

Universal Life Lessons

*Gift
of Your
Greatness*

In honour of Dr Martha Farrell

Who believed in equal rights for women and peace for all
You will be remembered for your courage, passion, and strength

*A percentage of the proceeds from this book will be donated to the
Martha Farrell Foundation*

By Susan Ball

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Permission granted by Dr Rajesh Tandon to use cover photograph of Dr Martha Farrell.

The brilliant blue butterfly on the book cover represents the author's youngest beautiful, bohemian daughter, Anna Rose Paas.

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This book is dedicated to my dear friend Dr Martha Farrell. Little did I know that Martha and Anna, my daughter, would leave this world only a month apart (Anna on 16 April, 2015; Martha on 14 May, 2015).

Both women were significant in my life because of what they brought to the world and how they lived. They both had a profound effect on me as they taught me so many life lessons, many of which I have only been able to reflect upon in the last year.

I am grateful for their wisdom and, on the first anniversary of their passing, I felt the strong desire to write this book with a vision of launching it on 'International Day of Peace' (21 September, 2016) in Delhi, Martha's home-town, and to dedicate the book to Dr Martha Farrell.

The concept of the book *Universal Life Lessons: Gift of Your Greatness* started taking shape at the Rotary District 9600 Conference in April 2016, where I wrote down the structure of the book and the timelines.

Since then the book has evolved, with its underpinning purpose focussing on peace and harmony. There is also another important virtue in this book: the gift of serving others before self, and the reminder that we can all be agents for changing people's mindsets so that there is less hatred in the world and more love.

Writing this book has also required significant research to be able to understand more about The Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, as laid out in 'Transforming our World—The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. These goals were unanimously adopted by the 193 member states of the United

Nations at a historic summit of the world's leaders in New York in September 2015. This new ambitious agenda for 2030 calls on countries to begin to make efforts to achieve these goals over the next fifteen years. It aims to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

The Sustainable Development Goals are integral to achieving peace in our time, as development and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. “The Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people,” said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. “They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success.”

Most of the chapters in this book, like a watercolour, started forming naturally and flowed like true gifts that wanted to be told through sharing people's stories. This is the second book in the ‘Universal Life Lessons’ series.

I am grateful to Colin Ball, who enabled me to be an engaged and active global citizen thanks to witnessing his tireless work and contribution to the non-government sector throughout the Commonwealth. Thanks to Colin I was blessed to meet, and come to know as friends, Martha, Rajesh, Suheil, and Tariqa.

I am also grateful to all those along my journey who have encouraged me to be a storyteller and now, thanks to your support, I am able to share my next book *Universal Life Lessons: Gift of Your Greatness* with you.

Susan Ball
Author, *Universal Life Lessons*
Life Lessons Leader

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FOREWORD

Gift of Life

Martha Farrell was a passionate civil society leader, renowned and respected in India and around the world for her work on women's rights, gender equality, and adult education. She was among fourteen people killed in a Taliban attack on a guest house in Kabul, Afghanistan on 13 May, 2015. She had been leading a gender training workshop with the Aga Khan Foundation in Kabul at the time of the attack.

Daughter of Iona and Noel Farrell, Martha was born in Delhi into an Anglo-Indian family. She studied English literature at Delhi University, and did a Masters in social work at the Delhi School of Social Work.

She began her career in 1981 as a literacy worker at Ankur, an NGO working for women's literacy and empowerment in Delhi. She broadened her focus into adult education, where she began her lifelong practice of participatory learning methodology.

In 1991, she co-founded Creative Learning for Change, an NGO consisting of development professionals involved in research, training, and documentation of learning materials for students, teachers, and facilitators in non-formal settings. She remained connected to this initiative throughout her career.

Remembering Martha

Dear Family Friends

It was on the morning of 14 May, 2015 that we learnt about Martha's death the night before in a terrorist attack in Kabul.

Though a year has passed, and we are taking our lives ahead, it does, at times, seem as if it was only yesterday.

During this long year, I have learnt a great deal about Martha, and myself. Most of all, I have found an enormous ocean of love, care, and support for me, and my children Tariqa and Suheil, from all of you. It is this vast, unending, and spontaneous warmth from you all that has made it possible for the three of us to move our lives forward.

In some ways, this enormous warmth and continuous support for us over the past twelve months is a reflection of Martha's own journey in this world. We have learnt a great deal about her friendships, her generosity, her firmness, and her sense of justice in everyday life, over this one year. It makes me feel how little I knew Martha while she was physically with us. Yet, there are many of you, especially her family from birth (including her 92-year-old mother) and childhood friends, who know so much more about Martha than my association with her of thirty years.

In this past year, I have been learning more about my two children, and Martha's siblings and friends as well. As I learn to relate with them entirely on my own, without the enabling and protective 'shield' of Martha, I have discovered many of their inner strengths and ways in which Martha influenced them to 'get on with their lives'.

I am also learning a great deal myself in this one year:

- How to be patient with others without 'solving' their problems
- How to arrange engagement functions at home

- How to be generous with my time and care towards others without them asking for it
- How to share gifts with others thoughtfully
- How to cook tasty food in large quantities
- How to maintain impeccable cleanliness and orderliness in the home, office, and every place I visit (including hotel rooms)

During this past year, with support from my colleagues in PRIA and many of you around the world, we have launched the Martha Farrell Foundation to carry forward the commitment and efforts of Martha towards gender equality and prevention of violence against girls and women.

I am devoting myself to make the Foundation effective in Martha's ways—practical, persistent, personally professional.

In memory of Martha, several friends, colleagues, and family members are doing what they deem appropriate on Martha's anniversary—attending a special mass, holding a conversation, visiting a temple, and just thinking of good times with her in this world. Martha is in the spirit world now, and I am only just beginning to get a glimpse of her deep spiritual nature and connections.

In this journey ahead, we look forward to your continued affection, support, and comradery.

—Dr Rajesh Tandon
Martha's loving husband

Sari for Martha

In the closet in my parents' bedroom there sit two metal trunks, medium sized, one older than the other, where my mother's saris await their fate.

After my mother died, my friend Martha counselled me to not rush into dealing with her things. She assured me that she would help with the difficult decision of keepers and giveaways.

On the appointed day, in advance of her arrival, I emptied the trunks on to the double bed where my mother spent many hours.

My mother read hundreds of books: she read at night and when she could, during the day, always in bed. She listened to her favourite radio stations and programs on the transistor radio. With her back against the headrest, she took up hems of my father's trousers, replaced buttons on his flies and shirts, mended tears in his dhotis, darned holes, put patches in a salwars, knitted sweaters. Sometimes she would spread a newspaper and sit cross-legged to shell peas, peel potatoes, or assemble ingredients for making ladoos.

I spread out the saris, revealing their pulloos, borders, and recalled how she was very fastidious about putting falls on her silk saris herself; no tailor would do. If the length of the sari was too much for her, she would either put it aside for my sister or remove the extra material and then re-hem the edge.

Out here on the bed, there is summer, spring, winter, fall, and seasons in between. Saris for all seasons and occasions: tussar, chanderi, maheshwari, kanjivaram, organdi, organza, handloom, patola, voil, Dacca and such. They are like Martha: she embodies these varieties, I think to myself. She is a like a sari: beautiful, open, generous, expansive, flexible, and adaptable. Her love for people and life is boundless. She can wear all kinds of saris with great ease and grace.

"Oh, look at this, and this," Martha exclaims as she unfurls one sari after another, wraps it around herself and then me to show

their splendour and impact. “Wow, Aunty had such good taste!” she exclaims. “I love the mustard with crimson border. And you need to keep the peach one with tiny flowers embroidered with gold thread. I will get a salwar kammeez made out for you. And save this magenta with a delicate embroidered border for Manisha. She should have some of these: her grandmother’s saris. Lucky for me,” she laughs. “I have a whole new wardrobe for wearing to all the workshops I am doing from now till June.”

And then she recited her destinations: Raipur, Chennai, Delhi, and Kabul.

Two months later, as she sat down to have dinner in the hotel’s restaurant after a week’s work with women’s groups in Kabul, she was shot and killed by a Taliban gunman. She was one of thirteen killed that evening.

Today is the anniversary of her death. I miss you Martha.

—Pramila Aggarwal
A dear friend of Martha

Martha, My Sister

Martha was a great friend, sister, chosen family, mentor, confidante, and someone who would have solutions to those problems that I dared attend to. Her words echo in my ears still today, asking, “What is the problem, mushkil kya hai hamien batao?”

It is difficult to describe in words how empowered, unloaded, and supported I felt in those moments. She was my coolest English-speaking friend (in those days). I always looked up to her and wanted to hang out with her. We laughed, did crazy things, and had fun.

I have such beautiful, vivid memories of those golden days. Martha never made me feel less in any way; she was so perfect in

my eyes. She had always been there for me in the most difficult times of my life. She has made such a difference in my life ... she helped me come out of my cocoon and experience freedom.

Martha will always be missed; her memories are all we have. She will always be with us in spirit.

—Neelam Sharma
Martha's loving sister

Caring and Compassionate Friend

On 14 May, 2016 I reflected on Martha's life and how blessed I was to have known her.

I am grateful that I have many special memories of being with her, including at my wedding in Cuckfield, West Sussex in June 2002 when Rajesh (Martha's husband) was our best man.

What I recall most about Martha is her gentleness, care, compassion, and nurturing. I also remember her pride as a wife and mother and as an active citizen who had passion and drive for humanitarian causes.

I admired and respected her deeply. I recall that, when she received her doctorate, we exchanged emails, and we both had such a mutual love and respect for one another, both in our personal and professional lives.

In Delhi, I also recall going through the marketplaces with Martha while she looked for the right type of fabric for a sari and taught me that you must always do your research and make sure you make an informed decision. I have applied that learned wisdom wherever I can in my life. Thank you, Martha, *for the gift of your greatness.*

—Susan Ball
Author and a dear friend of Martha



Your Reflections

*If you have lost a loved one, what is their story?
What are the special memories you have of them that
you hold close to your heart?
How do they shine through you?
What is their legacy to the world?*

Chapter 1

Gift of Grieving and Healing

To all those who have suffered and are still suffering

Live—Love—Celebrate

WE ARE NOT AT THE END this is just the beginning ...



TWO ANGELS

Chicken nuggets, chips, laughing,
Unsettled nights, swimming,
Fighting, mayhem siblings, sleeping,
School, homework, birthday party, screaming,
Friends, family, church, loving,
Pain, hurting, crying,
Anger, shock, nightmares, sleepless nights, guilt, isolation,
Patience, grace, loving, living, sharing, courage, celebrating
Each day passing without you,
So many thoughts, I'm holding tight
Laughter, growing, surpassing, all you who thought they knew
Blossoming, entwining, fighting, beautiful and kind
Soul so deep,
Pleased, knowing we knew we couldn't have asked you to do more,
strength, love of life complete
Learning, time, precious girl,
Holding hands ... Two angels

In Memory of Elizabeth—Aged 16 (26/8/1989–19/03/2006)

In Memory of Anna—Aged 29 (18/10/1985–16/4/2015)

*Written with love by Robyn Loats
Hamilton, Victoria, Australia
May 2016*

This beautiful poem was written for the Western District Health Service Palliative Care Thanksgiving Service for National Palliative Care Week this year. It was written by a very dear friend of mine, Robyn Loats.

Little did we know when we first met in the mid-seventies that our lives would continue to entwine in such a profound way. We have shared the loss of Robyn's first husband Nigel (aged 32 years), her daughter Elizabeth (aged 16 years), and the loss of my daughter Anna (aged 29 years). We are now both working in very similar professions. In Robyn's case, she is working in the area of palliative care and sharing her life lessons through her lived experience.

I feel that the best way to share this poignant story with you is to start at the very beginning, when I first met this remarkable, caring, and loving woman ...

Robyn was married to my first husband's school mate, Nigel. They had both attended Timbertop at Geelong Grammar School, where many prominent and successful students had attended this highly acclaimed leadership course. In this particular close-knit group of 1967 were Nigel, Michael, John, Tim, and Charles—the latter being Prince Charles, which shows how even English royalty was attracted to come to Australia to attend Timbertop.

However, from my own recollection of hearing conversations much later about their 'days in Timbertop', they were clearly appreciative of being given such an opportunity; however, very little was said about what it was really like. Suffice to say, friendships were forged and the 'commoners' kept in touch with one another for years after they left Timbertop.

A love of old vehicles formed the basis of a friendship that connected my first husband Michael with Nigel. Often there would be car rallies and, on one such occasion, Nigel and Robyn, his wife, drove from Geelong, Victoria, to Peregian Beach, Queensland, for a National car rally for vintage vehicles and motorcycles. I recall seeing them arrive at our home in Brisbane en route to Peregian Beach in their old 1928 Armstrong Siddeley. They were exhausted

after a long drive, during which a few breakdowns had meant getting parts for the car. And, being a vintage car, this also meant getting parts sent to them from Geelong while they waited patiently in temporary accommodation on the Newell Highway. As you can imagine, it caused significant delays but miraculously they made it just in time for the start of the car rally.

They even popped in to see us on their way through to Brisbane for a short time. They told us about the misfortune of their car breaking down several times on the highway. We all agreed that driving classic cars on long trips always comes with some challenges and adventures and we had a good laugh about it together. It was just lovely spending time with them. We knew we would see them again at the rally for the weekend event, where we would enjoy some more quality time with them.

As they were leaving, I recall Nigel saying that his knee hurt and that it was probably all the driving. Particularly the double de-clutching which, in those older vehicles, took quite a bit of effort. So off they went, fortunately with no more mishaps from Brisbane to Peregian Beach, where we reunited with them.

It was a wonderful weekend. There were literally hundreds of vintage and veteran vehicles and motorcycles at the event. The weather was perfect. We just had fun. Anyone who has enjoyed car rallies would appreciate just how special it was being with so many like-minded people who loved restoring and driving those old jalopies, regardless of the challenges they might encounter along the way. That was part of the course. In fact, it added to it!

Upon heading back to Geelong from the rally, Nigel's knee was starting to swell and he wrapped it in a bandage to give it some relief. It was also starting to be painful. When he returned home he found out that he had cancer and that it was aggressive. He was given only a few months to live.

It was such a shock for all of us. He was so young; an only child; just recently married; and at the beginning of his adult life. It just didn't seem fair. Thank goodness he had parents who were able to

be there for him, who loved him dearly, and a wife who had faith, love, compassion, and nurturing in abundance.

Nigel chose to die at home. He also asked if Michael and I could be with him when he died, along with Robyn and his parents.

It was my first encounter with death. I remember arriving at their home and feeling a very beautiful energy. It was peaceful and calm. There was a true sense of being. Every breath Nigel took we knew was bringing him closer to his last and yet he wanted everything to be as normal as possible. He elected to have the people around him that he wanted in his last days on Earth and his wish was honoured. I couldn't imagine how his parents must have felt knowing that their only child/son was going to predecease them and the emptiness and sadness that they must have felt. I remember their strength and fortitude and, most poignantly, all of us being together when Nigel slipped away.

That experience was profound and will be with us forever.

It also reinforced my bond and friendship with Robyn, who was then a widow at the age of 31 years.

I will fast-forward a few years after that to 1985, when I received a phone call from Robyn to ask whether I would be her matron of honour as she was getting married to Kevin. I was elated, and accepted. I had only just had Anna, my second daughter who, at their wedding, was six weeks old. That didn't stop me. I was there with bells on to celebrate their joyous occasion.

Fast-forward again a few more years to 1986–1999, when I would receive regular updates from Robyn about her pregnancies, one after the other. It almost seemed like one a year! We would laugh, when she had child number six, about the fact that, as they were all girls, now they had their very own softball team! I loved getting those calls from Robyn, either announcing a pregnancy or announcing a birth. Either way, it was impressive—and so were her beautiful girls.

But then one day I received a totally unexpected phone call from Robyn. It was such a shock. In the night, Elizabeth, one of their beautiful daughters, had died in her sleep. She was 16 years

of age. I flew down to be with Robyn the next day as I just couldn't comprehend it. I wanted to be with her, Kevin, and the girls.

Everything in Elizabeth's room was as though time had stood still. Her guinea pig was waiting to be fed and its water needed to be filled. Her top bunk, where she had slept and not woken up, was still unmade from the previous night. It was surreal. It was as though we were in slow motion and nothing was sinking in. I couldn't imagine the pain and anguish for Robyn and Kevin and her strong, courageous girls, who had lost a sister, while an autopsy was carried out.

Year after year they went through horrendous hardship as forensics did further tests trying to determine what caused Elizabeth's death. That period of waiting for the result must have been almost impossible for their family to endure.

Eventually a result was determined: Elizabeth's death had been caused by a seizure while she was sleeping.

Even with the findings, the family still endured more when they all had to be tested to make sure that they didn't have similar epileptic tendencies.

I asked Robyn at the time how she got through, and her answer was, "Through faith. We knew we would get through." And they have. Robyn and Kevin have shown that even with the greatest adversity, they have been resilient. By having faith and hope their family has grown tall and strong with lasting memories of their beloved daughter and sister, Elizabeth, who will be in their hearts forever. (Refer to Life Lesson 1.)

The next profound moment was when I phoned Robyn on 16 April, 2015 to share my very sad news that my daughter Anna had passed away at 29 years of age. Robyn and Kevin, along with my

wonderful friend Barbara, came to be with me the next day. It was as though what we had experienced all those years ago with Elizabeth's passing was now turned on its head, and I needed Robyn to be by my side after I had just lost my youngest child.

My own recollection is that it felt very strange the day after Anna died. Everything that had once been normal was no longer normal. Everything was topsy-turvy. I was in overdrive. Even though I had prior warning that Anna was at end-of-life, unlike in Elizabeth's case, it still didn't make it any easier. Having family and friends around at that time was comforting as everyone was so supportive and loving and they, too, were experiencing the same sense of disbelief and sadness. There was a feeling of emptiness. I kept imagining seeing Anna coming toward me and saying 'good girl' or 'my mum' as she often did—but suddenly I realised I wouldn't hear those words again.

The year that followed for me had its ups and downs. I wrote a book, as so many people asked 'what were the lessons from Anna's 29 years?', knowing that she was one of the few to have lived with her condition to adulthood. I was focussed and it gave me a channel through which to express my grief. I knew that if it enabled one other person to make their journey a little easier then it was worth sharing the valuable knowledge. In fact, the turnaround time from when I started writing to when the book was published was three months. It was as though I had compiled all the information, the evidence, and the stories in my head for twenty-nine years, waiting for the right time to put it in writing and share Anna's remarkable story. The life lessons came naturally as they were indeed what Anna had shared with us through her strength of character, resilience, and fortitude.

I was proud to launch *Universal Life Lessons from My Brilliant Blue Bohemian Butterfly* on 23 August, 2015 at the Children's Westmead Hospital in Sydney, where there was a conference of the VCFS (Velocardiofacial syndrome) 22q11 Foundation. VCFS/deletion 22q11 is the most common microdeletion syndrome. The syndrome often presents with cleft palates and congenital heart disease.

In Anna's case, she had Chromosome 22 Ring, which is a rare chromosomal disorder where genetic material from one or both ends of chromosome 22 is missing and the two broken ends have re-joined to form a ring. Our family always focussed on Anna's personality, strengths, and abilities, rather than the condition that impacted on her mental development, co-ordination, and, later in her life, presented multiple brain tumours.

When Anna was born there were very few known cases in the world of Chromosome 22 Ring. To have lived to adulthood with such gusto was testimony to Anna's fortitude and stamina and her love of life.

I recall not long after Anna's passing, I went on a pilgrimage just prior to writing my first book honouring Anna's amazing life and the lessons learned. It was a quiet, spiritual retreat during which time I stayed in a beach studio where I could finish the painting that Anna and I had been working on together, reflecting on her life and all its twists and turns. I collected sea shells. I cried when I wanted to cry and I slept when I needed to sleep. I enjoyed my solitude for four days.

I thought I had done my grieving. I hadn't. I had simply started.

I then went on an overseas trip. It was very ambitious. I was not ready. I was raw and before boarding the plane I felt completely bereft. It was as though the trip I had been planning in my head during Anna's end-of life—to go to Greece with my friend Anne-Christine—that had kept me going, was suddenly too hard for me to even contemplate. However, I proceeded with the plans even though I felt numb and not able to even get excited about the adventure I had dreamed of for so long. As it turned out the trip itself was important—there was no doubt that I was meant to go on it.

I am eternally grateful to Anne-Christine for how she coped with a very different 'Susan' on that trip. I was thoughtless and certainly not mindful. I got through each day ticking the box of each island that we saw. The only time I really appreciated my 'presence' in Greece was when I jaunted off by myself to Santorini for the

day. It was as though I was guided to sit in one of the cafés with a panoramic view overlooking the Mediterranean and the white and blue ancient homes that had been built into the mountain. I stared at the magnificent view and I felt totally 'present' and at peace with the world. I knew I was exactly where I was meant to be at that exact moment in time. I just couldn't move as the feeling of joy simply overwhelmed me and I sat there for hours and let the world go by.

It was only when I returned home from my trip that I saw that the large painting of Santorini that I hung above my bed during Anna's end-of-life showed the café where I sat in its full glory. It made me smile and feel that for whatever reason I had gone to Greece, it was where I was meant to go at that particular time in my life when I was rudderless.

It was also at the end of that trip that I realised that I had lost my identity. I had always seen myself as Anna's mum. I would always be her mum, and my eldest daughter Claire's mum, but it was different now.

It overwhelmed me. I phoned Claire, who I was due to visit in the United Kingdom several weeks later. She heard in my voice that I was not coping. She invited me to come to her home earlier and try to get a flight to the UK the next day. I did exactly that.

I can only recall again the feeling of vulnerability and sadness. Claire was wonderful, she had prepared for my visit, although I don't feel she expected to see her mother quite as broken as I was. She had only ever seen me as an 'iron lady'. This was another different experience for us both. And, of course, we were both grieving.

During my stay, I realised I was not making coherent decisions. I would make a decision and then analyse that decision for hours, sometimes days, as to whether it was the right one. It was exhausting. Claire gave me some tools to enable me to 'let go' and release my stress through trusting in my decisions, regardless of whether they were good or not.

When I look back, this was the hardest period for me. It was October. My milestone birthday was coming up and, two weeks

after that, Anna's milestone birthday was looming. It was weighing me down as I had a vision of putting on an event to celebrate Anna's life on 18 October with her friends that she had gone to school with in Cuckfield in West Sussex, who kept in touch with our family.

Claire, again, was wise. She saw what was happening to me and that I was overwhelmed. She gently explained that she was so happy I was with them for my 60th birthday.

They wanted to celebrate that special day with me: to focus on my birthday and focus on celebrating the start of my new life.

Claire also suggested that I should reconsider having a celebration for Anna's 30th as, if Anna's friends wanted to do that, they could. She felt that I had done everything for Anna and now I had to know when to stop. I was grateful to Claire for her insightful words as I needed someone to tell me I had to get on with my life.

I had a marvellous birthday thanks to Claire, Jamie, Jake, and Mia, and Sally, who is a good friend of the family, also joined us for lunch. Claire made such a fuss with balloons, streamers, and us dressing up in similar gear to go to the Hilton in our jeans, boots, and leather jackets. The poor doorman didn't know what had hit him when we arrived and Claire asked him to take our photo at the revolving door at the front entrance of the posh hotel in Brighton. She then invited me to have a cocktail at the bar, and, not being a drinker, I was just happy to have a lemon lime and bitters.

But that clearly was not good enough. Claire insisted that I should have a cocktail and order one at the bar, which I duly did. Claire, unbeknownst to me, took my photograph and put it on Facebook saying, "This is my mother at the bar at The Hilton, seen having a cocktail!"

It made me laugh. In fact, I saw Claire that night radiate her love and pride for me. It was I who was proud of her. She had gotten me through the most difficult of times and yet she was also grieving. In my view, that shows a remarkable strength of character. I will always be grateful for Claire's love and nurturing when I needed it the most.

I returned home to Brisbane and I still felt lost. I had no sense of belonging.

I was going to go on a trip of self-discovery to Myanmar with another dear friend, Pat, who had seen that I was very low before I left for my European trip and had offered a place to come with her to Myanmar three weeks after I got back.

Again, I felt I wasn't ready. This was different. Not only was I not ready, I simply wasn't strong enough, neither emotionally nor physically, to go. I needed to stay put and not run away from my grief. I had to face it.

***I honestly believe that was when my decision-making 'with clarity' started to return. It was as though I had given myself permission to start releasing and letting go through simply being sad. I stayed home and kept to myself, which was very unusual for me.
(Refer to Life Lesson 2.)***

I applied for jobs in the disability sector, mainly up the Sunshine Coast as I felt it was time to make a sea-change.

However, the life lesson came in an unexpected place. I was asked to attend a job interview for a position in the area of fundraising, specifically focusing on bequests and major gifts. I had been referred through a fellow Rotarian who knew me both personally and professionally.

The job was in the city of Brisbane and it was in an area of work that, although I had established foundations and I was certainly a philanthropist, I had never considered.

It was as though, when the job offer was made, I started my new professional life. It also marked the beginning of a new chapter of my life. It truly was a blessing.

My learnings have been to trust in divine timing and to not have to know 'how' things will evolve as they will evolve naturally. To be able to trust that the path you are on is the right one as long as you have faith.

It is one of the poignant lessons in this book, *Universal Life Lessons: Gift of Your Greatness*, to share the revelation of being able to trust that wherever you are at that point in time is the right place and that by not forcing things to happen, they will, as they are meant to, evolve naturally.

***When things are right, like a jigsaw puzzle, they will slot into place. Trust in divine timing.
(Refer to Life Lesson 3.)***

I would like to share how I know that ‘I am in the right place, right now’ ...

Just over one year ago, I attended the Thanksgiving service at St John’s Cathedral, Brisbane during National Palliative Care Week. Anna had only just passed away weeks before. I remember walking into the service and it was as though I knew everyone in the cathedral ... faces that were all familiar, faces that were from different times in my life. It was as though my own life flashed before me.

There were people I had worked with, staff from the palliative care team, several social workers that had supported me over the years: that was the first sign that I was in the right place.

Unbeknownst to me as I sat down on the pew, next to me was the counsellor who had enabled me to leave Anna after being with her for several hours after her passing. I remember how Anne had been able to gently pry me away and made me feel comfortable at the thought of leaving Anna after all those years of being by her side. I was meant to sit next to Anne that day in the cathedral. That was another sign.

After the service there came a morning tea. It was a very reverent time where everyone was there to recognise a loved one they had lost and shared their stories with one another in fellowship.

In a conversation with the organisers, I was asked whether I would be interested in giving an address at the next Thanksgiving service for National Palliative Care Week and I graciously accepted.

I felt that I would be ready by then and I wanted to share Anna's story.

I began my address (which I share with you later in this book) on Friday, 27 May with an impromptu opening: *One year ago when I was asked to give this address today here in St John's Cathedral, I did not know that I would be part of the Anglican family and, as I stand here, I know I am exactly where I am meant to be.*

I could feel that Anna had had a hand in the plan and that it was no surprise to her at all. She already knew that I was going to find the right path for me and that I just needed some guidance through my very wise daughters.

During National Palliative Care Week, Robyn too had been approached to speak at a Thanksgiving service in her region of Hamilton. She chose to write the beautiful poem 'Two Angels' as part of her address.

It is a truly beautiful memory of Elizabeth and Anna who are, I'm sure, holding hands and sending their love and their greatness, which shines through us and enables us to heal.



This precious photograph shows Elizabeth expressing her free spirit and love of life on a beautiful day at her home when she was 14 years of age. The family had just come home from church.



This photograph of Anna Rose Paas was taken on her 27th birthday in 2012 when she was ready to go out to celebrate with her special friends. It shows Anna's joy and happiness.

Both of these wonderful women brought so much love to so many. Although their lives were cut short, and we miss their presence every day, it is the memories of them as fun-loving, kind, compassionate, and happy people that remain in our hearts forever.

Thank you, Anna and Elizabeth, for the gifts of your greatness that will live on in our hearts for eternity.

Your Reflections

*How did you cope with the loss of someone you loved?
Did you have someone you could talk to about your loss?
Do you need to release some of those emotions now?
How did you overcome any anger or resentment?*

Your Life Lessons

LIFE LESSON 1:

*Have faith and seek support from your loved ones
who will give you strength to cope with your loss.*

LIFE LESSON 2:

*Give yourself permission to be sad so that you can
start releasing your emotions.*

LIFE LESSON 3:

Trust in divine timing.

Chapter 2

Gift of Love



The previous chapters celebrate our loved ones who will live in our hearts forever. It shows that there is no greater love than love itself. The precious memories we have of Martha, Elizabeth, and Anna bring us comfort when we recall the joy and happiness they each brought to our lives.

By living in the present—with the underpinning feeling of love and gratitude—it also fosters peace and harmony and a sense of fulfillment. It makes us appreciate that we should enjoy the simple things in life and value the special moments that bring us so much joy, happiness, and contentment.

Feeling love and gratitude changes your vibrations and attracts more of the same. (Refer to Life Lesson 4.)

When I feel love around me I feel a life-energy full of connectedness and I am drawn to those around me with the same energy.

I have become more aware that now I am emitting the energy of love, I am attracting more of the same.