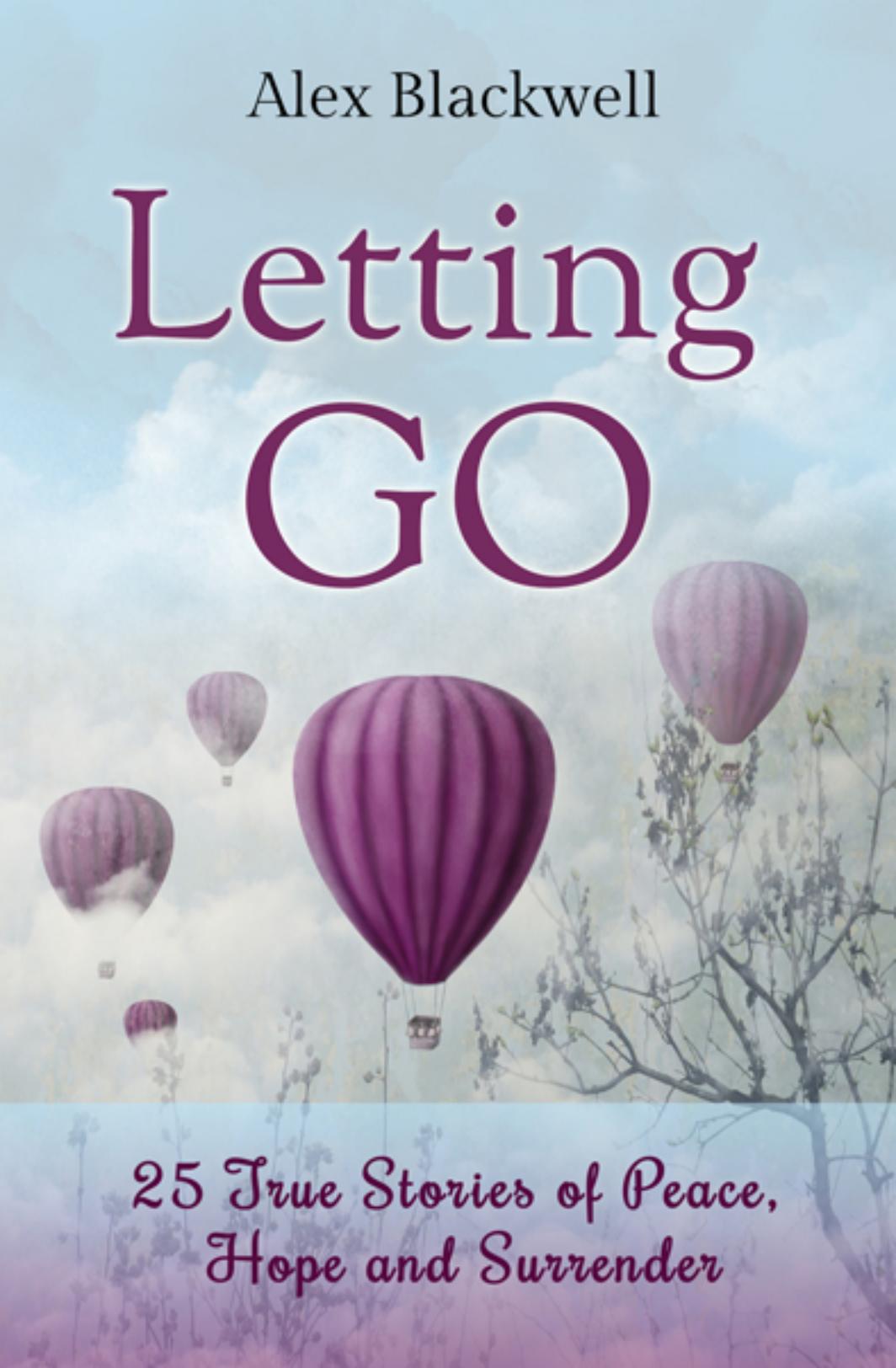


Alex Blackwell

# Letting GO

The background of the cover is a soft-focus landscape. In the foreground, there are purple hot air balloons of various sizes floating in a light blue sky with wispy white clouds. The ground is a mix of green grass and purple flowers. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible under a hazy sky. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

*25 True Stories of Peace,  
Hope and Surrender*

# Letting Go

25 Stories of Peace,  
Hope and Surrender



by Alex Blackwell  
Founder of [thebridgemaker.com](http://thebridgemaker.com)

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# Introduction



“Some of us think holding on makes us strong, but sometimes it is letting go.” – Herman Hesse

There have been so many days when I’ve felt like giving up. Being a child of an alcoholic parent, overcoming a speech impediment, and grieving the sudden death of my brother have all contributed to a suffocating anxiety that has left me feeling hopeless more times than I care to admit.

But through the healing grace of time and the loving support of family and friends, I’m learning to leave these difficult days behind and welcome the chance to claim the beautiful life waiting for me.

Throughout my journey, the most important lesson I’ve learned is one that is powerful enough to heal. This lesson brings me mercy, peace and hope. It gives me the courage and confidence to take a leap of faith and believe in its truth. This lesson has changed my life for the better.

This life-changing lesson is: **Letting go isn’t a sign of weakness; it’s a sign of strength.**

Are you ready to welcome the strength that is waiting patiently inside of you? Are you ready to claim your beautiful life?

## An honest look

To begin your journey, you must first acknowledge what’s holding you back. For example, do you need to let go of a mistake, a thought, or a

memory to be happy? What's keeping you from finding peace, realizing your greatest joy or living an amazing life?

***Is it...***

- ... a relationship?
- ... a business venture?
- ... the loss of a love one

***Is it...***

- ... a medical prognosis?
- ... a painful memory?
- ... an ideal of a perfect life

## So, why is it so hard to let go?

Letting go is hard to do because the need to hold on is rooted in fear. The perception of having no direct control over your circumstances – past, present or future – can be terrifying. Even when the warning signs are clear, you continue to think that if you try harder to do everything right; and hold on as tightly as you can, then you will have what you want.

You may cling to past mistakes and worry about making the same mistakes again. But, by dwelling in the past where these mistakes reside, you don't see the beauty of the present moment – the miracle of today.

## A freer perspective

The fear of being alone or feeling empty drives you to create and maintain attachments to the past even when you know that they no longer serve you. **Letting go fills the space once occupied by attachments.** Letting go gives you a clearer perspective; a freer perspective to be in the present moment.

The best way to start looking for what's causing you to hold on is to develop a deeper understanding. To do this, you may need to go deep and see what's going on inside of you. Once again, you need to take an honest look.

For example, if you are in a bad relationship, letting go of the relationship may be a wise choice, but it won't necessarily keep you from entering another bad relationship unless you let go of what has contributed to the bad relationship in the first place – jealousy, lack of confidence, feeling unworthy?

Early in my journey, I made a list of the things that were no longer serving me; attachments that were holding me back – **things I wished I'd never learned**. Here's what was on my list:

- I wish I had never learned that I'm not worthy of what I want.
- I wish I had never learned that it's waste of time to be spiritual and to worship.
- I wish I had never learned how to hide my feelings.
- I wish I had never learned that I could change my situation by being perfect.
- I wish I had never learned that wearing eyeglasses is a sign of weakness.
- I wish I had never learned that my value was determined by others.
- I wish I had never learned that being confident and secure was only a myth.
- I wish I had never learned that sex equals intimacy.
- I wish I had never learned that speaking up for my needs was a waste of time.
- I wish I had never learned that I wasn't enough.

My next step was to let go of these lies. I wrote each negative attachment on a piece of paper. Next, I took one piece at a time, crumbled the paper and released it into a garbage can. I can't say these things don't still surprise me from time to time, what I can say is that I'm learning how to surrender the power they once had over me.

On the days when I think I should be more perfect; or on the days my self-confidence is lacking, I remember how it felt to let go and be free of their grasp, then I make the choice to let go again.

## A Personal Story of Letting Go

A few months after Eric, my older brother died, the guilt and shame that festered inside me felt like toxic poison, strangling my heart and smothering my spirit. The guilt made me feel depressed, defeated and scared.

Eric's death made no sense; at 51 years old, he was taken too soon. He had no previous health issues and his death wasn't accidental. These circumstances left me thinking I *should* have picked up on the signs sooner or I *should* have intervened and done something to help him before it was too late. My guilt led to anxiety which led to a diminished quality

of life. Put simply, my world felt dark and I couldn't find my way back to the light.

After several sessions with a grief counselor, it was clear that I had to let go of the guilt for my soul to find its way back again.

The following is my true story of letting go and the peace it has brought me:

## Letting Go of Guilt

Guilt comes in different colors. Rational guilt burns a bright red, like a traffic light. It signals that your actions are not honoring you, others or the Universe. When you see this color, the wisest choice is to stop before the damage gets worse.

Irrational guilt burns a somber blue, like a melancholy poem. It whispers sabotaging thoughts like, "It was your fault;" "You should have known better;" and "Why didn't you do more?" When you see this color, the wisest choice is to let the guilt go.

### Feeling the burn

Since my brother's death, irrational guilt has been burning inside of me. Bouts of depression, restless nights and thoughts that I could have saved him, have damaged my spirit. My head tells me Eric's death wasn't my fault, but my heart wants to rewind the clock and do things differently. But time has a merciful way of offering a little perspective and much needed healing. I'm learning that before I can move past his death, I need to let go of the guilt.

Thankfully, my heart is beginning to hear these truths:

- My brother's memory deserves my whole heart; not a broken one that is distracted by the cruel whispers.
- It's time to focus on what I need. The energy I've spent trying to undo the past is keeping me from living in the present; precious moments are slipping away. It's time to hold onto these moments a little tighter.
- I'm beginning to recognize the feelings of guilt are really feelings of regret. I regret not calling him sooner; I regret not providing the help he requested and I regret being mad at him the last week he was alive. The way to move past regret is to make peace with the truth. The truth is: I did all I could.
- While my brother deserves love and kindness, so do I. His life

is over. There will be a day when we will see each other again. Until that day comes, I will remind myself that if I'm going to be loved, then I need to provide that love and if I'm going to be treated with kindness, then I need to provide kindness, too. Holding on to guilt keeps me from doing both of these things.

**Sometimes the simple path to letting go of guilt begins with looking inward and seeing that you're not bad, you're just in pain. And the perfect remedy to soothe your aching heart is to believe these words: "It wasn't my fault."**

The somber color burning inside of me is smoldering down to a paler blue. I still think of Eric often. Lately the memories are less about how he died and more about how he lived. I see him smiling, laughing and making the most of every day. Remembering my brother like this is a better way to honor him. I think if I could talk to Eric one last time, he would tell me, "Mouse, let it go. I'm happy. Please, be happy too."

For you, Eric, my heart is beginning to listen. For you, brother, my heart is beginning to let it go.

## 25 Stories of Peace, Hope and Surrender

The purpose of this book is to share 25 stories of peace, hope and surrender. These stories of letting go don't contemplate the absence of self-responsibility, they actually encourage it.

These stories will help you understand that you're not alone on your journey. They will also challenge you to remember that it's your responsibility to follow your personal destiny – no matter how out of control, or frightening, it may feel at times.

Letting go is about having enough faith to offer up your struggles and then getting out of the way so your life, the beautiful life that is waiting just for you, can be revealed.



# True Story #2



## **Fine the Way I Am**

by Caroline Palmy

My husband told me on December 31, 2008, that he will leave me. I was devastated, but felt soon enough that I feel free, the burden is off my shoulders, then in May 2009 I met a man, and we fell in love, and a relationship started.

I was over the moon, he moved in with me and my three kids, I was very happy. Then things started to fade, and two years later we went through several rough patches, and eventually I could no more. I felt betrayed, too many canceled weekends (where I organized a babysitter for my kids), I felt taken for granted, each time he called at 5:30PM to cancel our date for the evening, I felt used and unloved.

## Good to Just Be

It was December 2011, my husband has just shortened my allowance again, and I had no idea how to survive on the amount he gave me, let alone feed my three kids. I was desperate for that shoulder to lean on, for someone to hug me and tell me, all will be fine, but that boyfriend has disappeared, I was up to that time still in the waiting line, hoping for him to come by or call, I was so needy and alone.

Then I could no longer hold it back, I cried, I cried for days, I only got up in the morning drove my three kids to school, concentrated hard on the road under my tears, trying not to show it to my kids, driving back home, crawling under my duvets and letting all go, I cried I sobbed, I dozed, I was really letting it all wash away and over me.

Too long was I holding it all together, I always needed to be the strong one, I was always there for others, and now I could no longer, I felt weak, but it felt so good, to let it all go, it felt good to just be, it felt liberating. I was deep down, deep down in a deep dark hole, I did not want to come out again, I cried for a full week, then one of my friends came by and got me out for a walk in the sunshine, I was a complete mess. The sunshine, the fresh air, a friend that felt so good, I was not alone anymore.

## An Awakening Begins

Then I began to read up on spiritual books (for me it was Diana Cooper, Louise L. Hay and later Doreen Virtue) and I started to use Facebook more, I liked many inspirational pages, and enjoyed daily quotes and uplifting pictures. Somehow I found many likeminded friends, all over the world, and I learnt so much, and I could also share so much.

My awakening began.

I realized that I was going through a double loss, as I have never really digested the separation from my husband. I got a boyfriend soon, and that helped me over the worst period, especially the time when my husband's new girlfriend moved in with him. But my boyfriend was really just the total opposite of my husband, which was good for that time, but not really what I like.

I was too eager to have him in my life as a substitute husband, a substitute father for my kids, that I might have put too much pressure on him, not in a mean way, just in wrong loving care.

I also realized that I was needy of love, or of being loved to be precise, because I don't feel I am worthy of love. I don't love myself; I need this reassurance from outside. Now I know this never works.

I was so unhappy because I was never a priority in my boyfriend's life, but I never gave myself any priorities either. I was always there for others, never for myself.

He didn't respect me, but again, I never respected my own feelings. He was the perfect mirror, and I learnt a lot.

## My Music

I haven't found myself yet, I realized that, when I was looking at iTunes, when my husband left I deleted all the classical music things in there. I had to remember, what I liked as a teen, years back, yes during 20 years of being with the man that became my husband I never listened to MY music. I never developed my taste for anything, I was only 20, I didn't mind the furniture or pictures or anything, I was happy with anything. He was 14 years older, so he knows better, so I thought.

I lived a life that was not my own, I gave up myself completely, and yes I had three kids to look after, and we moved about 10 times, sometimes even continents, so when I met my boyfriend, I haven't found myself yet. I was happy he wasn't listening to classical music, he listened to Rock, but later I sat at iTunes again, and deleted all the ROCK music, because I like Pop...., I sat there and told myself, now I do this again, only three years ago, I did this with classical music.

Did I learn my lesson, yes I think so, I have been single for 15 months now, and I am still discovering myself, and enjoying reconnecting with my past (family reunion, High School reunion etc.), and yes I still need to forgive myself, for letting myself being used, I adapted too much, I was the pleaser, instead of being myself, I tried to impress my men.

I feel free, I feel loved, and I feel accepted by myself now.

And yes I am open to receiving love now, and I am strong enough to stand by me and I am also ok, if that special man does not enter my life (yet). I am fine the way I am.



# True Story #16



## Manual Release

by Galen Pearl

*I think I must let go. Must fear not, must be quiet so that my children can hear the Sound of Creation and dance the dance that is in them. - Russell Hoban*

My dad was a pilot, flying propeller-driven aircraft back in the early days of the airline industry. Once, when the landing gear did not automatically deploy, he instructed the copilot to circle and drop excess fuel, while he climbed down into the belly of the plane to find the manual release.

After moving some luggage and crates out of the way, he located the release, which was stuck. After finally freeing it, he manually cranked the landing gear into place, and returned to the cockpit to safely land the plane, amid the cheers of the passengers.

I remembered this story when my son James moved away from home. Our job as parents, as the saying goes, is to put ourselves out of a job. There is a natural progression as our children begin gradually to disengage from our day to day care, moving awkwardly but with stubborn determination to young adulthood and independence.

As we see them find their footing, we begin to let go as we gain trust in their judgment and abilities. Watching them take over the reins of their own lives, we settle back with satisfaction, knowing that when the time comes, they are prepared to handle life without us.

## Wondering What Awaits

But for the parent of a special needs child, this progression may be stalled. Depending on the nature of the disability, there may be no gradual separation. Independence does not automatically deploy.

Caring for an adolescent can look very much the same as caring for a much younger child. Chronological adulthood approaches without the corresponding maturity. The parent looks to the future, not with satisfaction but with dread, wondering what awaits her child when she herself is gone.

I know this because I am such a parent.

My son James has autism. As he grew, I planned, or rather, tried to plan for his future. There were basically two options. He could live with me at home, or he could move into some sort of supported living environment. Either scenario entailed the probability that I would die before James. How could I guarantee that he would be looked after?

No matter how many contingencies I planned for, the terrifying answer to that question was always...I couldn't.

All I could do was my best. When they reached adulthood, I opted for the choice of arranging for James and his foster brother Dan, who is also autistic, to live together in a group home run by an organization with a long and successful track record. That way, their lives would already be settled and consistent when the day came that I would not be with them anymore, and in the meantime, I could monitor things.

Then it was time for the actual move. Dan was fine, but James balked. He didn't want his things moved. He didn't want himself moved. He didn't want to be away from me. There is no gradual weaning of a child like James.

We gave him a little extra time. It helped that Dan moved first, so James could see that it was okay. Even so, the day of the move and his first night away was hard.

## A Safe Landing

Was it harder on James or on me? As you might guess, I suffered most. Neither James nor I was prepared to be apart. But while James was comforted by having his things with him, and his brother in the next room, I worried. What was he having for dinner? Would the staff make sure he brushed his teeth? And flossed? Would someone make sure he was wearing clean underwear?

I felt like I had abandoned him. I went to the group home frequently to check on things. I visited James and Dan every weekend, until one Saturday James told me not to come because he and Dan were too busy.

I could see that James and Dan indeed had full lives. The staff and other residents were becoming their new family. They went to work and on outings. James reminded me often that he was now an adult. They were happy and proud. It was time to let go.

I did let go, and we all thrived. Looking back, the process of helping James into independence was a lot like what my dad faced in the airplane that day. I had to circle the field while planning how to avoid a crash landing. I had to move a lot of emotional baggage to find the hand crank for the landing gear.

James and I were both stuck in place, like the crank was, and fearful about moving forward. Once I got the crank unstuck, I had to manually release the wheels by easing James (and me) through the move.

And, like my dad, I brought the plane in for a safe landing.

## About Galen Pearl

Galen Pearl is the author of [10 Steps to Finding Your Happy Place \(and Staying There\)](#). Her book and her [blog](#) by the same title are devoted to helping us develop habits to grow a joyful spirit. In addition to writing, Galen leads workshops and discussion groups focused on increasing the joy in our lives.



# True Story #21



## **A Leap of Faith**

by Anne-Sophie

Two years ago, I needed to let go of something big. I didn't want to, but it was a matter of life and death. I had to let go of my eating disorder.

Letting go of anorexia felt like letting go of myself.

Anorexia had been my best friend, my closest ally and biggest enemy for fourteen years.

It held me when I felt loneliest and consoled me when I felt weak. It gave me power, hope and strength; something to live for, a reason to get out of bed.

Yet, anorexia was also killing me slowly.

My relationship with anorexia had begun with an innocent diet as a nine-year old girl and quickly turned into a never-ending torturous co-dependency.

For fourteen years, my life consisted of numbers: calories consumed, calories burnt, kilos, grams, centimeters, body fat percentages and more.

At 23, I hit rock bottom. I was hardly weighing 80 pounds and my life was hanging on threads as thin as my spaghetti-like hair. I knew I needed to take a leap of faith, break free from my addiction or end up dying a miserable death.

## My True Identity

To be frank, the latter option sounded more enticing as life seemed scary, harsh and violent. But a tiny voice inside wanted me to fight and so I did: I admitted myself into a treatment facility and slowly fought for my freedom and life.

It sucked. I had no idea who I was without being the “skinny girl”, the one who never smiled because she was hungry all the time, the one who had so much “self-control.” I hadn’t achieved anything in life, had no degree, no job and no idea what I was going to do.

All I had was anorexia.

Deciding to get rid of that part felt like killing my baby over and over again. It ripped my heart open every single day.

Yet, I knew, I needed to kill that part of me to finally begin to live.

I jumped off many cliffs without ever seeing a net, but to my astonishment, I was caught by my strong core every single time.

Over time, I began to peel away the layers of fear and anorexia and I uncovered my true identity. I began to see my talents, my skills and my worthiness as a woman who had a right to take up space in this world, eat and enjoy herself like everybody else.

Now, two years into recovery, I still have my ups and downs. I still feel the pull of anorexia telling me to lose weight, to skip a meal and to follow her orders. Yet, I decide to listen to Anne-Sophie, eat, take care of myself and instead of placing value on my body; I place value on my voice, my message and my work.

Today, I’m happy, free and, most important of all, fully alive.

Letting go of the thought that being skinny meant being worthy, equal and even “better than” was the best thing I ever did and the single most gut-wrenching step of my life. Yet, if I had to, I would do it all over again.

## About Anne-Sophie

Anne-Sophie Reinhardt is a body image expert and self-love coach and the author of *Love Your Body the Way It Is*. As a sought-after writer, her work has been published on sites such as the **Huffington Post**, **Tiny Buddha**, **Wild Sister** and **She Takes on the World**. Anne-Sophie is passionate about helping you break up with your scale and reclaim your life! Start your personal body image revolution today by joining her [body-love notes](#).

## About Alex Blackwell



Alex Blackwell is founder of the popular faith-based blog, [The BridgeMaker – Inspiration When You Need It](#).

His Amazon best-seller [Saying Yes to Change: 10 Timeless Life Lessons for Creating Positive Change](#) was released in March, 2012.

A former English teacher, Alex has written over 500 articles for [The BridgeMaker](#) and other publications including [Zen Habits](#), [PickTheBrain](#) and [Lifehacker](#).

He also provides consulting services for bloggers and writers.

Alex Blackwell lives in Overland Park, Kansas with his wife of 28 years, Mary Beth with whom he shares four wonderful children: Brandon, Caitlin, Andrew and Emily.

When Alex isn't writing, he enjoys running, watching Kansas City Royals baseball games and spending time at the beach.

## A Free Gift for You

Alex invites you to download his book, [How to Love Consciously](#) FOR FREE.

The free book explores the power and joy of love. It gives practical advice for **improving relationships**, **inspiring romance** and showing **how love can grow** over a lifetime.

[How to Love Consciously](#) also includes eight ways to create and sustain lasting love, improve intimacy and make a relationship great.

[Download How to Love Consciously here!](#)