

Sabine Asgodom

Queen of Effing Everything

How to Get the Amazing Life that
Suits You

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Sample Translation by Anette Pollner

Queen of Effing Everything

...]

This book will show you how you can live a 'queen size life', the great life that fits you. It's all about decisions and making changes, because

if you want to dance with life you've got to get moving.

I'm going to tell you about the difference between a princess and a queen. And how easy it is to swap these crowns. You're going to learn how to write your Declaration of Independence so that you get the respect you deserve. You're going to find out why it is damaging to 'laugh off' anger, rage or disappointment. And I'm going to show you different options, like addressing the emotions boiling up inside you or developing strategies to deal with them wisely. 'I'm Not Easily Offended' – that was the title of a book by my highly esteemed colleague Bärbel Wardetzki. That's how it is.

In a monarchy, the king or queen is also called the 'sovereign'. In a democracy, the people are the ultimate sovereign. Therefore, if you prefer to think in terms of democracy, sovereignty is the human right of self-determination. My book is about exactly that right of self-determination. Please understand the image of the queen as an imaginative metaphor.

To be honest, I wasn't always a queen myself, and not even a princess. I presented myself for a long time as the embodiment of Cinderella. The lesson I learned at home was: "Children who scream 'I want! I want!' Only get their bottoms spanked."

I realised right from the start that, as a child, you don't count and you certainly can't demand anything. You're not allowed to trust your own emotions. You have to keep your thoughts to yourself. You're not allowed to say 'no'. You're not allowed to question anything. You mustn't criticise your parents. They decide what you get, as illustrated by another one of my father's sayings: "Just close your eyes and you'll see what you get." I knew only too well what that was: nothing! If you'd like to know more about my biography, read the chapter 'You Need a Strong Self to be a Queen.'

Luckily it's never too late for a happy childhood, as the famous psychologist Milton Erickson wrote. In 1979, as a journalist, I travelled through war-torn Eritrea. We were visiting a refugee camp in a long sand-filled valley surrounded by rocky hills, when our escort suddenly came running towards us and shouted: "Quick, quick, hide in one of the tents! We're expecting an air raid. Go sit on a cot, put your index fingers in your ears and open your mouth as wide as you can. That's going to protect your eardrums from exploding when the rockets strike close to us!" We could already hear the approaching aircraft, flying low, thundering across our valley. And then we heard loud bangs. The rockets were fired off and struck the ground around us. Boom, boom, boom. I feared for my life.

Can you imagine everything changing within one or two minutes? Just because of one determining experience, one thought, one insight, one sentence you read somewhere? Americans call such a moment a 'game changer'. In that moment, I learned two things. I love life. And: life can be over in a second. And I



hadn't even lived nowhere near enough yet! To be honest I hadn't even started to taste the sweetness of my life. Could this already be it? All of it?

This dramatic experience in Eritrea changed my goals. I realised that I wanted to live my own life. Not the distorted image that others had sketched out for me, limited by warnings like "be humble and modest so people will like you". Or by the poems in my little blue friendship book that went something like this: "Walk on a path of roses in meadows green and bright, until someone who wears trousers will take you as his wife." Bullshit!

The guideposts of my life were repositioned. I no longer wanted to believe all the promises and accept flimsy excuses. I no longer wanted to always give and neglect myself. I didn't want to drown in mediocrity and give up my plans because they didn't fit into the concepts of other people. A deep longing for a fulfilled life had awakened inside me, a longing for a queen size life.

"No one is getting out of here alive. So stop treating yourself like a keepsake. Eat delicious food. Go for a walk in the sunshine. Jump into the sea. Speak the truth and carry your heart on your sleeve. Be ridiculous. Be kind. Be funny. There's no time for anything else." Sir Anthony Hopkins.

I'm describing my life path to you in fast forward because I want to show you that you, too, didn't come into this world in the 'right way' or the 'wrong way'. No. At any moment in your life, you can decide to make changes. You have the choice to endure things or to take action. I'm going to tell you a lot about all this based on my own biography, and it's often going to be very personal. I'm going to reveal things in this book that I've never told anyone before. (Am I actually crazy? What will people think if I write about my failures and weaknesses? Ignore reviews, my friend Elke told me recently. I think you'll understand what I'm trying to say.)

Why am I going to talk so much about myself? It would be a transgression to share details from my conversations with clients and workshop participants. Of course I'm going to bring in a few examples from my daily life as a coach. But I'm only going to use my own stories when I show you my deepest inner self, when I'm radically honest with you.

I believe in the power of stories. We learn from the example of others. They encourage us and show us new ways of doing things. Stories carry strong emotions and experiences and stimulate us into action. And that is what we need in order to live the life we want to live. Because we can not only change our own world but also set landmarks for others. We need more women who are able to speak their minds and dare to make decisions. The world needs you, genuine and fearless, visible and empathetic, wherever you are or where you aspire to be.

The world needs women like you, contributing your point of view on the planet and our responsibility for the next generations. Women can do so much! They're so competent! And they're still underrepresented in decision-making positions, in business, in institutions and politics. Did you know that cars are still designed for men's bodies? A small, plump woman with relatively short legs like me is reminded of this fact every time she gets into a rental car. Studies tell us that my seat and belt positions in the car endanger my survival. Women's needs are not considered in clinical tests or in assessment centres. We need more confident women who can speak out and create change.



We need women like you who don't just complain or retreat in disappointment but reset their crown and lead a self-determined life, professionally, personally and everywhere in society. Every brave woman sets an example and can embolden all those who would like to be brave themselves. No one is going to give us our queen size life for free. We need to take action and we need to have the courage to provoke and to shout "here!" when exciting jobs are being handed out. And it's definitely worth it!

"The 'having mode' of being human relies on what you have, while the 'being mode' puts its trust in our existence, in being alive and in creating something new if the courage is there." Erich Fromm

We need women like you who want to be the way they are. Women who aren't chasing an artificial image but who feel at peace with themselves. If you like yourself, you will be able to like others. Simply being yourself creates peace.

This book is partly about saying no but mostly it is about saying yes. I once had an offer to become one of the founders of a speakers' association where I would have been the only woman among eleven men. The offer included the position of note-taker. I very firmly declined. Then they changed the offer. Now, it no longer included the obligation to take notes. I immediately said yes. Two years later I was the president of this organisation. Note takers don't become presidents. This is one of the lessons life has taught me.

If you look at all the building sites, the adaptations, the unfulfilled desires but also all the signposts in your life – which of the following applies to you?

- You don't just want to function any more and be fobbed of with empty promises?
- You don't want to be nice any more or you don't want to beg for love?
- You don't want to be used or treated without respect any more? In short:
- You don't want people to mess you around any more?

Did some of these answers resonate with you? If yes, then let's meet those challenges together. The goal of this book is that

- you are treated with respect,
- you are valued and taken seriously,
- you are loved and treated well,
- you can rely on promises,
- you can play to your strengths,
- you can create your own life. In short:
- You can and will become the queen in your own life.



Maybe you're asking yourself: But how am I supposed to get that wonderful life that fits me? How do I get from my own perceived weakness to the active strength I want? How do I create energy from anger? Motivation from disappointment? How can I make my neglected Self shine again?

Imagine a fairy godmother who can give you a fulfilled life at the wave of her magic wand. That would be great, wouldn't it? However the bad news is that there is no such fairy tale character. Therefore my favourite personal slogan is: "If you don't have a magic wand, take your fate into your own hand!"

So let's reframe the question more actively: what can I do myself to lead the wonderful life that fits me? My guess would be that you are one of the women who work a lot, give a lot and always get far too little in return. I call these women 'feminine, angry and full of energy'.

Believe me, you can change that. Apart from the dents and marks that life may have left on you, you also have a strong internal Self, a Self that loves you and a Self that loves life. And that needs to be discovered, strengthened and lived. As the French author Albert Camus said: "In deepest winter, I found an invincible summer within myself."

This book contains many examples of women who found that strong sense of Self within and came to shine more brightly. There are also strategies, methods, solutions and tips. All very practical, tried and tested. The foundation of all of it is positive psychology. Professor Robert Biswas-Diener, one of the best-known psychologists of this orientation, describes it as follows: "Positive psychology is the scientific investigation into how humans when they are at their best or could be at their best."

Many women came to me saying things that you may recognize, such as: "I'm completely fed up!", or "That can't have been all!", "I've had enough!" or "Now it's my turn."

And then they managed to transform negative emotions like sadness, disappointment or frustration into pure life changing energy.

To me, these women are proof that change is possible. I would like to hold them up as examples against any feelings of being disheartened and sceptical that you may still carry within you. Every woman can change her own life. Change is the energy that drives human life.

In her book 'The Freedom to Be Free', the philosopher Hannah Arendt writes: "The mysterious human gift, the ability to start something new, is obviously related to the fact that all of us entered this world as newcomers. In other words: we can begin something because we are beginnings and therefore also beginners."

And so we can re-create ourselves. We start to see things in a different way, to find different values in them or to change the way we do them. That applies just as much to seemingly unremarkable situations, at least in the eyes of other people, as it does to the big issues in life. The issues that women have worked on with me, whether they were 35 or 65, come from all areas of life. Here's a short selection:

- How to live a self-determined life



- How to resolve conflicts with their parents, partners, children
- Finding their dream job
- Discovering new perspectives
- Gaining a certain lightness of being
- Becoming visible
- Enhancing your confidence
- Setting boundaries
- Developing your own rules on how to live life

This book is about learning, doing and potential solutions. It is intended to help you realise the changes you want, to provide suggestions and motivation. It can give you new ideas, encourage and affirm you and help you to persist. It can also make you smile and lift you up when your thoughts become too heavy. Whether you want to take small steps or whether you are planning your big breakthrough, or even if you realise that you are happier than you thought and don't actually need to make any big changes, I'm sure you will find many glittering suggestions here. And now – let's go! Let's start our queen size life!

Deciding to Choose a Queen Size Life

You probably know the term 'queen size' from hotel websites or bedroom furniture. It is normally used to describe the size of a bed. A queen size bed is wider than a standard bed, usually 1.60 metres by 2 metres. It promises luxury and comfort. This term originates from the 17th century, also called 'the century of magnificent beds'. The magnificent beds of kings and queens to be precise.

When I finally, after much hesitation, moved out of my first marriage at the age of 49, I very consciously decided to buy such a queen size bed for my new flat. I was thinking that I wouldn't feel so lost, sleeping alone in that bed, as I would in a really big one ('king size'). This bed provides enough room for me and it feels cosy at the same time. It's not a double bed but also not a narrow single berth. And to be honest there was also another thought at the back of my mind. Maybe, if, eventually, possibly, potentially someone else were to find their way into my bed again, it would be wide enough for two. (And that's exactly what happened.)

But what does all this have to do with the idea of a queen size life? For me, it describes a better life than the 'standard' version, hopefully in connection with luxury and comfort. As the queen in your own life you decide what luxury and comfort mean to you:

- Having enough time for yourself
- Being free from financial worries



- Being able to afford your own opinion
- Doing what is fun for you
- Getting support and help from others
- Living an honest life
- Being independent

What does Your Queen Size Life Look Like?

I hope the word queen size triggers positive associations in your mind, I hope it creates a sense of longing, confusion, sparkle, excitement, delight... Or maybe you realise, wow, that's exactly the kind of life I'm living already. I'm privileged, independent, self-reliant, my life's a bed of roses! Wonderful. But maybe you can also feel a faint sense of something lacking. Maybe there's more to this.

Do you feel you would like to record these thoughts? Here are a number of creative options.

Letter from the Future

Here's a method for those of you who love to write:

Write a fictitious letter to your best friend describing, in detail, your life in comfort and luxury. How you wake up in the morning. What you're looking forward to. What your environment looks like. What a typical day is like. Are you working? If so, what is your job? How are you working? With whom? For whom? Where do you live? Who is living with you? What do you enjoy? How do you feel before you go to bed? What are your challenges? What are your achievements? Who is good for you? Who did you say goodbye to? Write down everything you can think of. There's no right or wrong, nothing is too big, too small, too difficult, too easy. There's nothing to be ashamed of.

A Colourful Picture of Your Future

If you prefer to visualise your thoughts, you could draw your queen size life onto a strong piece of cardboard using big colourful pens. (Don't forget your crown, he he.) Or you could create a collage (now also called a vision board). You probably have some old magazines lying around somewhere or you know where you can get them. Now tear out some pictures, cut out headings and words, then arrange it on the cardboard. If you like the result, glue it all on. I love this kind of work and I sometimes do it with my groups. It's fascinating to experience the meditative mood everyone gets into, calm, focused, touching, moving. The activities of cutting out, arranging the pieces of paper and gluing them on satisfy your tactile senses and unconsciously enhance your creativity. And afterwards you let yourself be surprised and celebrate the result.

The Queen's Speech

If you are more the auditory type, then it's easy to record a speech or even a short video on your smartphone. Assume a regal posture and describe what your queen size life in luxury and comfort looks like.



Let your thoughts drift, let your dreams shine through. Fantasize, let your stories grow, have fun. Think about different areas of your life: personal, private and professional. Just talk, don't listen to yourself, don't correct yourself, don't tone it down, just let rip! Be wild and insatiable. And then watch your little movie. Tell your inner critic to get lost ("Omg how do I look!", "That voice!", "I really need to have my hair done!"). Focus on the content. Now listen to yourself very carefully. What do you feel? What do you experience? It's also ok to have a little cry now.

No matter how you connect to your life in luxury and comfort, it's completely normal if you maybe also feel a little sad in all that joyful excitement because it seems too far away from your current life. Or if you get angry because you can sense what is lacking in your life, where you're twisting yourself out of shape, or where you limit yourself.

But all and any of this is better than staying numb or muted in a cookie cutter life. I'm absolutely convinced of that.