

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

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Dialogues with

BYRON KATIE

EDITED BY CAROL WILLIAMS



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CONTENTS

Foreword by Carol Williamsvii

DIALOGUES:

1. Joe Is Irresponsible.	1
2. Sleep Disorder	19
3. My Mother Wouldn't Approve	39
4. I Can't Stand It That George Fell in Love with Linda.	47
5. The Rent Increase	81
6. Welcome to Al-Anon!	91
7. Frank Bosses Me Around	117
8. My Mother Manipulates Me	123
9. Cancer Ruined My Life	153
10. My Sister the Prostitute	185
11. My Mother Made Me a Victim	211
12. My Husband Shouldn't Have Left Me.	227
13. I'm Not Enough—and Some People Are Better Than Others. . .	251
14. My Father Abused Me	267
15. Scared and Angry at God.	299
<i>Afterword</i> by Carol Williams.	309
<i>Appendix</i>	311
<i>Index of Topics</i>	315
<i>About the Author</i>	317

For more information, visit: www.whowouldyoubewithoutyourstory.com

FOREWORD

by Carol Williams

Over the past twenty years, Byron Katie has become known around the world as one of the clearest and most inspiring teachers of our time. She teaches a way to happiness, and those who meet her respond instantly to the delight she takes in whoever and whatever is in front of her. Yet, as she is quick to explain, her own teacher was suffering.

Amid the circumstances of what should have been a satisfying life in a California desert town—successful business career, healthy children, beauty—Byron Kathleen Reid (everyone calls her Katie) was overcome by a depression that lasted more than ten years. She kept to her bed in deepening rage and despair. Eventually she committed herself to a shelter for women with eating disorders—the only place that would take her health insurance. One day she woke up in her attic room to find that all her suffering was gone, replaced by a joy that was unlike anything she had ever known:

I discovered that when I believed my thoughts, I suffered, but that when I didn't believe them, I didn't suffer, and that this is true for every human being. Freedom is as simple as that. I found that suffering is optional. I found a joy within me that has never disappeared, not for a single moment. That joy is in everyone, always.

The difference between her experience and other experiences of spiritual opening is that in the moment of waking up, she

discovered a method of sustaining that extraordinary lightness. The four questions and turnaround that she later called The Work were already present in that first moment.

Katie knew that the joyous clarity she was experiencing is available to everyone. And, in her down-to-earth American way, she began to share her method of self-inquiry with the many people who were immediately drawn to her. Katie's primary realization was that every painful feeling—anger, loneliness, fear—is the result of believing a thought that isn't true. To notice what that thought is and then to examine it with the questions that Katie discovered has an unimaginable power—unimaginable until you do it for yourself.

To do The Work, alone or with others, you begin by finding the particular thoughts that are causing you stress. Perhaps one thought is: *My husband doesn't love me*. You write the thoughts down on what is called a Worksheet (see the Appendix of this book for more information), then examine the thought using these four questions:

- *Is it true?*
- *Can you absolutely know that it's true?*
- *How do you react when you believe that thought?*
- *Who would you be without the thought?*

After this, you turn the thought around to its several opposites—for example, *My husband does love me*, *I don't love my husband*, and *I don't love myself*—and you find three genuine examples of how each turnaround is as true as or truer than the original thought.

The conversations in this book show the kinds of things that happen when people who are suffering answer these questions, slowly and accurately. They are edited dialogues between Katie and fifteen participants at various public workshops and Schools for The Work that took place around the United States and in Europe. Some of the participants had painful illnesses; others were lovelorn or in messy divorces; some were simply irritated with a co-worker or worried about a rent increase. What they all had in common was a willingness to question, with Katie's help, the painful thoughts that they came to see were the true cause of their suffering.

FOREWORD

The dialogues aren't organized by their ostensible topics—family, illness, and so on—because the real subject here is the process of The Work and the various paths it can take. Some of the participants were new to The Work, while others had been practicing it for some time but had hit particular walls. In every case, we see how Katie's acute mind and fierce kindness helped each person dismantle for themselves what was felt to be unshakeable reality.

Although these dialogues make fascinating reading—some are both hilarious and deeply moving at once—they are intended primarily as teaching tools. Each took place in front of an audience. Katie never lost her connection with that audience, repeatedly reminding each person in the room to follow the dialogues inwardly and to ask themselves the questions the participant must ask.

This is the way this book should be read to be most useful. The dialogues between Katie and these volunteers is an external enactment of precisely the kind of dialogue each reader can have with his or her own thoughts. The result, even in the seemingly direct situation, can be an unimagined freedom and joy.

Two Things to Know Before You Begin Reading

Each participant in the dialogue has been given a copy of Katie's Worksheet to fill out before the workshop begins. (There is also a copy of it in the Appendix at the back of this book; you are encouraged to look at it and use it yourself.) The Worksheet—which asks questions such as “Who angers, frustrates, disappoints, or confuses you, and why? What is it about them that you don't like?”—helps identify and pin down the thoughts that are the causes of suffering. Usually the conversation begins with the participant reading from the Worksheet, and they return to it again throughout the conversation. In this book, each time a participant reads from the Worksheet, their words appear in italics. This is to make the process clear.

Some readers might be puzzled when Katie addresses the workshop participants as “Sweetheart” or “Honey.” This doesn't mean that she knows them or that she is being insincere. For Katie, the one she is with is always the dearest person in the world, and

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

I hope some of the intensity of her attention comes through in these transcriptions.

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6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

What is sobriety? If you want someone to get sober, try getting sober about the stressful thoughts that rule your life.

Margaret: [reading from her Worksheet] *I am fearful and sad about my son Paul because he is trying to recover from using drugs and doesn't really know how to be in the world, and is really having a hard time learning how to live.*

Katie: Yes, so, “He doesn’t know how to be in the world”—is that true?

Margaret: He’s having to relearn everything, because he’s just been using drugs, so living life is new to him, and he’s really struggling.

Katie: Yes, I hear that. And “He doesn’t know how to live in the world”—is that true? Does he know how to eat?

Margaret: He knows how to eat.

Katie: Does he know how to dress himself?

Margaret: Yes. Okay, he knows how to be in the world. Okay, okay.

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Katie: We all know everything we need to know.

Margaret: Ahh! But you know . . . he's learning how to go grocery shopping, I mean these basic things. He's an adult, and he's learning all this stuff.

Katie: That's beautiful! He knows how to be in the world! You grow, and you learn—that's how to be in the world. If people stop growing and learning, the world gets really scary. "He's learning how to be in the world" means that he knows how to be in the world—it's growing and learning and being willing. Sounds like he's doing it.

Margaret: Okay. Thank you.

Katie: How do you react when you believe the thought "He doesn't know how to be in the world"? Where does your mind travel when you believe that thought?

Margaret: A lot of fear. A lot of pain.

Katie: So close your eyes. What pictures do you see of him when you believe the thought "He doesn't know how to be in the world"?

Margaret: Just really sad and scared and miserable—confused.

Katie: So who would you be without the thought "He doesn't know how to live in the world"—as you watch him eat breakfast, put on his shoes, go grocery shopping?

Margaret: I would be free. Yes, I'd be a free person.

Katie: Yes. You'd be free to notice that he's doing fine in the world.

Margaret: I'd be free to notice that he does know how to eat, he does know how to dress. And I'd be more focused on—

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Katie: And he knows how to learn. That's amazing! Not every son goes to the grocery store.

Margaret: [laughing] Okay.

Katie: So, "He doesn't know how to live in the world"—turn it around.

Margaret: I don't know how to live in the world.

Katie: You don't know how to live in the world with your son sober.

Margaret: This is true—I don't.

Katie: So do you know how to eat?

Margaret: Yes.

Katie: Do you know how to put on your shoes?

Margaret: Yes.

Katie: Okay, that's how you live in the world with your son.

Margaret: Oh, God . . .

Katie: You just eat; you put on your shoes. When he walks in, you say, "Hello," or you don't. When he asks, "How are you?" you answer the question. When he says, "I had a miserable night, Mom," you say, "Well, can I help you?"

And when he says "No," believe him. If he says "Yes," listen. That's how to live in the world with a newborn son. How old is he?

Margaret: He's thirty-four; he's an adult.

Katie: He's like a newborn baby.

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Margaret: Yes, he is really.

Katie: Yes. And he's born again, and he's learning to crawl. So how were you with him when he was little and crawling?

Margaret: I was there to help him.

Katie: And when he fell down?

Margaret: I picked him up.

Katie: And did you laugh?

Margaret: Yes.

Katie: And play?

Margaret: Yes, we played and we laughed.

Katie: So you *do* know how to be in the world with your newborn son.

Margaret: Part of the struggle, though, is for me to stay out of it and allow him to, you know, work his AA program, work with his sponsor, work with people in the program, and all of that. And for me really to stay out of it.

Katie: That sounds like a relief.

Margaret: That's the hard part. That's the part of where I don't know how to be.

Katie: "That's the hard part"—turn it around.

Margaret: Okay. That's the easy part.

Katie: Yes. He's out of your hands.

Margaret: Ah!

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Katie: It's what he wants!

Margaret: [laughing] So when he's talking about a problem, it's my job—from what I'm taught in Al-Anon—to not solve his problems, but allow him to solve his own problems.

Katie: That sounds wonderful. It's not your problem.

Margaret: Right.

Katie: He doesn't think it's your problem. Al-Anon doesn't think it's your problem. You're the only one who thinks it's your problem.

Margaret: Oh God! You make it sound really easy!

Katie: Well, not living someone else's life *is* really easy. Living your own is enough.

Margaret: Yes, yes, absolutely. Should I read this next part?

Katie: Let's dialogue, okay?

Margaret: Okay.

Katie: He's got a big problem, and he's talking to me, and I am you. Think of something he would say that really would suck you in—you take on that role.

Margaret: Okay. [as her son] "Well, I'm avoiding my sponsor because I owe him homework, and I don't want to see my sponsor."

Katie: [as Margaret] "Yes, I hear that you don't want to see your sponsor, honey. I love that you shared that with me."

Margaret: "And I'm still not really feeling like a part of things with AA—I'm just out there. I'm really . . . my mind's really foggy."

Katie: "Yes, well, that's understandable, honey. Is there anything I can do to help?"

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Margaret: “No, I don’t think so.”

Katie: “Okay. I love you.”

Margaret: “Okay.”

Katie: “It must be tough to be foggy and not feel a part of it.”

Margaret: [as herself] And then what if he said, “Yes”? Okay, so now I’m going to be him.

“Yes, there *is* something you can do to help.”

Katie: “Good. What would that be?”

Margaret: “I don’t know.”

Katie: “Well, when you know, just ask.”

Margaret: “Okay.”

Katie: “And if it feels right to me, I’m just going to do it.”

Margaret: [as herself] The big part for me as a parent is keeping my mouth shut when I see that he may be doing something that isn’t supportive of his well-being.

Katie: Well, he didn’t even want to see his sponsor! I just *heard* him. Why is that hard on you? He’s the one it’s hard on. What I did was that I just repeated it to him. My job as a mother is to listen. The solutions to his life are within him. So you find them within you, and then you understand that.

Margaret: Okay, it’s not about giving advice.

Katie: Only if you take it yourself.

Margaret: Oh God!

Katie: So that keeps me very still at home. [The audience laughs.]

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Margaret: Okay, thank you. Yes, it all sounds so much different, reading this now. *He is exhibiting behaviors that may lead to drug use again.*

Katie: Turn it around.

Margaret: I am exhibiting behaviors that may lead to drug use again. What does that mean?

Katie: I don't know. You tell me. Give me one genuine example.

Margaret: Well, I'm exhibiting behaviors that lead to my own drug use, which is obsessiveness.

Katie: Obsessing over him.

Margaret: Yes, obsessing over him and his life, yes.

Katie: Yes, alcohol and drugs are what he obsesses over. And he is what you obsess over. So he's your drug of choice.

Margaret: Yes. Okay, okay.

Katie: So say it again, just like that. I . . .

Margaret: I am exhibiting behaviors that may lead to drug use again.

Katie: . . . to *son* use again.

Margaret: To what?

Katie: . . . to son abuse again.

Margaret: Oh! I am exhibiting behaviors that may lead to son abuse again?

Katie: Yes. Can you find examples?

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Margaret: I try to give him advice when I'm in a state where I could use some good advice.

Katie: Good.

Margaret: And also I feel that if I keep up this being in fear and being obsessed, it'll cause him to go use, you know?

Katie: Well, he'll reflect back your own lack of sobriety, yes.

Margaret: So I *could* cause him to go use.

Katie: Well, my experience is that people mirror back my life.

Margaret: Wow! Okay.

Katie: I mean, if you're worried all the time, sobriety does not look that great.

Margaret: Yes. But then there's the part, though, where I need to know that I'm not responsible for whether he uses or not. I mean, there's this whole piece about nobody can make anybody do anything, so I'm confused.

Katie: Well, I agree with that.

Margaret: However . . .

Katie: Get sober, that's all I'm saying. If you want him to get sober, *you* get sober first.

Read your next statement.

Margaret: Okay. That's what I'm here for. Okay! *I am fearful that he could die or become homeless again.*

Katie: So, what's not okay about him being homeless?

Margaret: It's terrifying for me, not knowing where he is, or if he's dead or alive or drunk.

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Katie: So, your story is: “You need to know where he is.” Let’s say he’s drunk, he’s using, he’s on the streets, he’s homeless. “You need to know where he is”—is that true? You’re at home, and you’re comfortable; he’s out there. “You need to know where he is”—is that true?

Margaret: No. I don’t *need*—

Katie: Where did the *no* come from?

Margaret: The *no* came from a place where there was a period of time where I didn’t know where he was, and I knew he was in danger, but there was nothing I could do. I couldn’t change his drug use. And the thing was, when he wasn’t around me, I was able to really work on my life, because his drug use wasn’t in my face. So I was able to get some semblance of joy in *my* life, even though I didn’t know where he was.

Katie: Wonderful.

Margaret: That’s the truth.

Katie: Yes. I don’t know if you can hear this, but if I needed that and my son really loved me, that’s what he would give me.

Margaret: Say that again?

Katie: If I were just a total mess and needed help, if my son *really* loved me and that’s the only way I could find help, he would just live like your son. Interesting, huh? There’s no mistake in the universe. Everything is for you. You’ve heard the expression “I’d die for you”? Well, that’s the people in our lives, and it’s ourselves. What does it take for you to get sober?

Margaret: Well, that’s the whole thing.

Katie: One way I say it is: If your son’s path were your only way to God, would you take it?

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Margaret: If my son's path were my only way to God, would I take it?

Katie: If that were your only way to God, would you take it? Would you choose that son, and that pain?

Margaret: I've got my path that has plenty of pain with regards to that. And through it I *am* finding God, more God. So this is my part in it.

Katie: Yes, so thank God. Thank your son. It's what everything is about. That's how it is. No mistake.

Margaret: Okay. There's no mistake that he was out on the streets?

Katie: It's all for you.

Margaret: Just like it is for each one of us. It's all for us.

Katie: It's all for you. Each one of us? That's all for you, too. You just shifted back into your son's business. You were caretaking again.

Margaret: So is that another way of saying we always get what we need, then?

Katie: Yes. It's an example of that.

Margaret: I *did* need that—not to be in his presence while he was using.

Katie: So, "You need to know where he is"—he's out there drinking, using, he's homeless. "You need to know where he is"—how do you react when you believe that thought and you don't know where he is?

Margaret: In utter panic: "Is he dead? Is he alive? Is he in pain?"

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Katie: Look at all the pictures that go with that—as you’re at home, thinking the thought: “I need to know where he is. He’s dead; he needs me”—all the pictures.

Margaret: Or, “I should be doing something.” There’s always this thing going on in my mind: “Oh, my God, I’m his mother; I should be doing something, and I should be helping . . .”

Katie: That’s a good one. There’s another one: “If something happens to him, it’s my fault. I’m his mother.” That one is very powerful.

Margaret: That’s a big one for me. Absolutely. It’s my fault, so I have to fix it.

Katie: Yes. So again, it just leaves no regard for them. Really, it becomes about us. It’s all about us. If something happens to him—what are they going to say about me, as a mother?

Margaret: Yes.

Katie: We don’t grieve long.

Margaret: Wow! Or it’s: “What am I going to say about me?” That’s the thing that drives me crazy.

Katie: Okay, so, “I need to know where he is”—give me a peaceful reason to believe that.

Margaret: So that I know he’s safe . . . and alive.

Katie: That’s not very peaceful when you don’t know where he is, when he’s drinking and using. There’s nothing peaceful about it. Give me a peaceful reason to believe “I need to know where he is”—when you don’t know where he is.

Margaret: [after a pause] There isn’t one. There isn’t a peaceful reason.

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Katie: Who would you be without this thought that's useful only for suffering? "I need to know where he is"—who would you be if you didn't believe that?

Margaret: I would be free and joyous and living my life.

Katie: "I need to know where he is"—turn it around.

Margaret: I don't need to know where he is.

Katie: Yes, and that would match reality. When you don't know where he is, you don't need to know where he is. It doesn't mean you're not going to make phone calls and check around. And ultimately when you don't know where he is, you don't know where he is. And panic doesn't make for a clear mind.

Margaret: No.

Katie: Not a lot of options there. Now give me three examples of how this turnaround is true in your life.

Margaret: Well, I don't need to know where he is because I can't do anything about his using even when I do know where he is. And second, I'm sometimes happy when I don't know where he is. . . .

Katie: That's two, sweetheart. Can you find a third example?

Margaret: I don't need to know where he is because he has gotten along without me in the past.

Katie: That's major! Can you find another turnaround to "I need to know where he is"?

Margaret: I need to know where *I* am?

Katie: Yes. Get sober. And just notice where *you* are and what's supporting you, the ground that's supporting you, or the chair that's supporting you, or the air that's supporting you—all the beauty of

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

the moment. And as you notice what's supporting you, you know that the ground is supporting him, too; you know that the air is supporting him; you know that everything he needs is there.

Are *you* awake to it? He doesn't have to be. What you know is that everything that's supporting you is supporting him. To awaken to it is a wonderful thing. Because you know what's supporting him, you know where he is: He's supported. Dead or alive—he's supported.

Margaret: Ahh! Okay, got it.

Katie: Continue to read.

Margaret: I want to say this. Since he's been sober, I've noticed when I'm in his presence, when he's with me, it's just so upsetting to me to still be in that fear. I want to be in that place of absolutely just loving him to pieces.

Katie: Well, that's ahead of your time.

Margaret: Okay.

Katie: So let's continue. Read the next statement.

Margaret: *I want him not to have the disease of chemical dependency.*

Katie: Turn it around. "I want me . . ."

Margaret: I want *me* not to have the disease of chemical dependency. Meaning my obsession over his.

Katie: Well, you also want you not to have the disease of chemical dependency. That's your path. It's not his now, but that's your path.

Margaret: Yes.

Katie: So, try: "I want me not to have the disease of *son* dependency." When he's not well, you're not well.

Margaret: Wow!

Katie: But why does he have to be well for you to be well? Why don't you just skip the middleman and be well?

Margaret: Yes, yes, yes. I like that.

Katie: Take the quick route because it's happiness that you want. When you're happy, it's so much easier to serve the people you love.

Margaret: Man!

Katie: I once hung out with someone who looked like a very old man. He had a beard, and he smelled, and it was about two in the morning, and I was in an interesting neighborhood in one of these high-rise parking things. And it was dark, and I was going to my car, and I saw him.

And I thought—I don't know, what was it? It looked like a good place to sit. So I sat down beside him and reached under his tarp thing for his hand, and sat there, and put it in my lap, and just sat in the parking lot. And I see why people sit in parking lots. [Margaret laughs.]

You know, it was very pleasant. And as it turned out, he was a *young* man. He was in his early twenties or his teens. And he just looked so old—so old and so beautiful.

And we talked; we just talked. And it wasn't as terrible for him as you would imagine. This is what I heard from him. And he was miles away from home, *states* away from home. He came from New York or someplace. But he wasn't having a terrible life—that's what he said. It was his life. What do I know?

What I know is that I listened to his reality. He *loved* sharing his life with me. But his mother—if she has a mind like yours—can't share that with him. He'd say, "I spent the night in a parking lot, no food, cold, alone." And the mother might panic, because she's not listening. She thinks that being alone is terrible, maybe. She thinks that a parking lot is a terrible place to sleep, maybe.

Margaret: And that's not how he was meaning it?

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Katie: Not at all! This is not uncommon. It's called listening. What is hell for you may not be hell for someone else.

Margaret: However, it was hell for my son. I mean, he's told me it was hell for him.

Katie: If you sat and really talked with him, you might be able to find that he could tell you other things. And I hear that for him it was hell. But you listening—that's wonderful.

All I can report is what people tell me. I sit in countries where children are very hungry, and they have great big smiles on their faces. They're playing; they're wonderful. How are you to know?

In other words, take care of your own reality. For all you know, your pain was greater than your son's pain, as miserable as he was. Pain is pain. That's what I know.

Margaret: Yes. Well, he was busy using, so he wasn't feeling the pain that I was feeling.

Katie: Who knows? So take care of your own sobriety. That's what you're doing here, honey. This is about getting sober: dropping your addiction to needing your son, your dependence on your son for your own happiness. It would be okay if it were kind. It's just not kind—not to you, not to him.

Margaret: Yes, I agree.

Katie: Because if he slips up, he has to worry about you. That's off. You've taught him that you're dependent on his life being a certain way. That's not sobriety.

I had a cousin who called me very late at night. The phone rang, I woke up, picked up the phone, and he said, "I have a loaded gun in my mouth, and the hammer is cocked." He was very drunk. And he said, "If you can't give me one reason why I shouldn't kill myself, I'm going to pull the trigger."

And I waited and I waited and I waited. And I just kept waiting for one good reason. And I couldn't find one. And finally I said, "You know, sweetheart, I can't find one reason why you shouldn't do it." And he burst into tears. He said that was the most honest thing he'd ever heard. Later he found AA, and he died sober.

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

I was just being honest. I couldn't find a reason. But what happened was that because I'm not dependent on other people, they don't have to live for me. I'm free.

Margaret: Well, it was huge when you said, "He's not here to live or die to make you happy." That really struck home. If he's going to die, it's his right to die! I don't want it, but I just realize now how disrespectful it is for me—

Katie: To use him for your happiness.

Margaret: To use him for my happiness in any way.

Katie: That's what users do, and users teach their children to use.

Margaret: Oh good God!

Katie: Yes, God is good.

Margaret: My son is using drugs, and I'm using him. So we're both users. Very clear.

Katie: Very good. Welcome to Al-Anon. Now read the next statement.

Margaret: *I want him to have an easy life.*

Katie: No, no, no, no, no. Turn it around. You don't care about his life. Turn it around. "I want *me* . . ."

Margaret: I want me to have an easy life.

Katie: Yes, and you think he has to live for you to have that. You require him to live and be sober for you to have it.

Margaret: Yes. I see that.

Katie: So that gives him a hard life.

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Margaret: Ooooh! Let me write that down.

Katie: “Here are your requirements so that I can have an easy life.”

Margaret: Oh God!

Katie: Yes.

Margaret: Oh man! [The audience laughs.] Okay.

Katie: [laughing with the audience] I think she’s getting sober. What do you think?

He gets to live an easy life through your example. That’s how our children learn, through example. They don’t do what we say. We get angry and say, “Do this!” And what they’re learning is “If I get angry enough, I get people to do things.” Because we’re always teaching—not by what we say, but by what we do.

Margaret: And yet I don’t want to do it for that purpose, live that easy life. You know? Because then it’s manipulation: I’m still focused over there, on him.

Katie: There’s another turnaround. “I *don’t* want him to . . .”

Margaret: I don’t want him to have an easy life?

Katie: Well, obviously: Look at all the requirements you put on him.

Margaret: Oh man! Poor kid! [Margaret laughs with the audience.] Oh! So will these realizations help to change my behavior?

Katie: Let me know. Because stressful feelings will let you know if your behavior doesn’t change. Your stressful feelings will let you know when your mind is out of order. When your mind is out of order, it’s time to do The Work.

Margaret: Okay.

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Katie: So “I don’t want him . . .” and continue.

Margaret: I don’t want him to have an easy life.

Katie: Now give me three genuine examples of how that turn-around is true for you.

Margaret: Well, like you just said, look at all the requirements I put on him.

Katie: Yes. And a second?

Margaret: [pause] Well, if I really think about it, it’s arrogant of me to want an easy life for him. How would I know what’s in his best interest? Maybe his life should be difficult. Maybe that’s what will help him the most.

Katie: Yes. As I often say, who needs God when we have your opinion? And a third example?

Margaret: Let’s see. I don’t want him to have an easy life, because when I want that and his life isn’t easy, I get so bent out of shape. It makes *my* life so difficult.

Katie: Good, sweetheart. Keep reading.

Margaret: *I want him to live and stay alive.*

Katie: And turn that around.

Margaret: I don’t want him to live and stay alive and be in joy?

Katie: Not *his* way of life and *his* way of joy. You want him to live *your* life. That’s what you’ve been requiring.

Margaret: Oh.

Katie: Keep reading.

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Margaret: *He shouldn't have the disease of chemical dependency.*

Katie: Is that true?

Margaret: No. I don't *want* him to have it.

Katie: Can you absolutely know that it's true that he shouldn't have that?

Margaret: No, I can't know that.

Katie: Who needs God when we have your opinion?

[As Margaret]: "You shouldn't be chemically dependent—I *know* this."

Margaret: Wow!

Katie: The I-know mind is very painful. It tries to run things like a dictator, and life goes on without it. And all sadness is a tantrum. It's the war with God, the war with reality—*all* sadness. And you lose.

So turn it around.

Margaret: He *should* have the disease of chemical dependency.

Katie: Yes, welcome to reality. You're catching up with him. You're out of denial. He *should* have it, because he does.

Margaret: Okay. And then I wrote, *He shouldn't have it so hard.*

Katie: Turn it around.

Margaret: He *should* have it so hard.

Katie: Yes! There's no mistake in the universe. There's another turnaround.

Margaret: *I shouldn't have it so hard?*

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Katie: Yes. You're not the one living out there on the streets with a chemical dependency. But you're living as painfully as if you were. And you throw yourself out into the streets. When he's standing there with you clean and sober, in your mind you throw him out there into the streets, as though it were happening, and it's not.

Margaret: I hate that.

Katie: Well, just notice. And be kind and say to yourself, "Oh, sweetheart, you're throwing your son into the streets again." And just come back, be present. And see the real son, the one in front of you, not the one in your imagination. And put your arms around him, and just thank him for standing there with you.

That's what I loved about my daughter coming in. She was sixteen and, by her own admission, an alcoholic, and she'd come through the door and she would look at me like "Blauugh!" Just look at me as if she couldn't bear having me as her mother. And I knew why. I had done my Work. She was looking at who I used to be, worried and fearful. She had every right to look at me like that.

But she didn't see who was really sitting there. It was a different mother. I had realized who the woman was that she thought she saw. So the reality that I was present with was this: She was home; she was with me; she was alive. "Oh my God, another moment with this beautiful being."

In my imagination, before I had a clue, I had killed her a thousand times, but there she was. So that's where I learned that reality is always kinder than my story. That was just a first taste.

Margaret: That's the thing that I hate the worst—that he's here, and I don't know how long he's going to be here. We don't know how long anybody is going to be here, but—

Katie: "That's the thing I hate the worst"—turn it around.

Margaret: That's the thing I love the most.

Katie: Yes. That he's here.

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Margaret: He's here. But—

Katie: And here is the only place he's ever going to be.

Margaret: Well, I want to be here, too.

Katie: You're on the right track, honey. And keep reading.

Margaret: *He should be honest and really dive into recovery and work with his sponsor.*

Katie: No, no, no, no, no. Turn that around.

Margaret: *I should be honest, and really dive into my Work . . . and work with my sponsor.*

Katie: Yes. Are you working with your sponsor?

Margaret: Yes.

Katie: Closely?

Margaret: Every day.

Katie: Very good. So you're following your—

Margaret: I'm following my advice.

Katie: Very good. That keeps you mentally out of your son's business and in your own. You live a happy life, and that sets the example. Sobriety is very attractive.

Margaret: And I haven't been sober.

Katie: No, you haven't.

Margaret: So, it's all coming clear. *I need him to not have this disease. . . . See, I'll never be happy with what I wrote here, because it won't work. I need him to not have the disease and to be in full sobriety*

and working his program. To be in my life sober and to live and have joy. Jeez. It's just impossible; this is impossible.

Katie: Very good. You've been requiring . . . well, you see it.

Margaret: It's awful.

Katie: Well, you said it—it's not possible, up to now.

Margaret: No, he's got the disease. There's no denying it. I can't change that; nobody can change that, and even in full sobriety—he's sober, he's doing the best he can. And it's so clear that *he* can't make me happy—no matter what he does, ever.

You know, if I continue to worry about whether he lives or dies, or whether he's sober or not, or whether he goes back to the streets, I can't be happy—no matter what. So it's *got* to be about me. It's *got* to be about my own sobriety, which means . . . working on my life and not using the drug of being obsessed by him.

Katie: Using him as your drug. Okay, so turn it around.

Margaret: I need him to . . .

Katie: "I need me . . ."

Margaret: Oh. I need *me* to not have this disease and to be in full sobriety and working my program. To be in my life sober. Yes. Wow! That's a big deal.

Katie: Now there's another turnaround. "*I don't* need him to . . ."

Margaret: Ohhh. Yes, that's a good one. I don't need him to not have this disease or be in full sobriety and working his program. I don't need him to be in my life sober. . . . That last one is easy for me to say, but in reality if he went out and used again, it could be tough for me.

Katie: Oh, there's a plan. "I think I'll plan that." [Margaret laughs.] If you want to know your plan, look at your mind. It will show you. "That will be tough." There's a plan.

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

Margaret: Okay.

Katie: Okay, and the next statement?

Margaret: *He is loving, passionate, sad, doesn't know how to live everyday life, confused, afraid, kind, wise, intelligent, hilariously funny.*

Katie: Yes. No wonder you love him so much.

If I had the thought "I don't know what I would do without my daughter"—it would be a lie. Sooner or later, I'd have to go to the bathroom. Then I'd eat. "I don't know what I'd do without her"? Of course I do! It's a lie. It's our thoughts that drive us crazy, not death, not the loss of a child, not life at all. Our thoughts about life—that is a lack of sobriety, that is *the* lack of sobriety. Our stressful thoughts—until we question them, we're drunk.

Okay, let's look at the next statement.

Margaret: *I never want to have him living on the streets again and to wonder if he is alive or hurting and not know where he is.*

Katie: "I'm willing . . ."

Margaret: I'm willing to have . . . aargh! Okay, I can say, "I'm willing." I'm willing to have him live on the streets again—

Katie: How many times today did you have a picture of him living on the streets?

Margaret: A few.

Katie: And he's sober! So, that's what this number six is about. "I'm willing to have him out on the streets"—well, you just were! Any time you picture him on the streets, you put your son on the streets, and you feel that. And you become worried, and sad, and stressed. So just notice that he's not putting himself on the streets; *you're* putting him on the streets. So just notice and smile and come back to reality.

Margaret: Yes.

WHO WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT YOUR STORY?

Katie: Okay. "I'm willing . . ."

Margaret: I'm willing to have him live on the streets again and to wonder if he is alive or hurting and not know where he is.

Katie: Yes. So either in your mind or in his life, it doesn't matter—it's just as painful, because he's sober, and you're still in pain. So whether it's in reality or in your imagination, you'll feel it. And when you feel those feelings, it's time to do The Work again. Question it; turn it around.

So, "I look forward to . . ."

Margaret: I look forward to having him live on the streets. . . . Okay.

Katie: It could happen again in your mind. And it could happen again in reality. It's just that there are two ways for it to happen: One way is you sane, and the other way is you crazy. Either way, life happens. And mind happens.

It's like we're superstitious cavemen. We really believe that if we say, "I'm willing; I look forward to him being on the streets again," it will happen. That way of thinking is ancient. But that's not how it works. It's what supports denial. "Oh, I won't dare think that, or it'll really happen!"

Well, I say: Put integrity above superstition. And just face it head on. "I'm willing to, I look forward to . . ." It could happen. It's called life. And if it doesn't happen in life, it happens in my mind. Either way, it hurts. So what kind of intelligence would just wait for it to happen and suffer to the end of our days?

So do it now—be ahead of life, and then you're prepared. Your arms are open to it.

The thing that runs in me is: I love God. And for me, reality is God. I love God.

Margaret: No matter what's going on around you?

Katie: I love God. And God is what is. I weep at my devotion. Because the good in it is so clear to me. Nothing happens that is not for the good. And if I can't see that, I'm insane, and I suffer.

6. WELCOME TO AL-ANON!

It's because I am seeing through a distorted mind and the gift of life is lost to me.

People say, "Open to the beauty." Well, everyone would if they could, and that's what this Work is about. The answers inside you are just waiting for the questions to be asked. And as you ask these four questions, the answers can live and enlighten you to what you already know. And there is no way I can lose a son or a daughter until it's time.

Margaret: Period.

Katie: Period.

Margaret: No matter what.

Katie: No matter what. When we stop using our children, we come to see who they really are. And then we know true love. And dependency is not love. Thank you, sweetheart.

Margaret: Yes. Thank you so much, Katie.

For more information, visit: www.whowouldyoubewithoutyourstory.com