison your body with cigarettes and drugs and alcohol and food that's making you sick (actually, we need you to do that so we can sell you drugs), it's okay to hate on others (actually, please do, so we can use that hate as fuel to get what we want – power), it's ok to rape, torture and kill other species (actually, we need to do that so we can make quick and easy money), it's better to succumb to the enormous pressure of being busy and perfect than to live a calm, simple and happy life (actually, please have a mental breakdown so we can prescribe some more drugs).

We are hurting others and by doing so we are hurting ourselves. Mother Nature gives us life and we are tearing her down. We have the ability to heal ourselves, our body has the ability to heal itself, but we are hurting it over and over and over again. This needs to stop.

It is time to heal. It is our responsibility to break through this curse and heal not only our kids, but ourselves and the people around us.

We need to love our bodies for being a vessel for what's inside.

We need to take care of our bodies and stop poisoning them.

We need to love, respect and help the people around us.

We need to accept people for who they are, no matter their gender, sexual orientation, beliefs or looks.

We need to be kind.

We need to support each other, always.

We need to support other women, let them know that they are amazing, that menstruating is not filthy and that our bodies are ours and ours alone.

We need to support other men, let them know that they do not have to show aggression and dominance to 'be a man', we need to tell them that it's okay to cry. To feel.

We need to care for the earth and all it's earthlings, stop hurting and exploiting them.

We need to hold space for calmness, simplicity, time to do nothing.

We need to stop the glorification of busy.

We need to raise our kids with love, honesty, respect for everything around them, humility.

We need to tell our kids about consent.

We need to heal the earth.
We need to heal ourselves.
We need to heal our bodies.
We need to heal our minds.
We need to heal.

We need to heal.

Let's open the floodgates and pour out love over everything and everyone. Let's stop dancing to the tune of others, let's start hearing our own tune and dancing to that. Let's put our hands on our hearts, feel the drum and let it guide us. We can only be what we give ourselves the power to be. You have power. I have power. We can do this. Let's start with our actions and words.

“THE WORDS YOU SPEAK ARE THE HOUSE YOU LIVE IN.”

– SADIE ROSE

Let's build new houses.

THE WORLD IS HURTING, IT HAS BEEN HURTING FOR TOO LONG. PEOPLE ARE HURTING, THE EARTH ITSELF IS HURTING, ANIMALS ARE HURTING. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY, YOU AND ME, TO HEAL IT, US, THEM. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US KNOWS STRUGGLE AND I WILL NOT WASTE TIME COMPARING ONE STRUGGLE TO ANOTHER, BECAUSE EVERY STRUGGLE IS ONE AND NEEDS CARE, HEALING. FOCUS ON THAT, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, HEAL YOURSELF SO THAT YOU CAN HEAL THE WORLD. PLEASE DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO BECOME STRONG, ROOTED, SO THAT YOU CAN SPREAD LIGHT TO THE WORLD.

AND WHEN YOU'RE STRONG ENOUGH, I'M BEGGING YOU... HELP SOMEONE OUT. SMILE. LEAVE THE MEAT FOR A DAY, OR TWO. MEDITATE. RADIATE LOVE. SPEAK UP AGAINST VIOLENCE, HATE, FEAR, RACISM, SEXISM, SPECIESISM.

I SEE ALL THESE RANTS ONLINE ABOUT POKEMON GO, HOW PEOPLE ARE WASTING TIME PLAYING WHILE THEY COULD BE EDUCATING THEMSELVES, PROTESTING OR HEALING THE WORLD IN WHATEVER WAY THEY CAN... BUT WE SHOULDN'T DO THAT. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE RANTING ABOUT PEOPLE PLAYING POKEMON GO, YOU TOO ARE WASTING TIME YOU COULD BE SPENDING BETTER. LIGHTER. THIS GAME IS HELPING PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY TO GO OUT AND MEET PEOPLE, WALK AROUND, IT HEALS TO SOME EXTEND. WE DON'T KNOW THAT SO LEAVE THOSE PEOPLE ALONE.

BUT IF YOU READ THIS, IF YOU ARE OK, IF YOU ARE STRONG AND ABLE TO BRING LIGHT, EVEN IN THE SIMPLEST OF WAYS, THEN PLEASE... PLEASE DO IT. BRING LIGHT. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SO. WE NEED TO FOCUS ON LOVE, SUPPORT EACH OTHER, BE NICE TO EACH OTHER, STOP JUDGING OTHERS BASED ON APPEARANCE, SEXUALITY AND ALL THOSE OTHER THINGS THAT DO NOT MATTER IF WE EVER WANT THIS WORLD TO BECOME A BETTER PLACE. LET'S HOLD EACH OTHER'S HANDS NO MATTER WHAT STORY STICKS TO OUR SOUL, NO MATTER WHAT IS WRAPPED AROUND OUR BONES AND JUDGE WHAT IS REALLY HURTING THE WORLD.

A BODY SHAPE OR AN OUTFIT THAT DOESN'T FIT YOUR TASTE DOESN'T HURT THE WORLD. A WOMAN'S NIPPLE DOES NOT HURT THE WORLD. BEING GAY DOES NOT HURT THE WORLD. THE ENDLESS JUDGING DOES. RACISM DOES. SEXISM DOES. HATE DOES. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DRIVE THOSE DEMONS WE LET LOOSE BACK INTO THEIR CAGES AND BURN THEM TO THE GROUND. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO STAND UP. TO CARE. TO PROTECT. TO DEFEND. TO HEAL. TO LOVE. TO RISE ABOVE THE HATEFUL FIRE THAT IS SCORCHING THE EARTH AND EXTINGUISH IT WITH OUR TEARS OF COMPASSION. BE KIND. LIVE KIND.

SPREAD LIGHT. PLEASE. THE WORLD NEEDS IT.

LIVING A HAPPY LIFE

Ugh, so many responsibilities. Okay, last one. It is your responsibility to allow yourself to live a happy life. In order to do so, a few things need to change.

Stop being mad at yourself for three hundred and forty-six reasons. Stop feeling guilty about practically every breath you take. Stop being ashamed of the space you take up. Stop hating your own body. Allow yourself to really enjoy your life, the littlest things. Talk about your blessings more than you talk about your burdens. It's all about focus. I'm not saying ignore the burdens, but try acting upon them instead of talking about them. Live. Exist. Listen. Focus. Stop beating life and your happiness down with endless arguments about what's going wrong. There is a lot going right, you know.

But also, do talk about the burdens if you need to. Do it with the right people. The ones we talked about earlier in this book.

It is okay. You are okay. You are enough. You are amazing. Maybe affirmations work for you, maybe they don't, but believe in yourself. The good and the bad. The light and the dark.

Stop thinking that your life is not a happy life because you feel sad every once in a while. Stop thinking that a bad morning, a bad day or a bad week ruins everything. It does not. You can always, always start over. Let there be room for every aspect of you.

“YOU ARE ENOUGH. YOU ARE SO ENOUGH. IT IS UNBELIEVABLE
HOW ENOUGH YOU ARE.”

- SIERRA BOGGES

No, we're not always at our prettiest, we're not always super happy and confident. We are not always concerned with everything and everyone around us, we're not doing only the exciting stuff. We are not fairy tales, we are real people. You and me. With ups and downs. But you know what? I don't want to be a fairy tale. I want to be real. Imagine being a fairy tale, everything would have to be perfect all the time. How exhausting! No, I am not perfect, but I am good enough the way I am. Just like you. Our lives are good enough. We can live a happy life anytime we want. We just need to choose to do so every morning. Heck, maybe twice a day.

We need to learn that life isn't meant to be perfect, and that knowing this is actually pretty nice. We need to allow ourselves to love every raw part of life. Every bit. Happiness is

kind of a living and breathing thing, it's not some strictly-defined thing we can control. It's like the flow of the ocean, it comes and goes but it's always there. Somewhere. While writing this I am not in the best place ever. I'm overworked, overwhelmed by life and I have sought help to deal with this. Panic attacks and random crying are part of the deal.

I could blame myself for all this and be mad at myself and beat myself up for this. And sometimes I do. I could also think 'omg I'm so unhappy, such a crappy life I have'. I don't. Because it's not true. My life is not crappy, I am just feeling crappy right now. Life is great, you know? The sun rises every day, we get to choose our paths every day. We need to allow ourselves to accept this truth and live by it. Tattoo it on the palms of our hands, like God has written our names on his.

Allow yourself to fall down when life hits you hard. Allow yourself to be happy anyway. Roll around in the dirt you fell in and enjoy it. And then stand up. Take another step. Maybe slip again. Laugh about it a little. Cry about it a lot. But in the end, always find that centre where you know happiness is not some perfect state of mind.

You yourself are not - and do not have to be - some strictly-defined thing you can control either. There is no need for that. You can be anything. There is no committee assigned to review your manifest, and to be super disappointed and pissed when you change something. Or when you cannot choose between certain things in life. It's all okay and living a happy life does not depend on continuity of opinions or characteristics. You can be a hippie living in a van one year and a career-tiger the next. It doesn't matter. You know why it doesn't matter? You are free! If that isn't happiness I don't know what is. You have a choice. Always.

I have a feeling that the things I wrote about in the first two sections of this book will help you live a happy life, (why else would I write this book) but always remember that it's not a strictly-defined thing. It doesn't have rules. It cannot be ruined by a bad day. It will always be there, somewhere. Even if you experience certain boundaries. Even if you can't see it for a while.

PLACE YOUR HAND ON YOUR HEART.
JUST DO IT. NOW CLOSE YOUR EYES,
LIFT YOUR CHIN A LITTLE AND SMILE.
JUST LIGHTLY IS OK. FEEL. BREATHE. BE.

YOU ARE HERE, YOU ARE LOVED AND
ALL WILL BE WELL.