

Louisa recalls a true self technique she received from Martia Nelson more than twenty years ago that took her from feeling separate from Life to a deep belonging that still enriches her today. You'll also read how it helped her get out of a bad relationship, increase her flow of money, and trust herself.

## LOUISA

“The Nothing is everything,” answered Louisa when I asked to hear her most important true self lesson. “Going into the space in myself that seems like nothing is where I find who I really am. What appears to be darkness and nothingness turns out to be all potential.”

“How did you discover that?” I asked, wondering why I didn't know the answer. Friends for twenty years, we'd shared so many of the struggles and triumphs in our lives that I was surprised not to remember this spiritual milestone of hers.

“In the late eighties, I was having a problem in my meditations—or at least I thought it was a problem,” she began. “After closing my eyes and settling in, I would find myself facing a big hole of darkness. ‘There's nothing there,’ I would think, ‘What do I do with this big hole of dark nothing?’ My impulse was to reject it and search for the uplifting experiences I was used to in meditation, but the dark hole kept appearing. I was sure something was wrong. I hadn't started meditation to find darkness!”

No wonder I didn't recollect this story; Louisa and I had only begun to get to know each other then. Neither of us had yet recognized what good friends we'd become or how long lasting our friendship would be. “What kind of meditation were you doing back then?” I inquired.

“I had learned a meditation practice of closing my eyes, silently saying, ‘Relax, relax, relax,’ and then continuing to sit quietly. It was wonderful. Not only did I feel relaxed during the meditation, I felt uplifted, light, buoyant, and deeply at ease. My daily

concerns—work, money, relationships—faded, becoming less important to my well-being. Daily struggle fell away. I felt expanded, and my greater being became more real to me.

“Then, one day it changed. The darkness and nothingness started appearing. Almost as soon as I closed my eyes it was right in front of me. I couldn’t see beyond it or get past it. ‘I know there’s more to me than this,’ I thought, ‘where is it?’ I assumed something was wrong—perhaps I was encountering a block in myself. For weeks, every time I meditated I was confronted with the same dark, empty nothingness.

“I went to one of your talks and asked you about it. In your true self channeling, you told me, ‘Go into that darkness and emptiness. The Nothing isn’t really empty. *Everything* is there. Even the stars are there. The universe is there for you.’

“At that point everything changed. I realized that the darkness wasn’t really nothing; I just wasn’t seeing what was there yet. Understanding was a relief to me. I decided then and there to open to the new level of awareness that was presenting itself to me as The Nothing. I started believing, ‘I’m not doing anything wrong. I’m supposed to be here with the nothingness. Darkness is just what it looks like to me now; I need to move into it.’

“In my next meditation the dark hole of nothingness appeared again, and I opened my mind by asking, ‘What else is here that I haven’t noticed? What else is coming to me here?’ I thought of the stars, and then everything started moving. Stars whooshed by, and new ideas and awareness flowed through me, showing me more of my true self and how expansive I am in my being. Then I was moving with the stars; I was part of them. Whatever they were, I had the same stuff in me. I had all potential.

“It changed my life to experience that I really am part of the universe. I am not separate from it. I am not a stranger in it after all. I am part of the whole.”

“Did you used to feel separate?” I asked.

“Oh, yes, definitely. For as long as I can remember I’d felt that I didn’t really belong here, in this world, on Earth. Before opening to The Nothing, I used to look out my window at the trees on the hillside and think, ‘There’s a world out there, and I’m not part of it.’ It felt sad, but normal.

“Then one day, after I’d started moving into The Nothing in my meditations, I was looking out my window at the trees on the hillside, as usual, but this time it felt different. Instead of looking *at* them and feeling separate, I felt I was part of them. I felt connected. It made me stop and think, ‘I’m looking out at the world, and I feel that I belong here. I’ve never felt this way before. Wow, I’ve really changed how I perceive myself and my place in the world—and my place in the universe.’ My old belief about not belonging had shifted.

“That shift had a profound effect on my life. Because of it, I carried forward a knowing that I really *do* belong here, I *am* a part life, and the universe *wants* me here. Now, 20 years later, I still carry that knowing; I can feel it in the cells of my body. I know that I’ll never go back to feeling like I don’t belong in this world.”

“How did that knowing stay with you?” I asked in awe. I had noticed over the years that Louisa was facile at getting back in touch with true self whenever the stresses of life pulled her off track. “Did you do anything to keep renewing the knowing, or did it just stay with you on its own?”

“Practice, practice, practice! I’ve practiced staying in touch with it, by choice. My expansiveness, my connection with the universe, and my belonging in the world have stayed real to me because I’ve made a point of integrating them into my daily life. I practiced a lot!”

“How did you do that?” I asked.

“First, I continued to meditate. I recognized that the expansive experience in my meditations was not just an ‘altered state.’ It was a reality, a legitimate and important reality. I chose to accept it as a reality, a normal part of my life here on Earth, and to value it.

“Second, at the end of every meditation, I chose to integrate my expansive experience from that meditation into my daily awareness. For awhile, although I had accepted my expansive experience as a reality, it seemed like a separate reality that didn’t connect with my daily reality—being at work, talking with people, driving, shopping, fixing dinner, and so on.

So I added a third step: At various times during my daily activities, I made a point of pausing to remember my expansive experience and to invite it into my day. Especially helpful was the image of the stars from my meditation. To me, it represented my being part of the unlimited universe and, simultaneously, belonging in this world. Remembering the stars brought my true self into my personality in an instant.

“Cultivating the integration took a lot of practice, and doing it felt like exercise—like I was exercising my awareness muscles. But it was worth it. Because I kept repeating those exercises, my two worlds started to blend. My expansive state from

meditation, which was my true self, and my daily awareness, which was my personality, began integrating. That integration has continued over the years.”

“Was this all done with your awareness, or did you do something tangible, too?” I asked.

“I got creative about giving myself tangible reminders so I wouldn’t get caught up in my day and forget, especially at work where distractions were greatest. Some days I’d put a short, inspiring quote on my desk and read it every couple hours. Reading the quote would trigger my expanded awareness in the midst of the hubbub of work. Other days I’d light a candle on my desk to remind my subconscious, whenever I looked in that direction, that my true self had come to work with me. Or I’d put a special, little stone in my pocket when I got dressed in the morning. During the day I’d notice it whenever I put my hand in my pocket, or sometimes I’d just remember it was there, and that would remind me to take a breath and open to my true self.

“Over the years, I’ve also used the big challenges in my life as opportunities for integrating my true self and personality. Those were the times I needed it most, anyway.”

Louisa stopped, thinking she was done with her story. “Hey, keep talking. This is fabulous. Give me some examples,” I told her.

“Okay. Lets see...oh, yes, money and relationship. The real biggies. Money, or my lack of it, used to seem like an insurmountable obstacle to my happiness. Back then, thinking of money made me feel, ‘I can’t be part of life because I don’t have money. I’m not like everybody else. I don’t belong. I don’t deserve to be here.’ Not having money made me feel weak, not entitled to goodness, and different from everybody else.

It seemed to me that everybody else was able to live life in a fully engaged way, but I could not. Everybody else was in a big, colorful parade, complete with bands, balloons and floats, trumpeting its way down the street, but I couldn't be in it. I was on the curb watching it all go by.

"I'd been living with that perspective for so long that I had no awareness of it or how it was affecting me until my therapist pointed it out. She helped me to notice how I felt about myself and money—and then she helped me to realize that those limiting beliefs weren't true. That got me jump started.

"From there, I started applying my spiritual 'exercises' to money. When I thought of money, I made a point of remembering the stars from meditation. When the old feelings of unworthiness and not belonging because I had money struggles sneaked back in, I did the exercise again: taking a few breaths and remembering the stars and my expansiveness. Or sometimes I looked out the window for 10 seconds and remembered, "I *am* a part of things." When I caught myself having that feeling of being on the curb as everybody else's parade passed by me, I just reminded myself, 'That's not true,' and the feeling lost its power. Practice, practice, practice!"

"And the exercises helped?" I asked.

"Doing those exercises made a world of difference! I felt a new lightness come over me. My old associations with money—feelings of shame, not deserving, and not belonging – transformed to feelings of belonging, being part of the universe, and being part of life. Experiencing myself as an integral (and wanted!) part of life made me increasingly feel that I deserved all goodness, including money.

“I made this integration of true self into my personality’s experience in tiny steps over the years. And I’m so glad I did it! Now that I feel I’m a part of the movement and flow of the universe, and that money connects rather than separates me from it, my whole life moves and flows. My life is full, like the universe is full.

”In retrospect, it’s clear that feeling a part of the universe made me feel more supported, and as I integrated that feeling of universal support into my thoughts and feelings about money, my finances grew to support me in this world. Career opportunities improved, and my income increased. These days my finances are balanced, and I feel comfortable.”

“And relationship?” I asked. We had hashed over our relationships for years, so I was curious to hear her perspective now.

”The tough thing for me in relationship was that I would easily lose my sense of self, my rootedness in who I am. I would adapt to the man too much, without even knowing it until I lost my self-esteem and self-confidence. His wants and needs would become more important than my own. At that point it would be hard for me to get my authentic self back because I felt small, like I didn’t deserve much, and reclaiming myself felt like trudging upstream, against the current of the man’s expectations of me.

“This was especially true with my last boyfriend, who, as you know, was very overpowering. Finally I decided to take a stand for myself. I made the commitment to be grounded and balanced. I created a mental exercise in which I said to myself, ‘I’m going to stand my ground. I’m going to be who I am. Who I am is good. It does not matter what he thinks, how he criticizes me, or how much he rants and raves at me. I will remain loyal to my authentic self.’

“By that time, I already had developed my strong experience of true self. My expanded awareness in meditation had begun to help me with money, so I called on that expanded awareness to help me in relationship, too. It reminded me, ‘I am who I am. I am in the universe, and the universe is in me. I am the stars, and the stars are me. I belong in this world, and I am wanted here.’ Remembering that truth gave me confidence in who I was as a whole being. Because of it, I realized that even if I had flaws, I was much more than my flaws.

“It wasn’t always easy, but I became increasingly authentic in the relationship, expressing more of my wants and needs. I got many backlashes from my boyfriend, so I turned to the support of good friends and my therapist for help remembering who I was and what I wanted. Finally he and I broke up because it became clear that he wanted a relationship with the ‘lesser’ me rather than the real me. It was painful for me to lose the fantasy that we were going to be good together someday, but it was better to find out the truth and move on. Since then, knowing that I am as big, expansive, and powerful as the universe has kept me from losing myself to another person or handing over my self esteem.

“I’m not in a relationship right now, but as I look at my life, I can tell you that it genuinely reflects me. The well-being, contentment, belonging, and love of life I feel, plus my work and house, all feel like they reflect me. It all has come as a direct result of moving into The Nothing, integrating my expanded awareness into my daily life, allowing myself to be who I authentically am, and understanding that I am a reflection of all that is true in the universe.

“I still have struggles sometimes, and I do my spiritual ‘exercises’ when I need them. I know this for sure: My integration of true self’s expanded awareness into my life has brought me abundance and profound contentment.”

Martia Nelson, life coach and author of "Coming Home: The Return to True Self," helps you reclaim your true self and a life that makes your soul sing. Get your FREE mp3 at [www.MartiaNelson.com](http://www.MartiaNelson.com) . Copyright © 2008 Martia Nelson, all rights reserved.