

EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

BREAKTHROUGH

METHODS

FOR ACHIEVING

PEACE OF MIND

WHEN FACING

THE UNKNOWN

SUSAN JEFFERS, PH.D.

AUTHOR OF *FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY*
AND *END THE STRUGGLE AND DANCE WITH LIFE*

FROM THE MILLION
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY
COMES A POWERFUL AND HEALING
BOOK DESIGNED TO OFFER A SAFETY
NET IN A WORLD OF NEVER-ENDING
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COMFORTING AND LIFE-AFFIRMING
BOOKS YOU WILL EVER READ.

*"Exceptionally helpful in learning to
handle life's greatest challenge.*

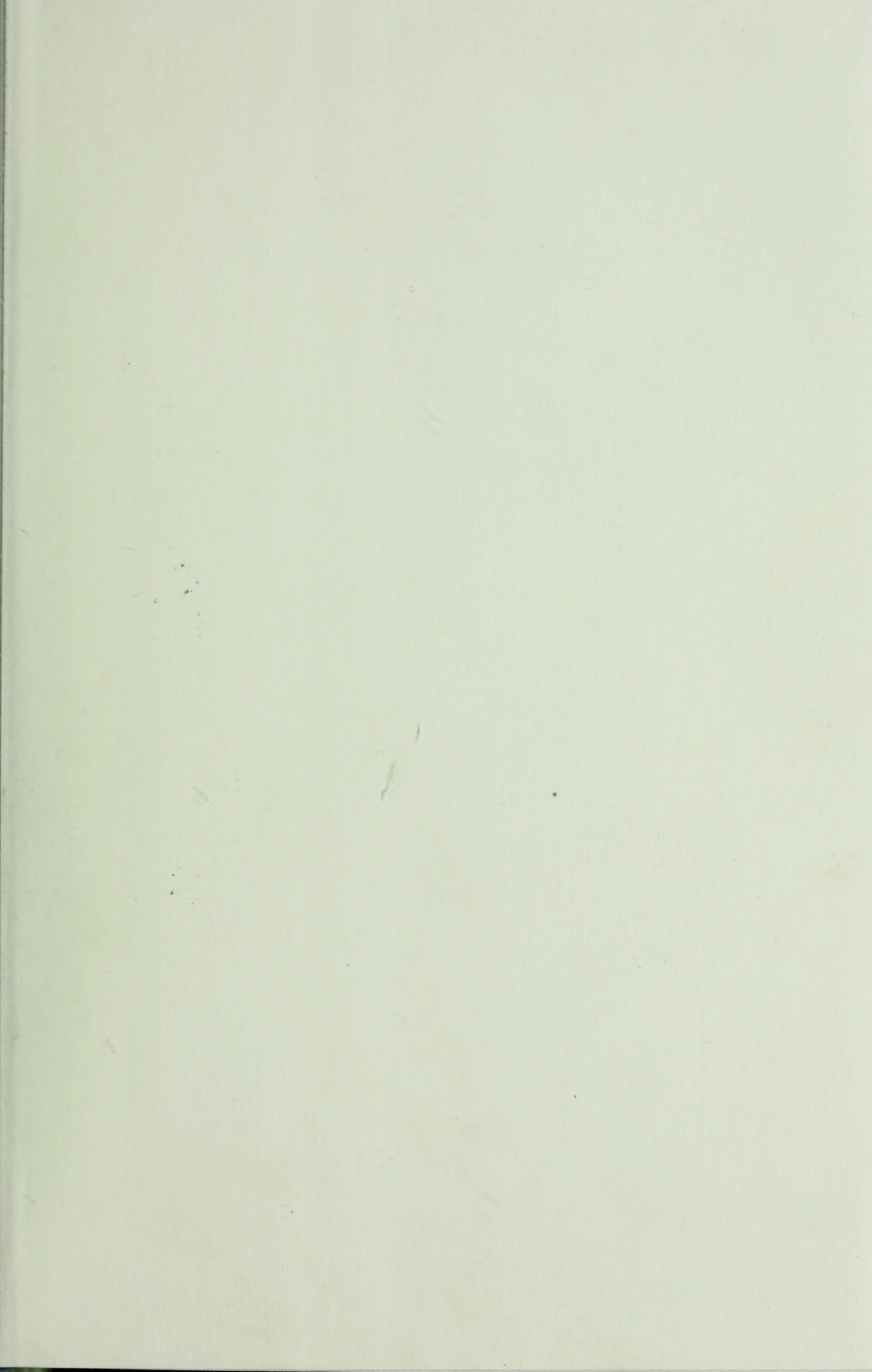
*I love this book!" —Wayne W. Dyer,
author of WISDOM OF THE AGES*

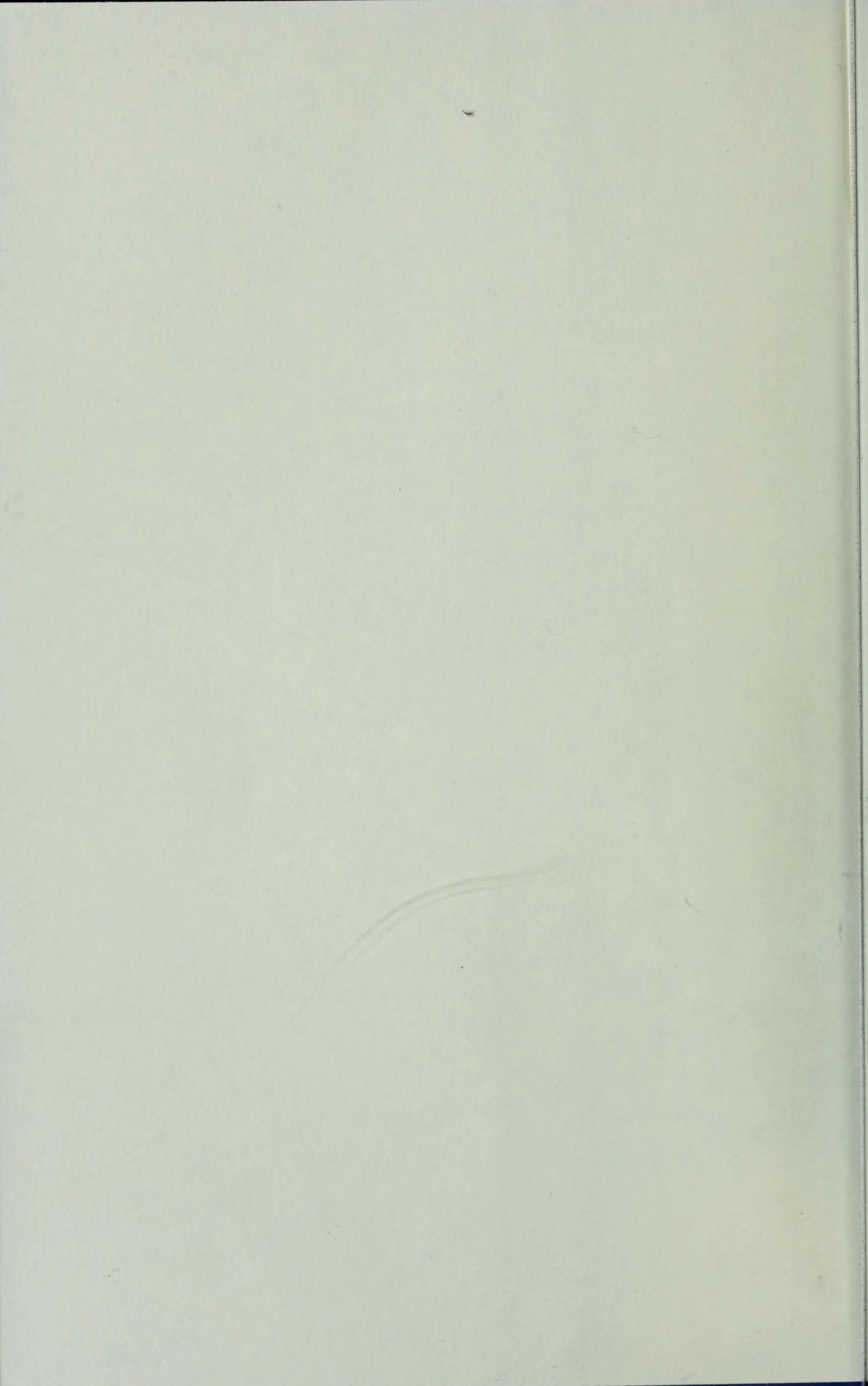
With her invaluable insights and exercises,
Susan Jeffers gives you the tools you need
to deal with all the uncertainty in your life with a
sense of peace and possibility. You will learn:

- ☞ Forty-two exercises to help make your
life an exciting adventure instead of a
continuous worry
- ☞ How to lighten up and put problems into
a life-affirming perspective
- ☞ The amazing power of the word *maybe*
- ☞ And much more

You will discover that there is a wondrous,
joyous, and abundant life that can exist in the
presence of uncertainty. The question is, What do
you need to do to reach this wonderful state? And
the answers abound in *Embracing Uncertainty*.

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by Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.
(in alphabetical order)

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Yourself Up to the "Next Curve You Face"

Feed the Fear . . . and Reveal Dynamic Techniques
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Why a Little Book?

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(in alphabetical order)

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Embracing Uncertainty

Breakthrough Methods for Achieving Peace

of Mind When Facing the Unknown



Susan Jeffers, PH.D.

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*To the many heroes in our world who show us what
embracing uncertainty truly looks like.*

*They open our eyes to the astonishing, but sometimes
forgotten, strength that lives within us all.*

We need only to remember.

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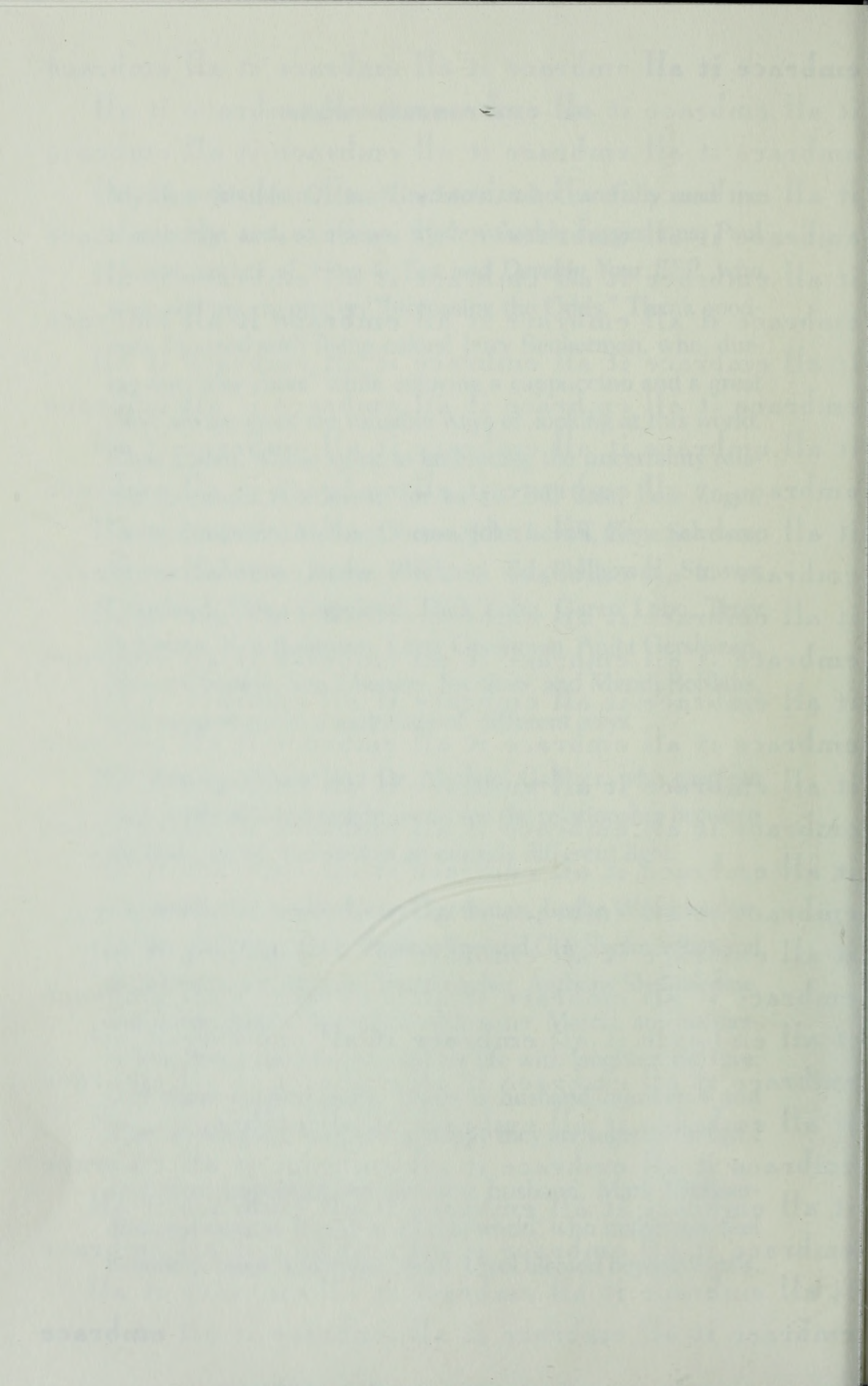
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[illegible]



Introduction

How Do You Choose to Live?



*Now, more than ever, we need something
enduring to hold close, something that won't
wash away in the furious tides of change.*

—WALTER COOPER¹

E*mbracing Uncertainty* is a book about sleeping better at night . . . about easing the pain in our brains that comes from trying to control the uncontrollable . . . about making life more an enriching adventure than a continuous worry. It is about providing that “something enduring to hold close, something that won’t wash away in the furious tides of change.”

The wise philosopher, Alan Watts, points out that there is *the feeling* that we live in a time of *unusual* insecurity. He attributes this feeling to the many new technologies with which science and industry are bombarding us. He also attributes it to the many long-held traditions that have bro-

ken down relative to family life, religion, and the world of work.² Now here's the surprise . . . *Watts made these observations in 1951!*

I would venture to say that the feeling of insecurity has greatly escalated since those seemingly "good old days"! Since then we have lived through many events that have further eroded our sense of security, none more startling and upsetting than the destruction by terrorists of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington on September 11, 2001. So many people from all over the world lost their lives. And so many lost people they dearly loved. What happened on this historic day has had the effect of putting the entire world on a state of alert. For how long? Only time will tell.*

To compound the difficulty, we live in a society that teaches us to grasp for control, total control, of everything—our careers, our relationships, our children, our health, our money, the state of the world, and on and on and on. We insist that life be secure, safe, predictable, and all good things. As a result, we are uncomfortable, even panicked, about all the uncertainty in our lives. After all, uncertainty implies "no-control."**

If the truth be told, most of us don't handle this reality of "no-control" very well. We take pills to lessen the anxiety. Or

*This horrific terrorist attack took place just as I was completing this book. I remember thinking to myself that if there was ever a time when the world needed to learn how to embrace uncertainty, this was certainly it.

**The sense in which I am using uncertainty throughout this book is the state of not-knowing what the future holds in any area of our lives . . . or our world.

we go into denial. Or we become addicted to work. Or whatever else we find to do to take our minds off the fact that we have so little control. Or we simply live with a cloud of anxiety that never goes away as we think about the unknown . . . the unexpected . . . and the uncontrollable. What is lamentable about the situation is that . . .

We spend so much of our lives worrying and trying to prevent the bad from happening, that we forget to enjoy the good. What a waste of a life!

Thankfully, it doesn't have to be that way. We don't have to walk around with a dark cloud over our heads. The truth is . . .

Nowhere has it been proven that a rich, joyous, abundant life cannot exist in the presence of uncertainty.

This is a very essential concept for you to take in. There have been many before us and there are many with us today who have proven that life can be wonderful, despite the uncertainty. In fact, there are those who have proven that life can be wonderful because of the uncertainty! *Yes, because of the uncertainty.*

The question is, "What do we need to do to reach this wonderful state of being in this world?" As I pondered this question over and over again prior to and during the writing of this book, I came up with many answers to help you learn how to make life grand despite, better yet, *because of*, the uncertainty.

But before you delve into all the ideas I provide within

these pages, you need to embrace three important realities. Without an understanding and acceptance of these three realities, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to make yourself comfortable with all the uncertainty in the world today. Once you embrace these three realities, you will be on a stronger footing to begin to embrace the grand adventure of it all. And it truly is a grand adventure.

I suggest you read these three realities a number of times. In the beginning, you may not like all of what you read, but ultimately you will be able to see the definite advantages that can come from embracing all the uncertainty in your life.

Reality 1

The only certainty is that life is uncertain!

“Susan, I already know that!” Of course, you already know that. But on a very deep level of your being *you don't truly believe it . . .* nor do you want to believe it! When you picked up this book, the likelihood was that you would have preferred that the title of the book be *Erasing Uncertainty* instead of *Embracing Uncertainty*!

On a very deep level of your being, you want guarantees. Isn't that true? You want a promise that life will give you a happy marriage, lots of money, vigorous health, well-behaved, happy children, a world without conflict . . . or whatever it is for you. If you truly believed that life is uncertain, you wouldn't be looking for any guarantees; you would be looking for something else. And I will keep you in sus-

pense for a little while before I tell you exactly what that something else is.

Again, and I can't repeat it often enough, the reality is that there is never a way to erase the uncertainty in any area of our lives. Name it, and it is uncertain. We could cry, scream, and be angry about this, but nothing is going to change the fact that, even if we do our very best, we cannot predict or control, even the next second of our lives, let alone how our children turn out, how our relationships will turn out, how we are treated at work, how long we will live, and on and on and on.

There's *nothing* that's certain . . . of THAT you can be certain!

I can hear many of you saying, "How depressing! You mean I REALLY can't control my world? I REALLY can't create the guarantee, the safety, the comfort, I am seeking? I REALLY can't become strong enough to control my own destiny?" My answer is, "No. You cannot gain the kind of control you are seeking."

"Oh, yes, I can, Susan. I can get insurance. I can raise my kids a certain way. I can eat the right food." Denial. Denial. Denial. Of course you can do all of the above and I am not against your taking such action. In fact, I *encourage* it. That still doesn't offer any assurance that things will turn out the way you want them to. The hard reality is that the insurance company can go out of business, your children can grow up the opposite of what you would have wished, and the right food today is the wrong food tomorrow. Whoops! You get the picture.

It is now time for you to take a deep breath and SURRENDER to the fact that you can control NOTHING when it comes to the future. To help you accept this reality, you need to say to yourself over and over again,

I have no control over the future.

I have no control over the future.

I have no control over the future.

Believe it or not, you will soon come to realize that this “negative” statement is a very positive affirmation!* As you repeat this affirmation over and over again, you will consciously LET GO of any hope that you can create any certainty in your life. This sounds like bad news, but it truly isn’t . . . which leads us to the second reality . . .

Reality 2

Once you surrender to the fact that you are unable to control the uncertainty, you will, at last, be able to breathe a sigh of relief.

Yes, when you finally do reach that state of SURRENDER, you can’t help but feel the peace that comes when you stop trying to do the impossible. (Did you ever notice how

*Generally speaking, affirmations are best stated as a positive rather than as a negative. However, there are exceptions to this rule that can serve us in some way. This is one of those exceptions.

great it feels when you stop hitting your head against the wall?)

Understand that surrender in this case doesn't mean giving up on your attempts to do the very best that you can; it means letting go of something over which you have no control . . . THE OUTCOME of any situation in your life. Once you've let go of the outcome, you can understand why you are overcome with a wonderful sense of calm. "Whew! I don't have to work so hard doing the impossible . . . controlling the future. I can rest at last." What a relief!

This is important: As long as you think you can *beat* the very nature of life itself, you avoid looking for a way of being in this world that actually *embraces* the nature of life itself . . . which is uncertainty. You continue to live with the delusion that there has to be a way to control everything.

If, however, you are totally clear that there is no way to create certainty in your life, you can then move on to something more life-affirming. That is, you can learn how to embrace uncertainty instead of trying to *erase* it . . . which, of course, is impossible. Now on to the good news . . .

Reality 3

A "deep" acceptance that life is uncertain opens the door to a powerful way of living.

Earlier, I told you that, if we truly accepted the fact that life was uncertain, we wouldn't be looking for guarantees. We

would be looking for something else. And not to keep you in suspense a moment longer, here is what we would be looking for . . .

We would be looking for the valuable gifts inherent in all that happens to us . . . no matter how bad things may seem in any given moment. Finding the gifts minimizes—even erases—the suffering.

We would be looking for a way of being in the world that assures us that we could handle whatever life hands us. Therefore, we would live with a “bring it all on!” attitude knowing that we are prepared for anything that comes our way!

We would be looking for a way of being in the world that allows us to see uncertainty, not as something to fear, but as an enriching aspect of life.

Let me tell you a little about my own experience of learning how to embrace uncertainty. I grew up desperately wanting guarantees in my life. I kept looking to Daddy, or Mommy, or God, to always keep me safe and secure. I married very early (at the age of eighteen) hoping that my Prince Charming would make me feel safe and secure. Poor guy! Of course, he couldn't make my fairy-tale expectations come true. This disappointment created a lot of strong emotions within me . . . anger, denial, frustration, helplessness, sadness, and fear. Ultimately, we divorced. Between my marriages, I dated a lot of men, but finally had to admit to myself

that there truly was no one out there who could make me feel safe and secure.

So I took another tack. I became defiant and tried to control the uncertainty all by myself. Exhausting . . . and, of course, futile. Ultimately, I had to SURRENDER to the fact that even I, as hard as I tried, couldn't keep the harsh realities of life from knocking at my door . . . realities like illness, or divorce, or the death of people I loved. I was totally helpless when it came to creating certainty in my life.

In the beginning, this realization was very distressing to me. But little by little, as I explored the many ways of accessing the great power that lies within my being, my feelings of distress turned into feelings of delight and discovery. As I learned, and as I wish to convey to you throughout this book . . .

There is great adventure in the unknown that propels us to discover powerful parts of ourselves that we didn't know were there.

Each moment, each day, each age, each experience—good or bad—brings its own challenge and its own wonderment as to how it will all unfold. The trick is to learn to love the uncertainty of it all . . . to find, at last, the great satisfaction, the great joy, and the great opportunity that lies within the uncertainty.

So how do you choose to live? Do you choose to live in a state of unhappiness, exhaustion, and futility . . . or do you choose to live with a sense of excitement and possibility

about all the uncertainty in our lives? Yes, you definitely have the choice, and, unless you are a masochist, I am sure you will choose the latter.

Making the choice to live a life filled with excitement and possibility is a first step. Helping you take the next step . . . and the next . . . and the next . . . is what *Embracing Uncertainty* is all about.

In addition to the many new ideas presented within this book, I've included forty-two exercises (yes, forty-two exercises!) to help you get rid of your soul-destroying ways of thinking and being in this world. You would be wise to take note of those particular exercises that "speak" to you as you read through the book. Then go back to your favorite exercises, and little by little, make them an important (and enjoyable) part of your daily life. Eventually, you will be able to embrace the fact that life is grand despite the fact that . . . or better yet, *because* life is uncertain.

I also want you to know that *this book definitely has a mind of its own!* It told me that it wants to be read over and over again. It wants to be your resource when you need help in pushing through your worries about the future. It wants to help you in a multitude of ways. So I suggest that you make this book one of your very best friends. Visit it often and get to know it well. If you do, it won't let you down.

So, are you ready for an adventure of the most exciting kind . . . the kind that propels you from one way of seeing the world into another? As you travel through this book, you will

take a magical journey into the mind and into the spirit. Along the way, you will open your eyes to the beauty, the miracle, the joy, and the possibility in it all. All you have to do is take a good seat in the theater and let the story unfold. And what an amazing story it is!