

A ROUND PEG IN A SQUARE WORLD

DESIGNING NEW
OPPORTUNITIES IN A WORLD
OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

LAURA MINEFF

An Actionable Success Journal

To find out more about the Universal Design
Method and how you can incorporate it in your
life, please visit my website:

LauraMineff.com



A ROUND PEG IN A SQUARE WORLD (BOOK EXCERPT)

Designing New Opportunities in a World of Infinite Possibilities

Laura Mineff



An Actionable Success Journal

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DEDICATION

My mom has been my greatest friend and teacher over the last fifty years. She has truly allowed me to experiment with life in an unconditional atmosphere. This has been invaluable to finding and enjoying my true self. I know that we have both embraced this beautiful gift of unconditional love and acceptance, followed by great appreciation for each other.

Mom, your words and actions have been an inspiration and beautiful guidance in my life. I couldn't have had the adventure of finding my joyful bliss without our relationship.

I am so appreciative of the beautiful, creative insight of my daughter Lindsey. She truly brought these pages to life and was a continuous inspiration for me to keep moving.

My great love to both of you. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the beautiful life guides throughout my journey for allowing me to openly share the magic and the flow of joy in this loving, human life experience. You have shown me the true secret of creating my own life adventures. We are meant to create our own reality, and the voices in our heads attract us to our life focuses, fears, and thoughts.

Chicke Fitzgerald, without your guidance, I could not have gotten my messages, my thoughts, and my heart into this manuscript.

The rest of you, you know who you are.

Thank you. You know how much you mean to me.

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A Note from the Publisher

The AHAtat/THiNKaha series was crafted to deliver content the way humans process information in today's world. Short, sweet, and to the point while delivering powerful, lasting impact.

The content is designed and presented in ways to appeal to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic personality types. Each section contains AHAmessages, lines for notes, and a meme that summarizes that section. You should also scan the QR code, or click on the link, to watch a video of Laura talking about that section.

This book is contextual in nature. Although the words won't change, their meaning will every time you read it as your context will. Be ready, you will experience your own AHA moments as you read. The AHA messages are designed to be stand-alone actionable messages that will help you think differently. Items to consider as you're reading include:

1. It should only take less than two hours to read the first time. When you're reading, write one to three action items that resonate with you in the underlined areas.
2. Mark your calendar to re-read it again.
3. Repeat step #1 and mark one to three additional AHA messages that resonate. As they will most likely be different, this is a great time to reflect on the messages that resonated with you during your last reading.
4. Sprinkle credust on the author and yourself by sharing the AHA messages from this book socially from the AHAtat platform <https://aha.pub/BeARoundPeg>.

After reading this THiNKaha book, marking your AHA messages, re-reading it, and marking more AHA messages, you'll begin to see how this book contextually applies to you. We advocate for continuous, lifelong learning and this book will help you transform your AHAs into action items with tangible results.

Mitchell Levy, Global Credibility Expert
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THiNKaha®

A THiNKaha book is not your typical book. It's a whole lot more, while being a whole lot less. Scan the QR code or use this link to watch me talk about this new evolutionary style of book: <https://aha.pub/THiNKahaSeries>.



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PROLOGUE

Throughout my life, there were several moments that guided me to change how I approach living. My ex-husband, George, was a main catalyst that inspired a huge change in my life.

He and I met when he was still in law school. He graduated and started his own practice, and we raised four beautiful children together for sixteen years before we divorced.

My ex-husband was an attorney with his own practice. He would get up and go to work at 7 am every day and would often work late into the night and on weekends. As with many living this routine, he thought his demanding and high-paying job made him successful. He, like so many others, thought that money would buy him happiness and love. This was an idea passed on from father to son through many generations—that is, until my son came along.

My ex took care of the kids the only way he knew how. He paid for anything that would set them up for success in society by his definition. He paid their full college tuition, graduate school, a reliable vehicle, etc. He considered this a success and sent them off on their own, and that was it.

After the divorce, my second oldest son, Nicholas, took on the “man role” of the family. Nicholas made sure that all the other children were happy and kept the peace. He went on to law school and landed himself a job with his “successful” father.

George started Nicholas off on a very modest salary, but Nicholas made the most of it and got himself a roommate and made other budget adjustments to make the low salary work.

For over twenty years, Nicholas had watched his dad miss major family functions and work himself into major health issues. He watched as his dad worked endless hours so we could have a nice house, health insurance, and other provisions. His dad never dropped that ball of responsibility, but he had high expectations for Nicholas to do the same.

After working with his dad for a year, Nicholas came to the conclusion that he could not work to live. He didn't want to work late into the evenings and on weekends. He found the value in enjoying life's experiences and wanted to seize that opportunity.

He approached his dad and said, *"Dad, I love you and I appreciate the opportunities that you've given me. I'm appreciative of this job that I'm doing today, but I am not going to be like you. I cannot work to live. I want work to provide myself with the income to enjoy life. I will not be working on Saturdays and Sundays. I'll come in at 8 but at 5:30, I'm going to go home."*

His dad was rattled. Although that was seven years ago, to this day, they still disagree on this topic. He couldn't relate to Nicholas' need to live his life a different way and just thought that Nicholas was lazy and didn't care.

- People seem to be **#conditioned** to think that their way is the best way and that everyone should see their way of doing things. This conditioning can hinder them from achieving a happier and healthier life.

Nicholas was brave to live his truth and break away from his father's shadow. I truly believe this statement.

- With the simplest of adjustments, you can create a new path and journey for yourself. Life is all about the journey and having the **#courage** to take it.

We find ourselves at different stages throughout our life journey. Regardless of the era when we were born, all of us are given the freedom to choose the path that we desire.

- Beautiful **#opportunities** come to people all the time! You just need to crack open the door of your mind to be awakened to these opportunities.

This learning was the catalyst for the creation of the Universal Design Method that you will read about in this book. It is a mixture of changing your physical environment and your mindset and guiding you toward the joy of life.

INTRODUCTION

When I met Laura Mineff, what struck me immediately was her countenance. I realize that isn't a word that is frequently used in the English language, but it is by far the best word to describe my first encounter with her.

Laura seems to actually "transmit" joy—it is in her eyes, her words, and definitely in her laugh and her ever-present smile. I felt welcomed into her world, and even though we hadn't known each other long, I felt like I could trust her and that I could tell her literally anything and that she would understand.

This is a book that is written for those who want to live in a place where they can find solace and serenity. And quite frankly, it is for those who would like to be described the way I just described Laura.

It is likely that you are facing change in your life. You could be nearing retirement, perhaps you were a part of a downsizing in your company, you may have parents who may need more care in the coming years, or you are facing a breakup, becoming an empty nester, or dealing with the loss of a spouse.

So many struggle to find joy, especially in these turbulent times. They need to find courage and learn to communicate more freely, more honestly and more openly.

If only you could change the atmosphere around you, find peace in the midst of chaos, and have clarity about the direction that you should take!

You can! It is attainable. Through this book, Laura will walk you through a practical methodology to break down restraining barriers, seen and unseen, so you can see the opportunities and options and positively move on to the next chapter in your life.

She will teach you how to design your life and your environment. She will show you how to tell your story and demonstrate ways to add value to others' lives.

Artist Mary Engelbreit said, *"If you don't like something, change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it."* That is Laura's Universal Design Method in a nutshell.

Embrace it. Live it. Release fear. Radiate joy.

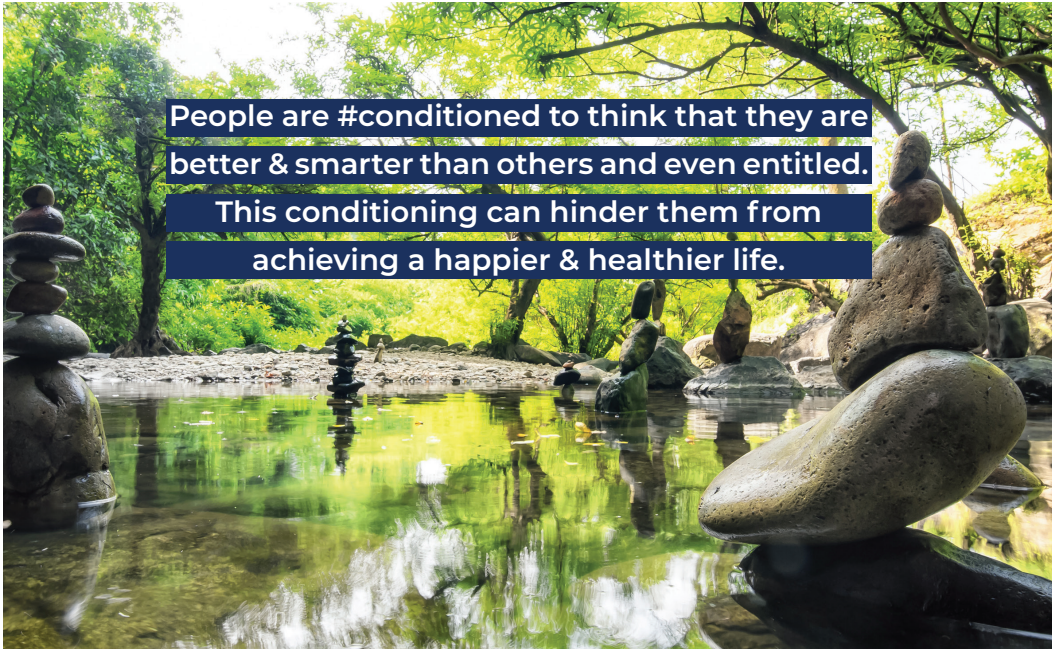
Be willing to be a round peg in a square world.

CHICKE FITZGERALD

CEO & Founder

Solutionz Innovations and the Game Changer Network

Section I: Appreciating the vortex.



LAURA MINEFF

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SECTION I

Appreciating the vortex.

Have you ever asked yourself how we have been conditioned to act the way we do?

When we enter this human experience, beginning with our first breath, we emerge from a perfect, beautiful, safe space, bathed in pure love and pure joy, ready for adventure. That love and joy form a metaphorical cocoon, where we reside until we can emerge on our own, strong and ready to fly.

At that moment, our path lies before us, full of curves, twists and turns, and infinite possibilities. We are born with everything that we need for the journey that we call life.

Then, without warning, the conditioning begins. Those who surround us inflict their conditional thought processes and their ways on us. Throughout our lives, it is these external influences that actually help us sort through things to find our own identity and establish our own mindset.

In those early days, we are surrounded by those charged with raising us. This is normally your parents. But it may be those who actually volunteered for that role— siblings, other family members and care givers, teachers, and mentors. They influence our lives, and we are shaped by the choices they make, including their reactions to adversity and even to the good things in life.

Are you one of the fortunate ones who were surrounded with one or more people caring for and nurturing you in your early years? If so, you will know those individuals breathed life into you through their model of unconditional

love. If not, don't lose heart. It doesn't have to define your story.

Even if the intentions of your caregivers were good, their guidance is fueled by their own individual life challenges and experiences. They project their thoughts, including their fears, a sense of lack, and their insecurities.

Clearly, some of that influence can also be positive, but most often, that conditioning causes us to put up barriers and walls that unwittingly can make our world square, boxed in, and more difficult to navigate. Fortunately, these lessons can also be our greatest teacher if we can recognize the habits and our environment for what they are and see how they impact our lives.

As we grow up, our world is continually shaped by our physical environment and surroundings and what we draw to ourselves, reflecting how we are treated and nurtured emotionally (. . . or not).

During adolescence, a child formulates their view of themselves from this conditioning. Figuratively, they begin to find their wings and push against the protective cocoon. This is often seen as their first act of rebellion. But no one can open the cocoon on our behalf. There are just some things that have to happen from the inside out at their appointed time and this is one of them.

Like a scratch on an old vinyl record, the thoughts and actions of those around us can create grooves and scratches in our perfectly round world, almost immediately impacting our physical life experience. We need to recognize that these habitual thought processes can suck the life from us and cause us to erect walls of restriction.

Once we realize what is happening, it can become a circular, swirling vortex of unlimited resources. The realizations that emanate from that energy are what equip us to break free from the constraints of our physical reality, just like a rocket breaking free from orbit.

The influences in our life clarify what we do and do not want to bring into our

life experience. After we learn the lesson, we must shed those influences and move forward. Then, we are free to achieve breakthrough and discover our true selves.

Once again, we become that innocent, beautiful butterfly, full of love and joy and childlike wonder, where anything is possible.

Enter stage left, the ego.

It is not unusual at this point to believe that you are better and smarter than others and even that you are entitled. There are many manifestations of this entitlement. The ego imposes itself on our behavior and influences and manipulates our responses. It also influences how we communicate and receive information.

The ego can easily be seen as the monster in the story—the devil sitting on our shoulder. His job is pointing out the things that we can't do and all of the things we aren't (smart enough, thin enough, rich enough), and his goal is making everything all about us. This robs us of the joy that was God's intended plan for our life.

It is normal to want to be the beautiful butterfly, and loving. We can't respect one another if we don't love and respect ourselves. This comes out of operating in the fear of not being worthy, accepted, or loved. Instead of breaking out of the cocoon and stepping into what we were created to be, we remain imprisoned, as if in a cage.

We desire to be acknowledged and appreciated. To do that, we need to learn how to move aside our fears, to find the way to unveil our pure motives and embrace our potential. Through our own appreciation of ourselves and in freely loving ourselves, we can come to show pure love to others.

Only when we have an appreciation of what the ego points out to us can we make peace with it and have an appreciation for that early conditioning and

even for the swirling vortex. We are then equipped to remove the resistance and see the opportunities to choose from, directing our own path.

Only at that point can we hear the “voice” of and operate in pure love. That voice tells us that we matter, that we are indeed worthy, and that we can do and be anything. By receiving and being empowered with that knowledge as we venture out and listen to others and appreciate their stories, we can then understand, interact, and truly care.

When we discover the courage and bravery within, we can see the accusing character on our shoulder as the clarifier, the one who keeps us on our toes and helps us to reflect our true nature in the choices we make.

When we alleviate our fears and tune our ego, we open up to others and to the world, and we begin to soften our edges. We also find a new joy in participating in life and can accept that we are the creators of our own reality. We have options and there are infinite possibilities.

I created the Universal Design Method to address the challenge created by this conditioning. It is designed to create a space where you feel empowered. In some cases, it literally lights your path. It is geared to enable you to live a happier and healthier life.

Reconditioning your mindset and shifting your environment can enable you to find the happiness and embrace the manifestation of your true nature and have a joyful life.

By reading this book and discovering your own AHA! moments, together, we are designing new opportunities in a world of infinite possibilities and helping you enjoy being a round peg in that square world.

1

People are #conditioned to think that they are better
and smarter than others and even entitled.
This conditioning can hinder them from achieving a
happier and healthier life.

2

What's blocking a person's #conditioning? Think about
it. Does it reflect one's true nature as a loving and caring
human being?

3

People want to be loved, accepted, appreciated, and acknowledged. They try to seek this out in others instead of looking into themselves and their #surroundings. #conditioning

4

Do people sincerely care? Yes, they do. It is just a matter of opening their hearts and minds to others. The #UniversalDesignMethod is designed to open spaces that help open one's mind by #releasing the #joy of #life. #conditioning

5

A person's true nature is to be caring, loving, and playful.
The #UniversalDesignMethod releases the energy to
reflect this through the #ease and flow of incorporating
curved design. #conditioning

6

When people set their egos aside, their true human
nature emerges. Through the #UniversalDesignMethod,
people can start discovering their true nature of being
open to others by just letting go. #conditioning

7

The #UniversalDesignMethod can create a path that allows people to be self-reflective on their successes so they can share the newfound sense of self-worthiness with society. #conditioning

8

The #UniversalDesignMethod is a methodology that can enable a person to live a more #loving and #joyful and #healthier life. It allows them to move aside fear and have the #courage to see things differently. #UDM

9

The path to true happiness is always through a loving heart. #conditioning #unconditionallove

10

The most important person to love is one's self. People can only give what they have. To love another, one must first love one's self. To appreciate another, one must first appreciate one's self. #conditioning

11

When people release their fears, the walls go down and they become open and appreciative of others. The #UniversalDesignMethod releases one's inner restrictions by moving the #energy, softening the edges, in order to enjoy who one's self is. #conditioning

12

Do you know the biggest fear that people have is feeling that they are not worthy anymore? This can be addressed by a change of #mindset, which is vital for people to find the joy in their self-worth.

13

Do you know that the #UniversalDesignMethod can provide the support that you need when you experience a #change in your life? It acts by altering one's atmosphere to reflect and encourage the change.

14

Living in the moment is a mindset where people appreciate the place they are in right now. How can you best appreciate the place you are currently in?
#livinginthemoment

15

The #UniversalDesignMethod can influence emotions because it alters the atmosphere and touches one's spirit.
#change

16

People need to recall what brought them #joy and only then can they #freely share this joy with others, letting it resonate in their very being. This is the fun part of the journey!

17

The #UniversalDesignMethod creates that mindset of openness and giving back to society. What have you given back to others? #journey

18

#Joy flows when people connect to God as their energy source and the source of provision. The #UniversalDesignMethod allows one to feel connected to that free-flowing, unconditional love.

19

When people discover themselves through the help of the #UniversalDesignMethod, they are able to move forward and positively influence their life and the lives of others. #conditioning

20

Practitioners of the #UniversalDesignMethod have a desire to add value to society. They have an appreciation for where they have come from and where they are today. #journey

EPILOGUE

I was a brand-new mom. I was also curious and loved seeing how other people lived.

My dad was a fireman and a builder. We lived plainly, with no extras. My mom was stay-at-home, while my dad provided; it was very traditional. We did not have cellphones. We didn't have the internet. We didn't have an HDTV. There was no Martha Stewart.

Yet in the midst of it all, I had this desire, and I didn't know what to do with it. I also had a new catalyst in my life, which was my new baby, bringing me so much love and joy.

I had a yearning to find a way to connect to myself.

I would go on walks with my little girl through the neighborhood. Many homes in the neighborhood didn't have garages. I would stand on the sidewalk and try to look into other people's homes. I would even go at night because most people would have their lights on and their windows open, and I could see inside.

I soon found out that they had open houses for homes that were for sale. So, for three hours every Sunday, I would go to as many open houses as I could manage.

I frequently saw the same realtor. She finally looked at me and said, "Look, I don't know what you're doing, but I know you're not going to buy a house. Could you please just go get your real estate license?" That prompted me to ask, "I could do that?" She answered, "Yeah, three weekends, John Honduras. Just go do it because I'm trying to get clients here and you're taking up my time." So, I thought, "This is awesome!"

Within three weeks, I signed up and got my real estate license.

Then, I became the open house guru.

Had the real estate agent not said something, I wouldn't have known that I could even go down this path. That literally started opening doors for me. You might say that she was my next catalyst.

As I saw all these homes that were on the market, I asked myself, "What can I do to help these people and other realtors see the potential and create a desire to live in these homes and make it their own?"

So, I got a bucket and rags. I got 40-watt light bulbs and candles to create a welcoming, homey atmosphere.

I would call the homeowner before I'd have their open house and say, "Hey, listen. I know you're excited to find your new home and get ready to move. I'm going to hold your open house. Would you be willing to leave me a few boxes? Would it be all right if I just started to declutter and pack a few things up for you? I'll label the boxes carefully, so you'll know exactly what I've put in them." And people would say, "Sure, no problem."

I would go an hour ahead of time to my open house. I would wash the fingerprints off the woodwork and clean all the tables. I would either pop a frozen pumpkin pie in the oven or at least make a few slices of raisin-bread toast.

I touched all the senses, including sound—with low happy music, not elevator sounds. I would rearrange their furniture, shifting the energy.

I would simplify things so those coming to see the home could envision and imagine it as their own.

After I had held their open house, when the homeowners would come home, I would have at least two people interested in purchasing their home. Sometimes, I'd already have an offer. As a bonus, the owners would have a clean and decluttered house, giving them a head start on their moving process.

I invented the first staging. Today, people make it a career. But the cool part was watching the homeowners come home, be surprised, and say, "We don't even

want to move now."

They had no idea that this change was possible, because they had become so habitual about their living and how they utilized their home. I didn't do anything except rearrange what they already had and create a new atmosphere for them.

From there, I went full force into helping people envision what their life could look like.

I helped them open up those doors of opportunity so they could take the next step into wherever they were going. I created an atmosphere that allowed them to see different opportunities. I loved seeing and being a part of their joy and their excitement.

Life went on. I had more children, and then I got divorced, which was my new catalyst. After that, I had to see my own life and future differently.

I started with corporate gift packaging. My sister helped me with this business. I loved being creative with her, but we had no money. So, we would go to garage sales and thrift stores. We would gather whatever we could for a small amount of money and put these amazing things into themed baskets together. I sold them to banks and realtors who were giving them to their employees and clients.

Our business was growing, and we were working out of my home. People who came into my home to get the baskets would say, "Wow, I love those window treatments. Could you make those for me?" So, I started thinking that we should just have an open house with all these cool fun things that we found and refurbished. We could sell them!

I started having these open houses once a week. I was willing to sell everything in my house. I was a single mom of four children with minimal support.

People would line up out the door at 7 am and buy my stuff. At one point, my kids commented that if it wasn't nailed down, it might get sold! This helped

them to develop into young people who were not materialistic.

Every week, after we would have these open houses, we would begin again on Monday and collect new items. Finally, people started inviting me into their homes and asking me if I could do the same thing for them.

I'd go into their homes and do exactly what I used to do for the open houses. I would go to discount stores and then take off all the labels, so they didn't know how much things cost. I'd write up a price sheet, and people would buy everything that I put in there.

These were mostly picture frames and small things. It just escalated from there, and people started asking me to participate in designing their homes.

That was all the basis for my development of the Universal Design Method.

The system works.

Every door of opportunity included me moving aside the fear, letting go, and having the courage to see things differently.

I've lived my life that way. And you can too.

Be the round peg in your square world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LAURA MINEFF is a lifestyle designer who has owned and operated her business, Array Design Studio, for over twenty years.

During those years, she grew to listen and understand from her clients what they needed to better their lives. From that experience, she created the Universal Design Method (UDM).

Laura now uses her method to infuse happiness into the lives of her clients. She saw the need to share these methods with others

in the industry, as well as the average person. It was her heart's desire to make UDM accessible to all. This is how she came to write this book and share those methods with you.

She currently lives Cleveland, Ohio, where she is working on a multi-use community that will be designed around the UDM. You can also catch her series, *Laura Mineff: Lifestyle Designer*, on YouTube, where she takes you through all the processes of UDM. Additionally, she is starting a UDM academy for those interested in getting a full Universal Design Method experience.

If you'd like to find out more about the projects Laura is working on or to be more involved in her academy, please go to LauraMineff.com or find her on Facebook and Instagram @LauraMineffLifestyleDesigner.



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If you are facing a major change or you simply need some hope, encouragement, and joy in your life, this book is for you.

In *A Round Peg in a Square World*, Laura Mineff gives readers a fresh perspective and practical ways to change the atmosphere in their environment. She firmly believes in a world of infinite possibilities, and in this book, she goes hand in hand with you to navigate your new opportunities. Her Universal Design Method provides a framework to design your physical environments and create new opportunities by shifting your mindset.

The AHA moments from the book include:

- When you release your fears, the walls go down, and you become open and appreciative of others.
- The Universal Design Method releases your inner restrictions by moving the energy, softening the edges, so you can enjoy who you are.

"Laura is indeed a round peg in a square world. Her enthusiasm and optimism is absolutely infectious."

Chicke Fitzgerald
CEO, Solutionz



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