

# WRITING TOWARDS CONSCIOUSNESS

finding your true story

LEONIE JOANNE BROWN

Beautifully written, very powerful, and healing! Writing towards Consciousness serves as a guide, encouraging you to delve into the depths of your soul and authentically express your true self on paper. It empowers you to embark on a transformative healing journey, confidently embracing your life purpose.

Ken Honda, Happy Money Mentor and Japan's best selling zen millionaire

As an Author and Success Coach myself I feel that this is an absolute must-read for anyone interested in personal growth and creative expression. Writing Towards Consciousness is an inspiring guide that shows how and why writing is a powerful tool for developing self-awareness and ultimately your greatest success.

Mark Wilkinson, Life Remixed, Success Coach

Writing Towards Consciousness is a brilliant and inspiring work that will help readers deepen their self-awareness and access their inner wisdom. Whether you are an experienced writer or just starting out, this book is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to live a more conscious and fulfilling life.

Yiannis Michael, healer and speaker, best-selling author of Repaint Your Life

Writing towards Consciousness is a soul-stirring masterpiece that empowers purposeful living - a literary journey that captivates the heart and moves your mind. It is a precious gift of healing, empowerment, and profound transformation, reminding us of our innate power as the authors of our own lives. With every written page, Leonie is able to inspire us to awaken our deepest selves, inviting us to embrace a life full of connection, growth and fulfillment.

Marissa Klouwer, Alianment Coach & Master Healer



# WRITING TOWARDS CONSCIOUSNESS

finding your true story

LEONIE JOANNE BROWN

In honour of creativity

Keep moving, just keep moving.

- LJB

# Foreword

Congratulations on picking up this book! You're about to embark on a wonderful journey of self-discovery and creative exploration. First things first - buy yourself a journal, pick up your pen, and let Leonie's words sink into your heart. In these challenging times, it's more important than ever to reconnect with our innate creativity and celebrate who we truly are as human beings.

In this book, Leonie, a master of the creative process, has skillfully written her celebration of life! If you think about it, life itself is an ongoing work of art; we're constantly evolving and adapting to new circumstances. We are all creators and our lives are the canvas on which we each paint our own unique masterpiece.

Leonie invites us to re-examine and grow our knowledge about the creative process, reminding us that at our core we are all loving, creative beings capable of manifesting our dreams. Whether it's through the work we do, the relationships we cultivate, or the passions we pursue, we can use our creative energy to shape our reality. We have the ability to create a life that is both meaningful and fulfilling. The source of possibilities that we can tap into is *endless*.

As a writer, transformational teacher, and spiritual mentor myself, I have experienced firsthand the impact of writing as a tool for personal growth. It has the power to inspire change, connect with others, and impact the world in an infinite amount of ways. I was deeply moved by the way Leonie lovingly and patiently addresses the reader. Wherever you are in life, no matter your experiences, she will guide you into a deep inner process, including all the emotional, psychological, and spiritual challenges that come with change, such as self-doubt, perfectionism, and creative blockages.

As a writer's coach with a background in systemic therapy and coaching, she brings a unique perspective to her work. She will help you recognize the underlying patterns and systems that shape your behaviour and use these insights to facilitate positive change and growth. She offers practical advice to cultivate your creative powers, which can be applied to any aspect of life, from personal relationships to business. Whether you're trying to solve a complex problem, launch a new business, enhance your relationships, or find more joy in your daily life, her words can help you find new solutions to old problems.

Writing towards Consciousness is not just a book about writing. It's a testament to the transformative power of writing and the human creative spirit. It will inspire and empower you to connect with your truest self. Let us all embrace the beauty of creation and the incredible potential that lies within us all.

Wishing you all the best on your writing journey,

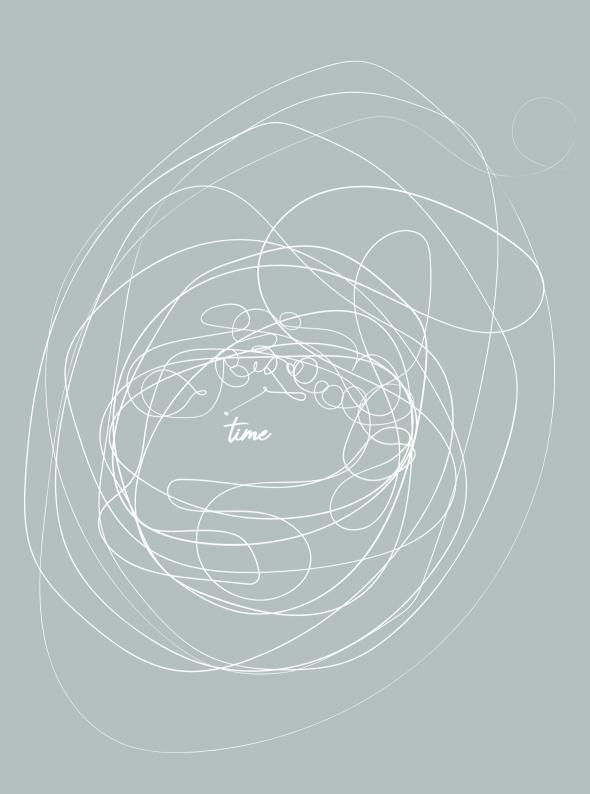
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everything starts with a

When I return
To what I eternally was
And am and always will be,
I am what I wanted and I want
What I am.

- Meister Eckhart

# Author's Preface

In my teenage room, a poem about a forest and the thought of life and what it is, real life, without dying before your time. At the edge of the forest, under a tree: a woman. She thinks of the poem that thinks of her. The wind picks up, carries the poem away, leaving my room empty, the forest dark. Years later, the verses return: the woman gets up, brushes the dust from her skirt, and walks into the forest.

– LJB, inspired by the poem 'The Prediction' by American poet Mark Strand

Writing towards Consciousness was born out of my desire to share with you what I discovered during my personal journey towards a higher state of consciousness. It took years for it to grow, along with me. All that time, I waited patiently for an opening to appear. People frequently asked me: 'When are you going to write your book?' Somehow I knew that I would one day, but I had no idea how long it would take. I kept my writing hand in motion and trusted in the process, in the strong belief that the content of the book would eventually become clear to me. I felt that I had other priorities to attend to: I needed to clarify my mission and message. Did I even have a message to share?

Then, one dreary winter's evening, the title and structure of this book revealed themselves to me. I quickly grabbed my journal, sat down by the fireplace, and wrote the first draft in an hour. This was the start of a new phase in my writing journey: shaping my message into this book.

Writing towards Consciousness is the journey I took, like the heroines and heroes in the ancient epics, to find answers to the question: 'Who am I and what am I doing here?' I found answers in three motions: inwards, upwards, and outwards. The first thing I learned was that I had been caught up in the need for answers. The fact that

I had gained consciousness of both the flexibility and fluidity of life and the infinite possibilities we have as human beings, was what gave me answers. I broke free from what was holding me back and used writing as a way of peeling back the layers to reveal the core of my being. A myriad of roads lead to the same destination. Whether writing is also your best means of finding your way towards greater consciousness is something only you can know. But the fact that you're reading these sentences now may be a sign.

The first sign to make my journey inwards appeared when I was an adolescent. I was fifteen years old when my language teacher wrote a simplified quote by American philosopher and writer Henry David Thoreau on the blackboard:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to put to rout all that was not life; so as not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

I vividly remember the feeling that came over me when I read those words. I was deeply moved by this quote on the blackboard, but if you had asked me what that text meant, I wouldn't have been able to tell you. I couldn't comprehend the English words, but I knew they held an important 'secret,' a message, intended especially for me. I copied the sentences onto the cover of my journal just as the teacher was walking past my desk. 'You're going to head out into the big wide world,' he said, and he shuffled on by as if nothing had happened. But it was as if I had been struck by lightning.

That same evening, I memorised the quote. I spent months contemplating the words but couldn't figure out what they meant.

Over time, Thoreau's message faded into the background. The call I had felt had disappeared. Life took me down other paths and, although I didn't realise it at the time, I built a life in which I gradually drifted further and further away from my true essence. I had become disconnected from myself, from my feelings, and emotions. Not because I wanted to be, but just because I didn't know any better, because I didn't realise there was another way. I was living in what you might call an 'unconscious state'

That was until, as a young woman, I faced a full-blown identity crisis. A breakup of a relationship, depression, unresolved trauma, burnout from an unfulfilling job – my crisis was a combination of all these factors. But while I was stuck in this hole, I heard a different voice from somewhere inside of me. 'Something' was telling me to

go on a journey: to find silence, tranquillity, and to start over again. Fifteen years after Thoreau's message, I started my journey of self-discovery. It became a literal journey to India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Greece, and Italy, and a writing journey that unexpectedly urged me to reconnect with whatever had been calling me. I had no idea what exactly I was looking for. I had never encountered words like 'higher consciousness' and 'soul mission' before, but I had faith that my journey would lead me to what I was looking for. The great thing was: as I began that journey, Thoreau's words came back to me! It all began in an Indian taxi.

'Open toilet, ma'am,' the driver said to me as evening fell. I had stepped off the plane an hour earlier, and now we were on our way to a Zen meditation centre, where I would spend a month of 'sitting' in silence. I had told the driver I needed to pee urgently. He stopped by the side of the road, got out to smoke a cigarette, and politely turned his back to me. Peeing in public as a symbolic introduction to India.

It was dark by the time I arrived at the meditation centre, where I was welcomed by the manager. 'Everyone's asleep. You'll be given a tour tomorrow morning after breakfast. Tea? Biscuits?' He led me to a simple room with a bed, a closet, and a small desk beneath a barred window. And there I was, in the silence of the room. I sat down at the little desk, wondering what I would see through the window at the first light of dawn.

I took my – still empty – journal and opened the desk drawer to put it away. There was a postcard with an image of Buddha on it. Had it been left there by a previous guest? I turned the card over and my heart skipped a beat. Thoreau's quote! How on earth was that possible!?

I read the words out loud and imagined myself back at that school desk long ago. I had forgotten the words, but the words hadn't forgotten me! In India, at that little desk, I knew I was exactly where I needed to be. Suddenly, I understood the real meaning of this sign and all the other signs I had received over the years. My purpose here was to awaken and to write about the process. I grabbed a pen and put down the first dot of what would eventually become this book ten years later.

To my surprise, the dot became the essence of what I would eventually create: my own methodology or the dot-line meditation, a unique approach to writing meditation, as you will read further on. As a writer, coach, therapist, and creative entrepreneur, I have spent countless hours exploring the mysteries of the creative process itself. How do we come up with new ideas? How do we turn those ideas into finished works of art or products? And perhaps most importantly, how do we keep ourselves motivated and inspired along the way? These questions have driven me to

explore the creative process in depth, drawing on my own experiences as well as the insights of other artists, writers, and thought leaders.

Guided by this book, I hope that the practice of the dot-line meditation will help you to feel, experience, and understand what and who you truly are, and what your life really is. The story you've known about yourself until now, may be concealing another story that has been longing to come to the surface: your true story. My greatest wish is for my words to touch you, to set you in motion, and to open up something deep within you. Consider my words, experiences, tips, and dot-line writing meditations as instruments to transform your life into a work of art. You, too, can rewrite your life!

Leonie Joanne Brown

Icaria, 2023

P.S. Throughout this book, I use the words awareness and consciousness. Awareness and consciousness are related concepts, but they are not exactly the same thing. Awareness generally refers to the ability to perceive and have knowledge of something, whether it be a thought, feeling, sensation, or external event. It is the state of being mindful of something. Consciousness, on the other hand, is a broader and more complex concept that encompasses awareness but also includes the ability to experience subjective feelings, emotions, and sense of self. I generally use the word awareness as the first step on the path to greater spiritual consciousness. The more you become aware of yourself, your inner world, beliefs, assumptions, judgements, and all the self-told stories you live in, the more you grow in consciousness.

I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be. If you follow your bliss, doors will open for you that wouldn't have opened for anyone else.

- Joseph Campbell

# Introduction

You write. Or you used to write. Or you've never written before, but it feels as if you're being called to write: you're not particularly interested in writing, yet the idea of writing keeps drawing you in. Maybe you find yourself constantly scribbling on cards, pieces of paper, or cardboard. You don't know why; you just do it and you feel a desire to write. Whatever it is, you wouldn't be reading this book if you didn't already have some interest in writing.

What does writing mean to you? This is one of the first questions I ask my clients during my seminars, and I've heard as many answers as I've encountered clients: because I want to understand myself better, because it makes me happy and gives me confidence, because I want to share my story, because I want to overcome my grief, because I want to explore my past, because I have a message, because it helps ease my mind.

What all these people have in common is the realisation that there's something calling them, that writing can mean something to their lives, something they've overlooked up to now. They instinctively feel that writing can be a profound tool in their lives.

### WHY WRITING IS SO GOOD FOR YOU

Writing brings you nothing but benefits: you reach your personal goals more quickly, it reduces stress and tension, it helps you remember things better, and it has a positive effect on your mood, your blood pressure, and your immune system. It helps combat depression and is even said to prevent cancer. In short, writing makes you a happy person. Before embarking on my writing journey, I had no idea that scientific research had been done into the healing powers of writing. Still, I knew instinctively: if I don't start writing now, something inside me will die.

It wasn't until much later in my writing process that I began to look for scientific explanations for my method of writing - the dot-line meditation. I found confirmation in what would become my writing bible: *Expressive Writing, Words that Heal* by American social psychologist James W. Pennebaker, who is considered the pioneer of writing therapy. He teaches people how to express their emotional experiences in writing. He began studying the positive effects of writing in the 1980s. For example, he discovered a link between keeping emotionally distressing experiences hidden and physical illness: he found that those who don't express emotional pain in any way are much more likely to become seriously ill. This applies not only to distressing experiences, but to all events that evoke strong emotions, such as financial worries, losing a partner, losing a job, moving to a new house, and marital problems.

Dutch science journalist Mark Mieras also describes the healing effect of writing in his essay *The Value of Writing*. He sees writing as 'a tool to remain healthy.' By writing, you not only let your negative experiences flow away, but also your thoughts about them. When stress and anxiety disappear, so do the associated physical discomforts.

However, the use of writing as therapy or learning to write your life story isn't the primary goal of this book. My focus is on the quest for meaning: to become conscious of the creative process that is your life. By the end of your writing journey, you may feel happier and lighter in life, which is of course a positive side effect of this quest.

What is healing, but a shift in perspective? - Mark Doty

### **DOT-LINE MEDITATION: ALIGN WITH YOUR LIFE PURPOSE**

Who are you? Why are you here on this planet? Who would you be and what would you do if you were able to connect with your reason for being here on Earth? You can find the answers to these questions through writing. Writing is calling to you for a reason. It can help you reconnect with your origins, with *what* and *who* you really are. We shall look further, deeper, and higher than what you knew and thought about yourself up to now, going *beyond* ego and identity. *Writing towards Consciousness* is my invitation to you to go on a journey of exploration, delving deeply into your thoughts, as well as your memories, sensations, feelings, and emotions.

The question of who you are\*, why you're here, and what your purpose is can't be answered in your mind. Answers to such questions can only be obtained through feeling and connecting with yourself on a deeper level. we'll make this connection in the motions: Writing Inward, Writing Upward, and Writing Outward; the three parts of this book.

### **HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANISED**

The writing journey you're going to embark on starts with a preparatory phase. In this phase, I'll help you pack your backpack. What do you take with you if you don't know your destination? I also give you some instructions for your journey: how are you going to write?

In *Writing Inward*, you'll explore your inner self, seeking to answer the question: *who am I*? It's the most comprehensive part of this book. So it should be, because your inner world might have been ignored for too long.

Why am I here on Earth? That's the key question in Writing Upward. It's the question of what more there is to you, of your purpose, and of your unique contribution to the world. It's also the question of connection: with your Earthly Self and your Higher Self, with other people, the Earth, and the universe.

In the third part of the book, *Writing Outward*, I'll show you how to move outwards, or how to form your true story. How do you want to create the life that's right for you, based on your renewed and most profound connection with yourself? *How do you want to experience life from now on?* 

Writing Outward talks about change and movement, about courage, and about trusting your inner wisdom. Consider this book a unique opportunity to reset or restart the creative flow in your life. Grow silent. Meditate. Write.

<sup>\*</sup> For the sake of convenience, I use 'Who am I' in this book, but remember that the answer goes beyond merely interpreting identities (ego) and that it also touches on 'what' we all are; our origin.

### WRITING MEDITATION OR WRITEFULNESS

The three parts of this book are divided into chapters. Each chapter ends with a dot-line writing meditation. I'll teach you how to start – and continue – writing, using a simple dot, a line, and a keyword.

I've deliberately chosen to use the term 'writing meditation' because it combines two of my passions: writing and meditation. Writing meditation involves maintaining a *meditative presence* as you write. This type of writing is also referred to as writefulness.\*

I see many similarities between writing and sitting meditation. Just as you sit down and contemplate your thoughts during meditation, writing helps to enhance self-knowledge. At the same time, you're mindfully present in the moment: in your body and in your breathing. 'Meditation and writing practice are coincidental. The more we understand the human mind, our basic writing tool, the better, more secure we can be in our writing,' says Natalie Goldberg in *Writing Down the Bones*. It's true; writing meditation invites you to slow down and gain a deeper understanding of your internal and external experiences. You transfer your attention to the sheet of paper – not with the aim of writing a bestseller, but to train your spirit. It helps overcome the fear of emptiness and new beginnings (the blank page!) and how to connect to your inner critical and guiding voices.

Effectively, writing meditation involves writing without a plan, expectations, or judgements. When you practise writing meditation for the first time, you may find it strange, utterly useless, or even ridiculous. Just go ahead and write something?! What's this?! These negative thoughts make total sense, because the function of your mind is to protect you from pain, sadness, and discomfort. Judgements and doubts help us keep our vulnerability under lock and key. When you face a wall of intense inner resistance, you can break through by *continuing to write* and keeping your hand moving without lifting it from the page. And suddenly it appears: an idea, a speck of light in the darkness. When you sigh deeply or shed a tear while you write, know that you've relieved yourself of a burden.

<sup>\*</sup> Over the past decade, the practice of mindfulness has become so popular worldwide that it has resulted in the proliferation of hundreds of mindful variants, including mindful eating, mindful drinking, mindful horseback riding, mindful swimming, mindful parenting, mindful music listening, etc. This often leads to compound words, such as swimfulness (mindful swimming), eatfulness (mindful eating), paintfulness (mindful painting), and also writefulness or mindful writing.

Writing meditation is a practice that helps you find your way back when you're lost. It's the ongoing practice of being mindfully present in yourself, in the moment. You write yourself alive: you become one with your hand, your pen, and your energy flow.

### **OUOTES, STORIES, AND ANECDOTES**

At the start of each chapter, scattered throughout the text, you'll find inspirational quotes by writers, poets, spiritual teachers, and artists. If you find them inspiring, you can use them as topics for your writing meditation.

You'll read pieces from my personal story, as examples and as a resource for you, as well as stories and anecdotes by people I've worked with over the years. For privacy reasons, I use fictitious names when I tell their stories or cite quotations, unless they've given me permission to use their real names.

This book serves as both an activity book and a non-activity book. I invite you to pause regularly in the silence between the lines, or to close the book after a chapter or a story and just sit with it in your lap for a bit while the words sink in.

Writing is healing: be gentle to yourself.

Writing is clarifying: allow yourself to develop insights.

Writing is liberating: write yourself free!

Writing is revealing: dare to see your whole self.

### WHEN THE RAVEN CALLS

In the preface, I wrote about the first sign I received to start my journey inwards, the poem by Henry David Thoreau, which called to me as a teenager, and then flew out of my room, only to return once I was old enough to understand it. Other signs appeared in the form of a crisis, dreams, burnout, and illness, but I was afraid and not ready to recognise them. And then, one day, in my young thirties, I received a clear sign in the form of a real-life raven. It happened out of the blue on a weekday. At the time, I was still a high school language teacher. The raven made me realise, somewhat urgently, that it was high time to leave.

Raven, raven, black as pitch, mystical as the moon

Speak to me of magic, I will fly with you soon!

- Sams & Carson, 'Medicine Cards'

On a cold spring morning, I parked my bike in the bike-racks at the school where I was teaching. I swung my bag over my shoulder and walked down the brick path to the metal door that led to the school's high-ceiling lobby. A low cast-iron fence bordered the brick path on both sides. As I was about to ring the doorbell – it was early, the school door was still locked – I saw something move out of the corner of my right eye. A large black raven was perched on the fence, staring at me.

'What are you doing here?' I heard myself say. 'You don't belong here.' Before I was fully aware of what I was doing, I reached my arm out to the bird. It hopped onto my arm as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Its claws prodded through my thick winter coat. 'Do you want me to take you to the park across the street?' I walked back up the path with the raven on my arm and shook it off me beside a bush. It flew up to a low-hanging branch and looked at me inquisitively. Its beady eyes seemed to ask, 'Can't I stay with you?' 'No,' I said, 'my classroom's no place for you.' I turned and walked back down the path to the school door. But before I could ring the doorbell, I suddenly felt wings beating down against my neck. Strong claws pricked into my shoulder, startling me. Students gathered around me, amazed: 'What's that bird doing on your shoulder, Miss?!'

I gently spoke to the bird again: 'Sweetie, you really can't come into school with me.' Then I repeated what I had just done. The bird stayed behind on the same low-hanging branch, tilting its head, with its gaze fixed on me. Questioning. Waiting. Impatient.

Again, I walked to the school door, which was now open as students poured into the lobby. 'Ouch!' Just as I started to step through the doorway, I felt a sharp pain on the top of my head. The raven flew over me and into the school, taking a tuft of my hair as if to give me a warning. Panic ensued: 'Eek! There's a bird in the lobby!'

The raven perched out of reach on the students' lockers. I walked up to it and firmly held out my arm: 'Come here you! You're scaring the students!' And just like that, it hopped back onto my outstretched arm, so I headed back to the park again. 'Get out of here!' Then more quietly: 'Thank you for visiting, but that's enough now.' I walked back into the school and shut the door behind me. Phew.

During the first morning break, two hours later, my co-workers teased me about the raven's visit: 'The students are wondering if you're going to do a bird experiment.' Another colleague came up to me with a serious look on his face. 'Leonie, that raven's looking for you. It came to my classroom window, looked around for a bit, but didn't see you, and flew away again.' I laughed, embarrassed. 'To mine too!' shouted another co-worker. 'It sat on my windowsill for a while!' I didn't believe them. Their mischievous eyes sparkled a little too much. 'You're trying to scare me,' I said. 'Thanks a lot!' But the seed of doubt had been planted. Would I get to see the raven again?

The third period came and went. Nothing. No raven on the windowsill. At the end of fourth period, there was some commotion among the students in the back rows. Everyone turned their heads to the left: something was going on outside the large window at the back of the classroom. Then the excitement spread to the middle rows, by the second window. I heard someone whisper, 'The raven's here!' I froze. Again, the excitement shifted, this time to the front rows. The students in the back and middle rows had left their desks and were now all gathered at the front near the first window, waiting to see what would happen.

There was the raven on the windowsill. The students held their breath. And as if we were in a fairy tale, the raven hopped two steps closer to us. 'Tap!' we heard. 'Tap, tap, tap!' With his beak against the window and his pitch-black eyes gazing at me intently.

'Miss, you're going to die!' a student shouted, 'A raven is a messenger of death!' She began to cry. 'It's not that bad,' I said in an attempt to comfort her, but my heart was pounding in my throat. I looked at the raven and tapped on the window with my ring: 'Look,' I said, 'these are my students. I'm a teacher here. This is my world. What are you trying to tell me?'

We stood motionless, just looking at each other for a while. Only now did I really see it, standing there stock-still on the windowsill. I saw the power of the raven and how it sent me his message just by being there, staring at me. Then it dawned on me, unexpectedly, like a shock travelling through me: I felt what the raven wanted to tell me. I understood that it had come to get me. It was my time to embark on a journey.

'I promise you I'll listen,' I said after a while. As a confirmation of my words, I tapped on the window again, three times. The bird looked at me for a moment longer, then it flew off and disappeared.

'Miss, what are you going to do? Are you really going to die?'

'Don't worry,' I said. 'You don't have to take it literally. The raven wants me to go and live my life.'

## A valuable resource for anyone seeking to live a more conscious and fulfilling life.

Yiannis Michael, healer and speaker, best-selling author of Repaint Your Life

Who are you really? Why are you here? What's your life's purpose? Writing towards Consciousness takes you on a deeply transforming writing journey to your true self. It's an open invitation to reshape the story of your life.

Embrace the author's voice and guidance to break free from limiting beliefs and patterns, allowing you to create the life you truly desire. If you are longing for depth and connection then this is for you! Whether or not you are an experienced writer, this book will guide you through a widely tested step-by-step inner process towards a happier, fulfilling, more creative life.

Leonie Joanne Brown is a Transformational Writing Coach and pioneer in her field. As an expert and trainer in Systemic Coaching and Book, Business and Family Constellations, she has helped thousands of individuals to break through their limitations, guiding them towards a more creative and successful life.

She is best known for her Dot-Line Meditation, her self-developed method for introspection and personal growth. She lives and works on the Greek island of Icaria, worldwide known as the island of longevity. When connecting with her, whether it is through picking up this book, through her online programs, or participating in her retreats, it will ignite a process of awakening.

When you start practising writing meditation, chances are you'll find yourself in a stream of extraordinary events that you never dreamed possible.

Visit www.leoniejoannebrown.com



### Beautifully written, very powerful, and healing!

Ken Honda, Happy Money Mentor and Japan's best selling zen millionaire

