

spiritual hero



The Ambassador of New Thought

Claudia Abbott

She has been called a pioneer and the Queen of New Age. She ranks sixth on the list of the best-selling female authors of all time, and no other American female author has sold more copies of a single title. She is the founder of a publishing empire that has become a spiritual beacon for the Western world. Few people have done more to spread the message of personal empowerment and the New Thought philosophy than Louise Hay, *Science of Mind's* Spiritual Hero for 2009. Still speaking publicly and granting interviews at the age of 83, she was open, upbeat, and enthusiastic as she spoke with *Science of Mind*.

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A Life That Defied the Odds

Louise Hay was raised in a home where her stepfather ruled and violence, mental cruelty, and sexual abuse were the norm. She was molested by a neighbor at the age of five, dropped out of high school and ran away from home at fifteen, and at sixteen, gave up a newborn daughter for adoption. She eventually made her way to New York City, where she became a successful fashion model. In 1954, she married Andrew Hay, an English businessman who introduced her to a world of wealth and status; after fourteen years of marriage, however, he left her for another woman.

In the midst of despair, Louise walked into the First Church of Religious Science on 48th Street in New York City, and her life found a new direction. She remembers, "Someone was saying, 'If you change your thinking, you can change your life.' It was like a penny dropped. I thought, 'Really? Really?' I had not studied anything in my entire life, but I became an avid learner. I went twice a week. It opened up a whole new, wonderful world to me."

Hay went on to become a

licensed Religious Science practitioner and popular workshop leader. It was her self-published book of affirmations titled *Heal Your Body* that began what would be an amazing career as a writer, publisher, and owner of Hay House, a spiritual self-help empire.

Her own experience with cervical cancer in the late 'seventies provided the opportunity to go deeper, practicing the principles she had learned and healing her life. In *You Can Heal Your Life*, Hay recalls that experience. "With my background of being raped at five and having been a battered child, it was no wonder I manifested cancer in the vaginal area. I knew that a deep resentment literally eats away at the body. I had been unwilling to dissolve all of the anger and resentment over my childhood." She embarked on a holistic journey to heal the cancer, but at the core, she learned to forgive and love herself. She deepened her knowing that "Dis-ease can be healed if we are willing to change the way we think and believe and act."

The Birth of a Publishing Empire

The message of self-love and the empowering principles of Sci-

ence of Mind spread through Hay's work. "I did not start Hay House; I just started my pathway. I never thought it would be anything but what it was at the moment, teaching a few classes and selling a few books. I wrote my little book (*Heal Your Life*) in 1976. The beginning was so small; I had no idea what it would grow into."

In 1984, Hay published *You Can Heal Your Life*, which has sold nearly 40 million copies. "I have always said that since the moment the book came out, life took over and determined that my book needed to go around the world, and I had very little to do with it." The message—you have the power to change your life—continues to resonate because it empowers.

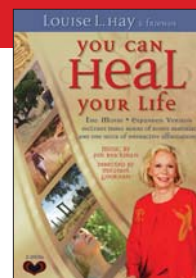
The AIDS epidemic was at its height in the 1980s when Hay started a support group for people living with the disease. The group, which started with six men in her living room, became known as the "Hayride" and grew to over 850 when they found a space to meet in a large hall in West Hollywood.

"On some level, AIDS made me famous because I was the first person who opened my arms and said, 'Yes, I will work with you.

But I want you to know that I don't know what we will do, but no one else knows that either. So we can start a group and we can work on forgiveness, releasing resentment, and loving ourselves. And we will see what happens."

In 1988, she was invited to appear on the Oprah Winfrey Show. "At that time, anyone who did an interview about AIDS would start with, 'We all know that everyone with AIDS is going to die.' With that sort of opening, how do you get a positive message out? But Oprah allowed us to say what we wanted to say. I went to the bestseller list for fourteen weeks and Hay House became a voice."

The message she taught in those groups was simple: love yourself and love others. At the core was learning self-care,



To order *You Can Heal Your Life* by Louise Hay, visit scienceofmind.com or call DeVorss & Company at 800-382-6121.

self-love, and forgiveness. “When people have a lot of self-hatred, they don’t take care of themselves. They think, ‘Why bother?’ Far too many people died during that time, but today I still see many people who say, ‘Remember me? I was at the Hay ride,’ and I see a healthy, happy person. I almost burst into tears because it is so wonderful.

*Hay House puts
principle into action
by giving back.*

“Life brings you challenges, and AIDS was a challenge to me. It was a big learning lesson for all of us. I call it six and a half years in the trenches because that is how long it lasted for me. By the end of that time, other people were developing groups to take care of those with AIDS, and I didn’t have to do it all myself. In the early days there were just two of us doing anything positive in the way of AIDS: Carolyn Myss on the East Coast and me on the West Coast. The challenges we are dealing with now are just as drastic

but in a different way. I think we have to know that we are safe, all is well, and life loves us.”

**Hay House—A Voice
for New Thought**

Today, Hay House has offices in countries around the world, and the message of love continues to be the focus. Hay states the mission: “The entire purpose of Hay House has always been to help people improve the quality of their lives. Every book, every card, gives the person that buys or receives it an opportunity to improve their life. If they take the opportunity or not, they have a choice.”

Not only does Hay House change the world by spreading a message of positive thinking and spiritual enlightenment, it also puts those principles into action by giving back. “We have an office in South Africa, and we do not take any profit from that company at all. Every bit of profit goes into a foundation that takes care of the AIDS orphans. These little children watched their parents die. They have nothing and no one there for them, so we give our money to programs to take care of them.” The Hay Foundation supports many other efforts, including providing books

to homeless shelters. Hay comments, “I give to people or charities that touch my heart.”

In an era where self-help publishing has grown exponentially, perhaps Hay’s largest contribution has been in bringing new teachers and spiritual masters to the public. When asked about her favorite teachers, Hay responded, “I was trained by Dr. Raymond Charles Barker and Rev. Eric Pace in New York City. They were brilliant teachers. They opened the doors for me. There are so many good

the amount of teaching I used to do. I find people who are excellent teachers and support them so they can have larger audiences and reach more people. I don’t have to change the world alone. I used to think I did. We don’t want to listen to those people who sell fear. There are many people speaking the truth and doing the work. The point of all this is that we are learning that we are all one, and what blesses one blesses all.”

Reflecting on Life’s Lessons

This past October, Louise Hay turned 83. This beautiful, vibrant woman is an elegant model of how to age gracefully. When she turned eighty, she announced that was going to be the best decade of her life, and so far she seems to be proving that point. Today, she is comfortable with a different rhythm in her life. Still the ambassador for New Thought, she remains busy traveling and speaking, but life at her home in San Diego is simpler. She is concerned about nutrition and grows her own food.

Louise Hay exudes a sense of inner peace—contentment with being rather than doing. When asked what her goals were, she

*We are learning
that we are all one.*

teachers out there today, and there is a place for all of them. Dr. Christiane Northrup helps women open their consciousness, understand their bodies, and realize they have power over their lives. I love Bruce Lipton. To people who think that I am crazy I say, ‘Listen to him, because he will give you scientific evidence of what I have been talking about for 25 years.’ I do not do nearly

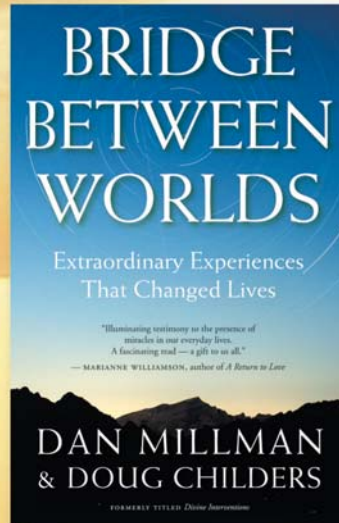
responded, "I've never had a goal. I don't do goals. I just see what today brings and that seems to work for me. I enjoy whatever presents itself and am open. I find that when I need things in life, they come to me. Whether it is a bit of information about health, a book, or another new idea, life brings it to me. When you are attuned to your connection and in the flow of giving and receiving, the Universe takes care of everything else."

Life has taught her that the events we might not understand at the time may yield greater experiences. "If my husband had not divorced me, I would never have become who I am today. I would still be a dutiful little English wife. While the divorce was absolutely devastating to me at the time because I went into, 'I'm not good enough; I cannot do it right,' it gave me the opportunity to go on a pathway that I would not have dreamed. Sometimes things are meant to end. If we don't end them, life will end them for us. It's not a bad thing; it is an opportunity.

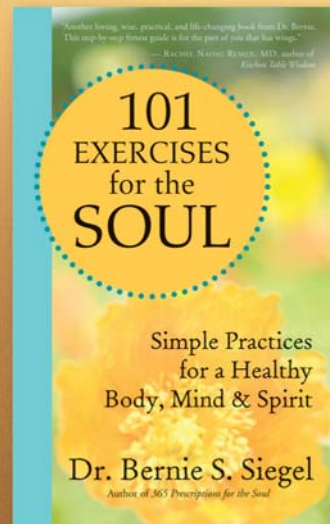
"I am learning more and more how to stay in the now, to stay in this moment, and to let the last moment go. No matter how wonderful yesterday was, I am

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not there now; I'm here. Even if this moment is the best moment, there is the next moment, and the next. It gives us an opportunity to not dash forth and have to do something—to really *be* and appreciate life.

“Many people think the materialistic things are the things we must go for. They don't realize that the most beautiful car in the world, brand new, is no good for

Life loves the grateful.

you if you are driving down the road screaming. Inner peace and joy are the most important. When you have the inner things, then the extra things just come in.

“Too much of the world wants to have the victim mentality and blame someone else. When we recognize that we are one with all of life, that the power that created us has given us the power to make changes, it is a wonderful, wonderful feeling. You don't feel so frightened or alone. The world is a safe place. When we talk about taking responsibility,

they think we are talking about blame. It is not the same.”

Louise seems to have found a contentment that comes from a life well lived. “People are always saying to me, ‘You changed my life.’ I say, ‘I did not do a thing; you changed your life. Even if I gave you the ideas, you did the work or nothing would have happened. Give yourself the credit.’ Today, I live a quieter life, and I love it. It suits me well. I keep my thoughts joyful and grateful. Gratitude is the key. Life loves the grateful. I bless and prosper everyone in my life, and everyone in my life blesses and prospers me.”

Hay finds many things to be thankful for. “One of the things I absolutely love,” she says, “is that two years ago a rose was named ‘The Louise Hay Rose.’ That gives me so much pleasure, because I know that long after I am gone, this beautiful rose will still be there shining in all its glory for people to enjoy.”

The rose touched Louise Hay's heart, but one can't help but think about the magnificent legacy that lives in the hearts she has touched. Louise Hay's work casts a beam of light that continues to expand and grow brighter. •