



THE *Little Book* OF
POWER

SECOND EDITION

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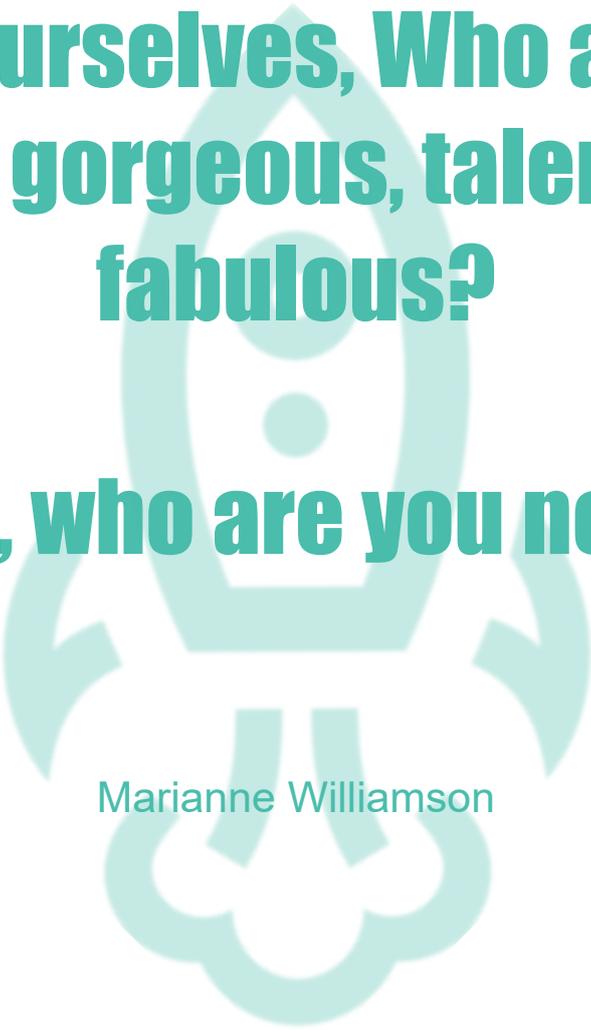
**Our deepest fear is that we are
powerful beyond measure.**

**It is our light, not our darkness that
most frightens us.**

**We ask ourselves, Who am I to be
brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and
fabulous?**

Actually, who are you not to be?

Marianne Williamson



welcome

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TO THE LITTLE BOOK OF POWER

A guide to Personal Power, by me, Liz Scarfe (I'm a process-oriented psychotherapist).

Personal power is a big topic, and this is a little book. It doesn't cover everything you'll ever need to know about power, but it's a good start (and it's short).

The goal of this book is to help become more aware of your own relationship with power, and to help you build better access to it so you can be more effective, confident and relaxed, you can love your own diversities more, and you can make a more powerful contribution to the world.

If you get stuck, have any questions, or need extra help to work on confidence, get in touch, I'd love to hear from you!

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What is

POWER?

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Despite the many negative associations and memories we have about power (mostly its misuse), power isn't good or bad, and it is necessary.

In very simple terms, power is about having

choice and control.

But if it were that simple, this would be the last page of the book (and it isn't).

Power comes from a range of characteristics and capabilities, some you earn, some you were born with.

Over the next few pages we'll explore these different characteristics and the different kinds of power associated with them.

Having power of any kind tends to make us feel safer and more relaxed, but not all power is equal in its ability to make us feel well.

Social

POWER

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Social Power is based on cultural preferences and how well you align with them. They can be split into Physical and Structural characteristics:

PHYSICAL ASPECTS

- height
- weight/size
- age
- gender
- sexual orientation
- skin colour
- ethnicity
- native language

STRUCTURAL ASPECTS

- formal education levels
- socio-economic class background
- current economic situation
- level of employment within a hierarchy (i.e. receptionist versus

Social Power is an unreliable source of power as it completely relies on external hierarchies and the judgement of others.

It's a stressful way to access a sense of power (and self-worth) because you have no control over it and it's non-transferable (it's not relevant in all contexts).

Check out page 16 for an all-in-one outline of the different kinds of power.

Personal

POWER

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Personal Power is an internal power, independent of the values of the culture, mostly built from developing self knowledge and growing from difficult experiences. Personal Power can also be split into two categories:

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- resilience
- self awareness
- growing from traumatic life events
- being at ease with conflict
- feeling loved as a child
- having your ideas and feelings validated through childhood
- valuing your own opinions and perceptions even if others don't
- emotional intelligence

SPIRITUAL ASPECTS

- feeling like you belong
- a relationship to something divine or transcendent
- knowing your purpose in life
- having been close to death
- contact with 'the ineffable'
- a deep faith and trust that life is meaningful

Personal Power is more stable and transferable than Social Power because it doesn't rely on the judgement of others, and it can comfort you in any context.

Given the right support, experiences of trauma, abuse and shame, can become a unique source of power.

Eight

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NEED TO KNOWS

1

It's inherently blinding. Having power makes life easier and more relaxing, so it's hard to notice it. Conversely, we are very aware of when we don't have much power because we don't feel so relaxed.

2

Just because you have it, doesn't mean you feel it. It's important to become aware of power you already have and to celebrate how it makes your life easier. This makes you less likely to misuse it. Others see and feel your power, even if you don't.

3

It's not a tar-brush. We can have lots of power in some areas of our life and not much in others. Our relationship with power is diverse and always evolving.

4

It's paradoxical. Having a lot of power often means you have a lot of responsibility (which can make you feel not so relaxed). Sometimes having not much power gives you a lot of freedom.

One of the most dangerous things to believe about power, is that you have none.

Eight

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NEED TO KNOWs...cont

5 Power is often in the eye of the beholder. It's subjective. I think wearing hats is a sign of confidence but others may think it's a sign of a bad hair day.

6 Conflict comes from un-owned power. If you want less drama and conflict in your life, owning your own power is the best place to start. When we have power that others don't, but we are unconscious about it, well that's just irritating (more on page 9).

7 Selling your soul for Social Power will make you unwell. Instead, protect and nourish your whole self by developing your Personal Power (along side any Social Power ambitions you have).

8 Personal Power primarily comes from working on suffering. Turning your scars into stars is the *royal road* to personal power.

To grow power from suffering requires awareness based practices: simply relieving or masking suffering won't cut it.

Power

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AND CONFLICT

When you're not aware of how you have power (and all the privileges that come with it i.e. the way life is easier or gives you more opportunities than others), you're at risk of misusing your power and inadvertently creating conflicts.

Over the next three pages we'll look at some examples of how different kinds of power, when we're not aware we have them, can create conflict.

Un-owned Social Power (physical)

Sarah is 5'8". Her friend Tricia is 5'3". Sarah doesn't wear high heel shoes because she knows they are bad for her back and feet. When she brings this up with Tricia (who almost always wears heels) and tells her she should stop wearing them because she is damaging her back and feet, Tricia gets annoyed and they fight. Sarah's intentions were good and she expected that Tricia would appreciate her care, if not her advice. She is hurt by Tricia's reaction. Had Sarah stopped to think about the ways in which being taller made life easier, and the ways in which shorter people are discriminated against, she may have approached this differently.

The world is full of *-isms*. Increase your awareness of the *-isms* you don't suffer from; the big ticket *-isms* and the smaller everyday *-isms*.

Power

AND CONFLICT

Un-owned Psychological Power

An issue has arisen between two friends, Sam and Chris. Sam brings up the fact that there is an issue and that they should talk it through straight away. Chris is avoidant, changes the topic, suddenly has to be somewhere else etc.

Sam gets irritated and hurt and feels victimised by Chris's behaviour but actually, Sam has more power than Chris in several ways.

Sam finds it easier to deal with relationship issues than Chris – this is power. Sam feels able to be direct in resolving issues – this is power. Sam tries to dictate the way (talking) and the when (straight away) of sorting out the issues – deciding when and how relationship issues are dealt with is power. Sam is the one who initiates action to deal with the issue – being the initiator of difficult conversations is a sign of having more power.

If Sam were more aware of these higher psychological powers, they could be used to make the situation easier for Chris, and better for the friendship in general.

It takes time and effort to develop power awareness. It also takes kindness. Don't beat yourself for past slights - focus on future improvements.

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Power

AND CONFLICT

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Un-owned Spiritual Power

Al is one of three grown children. At the funeral of their father Al's siblings are in tears and struggling emotionally, whereas Al is solemn but shows little emotion.

Later at the wake, one of them accuses Al of being heartless and selfish.

Al has diabetes and knows a lot about the fragility of life, having survived several diabetic coma experiences.

This has given Al a kind of detachment and acceptance of death.

This is a spiritual power that Al has, but it can come across as being aloof or uncaring, which can be hurtful and irritating to others when they are in distress.

Developing Spiritual Power is hard work and not commonly promoted in the exoteric teaching of religions, nor in most New Age practices.

Equality

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By now, some readers might be thinking that surely, at the most fundamental level, we are all equal, and none of these characteristics or different powers really matter.

So let's clarify, power isn't about who is **better**, but about who has more or less **access to resources**, be they social, psychological or spiritual resources.

It's true that at the most fundamental level we are all equal, in fact at the sub-atomic level of reality, we are not even separate entities.

But it is not true that different levels of access to power doesn't matter. They matter because life is not only lived at a 'fundamental level'; it is lived at the supra-atomic, physical level of separate selves, individual psychologies, cultural preferences and oppression.

To **only** see the way in which we are 'one' will almost inevitably lead to a misuse of power. It is actually a privilege of someone with more power to see unity rather than difference, because they are not suffering from difference. So we need to hold both the idea that we are all equal, while also understanding that we have different characteristics and histories that give us more or less access to power than others.

We're all equal, but we don't all have equal access to power.

Woohoo!

CELEBRATING POWER

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Becoming aware of power is hard for several reasons:

- power is inherently blinding
- people often feel guilty or ashamed for having more power than others; they deny having it so they don't have to deal with these feelings
- living life from a low power position seems easier sometimes
- feeling powerful challenges us to make the most of our life.

However, none of this excuses us from the harm we cause others through our unintentional misuse of power we have but don't want to be aware of. So we need to become aware of our power, not get stuck in guilt, and learn to use it well.

It sounds strange, but celebrating your powers and the privileges that come from them bypasses guilt, makes us less scared of our power, and almost always leads us to finding ways to share it. It's just three steps:

1. Think of all the ways a particular characteristic makes your life easier, gives you more opportunities, or causes you less stress than those who don't have that characteristic.
2. Now really **feel** how great it is to have that ease, those opportunities, that relaxedness.
3. Celebrate how awesome that makes your life, and *count your lucky stars!* If you go far enough with this you'll come out the other side, not feeling guilty, but looking for ways to help others who don't have quite so many lucky stars.

Get More

POWER

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One of the best ways to grow more Personal Power is to heal the wounds from past experiences of abuse, shame, and systemic oppression. However, it's not an easy task and it's not for everyone (and hard to heal if the trauma is still happening like in system oppression).

There is no one right way to do it but there is one golden rule; **do your healing work in a way that doesn't re-wound you.** Sometimes in our yearning for healing we can get pushy with ourselves which can lead to re-wounding. It's a little bit like a cut on your leg. It doesn't heal because you tell it to or will it to, but because you take care of it.

Some things that might be useful for healing include psychotherapy (there are lots of different kinds); support groups; community service; activism of some kind; time in nature; contemplative practices like meditation; self-help groups, books etc; spiritual practices; journaling; hands-on healing modalities, martial arts.

It's also not just about healing. Growing from suffering gives you skills, insights and attitudes that build the psychological and sometimes spiritual aspects of personal power.

For as long as we don't work on our wounds from the past, we will keep suffering from them in the present, with or without our awareness.

want more?

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The concepts in this booklet are drawn from the Process Oriented Psychology (aka Processwork) paradigm as developed by Dr Arnold Mindell (www.aamindell.net), in particular his book **Sitting in the Fire**.

The second edition of this booklet was further refined by another great thinker and writer about personal power (also from the Processwork paradigm), Dr Julie Diamond (juliediamond.net), in particular her book **Power, A Users Guide**.

If you're looking for more support with power issues check out my helpful [blog articles](#) and [videos](#); access these [free resources](#); come along to a [workshop](#); or book some [one on one sessions](#) (in person or online).

I offer a free 20 minute phone consultation so we can work out if what you need and what I offer are a good match.

Shoot me through an email with any questions or to book a free consult; liz@cultivatingconfidence.net. I'd love to hear from you.

In confidence

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POWER

Social

Social Power comes from having personal attributes that are aligned with the preferences of the dominant culture.



TWO MAIN KINDS OF POWER

Personal

Personal power comes from inner capacities developed from self-knowledge and growth, that enable you to act in the world in accordance with your values and goals.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS

- height
- weight/size
- age
- gender
- sexual orientation
- skin colour
- ethnicity
- native language
- health
- ability/disability

STRUCTURAL ASPECTS

- formal education levels
- socio-economic class background
- current economic situation
- level of employment within a hierarchy (i.e. receptionist versus CEO)
- being a member of a religion
- citizenship status
- membership in special or elite clubs

UNSTABLE because it is dependent on the judgement of others

NON-TRANSFERABLE it only gives you power in certain contexts

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- resilience
- self awareness
- growing from traumatic life events
- being at ease with conflict
- feeling loved as a child
- having your ideas and feelings validated through childhood
- valuing your own opinions and perceptions even if others don't
- emotional intelligence

SPIRITUAL ASPECTS

- feeling like you belong
- a relationship to something divine or transcendent
- knowing your purpose in life
- having been close to death
- contact with 'the ineffable'
- a deep faith that life is meaningful

no one gives it to you (or can take it away) **STABLE**

you can access and use it in any context **TRANSFERABLE**

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