

Learning to Thrive

*Begin by
Recognizing
Your
Trauma*

A Primer
by
Betsy Robinson

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Published by www.BetsyRobinson-writer.com

Introduction

“You have been so deprived!” said my classmate, tears of empathy pooling in her eyes. It was the late nineties, we were students in a four-year therapeutic training program, and I thought she was either insane or so deeply stuck in her own self-pity that she couldn’t see straight and she was projecting it onto me.

“Deprived?” I answered, incredulous. Deprived was growing up on the streets of Bombay, being a child soldier in Rwanda, being sold into prostitution or raised in an orphanage. I had grown up surrounded by white affluence in the suburbs of New York City. Yes, my parents were unpredictably violent and offered no physical affection, instruction, or guidance. Yes, we kids grew up feral, essentially raising ourselves, and were spat out into the world with no cash, no connections, no coping skills whatsoever and no knowledge that we lacked them. But I never went hungry, I always had shelter, I could read, and I was certainly not “deprived.” The idea was ludicrous.

About a decade later, stuck in a riptide, barely treading the deep, sucking waters of that ocean known as the Great Recession—on a whim and for a change of pace from the novels I was writing and reading—I took Malcolm Gladwell’s book *Outliers: The Story of Success* out of the library—the large print edition. What’s this? I thought. Could this be a life raft?

It was indeed. A very readable and compelling book, its big print seemed to scream at me, and I found myself “listening” as if my life depended on it. Here’s what I learned: After examining those who succeed and those who do not, Gladwell concludes that “extraordinary achievement is less about talent than it is about opportunity (“The Trouble with Geniuses, Part 1”). How interesting, I thought. But most interesting was the finding that genius children who experience a middle-class parenting style called “concerted cultivation” (where parents actively

teach, nurture, and encourage their children) do far better than equally smart children who are essentially left to their own resources—a very familiar parenting style called “natural growth.” Gladwell reports that after following a group of child geniuses into adulthood, a researcher compared the *A* group (concerted cultivation) geniuses with the *C* group (natural growth), finding the very successful *As* rated so much higher on personality and manner surveys compared to the unsuccessful *Cs*, one-third of whom were college drop-outs, that the researchers concluded that it was like “looking at two different species.” Ability and intelligence are not predictors of success, says Gladwell. The people who did best “are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot.” They have what’s called “practical intelligence.”

Stunned, I remembered all the times people had said to me, “For a smart person, you are so stupid”—usually after I’d blurted something self-sabotaging in a conversation that I didn’t even realize was a negotiation. I have a vague memory that I scored high on IQ tests—possibly approaching 140—even though I can’t do math to save my soul. But I have spent most of my adulthood falling through life—as an actor, a writer, and a menial worker—until I entered the world of publishing as a publishing associate at the age of forty-seven. How often I’ve felt clueless and impotent to change my situation. Even after I finally had a good job as managing editor of a magazine, I often felt like I was “passing” and secretly was a loser, or I just didn’t know “how to do it”—the way I assumed everybody else did. Despite the fact that I’m a highly articulate person who has successfully negotiated deals, I’ve had a secret fear that I won’t be able to say what I mean in a conversation. I’ve felt like a perpetual outsider. But I am hardly alone.

Nikola Tesla (1856–1943) was a Serbian-American inventor, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, physicist, and futurist best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current. He worked for Thomas Edison who went on to develop and sell work developed from Tesla's research. Tesla ended up living in diminished circumstances as a recluse in the New Yorker Hotel, occasionally making unusual statements to the press. Because of his pronouncements and the nature of his work over the years, Tesla gained a reputation in popular culture as the archetypal "mad scientist" and he died penniless and in debt in 1943.

Mary Anning (1799–1847) was a British fossil collector and paleontologist. At age twelve, she made her first seminal discovery of the first dinosaur skeleton, that of an ichthyosaur. Until her discovery, animal extinction was believed to be impossible. She was from a poor family and her gender and social class made it difficult for her to fully participate in the scientific community of nineteenth-century Britain. Popular science writer Stephen Jay Gould called Anning "probably the most important unsung (or inadequately sung) collecting force in the history of paleontology." She struggled financially for most of her life, and it wasn't until 2010 that the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge included her on their list of the ten British women who had most influenced the history of science.

One of my all-time favorite writers, Franz Kafka (1883–1924) was born into a middle-class, German-speaking Jewish family in Prague. While working in an insurance company, he wrote short stories, complaining about how little time he had to follow this passion. Not a talker, he preferred to communicate by letter. He had a complicated and troubled relationship with his father, was conflicted over his Jewishness, and ultimately died of starvation and tuberculosis, with most of his work unpublished.

Henry Joseph Darger, Jr. (1892–1973) was a solitary, reclusive, bitter writer and artist who worked as a custodian. His mother died when he was four and when his father became disabled, Darger was put in an orphanage and then institutionalized in the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children. Because he was seen as a smart aleck, he was reprimanded and bullied. He has become famous for his posthumously-discovered fantasy manuscript called *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*, along with several hundred drawings and watercolor paintings illustrating the story. Darger's work has become one of the most celebrated examples of outsider art.

Chris Langan (born 1952) was profiled in *Outliers* as an example of a genius—purported to have an IQ of 195—who has never learned how to negotiate the world, and therefore never finished college, and therefore has never had his theories, called the “Cognitive-Theoretic Model of the Universe,” published in scientific journals or analyzed by physicists and philosophers to judge their value. For twenty years he worked as a bouncer and today he owns and operates a horse ranch and contributes to a program that promotes intelligent design theories.

We are all natural-growth children.

Jump cut to the era of Trump followed by a pandemic, and suddenly I feel as if most people I know don't know how to cope. According to Mary L. Trump, PhD's new book *The Reckoning: Our Nation's Trauma and Finding a Way to Heal*, we are a nation in trauma.

But in my experience, we don't even know how to recognize our trauma, therefore we don't fully comprehend that we have it, let alone what to do about it.

In 2013 I had the epiphany to write about learning to thrive despite having no foundation of life skills from parents. I had worked for years as a journalist and thought that plus my personal credentials would be enough to sell a proposal.

I was born to write this book, I told agents in my pitch. I grew up in the unique position of being surrounded by white privilege—my town was middle-class, my home was filled with books—but my parents were completely dysfunctional; they thought parents who went to PTA meetings were ridiculous and it never occurred to them to offer guidance or teach their children anything. Both were alcoholics, and I and my three siblings essentially raised ourselves. We were “feral children” who were spat into the world with no coping skills whatsoever and no understanding that we had no coping skills.

After decades of falling through life as an actor, a writer, a menial worker, I entered the world of publishing, starting as a publishing associate at the age of forty-seven at *Parabola* magazine and books, then moving into the editorial side as managing editor of *Spirituality & Health* magazine where I honed my journalist skills (writing many features) and editing skills. Since being laid off from that job when the economy imploded, I’d freelance book edited for many self-help writers and indie publishers and attended four years of healing school where I’d not only worked on myself but participated in hours of what I, at the time, characterized as “quack therapy” sessions with other students, so I knew what I did not want to do: be a therapist or pretend to be one. But in the interest of self-healing, I took trauma workshops and embarked on an amazing path of trauma healing. (It took decades of fruitless talk therapy for me to self-diagnose with PTSD and find the right therapist and the modalities that actually changed me.)

In my decades of work on myself, as well as my four years of healer training, as well as my journalism research, I’ve learned that change does not come out of berating ourselves or

circumstances or others. Nor does it come from denying our darker feelings. It is born from acknowledging everything—our fears and arrogance, our insecurities and judgments, and, yes, our deprivation—and then choosing to discover and cultivate our strengths or “assets,” mining and building on them with every ounce of determination we’ve got.

One of my strongest assets is my curiosity to know what I don’t know and an almost obsessive need to find truth—even if it is sometimes uncomfortable. These needs are even stronger than my fears of asking for help, feeling humiliated, facing the unknown, and changing itself. My curiosity and need drove me to research and write a proposal and chapters of what turned out to be this unsaleable book.

If you are reading this, my guess is that you are somewhere on the natural-growth spectrum. Perhaps you come from a broken, dysfunctional home and even though you are somehow functional—maybe even highly successful—you too are plagued by a feeling that you’re “passing” because a lot of the time you feel absolutely lost when dealing with people, events, and basic life negotiations. Perhaps you have no family. Perhaps the family you grew up in thought success was staying alive and your parents had no interest in education or time to concertedly do anything, let alone cultivate you during your childhood. Perhaps you come from generations of people who were not offered opportunity and you battle daily with systemic racism, so the notion of asking anybody for help or access to an opportunity would not even be considered or, if you have tried, you have been thwarted so often that you are just exhausted. Or perhaps you are a person who serves such people and you want to learn better how to help.

Whatever your circumstances, I suspect you share my assets: you want change more than you are afraid of facing your or other people’s demons and insecurities. That’s the first step. You

are not alone. Everybody needs help, and admitting it may be the bravest and most productive thing we've ever done.

But before you can get help, you have to recognize the problem. Hence, the following chapter and a smattering of exercises and resources.

Recognizing Trauma

PTSD, the acronym for post-traumatic stress disorder, has become part of our common language. Before it was called PTSD, it was “shell shock,” and the flashback and freak-out symptoms have become the stuff of war movies. But according to trauma specialist Peter A. Levine, Ph.D., those determinants of trauma couldn’t be further from the truth. “Trauma,” writes Levine, “is the most avoided, ignored, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering.” (*Healing Trauma*, Sounds True, Inc., 2008). It is a result of being overwhelmed to the point of feeling helpless (“without agency,” in psychology-speak). And the same events can cause long-term trauma in some people but not in others, depending on our personalities and genetic makeup. A risk-taker personality might find a life-threatening accident exciting, whereas a timid or very sensitive person might be traumatized for years.

Trauma is about a loss of connection to ourselves, says Levine. “This loss of connection is often hard to recognize, because it doesn’t happen all at once. It can happen slowly, over time, and we adapt to these subtle changes . . . We may simply sense that we do not feel quite right, without ever becoming fully aware of what is taking place; that is, the gradual undermining of our self-esteem, self-confidence, feelings of well-being, and connection to life.”

The American Psychiatric Association defines the symptoms of PTSD according to “three symptom clusters”: intrusive recollections [unwanted memories], avoidant/ numbing symptoms [lack of feeling], and hyper-arousal [fast breathing, pounding heart] symptoms. Also involved are the duration of symptoms and how well a person functions. This is all very clinical.

To humanize it, imagine a child who essentially grows up feral—without guidance or nurturing from parents or community. Perhaps he feels as if he is invisible when he is in pain. He cries, but quickly learns that nobody is going to rescue him. Perhaps she is taught by fearful

adults that the world is a dangerous place and to stay alive, she'd better do what she's told and never take a risk. Perhaps the family or community is relentlessly violent so there really is constant danger.

Psychologist Alexis Johnson, PhD, leads weekend workshops for people who have suffered trauma as well as professionals who help such people. Johnson calls her course "Trauma: Soul Murder and Recovery." When people are fearful, they go into fight/flight/freeze mode, and this is a function of the "reptilian brain," located in the brain stem. The reptilian brain governs our autonomic functions—things we do without conscious thought. When we experience trauma, we experience it in—and therefore it is stored in—the reptilian brain. When it is stored, it is stored with a particular kind of neurochemistry attached to the experience; it becomes a "state-dependent memory." And it is only recalled when we re-experience the state we were in when it was first stored. Therefore, if our trauma involves being shouted at, or told we are stupid, or told that we failed, anything that evokes the feelings of that memory may evoke a traumatic set of feelings, emotions, and reactions. For instance, if we feel insecure, but we go for a job interview and we are rejected, depending on our personality, we may suddenly find ourselves feeling as if life isn't worth living, we'll never survive, or the interviewer was a cruel bully who should pay for what he did.

Once this reaction and concurrent set of beliefs are evoked, a "kindling effect" happens in the brain. The same way you start a fire by lighting kindling, this reaction triggers a roaring cascade of neurochemicals attached to the original trauma. If there is no interference in this reaction, it continues until it subsides, until the fire goes down to an ember and finally dies from utter exhaustion. However it is not really extinguished. It is merely dormant . . . until the next trigger.

But the reason there *is* a next trigger, and a next trigger, and a next one is that we are actually trying to heal. Our brain and emotions are trying to resolve a mess that has never been resolved. The problem is that the resolution will never come in this cycle of trigger—reaction—kindling effect—exhaustion. Some experts say that what is needed is interference. Others believe a physical resolution is required.

There are many ways to interfere with or resolve and therefore heal trauma—to throw a monkey wrench into the dead-ended neurochemical cycle. Some of the best are physical.

Interference Methods

1. Contact with a good therapist during a traumatic cycle.
2. EMDR (*eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, done by a certified practitioner*)—an eye movement therapy that forces both sides of the brain to stay functional during the event, and therefore brings a release.
3. EFT (emotional freedom technique)—a tapping practice that essentially alters what you're feeling while you simultaneously repeat true self-encouraging statements. EFT practitioners stress that it's important to tap specific points correlated to acupuncture points, but Dawson Church, Ph.D., executive director of Soul Medicine Institute and one of the leading EFT researchers, in discussing his clinical trials of EFT on combat veterans, explains it more generally: "The particular study we've done is a randomized blind trial of three groups. One got EFT, one got psychotherapy sessions, and one got nothing at all. We measured their cortisol [stress hormone] levels before and afterwards, and we determined if their psychological

symptoms decreased, if their anxiety and depression levels went down, and if that was accompanied by a drop in cortisol.” His three evidence-based trials (which are being replicated at other research institutions) concluded that EFT is a huge breakthrough in the treatment of PTSD: data showed much larger drops in cortisol with EFT than with either no treatment or with conventional psychotherapy, and test subjects remained free of symptoms as they were monitored for from three months to two years. Church, whose doctorate is in integrative medicine, and several other experts on various aspects of physiology and psychology believe that when our fight or flight mechanism kicks in—even though there’s no objective threat, as in the case with PTSD—with all the physiological symptoms (increased blood pressure and heart rate, shallow respiration, blood flowing to the peripheral muscles away from the frontal lobes of the brain—indicated by a rise in cortisol), when you then do EFT, it tells the body to stand down by introducing an “incongruous signal,” tapping. Says Church, “Now you’re getting mixed signals: the stress signal from the brain and a physiological signal from the tapping—which you wouldn’t be doing if you were really in trouble. Your stress memory is being challenged, which reconfigures that neural circuit involved in the stress response.”

Resolution Methods

1. Somatic Experiencing® (SE). In 1969 psychologist Peter A. Levine was attempting to get an upset patient to relax and, in response, she went into a full-fledged panic attack. “You are being attacked by a large tiger,” he exclaimed, surprising himself. “See the tiger as it comes at you. Run toward those rocks, climb them, and escape!” Letting out a blood-curdling yell, the patient began to shake and sob uncontrollably, and to Levine’s surprise, her legs started doing running

movements. This response went on for about an hour as the patient recalled childhood terrors, and at the end she felt like herself again and stopped having panic attacks.

For more than forty years, Levine, who holds doctorates in medical biophysics and psychology, has been exploring, teaching, and researching the radical modality for healing trauma that he happened upon that day. He calls it Somatic Experiencing, and through its practice he gained a profound respect for trauma. “The same immense energies that create the symptoms of trauma, when properly engaged and mobilized, can transform trauma and propel us into new heights of healing, mastery, and even wisdom,” he wrote in his groundbreaking book, *Waking the Tiger—Healing Trauma* (North Atlantic Books, 1997). There is “an animalistic and a spiritual dimension” to the lives of those who heal trauma. “They more readily identify themselves with the experience of being an animal. At the same time, they perceive themselves as having become more human.”

The key to why SE works is understanding what really causes trauma. “Traumatic symptoms are not caused by events,” says Levine. When faced by something terrifying, all animals (including humans) fight, flee, or freeze. If caught by a predator, the freeze response serves two purposes: to numb the victim to the pain of being killed, and sometimes to “turn off” the predator, allowing the victim to escape. Observing that wild prey animals rarely suffer trauma, Levine reasoned that it is because they instinctually “regulate and discharge the high levels of energy arousal associated with defensive survival behaviors.” Levine believes that many trauma sufferers identify themselves as survivors rather than as animals with an instinctual power to heal. SE clients learn to “renegotiate” and heal their traumas, rather than relive them, by essentially doing what our nervous systems are trying to do. “When danger is perceived, the body organizes an energetic defensive response,” says Levine. Traumatic symptoms happen

when you are essentially stuck in the freeze response and residual energy from fight or flight impulses is not discharged—effectively wreaking havoc on your nervous system.

Levine, who worked as stress consultant for NASA, has been a member of the Institute of World Affairs Task Force with Psychologists for Social Responsibility and served on the American Psychological Association initiative for response to large-scale disaster and ethno-political warfare. He believes that trauma is a societal problem, often passed from one warring generation to the next, and he is attempting to interfere with that cycle with SE.

2. For people who get stuck in a frozen fear response, self-defense classes can teach your brain—through the body action of fighting—to have a new experience of “agency.” It works much like riding a bike or driving. First you consciously learn new ways to fight back. With repetition of exercises, first in slow-motion choreographed fight responses and finally in a real fight with a trained teacher, your body learns new automatic actions, forming a body memory so that you no longer have to think to fight—effectively reprogramming the reptilian brain’s response to a physical threat.

Lessons

Trauma

1. Recognize any traumatic reactions and patterns you may have.
2. Get some help with the trauma—from a counselor with a specific specialty in trauma treatment, from some of the methods listed in chapter 1. Ask until you find the help you need.

Don't give up.

3. Make a commitment to tolerate being uncomfortable. No matter what happens, do not back down from this commitment. However, learn to recognize good discomfort and bad.

Tolerate your feelings of fear. Never tolerate somebody abusing you.

Patterns

1. Find something that is bigger than yourself—a hobby, an activity, a belief. Something that sparks your will to live, that excites you to a point where it seems more powerful than obstacles. Find what you love. Find what gives you joy. And if you don't know what you love, notice what makes your ears perk up, notice anything that gets your attention, and try to use it as a path to what you love. Identify what about it is interesting to you. Listen to what others say to you and when you get interested. Messages sometimes come from unlikely or unexpected sources. Listen!

2. Learn to see patterns—the patterns in your behavior, in your history. Ask the questions: Where did they come from? Who made those? *How* did they make those patterns?

3. Find the “heart of your industry (the thing you love).” Go there—literally or metaphorically.
4. Notice your strengths and build on them.
5. When your old traumatic reactions come up—literally in the form of throwing up, anger, defeat, whatever it is for you—don’t let it stop you. Repeat the actions that evoke it and continue to build on your strengths. You are now in the active process of changing, so of course the traumas are going to act up with a vengeance. They are fighting for their lives. They know their days are numbered. If you need help, find a counselor or someone you trust to talk to about this as it is happening. You need an ally. You cannot do this alone.
6. Value your mistakes and learn from them. Write things down as you learn them. Tell your ally. This will make them stick better. Talking about anything installs it in a way that merely thinking does not. Aspire to make good mistakes that you learn from. Accept the fact that sometimes you will make bad mistakes that you are unwilling or unable to correct. But be aware of them.
7. Find a practice—any meditative activity—that helps you observe, be curious about, and become familiar with your thoughts and feelings.

8. Are you holding yourself back from expansion? Observe yourself and find the places you do that. Do you have intuitions that you ignore? Be aware of what you're doing and ignoring.

9. No matter how fast or slow you are moving, be curious about the process. Curiosity is the antidote for judgment. Ask yourself questions, the way you'd ask an alien from outer space. Be attentive to the answers that come up to questions such as, "Why are you doing that?" "What pleasure am I getting from this?" "What am I afraid of?" If you're curious, you will love the process of living, even if you are not in active expansion. Consider the possibility that you are okay exactly the way you are—that you are exactly way you're supposed to be in this moment.

Resources

For Trauma Healing

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). To learn more about EMDR or to find a therapist, go to www.emdr.com.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). *Try It On Everything* DVD and companion book by Patricia Carrington, Ph.D., (associate clinical professor at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey) at www.TryItOnEverything.com. The book offers a complete history of EFT, case studies, and a comprehensive list of online resources. For a longer form of EFT and a free manual, go to EFT founder Gary Craig's website, <http://www.emofree.com>.

Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute, www.traumahealing.org.

Healing Trauma by Peter A. Levine, Ph.D. This is a workbook of exercises along with an instructive CD. Available at <https://www.soundstrue.com/products/healing-trauma>.

Eva M. Selhub, M.D., a senior staff physician at the Benson Henry Institute for Mind/Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital: *The Love Response: Your Prescription to Transform Fear, Anger, and Anxiety into Vibrant Health and Well-Being* (Ballantine Books, 2009).

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), search for trauma resources, www.nami.org.

National Institute of Mental Health, the [PTSD page](#) and search other key words—anxiety, depression, etc., www.nimh.nih.gov.

In *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from Leading Neuroscientist* (Ballantine Books, 2009), neuroscientist Andrew Newberg, M.D., says that regular simple exercises can physically change your brain, allowing you to concentrate better, be more relaxed and peaceful, and improve your memory. The key elements are doing your exercise with desire and focus, regulating your body control (for instance breathing or doing finger or eye movements), and practice. And most important is “expectation”—your belief that you can and will accomplish your goals in your exercise. Here are the steps:

- Maintain a state of relaxed awareness
- Regulate your breathing
- Do a simple or complex movement with any part of your body
- Speak, sing, chant, or silently repeat a sound or phrase that has personal meaning
- Do this for at least 12 minutes each day, with a clear goal

For Information

Read my interview with transgeneration trauma researcher [Rachel Yehuda](#) on how experience changes markers in our DNA. She found that children of Holocaust survivors as well as offspring of mothers who were pregnant during 9/11 carried a propensity for traumatic responses. And this can be changed!

Read my article, reprising some of the material in this ebook, [Radical Change Through Radical Disruption](#).

For a variety of mindfulness practices, go to www.SpiritualityandPractice.com. Mindfulness does not require any spiritual or religious belief, but this site offers a plethora of practices and other resources under the category, “Being Present.”

For Training

The East Side Institute for Group and Short Term Psychotherapy (www.eastsideinstitute.org) is an international educational, training, and research center for developing and promoting alternative and performance-based practices in psychology, therapy, education, and community building. It has sister programs for children. Their philosophy revolves around the idea that we are always performing, so in order to change we must consciously do a different performance.

About the Author

Betsy Robinson's novel, *[The Last Will & Testament of Zelda McFigg](#)*, was published in 2014 as winner of Black Lawrence Press's Big Moose Prize. Her edit of *[The Trouble with the Truth](#)*, a novel by her late mother, Edna Robinson, was published in February 2015 by Simon & Schuster/Atria/Infinite Words. Her first novel, *[Plan Z by Leslie Kove](#)* (called "one of the funniest book I have read . . . a fabulous read" by Sixth Sense radio, KKNW, Seattle), was published by Mid-List Press in 2001 as winner of their First Novel Award Series, and in 2016 Betsy published a revised edition. It is a hilarious story that concludes with the discovery of or beginning of healing PTSD. Betsy's short story and play anthology *[Girl Stories & Game Plays](#)* includes "Jakey, Get Out of the Buggy" and the full script of the play *Darleen Dances*, whose opening monologue was published in the best-selling actors monologue book, *Moving Parts* (Viking Penguin, 1992).

For more than a decade Betsy was an actor (*Return of the Secaucus 7*; *Lianna*; and assorted fools, clowns, and sexy wenches all over Off-off Broadway). She is also a playwright, and her scripts have been produced at the renowned Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference, Theatre in the Works (Amherst, Massachusetts), in Los Angeles, Off-off Broadway, on cable TV, and in Iowa where she won first prize in the Dubuque Fine Arts 1-Act Contest. With her mother, she received a Writers Guild East Foundation Fellowship to write a movie, still unproduced, called *The Love Convention*.

Betsy is a book editor specializing in alternative therapies and spiritual psychology. She has been on staffs of *Parabola* and *Spirituality & Health* magazines.

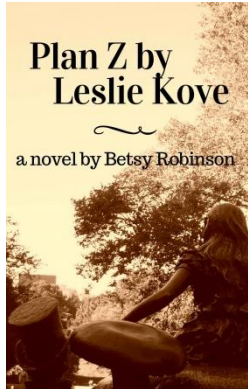
For more information go to:
www.BetsyRobinson-writer.com

Other Books By Betsy Robinson

Coming in 2024:

Cats on a Pole and *The Spectators*

Check [Kano Press](#) for updates



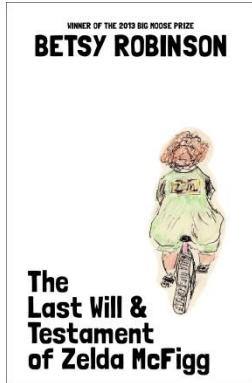
[Plan Z by Leslie Kove](#) (all-ebooks formats—at your preferred seller & paperback)

A funny and poignant novel about negotiating life without a plan, without a clue. With PTSD.



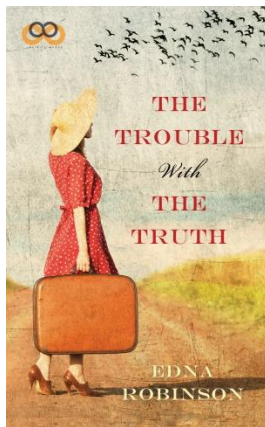
[Girl Stories & Game Plays](#) (all-ebooks formats—at your preferred seller & paperback)

24 stories and 3 one-act plays—a feast of silly, serious, strange, sexy, transcendent, and laugh-out-loud funny stories and plays with playable scenes



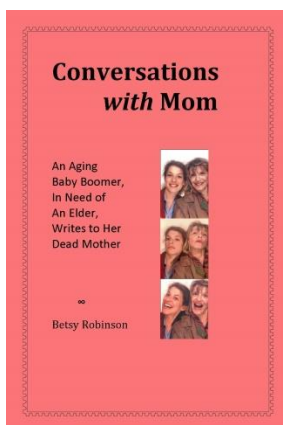
[The Last Will & Testament of Zelda McFigg](#) (all-ebooks formats—at your preferred seller, paperback)

A raucously funny novel about doing whatever is necessary to survive. Winner of Black Lawrence Press's Big Moose Prize



[The Trouble with the Truth](#) (all-ebooks formats—at your preferred seller & paperback)

An actor's sister's story of growing up in the shadow of her dramatic brother in the 1930s and '40s. (Edited by Betsy, written by her late mother, Edna.)



[Conversations with Mom: An Aging Baby Boomer, in Need of an Elder, Writes to Her Dead Mother](#) (Kindle; click here for [paperback](#))

A funny and moving little book for anyone who's struggled with being human.