

HONOUR THE VALLEY



5 SIMPLE STEPS TO ACCEPT
WHERE YOU ARE ON THE WAY
TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.



BY
TAMI CHIN MITCHELL

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I'm a Valley Girl. Well, not in the way you might think. I was born and raised in Kingston Jamaica (except for a 4-year stint in England where I completed high school, after which I hurried back to my homeland to pursue a career in music. I began on a journey that took me through many highs and lows, peaks and valleys. I performed in many different countries, signed a couple record deals, released many songs, shot several music videos and seemed to be living out my musical dream. And then, one day...it all just stopped. I met the love of my life, got married and wanted to start to family. So many people thought (and still think) that this was why I ended my music career so abruptly. Yes, this is true to an extent but the truth was that I was done with the music industry and wanted something new for my life. I remember doing my last show when I was six months pregnant with my first son knowing that it would've been my final show. At the time, I said it was my last show ever.

To this day, that remains true. I have not touched a stage to sing a song since then. I went on a massive soul search that has continued to this day. In the interim, I was part of a management team for my songstress sister, I started my own business (a hair salon) I dabbled in the music industry (again) for a short time and more recently became a podcaster and now I'm trying on the hat of "Author". I have followed my curiosity down just about every road it lead me to including, at one point, wanting to be a real estate agent. Yeah, like I said, soul searching. Chasing purpose. Craving passion. About a year ago, I decided to sell my business and take a year off to figure out what I really wanted to do with my life next. This is where a new chapter begins.

I was in a rut. I was constantly banging my head against a wall praying for some sign from the Universe, some divine intervention, and some miraculous moment to hit me with inspiration. I was waiting for the pieces of the puzzle to come together and hoping that my "Aha" moment would show up and make the path clear. But here's what was actually happening. I was in the valley...again.

What is the Valley?

Well, a valley by definition is "a low area of land between hills or mountains, typically with a river or stream flowing through it." In my life, the valley has always been the low point that followed a high. For example, when I look back on my life I can think of so many times that I have visited this place after some incredible highlights. So, *why is that the high must be followed by the low?* Well, first of all, contrast. Having a contrasting experience always offers us valuable insight. We can't appreciate good without bad, highs without lows, happiness without sadness and the list goes on. Life is always offering us contrast so we

can see the difference in things while learning to appreciate the good by virtue of the bad. So, this is why the valley is so important. It allows us to appreciate the highs when they come.

But what if we go a step further.

Suppose I told you, you could be happy in the Valley? Suppose I told you that the valley from another perspective is actually just a deeper level rather than a low point. The valley is where we go to collect ourselves, it's where we are forced to reckon with who we are and where we are made to face our deepest fears. It's where our shadows live but it's also where our light is unknowingly pulled to the forefront. Look at musicians for example, or any creative person for that matter. They don't constantly stay at the peak of their game. You may see them shining from stage to stage, book to book, exhibition to exhibition, film to film, but what you don't see is what happens in between. In between every hit song is a moment of silence. A moment where they go off to ACTUALLY live their lives. Perhaps they encounter great love or heartache, loss and grief, embarrassment and fear, depression or anxiety but this is where they collect enough data (experiences) to process, mix it all together and return it to you in the form of a smash hit!!! Artists, authors and actors alike can attest to this. But it's not something that is limited to just this group of people. It happens to all of us at some point or another and happens multiple times throughout our lives.

Can you take a minute to think about how many times you have been in this valley space? How many times have you been at such a low point that you thought you'd never get out? How many times have you felt like you've had the rug pulled from beneath you and somehow landed on your ass again? How many times have you hit rock bottom and said the words "back at square one?" If you're like me, the answer is "more times than I'm even comfortable admitting".

Here is what I know.

The valley is the most important space of your life. It's like the moment between breaths after the exhale. It's the quick, silent, stillness that makes the next breath delicious. Do it now, take a deep breath, inhale, exhale and feel the pause just before you inhale again. Doesn't that pause make the next breath mean something? Well, the same goes for the Valley. This is what makes the next peak DELICIOUS!

In this book, I want to help each and everyone of you to learn how to 'Honour The Valley' that is showing up in your life right now and help you truly understand that it is a necessary step to getting you to the next peak.

At this point, I would encourage to pause, get a book (or some paper) and a pen. There are a few steps that will require you to write things out. I would also add that, while you can give this book a quick read through, I would ask you schedule out sometime for yourself to really work through this process so that it may be most effective. Dedicate some quiet time to yourself and consider it an act of self-love. You are welcomed to do this process more than once, just keep in mind the specific situation you may be trying to work through.

OKAY...

Here are 5 simple steps that help me to honour my valleys when they show up because they never come without a gift or a lesson.

1. Why am I here? (Again) Looking at where you are (Acceptance)

So many of us have had to return to the same valley over and over again. Even if the circumstances around it look different, the core feeling is often the same. Maybe you're not in the job you want, the relationship you desire, perhaps you aren't further along in your career, maybe you aren't going after what you really want or your health is not up to par, but it is important to look at where you are, acknowledge what you are feeling in this place and sit with that for a moment.

I like to journal about this stage. It helps me to get all the thoughts and judgements about myself and the situation out of my head and onto paper. It helps me to put it all down so that I can really look at how it's making me feel but even deeper, it's gives me clues about why I am feeling this way.

Here are some prompts to get you started:

- I've been feeling really stuck lately because...
- I've noticed that it makes me feel...
- I am trying to pinpoint the first time I felt like this and I remember someone saying to me/making me feel like...

This exercise is simply to let it all out. It's an opportunity to feel all the feelings and take stock of what's really going inside your head. This is not the time for holding back or pretending to have it all together. This is raw emotion. It is not easy stuff. It is often painful and loaded with judgment and guilt. Take a moment

when you can to deep dive into this practice as it's going to be important for the next step.

2. Letting yourself off the hook (forgiveness)

I've asked you to take this deep dive because it literally provides you with a road map of where you are hurting and where requires healing. It will directly show you how you feel about yourself and why. It will highlight people or situations you thought were responsible for making you feel this way but mostly, it gives you an opportunity to release it. I used to think that letting people off the hook (forgiveness) meant that I was making what they said or did ok. But I began to realize that the practice made me lighter and created more space for me to ultimately forgive myself. We hold ourselves in such contempt over certain situations that all it does is literally anchor you to the feeling, to the moment, to the situation or to the person. You can release it all today. You can even feel the relief right now of what it would feel like to NOT carry this weight around anymore. Take a breath and imagine you have released it all in this moment. Give it all up. Set it free. Don't you feel better already?

Now, forgiveness of self and others and situations is not a one time deal. It is a practice that you will need to repeat sometimes daily. You may find yourself stuck in traffic, making meals, doing laundry, etc. and all of a sudden feel the daunting weight of it all. In those moments, I love to use the mantra *"I release it all. This no longer serves me because I am moving in a new direction where I cannot take this with me."* This simply acknowledges the feelings and gives you an opportunity to forgive again. Forgiveness is key. Forgiveness is Freedom. Forgiveness is a daily practice. Let's get back to that journal and start writing about it.

Here are some prompts:

- I am ready to release this person/situation
- The truth is, It does not serve me to keep this with me because...
- What serves me is to learn from the situation and try to do things differently. I've learned that...
- I release myself from feeling bad about what happened and what was said.
- I release this from my life because it feels better to be in flow than to be constantly fighting this current.

3. This is not a final destination.

So many times we hit a bump in the road and before you know it, we hit another and another and another. We hit so many that instead of seeing them as bumps they become roadblocks. Before you know it, you've come to a complete standstill and can't see a way out. It can easily feel like this is a destination when in fact, it's a through road to the next place. The truth is, whether you are on the mountaintop or in the valley, neither place is a fixed destination. We are constantly moving through the different stages of life and we don't ever really unpack and stay there forever. We may visit for long periods of time, stay in situations longer than we need to or get complacent in a dead end relationship or job. We can get complacent even when things are good and stop looking for the next set of breadcrumbs to drop, stop dreaming new dreams and before you know it, everything you thought you wanted to make you happy changes again. It is key to remember that nowhere is a real destination in this life. We are never anchored to any one situation or person or job. We are simply moving through to the next path that shows up. Often times, we create that path ourselves. Any which way you take it, good or bad, keep it moving and recognize that something is just up ahead or round the bend but it requires you to move in that direction.

Questions to get you moving again:

- How can I take one simple step to move in that direction?
- What have I been putting off that I need to get done?
- What small step could I take today to be a little closer to the life I want to create? Perhaps it's joining a gym, brainstorming that business idea, socializing in a new space, networking in different circles, education in a particular area.

These are just a few ideas but you get my drift. Keep it moving.

4. Honour the Valley

Remember in the beginning, the valley definition spoke of the river or stream flowing through it. This is a key point in remembering this is not a place of stagnancy. It is a place to learn stillness but like the rivers that run through it, to

also learn to align with the flow and energy of the steady stream of consciousness. I have gotten my biggest breakthroughs in the valley. This is where my biggest dreams are born through self-reflection, which can be painful and confusing, but it's where I work through all my mess and re-evaluate the "whys?" of my life. It's where I take a deep dive into my purpose and my process and come face to face with who I am. I have been broken and rebuilt in this space so many times that I have chosen to honour the valley. I have to honour this space that has come to me as a teacher, that has come to give me clarity through the chaos and that always leaves me better, stronger and more prepared than when I first got there. The valley is a magical place of self-discovery and is always asking you to find your worth and become worthy and deserving of all you desire. The valley is to be honoured. It is to be respected. Dare I say, we should welcome it with excitement because it is a clear indication that preparation for a new level is right in front of us. It is an invitation to raise the bar and promote yourself to a higher position. So the next time you find yourself in a Valley space, remind yourself that that something is shifting in your life and the perfect teacher has shown up at the right time.

Questions I like to ask in these moments:

- What is this here to teach me?
- How is this preparing me for a new level?
- How can I receive this with as much ease and grace as possible?
- How can I align with my truest self to accept what is showing at this time to serve me?

5. Gratitude & Grace

I have kept a gratitude journal (on and off) since I was 16 years old. It's ALWAYS a game changer for me and I promise, it can be for you too. Gratitude puts us in line with what is already good about our lives and puts us in a vibration of feeling happy. It's creates a frequency that attracts more of itself. I believe that just as negativity breeds more negativity, the opposite is also true. Positivity breeds more positivity and so, gratitude brings about more reasons to be grateful.

I used to list 5 things a day I was grateful for and as time went on, I could list anywhere between 30-40 things just off the top of my head. Now, listen, a gratitude journal is not a place to write deeply spiritual findings and life lessons

(even though they are welcomed) but to simply list all the things you are grateful for. I can't tell you how many times I've written things like "I am grateful for a bed to sleep in, for a phone, for a hot meal, for internet, for water, for electricity" I remember writing once how grateful I was for particular blue, bleach detergent bar that took every stain out of everything! My point is, this is not some deep dive into the Universe; it's being grateful for the everyday stuff and taking the time to notice them. I guarantee you that once you make this a practice in your life, you will see more things to be grateful for showing up daily either by virtue of the law of attraction or just simply being in a frame of mind to look for things to write in your journal later. Win win right?

I ask that you start your own gratitude journal. Get a book that you really like. Use a pen that you love. Put it in a place you can go to everyday in some peace and quiet. And start by just listing 5 things you are grateful for. If you can do more, go for it. They say, if you REALLY want to shift your life, write 100 things you're grateful for daily. Maybe you're not there yet, so let's start small.

I always start my journal the same way:

"I am so happy and grateful..."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Gratitude turns enough into a feast, a mess into a message a blunder into a blessing. Don't stop looking for the good that already exists in your life.

And then there was Grace.

If Gratitude is the bridge, then grace is the vehicle that takes us across. Grace, to me, has always been an ever calming, never failing constant in my life. Grace has given me the ability to embrace every single thing that has come my way. It has given me the gift of vision and shown me what is possible when you let more love in. I have been broken open countless times and grace has put me back together in moments when I thought I could never be whole again. Grace has guided me through the times when I had no clue what to do next or where to turn. Grace showed up in the form of family and friends, blessings big and small, gut feelings and instincts, friendly faces and strangers. Grace showed up in wrong turns and sharp exits. Grace came in huge waves and quiet moments, she came in plenty and little but she showed up every time, without fail. Often times what I thought was upside down was really right side up. What I thought came to disrupt my life turned out to be things that came to heal me

and make me whole again. Grace is a gift and it covers each and every one of us, even if we don't know at the time.

My Deepest Wish.

I hope this was helpful. I hope you feel a little clearer about what is happening in your life right now. My deepest wish is that you feel encouraged. We all go through things in life that knock us off our center but I know without a shadow of a doubt that everything is just the meaning we put to it. I am asking you to put a meaning to this space, to give it a new perspective, to let yourself and others off the hook, to keep it moving, to find gratitude in the little things, let grace take you through it and ultimately to honour the valley.