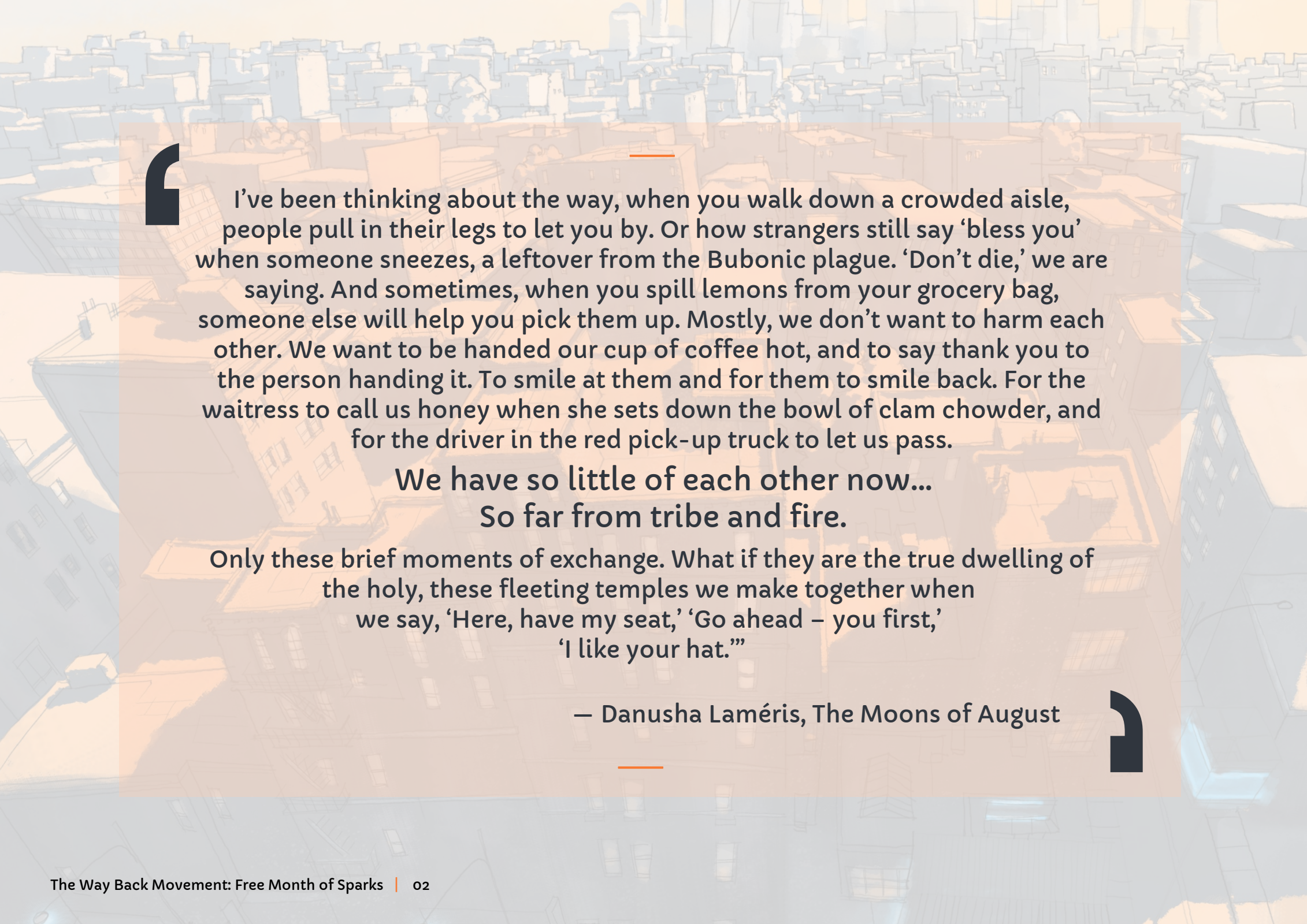




Move Beneath the Surface

The Way Back is a weekly shared practice that cultivates meaningful connection and allows us to be heard and seen for who we truly are.



I’ve been thinking about the way, when you walk down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs to let you by. Or how strangers still say ‘bless you’ when someone sneezes, a leftover from the Bubonic plague. ‘Don’t die,’ we are saying. And sometimes, when you spill lemons from your grocery bag, someone else will help you pick them up. Mostly, we don’t want to harm each other. We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot, and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder, and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.

We have so little of each other now...
So far from tribe and fire.

Only these brief moments of exchange. What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these fleeting temples we make together when we say, ‘Here, have my seat,’ ‘Go ahead – you first,’ ‘I like your hat.’”

— Danusha Laméris, *The Moons of August*

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MONTH 1 SPARKS

Week 1

Allegory of
the Cave

Week 2

Are you Misusing
Your Mind?

Week 3

Look for the
Helpers

Week 4

Gratitude Equals
Abundance

How to Use This Guide

This guide is an excerpt of *The Way Back: Volume 1*. It is a collection of sparks designed to help you connect meaningfully and intentionally with the people around you. Each spark includes a curated quote, written passage, and prompt to get your conversation started.

Anyone can start a *Way Back* tribe. All you need is a group of engaged individuals with a desire to connect.

Ready to gather your tribe? Review the 3 easy steps below.

01

Collect Your Sparks

You're already done with this step! You'll use the sparks within this excerpt from *The Way Back: Volume 1*.

02

Choose a Time

Your tribe can meet whenever works for everyone. We recommend meeting once a week on the same day and time, and allotting 30 minutes from start to finish.

03

Lead With Confidence

Ensure your success with the *Getting Started Guide*, which provides tools and tips for creating a safe space and leading a gathering where everyone can feel safe, heard, and excited to return!

WEEK 1

Allegory of the Cave

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” — Albert Einstein

The Allegory of the Cave was a dialogue written by Greek philosopher Plato. It begins with a group of prisoners in a dark cave, dimly lit by a fire. These prisoners are chained to a wall and have never seen the world outside of the cave. They can see shadows on the wall by the light of the fire, but they’ve never seen the actual objects making the shadows. All they know are the shadows themselves. So, if they see a shadow of a book, they might say, “Oh, there’s a book.” But, really, it was the shadow of a book, not the book itself. It’s a bit like knowing the word “strawberry” means a small, red fruit, but never having actually tasted a strawberry.

This allegory reminds me of how we often don’t know what we don’t know. For so long, I had never traveled outside of my home state of Tennessee. So, my perspective was very limited. Then, when I traveled to Denver, I was shocked to see folks eating fruit and hummus at outdoor events rather than fried chicken and potato salad, which was much more common where I grew up.

And, I had heard of the Rocky Mountains, but we had the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. At the time, I thought, “Aren’t all mountains the same?” And, it turns out they aren’t.

What else don’t I know? Well, I...don’t know. With each experience, our perspective gets a little broader, the color fills in a little more. How can we free ourselves from only knowing something by the “shadows” instead of the actual thing itself? Experience. Step your toe in the water. Do something new.

This goes for people, too. If you have an “other,” maybe it’s time to learn a little more about them instead of knowing them through the “shadows.” Unlike the prisoners in Plato’s allegory, we have the key to free ourselves and to experience life in color. Take a step today to experience it in real life, full of color.

TODAY'S PROMPT

What is something you may only be experiencing through a “shadow?”

WEEK 2

Are you Misusing Your Mind?

“Don’t believe every worried thought you have. Worried thoughts are notoriously inaccurate.” — Renee Jain

A friend was recently talking through a major life decision that was potentially coming up for them. They were feeling overwhelmed, terrified, anxious, and stressed. As I listened, I noticed something: They were piling on all of the potential problems they may ever face into that single moment. What a heavy weight! Why was this happening? The mind loves to problem solve. And it’s good at it! So, it comes up with many things to chew on (worry), all of which take you out of this moment.

It might sound like:

- What if I don’t have all the answers in that meeting?
- Will traffic be bad on the way to my appointment and make me late?
- My car sounds different today – what if it breaks down?
- What if I never find “the one?”
- What if he/she won’t marry me?
- What if he/she divorces me?
- What if my children struggle when they are adults?
- What if I don’t make enough money to pay my bills?

I’m not saying these things aren’t important. But, the mind is a tool that needs to be used properly and at the right time. If you get worked up into a frenzied state of anxiousness, it’s very difficult to think clearly from this state. The question I ask myself is, “Is this a problem that my mind can solve in this moment?” If the answer is no, then I know that I’m living in the future and need to shift to this moment by becoming still and breathing.

For example, if I feel anxious about not being prepared and having all the answers in an upcoming meeting, I’ll use my mind to take action in that moment. I’ll prepare as much as I can. I’ll succinctly recap what I know and make a list of good questions to ask. After I’ve done that, if I still feel anxious, it’s a clear indication that I’m still in the future and need to get back to the present moment. So, I’ll sit still for 10 minutes and breathe. I’ll often do a body scan if I’m feeling too anxious and distracted to be still without the help of a guide.

If I’m feeling anxious about something that I can’t do anything about in this moment, such as ‘What if x happens’, I can immediately recognize that I’m not in this moment and this isn’t a job for my mind. Then, I can take a few minutes to sit still and breathe. And, the anxiety dissipates.

TODAY'S PROMPT

What do you do when you’re feeling anxious or stressed?

WEEK 3

Look for the Helpers

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”
— Fred Rogers

It can be overwhelming to watch the news or listen to the radio and hear about all of the things going on in the world. There are so many difficult situations and a lot of divisiveness. But, for this moment, let’s focus on the good that occurs even in the most difficult of situations. Helpers come in all varieties. They are people who care. People who make an instant decision to get involved and help others.

Helpers look like:

- Jonathan Smith, a father of three, who risked his life and carried 20 of his fellow concertgoers to safety during the Las Vegas shooting
- The firefighters who risked their lives to save others during 9/11
- Ian Grillot, who risked his life to save two Indian men when a gunman opened fire on them in a bar
- The everyday heroes who save their neighbors from floodwaters during hurricanes
- Chef José Andrés, who built a team and cooked day and night to help feed the people of Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria

Who has been a helper in your life? Maybe someone who encouraged you during a really difficult time. Or, someone who brought you food when you lost a loved one. Maybe someone who helped you see the potential in yourself. Or, someone who didn’t judge you and just loved you for who you are.

TODAY'S PROMPT

When have you noticed a helper in the midst of a catastrophe? Or, who has helped you in your own time of crisis?

WEEK 4

Gratitude Equals Abundance

“When you are grateful, fear disappears and abundance appears.” — Tony Robbins

Have you ever had those days where you felt you didn't have much going for you? Maybe you were having a particularly rough week at work, which spilled into things at home, and you just felt over it. We've all had those periods of time. But, in those moments, we have a decision to make. We can focus on the things that are going wrong, and if you believe in the law of attraction, get more of those things. Or, we can stop to reflect on all of the things we're grateful for, which creates a feeling of abundance.

A few years ago, I would write down my “3 grateful things” each day and they would often include things like family, friends, and health – super generic stuff. And, then I would be walking around outside and see someone who was blind and walking through downtown, navigating other pedestrians and tons of traffic. In that moment, I would feel a deep gratitude for the ability to see. But, for some reason, it took being reminded to be grateful for my eyesight, something that helps me get through every single day!

What small victories or everyday occurrences might you have forgotten or be overlooking when reflecting on what you're grateful for? Remembering these is how you create the abundance mentality!

These things might include:

- Your mental ability to be able to work
- Music and how it makes you feel
- A book you're reading
- The person shoveling snow on the sidewalk in the winter
- Clean drinking water
- Peripheral vision
- A cozy blanket
- Being able to breathe on your own
- The ability to participate in another day
- The feeling of the morning
- Spending time with a loved one
- Someone's sense of humor
- A great night's sleep

I think you get the idea. Have you ever wanted something, like a job promotion or a partner, and then gotten it? After a while, if you're like me, you might have a tendency to forget how much you wanted it in the first place and then gratitude goes right out the window! Today is a reminder to take a few moments to be still and be grateful.

TODAY'S PROMPT

When have you noticed a helper in the midst of a catastrophe? Or, who has helped you in your own time of crisis?



A Note From the Founder

We live in a world where online communication and passive interactions have become the norm. I created The Way Back to allow us to return to the simple practices that make us human.

Whether you gather a tribe in your neighborhood, workplace, senior living center, school, church or other organization, The Way Back will help you get beneath the surface to truly see those around you, and be seen for who you truly are. Join me in this modern-day version of sitting around the fire.

*Keepin' the joy,
Patti Bryant*



How did your first month go?
Ready to officially gather your tribe?

VISIT THE SHOP

Interested in rolling out this employee experience program in your organization and/or aligning our books with your organization's values, mission, and visual branding?

LEARN MORE



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