

7 KEYS TO SURRENDERING TO THE SIGNS



BY LAURA FRANCES GATES

“Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.” — Oscar Wilde

We all come into this life with a purpose carved into our hearts and a blueprint encoded in our souls.

Like our fingerprints, our blueprint and purpose are unique to each of us. Our internal voice whispers clues to keep us following the blueprint to realizing our unique purpose. And when we stop listening to that voice, the universe also provides signs to get our attention.

Unfortunately, most of us begin to ignore that internal voice and those signs from the universe at an early age. We obey authority and try to please those who “love” us, and often that means accommodating others by quieting the impulses that seem out of line or inappropriate in their eyes. And then we build stories around why this all makes sense!

Or maybe we rebel against all that social conditioning. But in our rebellion, we often simply become the opposite of those we rebel against, rather than honoring our own true self.

We stifle our own needs and desires and downplay ourselves in order to fit in, and, sometimes, just plain survive. It’s hard to know what we even think or feel any more. We’ve lost touch with who we really are.

But here's the thing: You are unique. There is no one on the planet exactly like you. The world needs you to peel back the layers, dig down deep, and unleash YOU.

THE SIGNS OF THE UNIVERSE

The Wakeup Call

Sometimes when we’ve lost touch with ourselves, or fallen asleep at the wheel, the universe tries to get our attention. A gentle tap on the shoulder might work for some. But rarely has that been my experience!

I’ve spent two decades undoing a lifetime (and generations) of conditioning. I’ve learned to listen to my inner voice and to notice the subtle signs guiding me along the way.

Unfortunately, I'm not always a fast learner. I had to learn the hard way—by NOT paying attention to the signs. For me, it's been the two-by four. The big stick that says "Pay attention. Life is short. It's passing you by. Change is needed."

This is not some evil plot to thwart us, but rather the universe's way of putting us back on our soul's path when we've veered off course.

This is what I've learned:

Your purpose will track you down like a hound dog.
It will relentlessly pursue you until you take notice.

And if you continue to ignore it—diving into that pint of Häagen-Dazs Swiss Vanilla Almond ice cream, crawling into bed with the covers over your head, curling into a fetal position, hoping it will all go away—

Your soul's purpose will come sniffing at the bedroom door.

And it won't be pretty.

I know. I've been there.

Shortly after my 30th birthday, my husband left me for a woman in her 20s. I felt rejected, second-rate, a HUGE failure. Coming from divorced parents, I had sworn my marriage would work, but it didn't. What had I done wrong? Why didn't he love me?

I wanted to die.

I wanted to remain sobbing with my cheek pressed against the cool white tiled bathroom floor and never get up.

But my soul wanted me to live.

One night I knelt down, bare knees on my hardwood bedroom floor, and begged God or the Universe or whomever to release me from the pain and suffering.

And then, I had a Moment of Grace.

A sudden lightness overcame me. I felt a warmth in my chest and a calm, reassuring love in my heart. I sensed a deep, inner knowing that I would be OK. Life would go on and my broken heart would mend.

And so the journey began.

When we're able to see life's setbacks and challenges as a gift, as an offering from the universe in exchange for our soul, that's when the real work begins.

We can fully be ourselves, without the pretense that has kept us in hiding for so many years.

In order to step into our potential, we need to push our boundaries, do things that scare us, and often let go of things that we falsely believe to be essential to our very survival.

In order to become who we truly are, we need to let go of who we've been.

I've reinvented myself time and time again. I've traveled the globe in search of healing and wisdom. I've learned that my best teachers are not "out there" but can be found "in here" by listening to my inner guidance—that small, still voice inside.

I've honed my ability to notice the signs sent from the universe—songs on the radio, books that have literally fallen off the shelf into my hands, the bumper sticker on the car in front of me, and the people who seem to be on a mission to deliver the exact message I need to hear.

Like Ulysses, the butcher at Whole Foods the other night: When he asked me if I wanted anything else, I said, "A million dollars, please." And he said, "If the Universe wants you to have it, you will." Who sends these people anyway?

Most importantly, I'm learning to release who I am and allow who I'm becoming to stream in live, unedited. I'm finally allowing myself to be myself.

I'm Surrendering to the Signs.

(And yes, I am happily remarried! People like to know that it turned out well in the end!)

It's Your Turn to Discover your "Sign Language"

By now you might be thinking, "Sounds great. But how the heck am I supposed to find MY signs?"

The first step is to start recognizing that the universe is constantly sending you signs and begin to learn how to read your own personal "sign language." These signs feel to me like secrets whispered in my ear encouraging me on the path, pointing the way – "go to that class, talk to that person, stay away from that building, drive down that road."

These messages hold a wealth of information to help guide us on the path to finding our purpose. But sometimes they're not so obvious.

Are you convinced yet that paying attention to the subtle messages the universe is sending you is a worthwhile effort? Let's begin!

Here are seven simple steps you can use to start paying attention to the universal guidance that is always available to you.

7 KEYS TO SURRENDERING TO THE SIGNS

"The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are."

— Joseph Campbell

#1 Believe

If you want to receive the signs, you need to believe they exist. For example, I believe there is a higher intelligence that guides us. I believe we are not alone on this planet. I believe the universe is constantly sending us signs and information to help us on our soul's path. Affirm these or similar beliefs for yourself, today. Then start noticing.

#2 Ask

If you never ask for guidance, it won't be given. You need to want it, and please try to be clear when you ask. The universe doesn't like vagueness. Questions like "What should I do today?" are neither clear nor very helpful. You don't want to waste the universe's time. There are a lot of questions to be answered! Be specific, like, "Universe, if I am supposed to take this job, show me a sign!" Listen to your inner wisdom -- a pull inside yourself that feels like a yes or a no. And pay attention to what information shows up.

For years I volunteered for an organization that wanted me to work for them full time. This would have meant closing my consulting business. Even though I loved the work they did, the timing never felt quite right. I was unclear and fuzzy and kept asking, "Do I close my business and take this job?"

One day I lost a client and realized I had no energy to go out and drum up new business. And then I realized I hadn't had to drum up business in years and was suddenly faced with the need to either find new clients or close up shop. When I thought about doing a

push for business, I felt exhausted. That was my sign. I listened to my inner knowing. I closed my business and joined the company without hesitation.

#3 Pay attention

Signs are sneaky. Like dreams, they are subtle and mysterious. Our task is to learn to decipher the codes the universe sends us. Make it a fun game, trying to identify if something is a sign. It's a muscle to develop.

The night before a trip I'd been planning to Argentina in December 1999, the whole country blew up in riots, bank closures and a major government takeover. I badly needed this vacation to the Andes, but was worried about my personal health and safety if I went. As I drove home that night from work in the pouring rain, I asked for a sign. Dear Universe, if I am supposed to go to Argentina, show me a sign. As I sat at a stoplight I looked up at the car in front of me and noticed the license plate had my birth year on it. It was clear. I was going. It was one of the best trips of my life. I now see those numbers everywhere I go. It's my little indicator that I am heading in the right direction.

#4 Let go of the outcome

Sometimes you want information in a specific way and that can actually block your ability to receive the messages the universe is sending. For example, let's say I'm looking up in the sky, asking for a sign. I'm expecting a bird to fly over, or to see a cloud formed in a certain way. But nothing happens. If I wait patiently, I might then notice, far off in the distance, a pack of dogs howling, which is not an everyday occurrence in my life—and I have to wonder, OK, how is a pack of dogs an answer to the question I asked?

Note: Keep in mind that not everything we want is necessarily what we get or need. That's when trusting in the timing of the universe is important. My husband and I struggled to conceive for years. I often railed at the skies that I wasn't getting pregnant. What had I done to deserve this? I was a good person!

And then I realized I did have a sign – not getting pregnant was a sign. And at the same time everywhere we went people were trying to sell us their homes and give us great deals on mortgages. It was bizarre. So instead of investing yet more of our money in doctors and treatments we put it towards our home and ended the stressful pursuit of pregnancy. I can tell you now that we are a calmer, happier couple with a wonderful dog and a niece who spends lots of quality time with us while giving my sister and her husband much-needed relief. We do have a wonderful child in our life that we're helping

to raise. It's just different than we thought. Sometimes we need to let go of what we think we want and embrace what's staring us in the face.

#5 Trust

When the sign comes, no matter how mundane or seemingly insignificant, trust it. Pay attention to the song on the radio, the road sign that says "This way."

The other day the car in front of me had a bumper sticker that read "Zippy Turtle." I paused to take it in. Was I supposed to speed up or slow down? Since I was kind of speeding, I decided it meant slow down. So I did. I never question the signs. I implicitly trust what they're telling me, even when I don't quite understand the meaning.

On the other hand, the signs can be like a blast of knowing.

I was at a luncheon last year and a man handed me his card, looked at mine and said "Oh you're a coach, my wife graduated from the Coaches Training Institute and just completed her Master's Certification in Intuition Medicine, may I have her call you?" When he said the words "Master's Certification in Intuition Medicine" every hair on my body stood on end and I got very quiet inside. It was as if my cells said "I need one of those, where do I get it?" I could barely get the words out to ask where she studied. As it turns out the school is 20 minutes from where I live. A year into the program, I can tell you it's one of the most transformational programs I've ever done.

#6 Act

When you ask a question and receive a sign, you need to act on it. No wavering, no "let me think about it." You can ask more questions or ask for confirmation, but I do believe the gods get frustrated when we continually pester them with the same questions when they keep sending signs and we ask for more signs! (I'm guilty of doing this when I'm afraid of doing what I know is being shown to me.)

Surrendering to the Signs means acting on the information you receive. Period.

Whether it's hitting the send button on your most intimate, heartfelt blog post, to taking a stand at the executive board meeting, to simply balancing your checkbook or sitting quietly so you can turn down the noise in your head.

When my husband and I put a bid on the house we were living in and I woke up in the middle of the night in a panic, I immediately emailed the realtor and told her we couldn't

go through with it. Within a week I had found the perfect home, which was a 3-line listing on Craigslist, much cheaper and had space for my husband's music studio.

Had I discounted my gut instinct we would have been stuck in an overpriced house with bad heating!

#7 Express Gratitude

It helps to thank the universe for being there, for showing you the way. And for providing support from the infinite universal wisdom that is available to all of us.

Remember, you are the only one who can be you. No one's going to do it for you, but the universe will help, if you open yourself up to the signs.

Surrendering to the signs takes practice. Tuning in to your particular universal language is a skill. Once you embark on this journey you will be rewarded with an abundance of information and support in the form of signals to give you clarity and direction in your life.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch.

The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

From The Essential Rumi, Translated by Coleman Barks

Whatever challenge you're facing, wherever you are at on your path, it sometimes helps to have a little guidance along the way. If you need some roadside assistance, feel free to contact me.

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