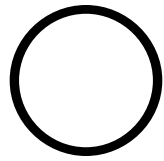


# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Find inner-calm, discover your life's purpose and achieve your goals through the principles of peace, purpose, power and practice, with a philosophy for all lifestyles from Oprah's favourite life coach, Martha Beck



prah Winfrey calls her “One of the smartest women I know”, and with her PhD from Harvard, best-selling books and three children, it would be easy to view Martha Beck as one of those ‘has it all’ American mummy gurus dead-set on showing us why she’s best friends with the mighty Ms Winfrey, and why we’re slogging it out at a nine-to-five job and best friends with our sofa.

However, a brief read through Martha’s resume reveals that the 48-year-old certainly didn’t pull herself up into her enviable position in life via golden thread bootstraps. A divorced, once bordering-on-bankrupt, mother-of-three – whose second child Adam has Down Syndrome – Martha’s earned a deserved reputation in the US as a straight-talking therapist and life coach, whose philosophy for leading a more fulfilling life can be broken down into her four bite-size principles of Peace, Purpose, Power and Practice.

A dedicated believer in creating your own path to personal enrichment and enlightenment, Martha also advocates the importance of acting on what you discover about yourself.

“If I act on [my epiphanies], I know from experience they’ll sink deeper into my consciousness, until they’re intrinsic parts of my world view,” she says. “Then new epiphanies will occur to me... that’s the way everyone’s destiny unfolds.”

And it’s a ‘practice makes perfect’ approach that’s echoed by UAE-based life coach and author Sahar Moussly, who stresses to her clients the importance of repeated affirmations and the continual need to question oneself so that life’s purposes reveal themselves. “I ask my clients to partake in affirmation exercises to help them to discover their life’s purpose,” says Sahar. “Positive affirmations on a daily basis can help people to tackle and come to terms with what are perhaps wrong beliefs about themselves that they may have had instilled as children. Once people become more satisfied with who they are, they find peace.”

Summing up her philosophy of peace and fulfillment as “add nothing, just subtract what isn’t working,” Martha’s four Ps – a blend of Eastern beliefs, core values and good old-fashioned gut instinct – are proving the perfect melting pot of guidelines for anyone in need of a spot of enlightenment... ►

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## BECK IN ACTION

BE YOUR OWN LIFE COACH WITH SOME OF MARTHA’S BEST PIECES OF ADVICE...

### APPLIED UNIFORMLY

“If you believe in kindness, slather it on the janitor as well as the CEO. If you wouldn’t excuse yourself for inflicting cruelty on another person, don’t make excuses for other people who are mean to you.”

### A LITTLE PAIN NEVER HURT ANYONE

“Unfailingly, the moment I stop fearing and resisting it, the pain changes.

It becomes smaller, more manageable and docile... The same perspective works wonders on emotional irritants: embarrassment, frustration, confusion, nervousness.”

### KNOW WHEN TO QUIT

“How do you quit doing something when depression, inflammation and financial disaster loom? If worst comes to worst, just stop. The formalities will take care of themselves. It’s far better

karma to be upfront and honourable about quitting.”

### SUNSCREEN AND VALUES SHOULD BOTH BE APPLIED UNIFORMLY

“Every time someone can demonstrate to me that I’m in error, a bright new bulb lights up my dim wit. That’s why it’s good to be wrong – not because we should hang onto our mistakes, but

because acknowledging error is the foundation of learning.”

### BREAK THE RULES

“If everyone kept all the rules, we’d still be practicing traditions like child marriage, slavery, and public hangings. The way humans become humane is by assessing from the heart, rather than the rule book, where the justice of a situation lies.”



IMAGES ASSOCIATE PHOTOGRAPHERS / AUGUST, COASTAL GLAMOUR BY NICK LEARY

PEACE

From John Lennon's exhortations of giving it a chance to its intrinsic entrenchment in leading philosophical and religious movements, the concept of bringing peace into your life is a comforting notion in a world that is, in Martha's words, 'becoming more bewildering, unsettling, and unsure.'

Separating it from the notion of 'peace and quiet' and placing it in the arena of 'inner peace' – the sort of calm you can find within yourself, even if you're sat in a traffic jam on the hottest day of the year with a broken air con and the kids wailing in the back seat – and working towards achieving peace is one of Martha's

key principles, which sits nicely alongside one of her favourite rhetorical questions – Why worry? "These two words, considered sincerely, can radically reconfigure the landscape of your mind," says Martha. "Worry rarely leads to positive action; it's just painful, useless fear about hypothetical events, which scuttles happiness rather than ensuring it."

Identifying the triggers that divert us away from our pursuit of peace – fear, anxiety, insecurity – is the first lesson peace-seekers are encouraged to learn, along with reacquainting themselves with that ancient premise of gut instinct. Martha's favourite quote is 'when you trust yourself, you will know how to live'. ▶

“HAVING ALONE TIME MAKES YOU ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF TO WHICH YOU CAN THEN BEGIN TO FIND ANSWERS. BEING A SELF-HEALER IN THIS WAY IS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR SELF-DISCOVERY”

POWER

Martha is big on questions. More specifically, she is big on the questions you ask yourself to find your life's purpose.

“At first I thought asking yourself ‘what should you be asking yourself’ was redundant. It isn't,” she insists. “Without this question, you wouldn't ask any others, so it gets top billing. It creates an alert, thoughtful mind state, ideal for ferreting out the information you most need in every situation. Ask it frequently.”

Martha acknowledges that purposes differ from individual to individual, whether you're here to create worldwide prosperity, a beautiful family, or, as she puts it, one really excellent bagel. While a second step is in discovering your purpose and to consider the achievements you would like to be known for.

Sahar agrees: “To start with, I ask my clients, ‘What are you aiming to achieve?’ I ask so many questions and 70 per cent of the answers come from the clients themselves.”

And self-questioning is a vital proponent of discovering your purpose. Martha adds: “How do I want the world to be different because I lived in it? Keep asking this question. Eventually you'll glimpse clearer outlines of your destiny. Live by design, not by accident.”

PURPOSE

For Martha and Sahar, power isn't about wielding it over others. Rather, Martha's power principle is based around letting go of the things that are stopping you from reaching your potential; and in the process facing up to your mistakes.

“Where am I going wrong? This might well be the most powerful question,” says Martha.

“Your ego wants you to avoid noticing where you may have bad information or unworkable ideas. But you'll gain far more capability and respect by asking where you're wrong than by insisting you're right.”

And power can also be attained in spending ‘alone time’, according to Sahar, who sets her clients the task of spending 20 minutes alone writing down thoughts, ideas and passions.

“Having alone time makes you ask questions about yourself to which you can then begin to find answers. Being a self-healer in

this way is a powerful tool for self-discovery,” she says.

And while you are working on harnessing your own power to enrich your life through banishing fear, Martha advocates relinquishing control.

“How can I keep myself absolutely safe? You can't. Life is inherently uncertain,” she straight shoots. “The way to cope with that reality is not to control it... but to develop courage.”

PRACTICE

The concept of ‘practice’ was given a shot in the arm recently thanks to US professor Amy Chua's much-debated book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, in which she discussed the differences between perfection-expecting Chinese mothers and their ‘permissive’ Western counterparts,

insisting, “My Western friends who consider themselves strict make their children practice their musical instruments for 30 minutes every day.

An hour at most. For a Chinese mother, the first hour is the easy part. It's hours two and three that get tough.”

And Martha also believes that fulfillment requires total dedication to a pursuit you enjoy.

“Some psychologists believe that no one is born with any particular talent and that all skill is gained through practice,” she says. “Studies have shown that masters are simply people who've practiced a skill intensely for 10,000 hours or more. That requires loving – not liking – what you do. If you want to excel, do something you're passionate enough to practice.” ■

LITTLE BLACK BOOK:

- For more of Martha's life-affirming advice and fulfillment tips, visit [www.marthabeck.com](http://www.marthabeck.com)
- Contact Life Coach extraordinaire, Sahar Haffar Moussly, at [www.lifeinharmony.me](http://www.lifeinharmony.me)