

Leap Years

**How to Make
the Rest of Your Years
*the Best of Your Years!***

Maryanne Ross

LEAP YEARS

How to Make
the Rest of Your Years
the Best of Your Years!

Maryanne Ross
Luray, Virginia

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Mental Apparel

Is your mind dressed for success?

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FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

With little fanfare and filled with the warmth we've come to expect... *Here's Maryanne!!!* expressed as *Leap Years*, in this beautifully crafted toolkit for living *YOUR* life...as *YOU* want it to be...as only *YOU* can.

For those who are about to meet Maryanne for the first time...Relax, sit back, and *LET* her story unfold before you. There is no hidden agenda, no *have tos*, *shoulds*, or *shouldn'ts*, no magic gimmick or subscription to buy at the end in order to become rich and famous. Along the way I believe you will find that the keys to *YOUR* happiness and *YOUR* effectiveness are within *YOU*...just waiting to become fully expressed as *YOU* in the outer.

What you're about to experience is simply the magic of an individual who has had and continues to have experiences much like our own and, using tools she gathered in good times and in bad times, how she has charted her path to righteous – right – thinking. Presented in a unique format, *Leap Years* walks you through the entire year with insights, personal stories, photos, poetry, and 'plain ole common sense.' As is her style, Maryanne provides inspirational quotes, exercises, resource material, recommended reading, and fun stuff along the way like: "*Eat dark chocolate – It's a delicious way to love yourself!*"

As you move through the chapters you might notice a familiar quote or exercise by a more famous author like Stephen Covey, Jack Canfield, Leo Buscaglia, or a Bible reference. Figuratively, these are the people with whom Maryanne associates...these

are some of her more well-known teachers. And to their teachings Maryanne adds her own prism, a painless and poetic approach to the many aspects of life and its truths that are as old as the spoken word.

Also woven throughout this text is a light and delicate and very apparent belief in something greater than herself. Maryanne's spirituality is simply an essence that accompanies her presence. No religiosity, no proselytizing, no preaching...just Maryanne, expressing her wonder-filled self while remaining grounded in her beliefs.

Mrs. Biederman, my 'seasoned' seventh-grade math teacher, told our class that she would learn more in the coming school year than any of her students. Maryanne is that type of teacher – trainer – instructor – coach – friend...a student of life. And with her commitment to self-mastery, she is always learning, always observing – whether she is consulting on a plant floor, leading a classroom filled with adults, or relaxing on a sofa with her grandbabies.

A dear friend and my mentor, Eric Butterworth often quoted, *"Success is not getting there...it's earning the right to be there."* Maryanne continues to earn her success each and every day...and in *Leap Years* she shares some of her most important lessons and insights. She has "gotten Naked." She has done a good work!

Continued Success and Joy,

Gary Pezzuti
Senior Partner
Summit Group Consultants, Inc.

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE

This book evolved from a presentation I wrote some six years ago, entitled “What’s in Your Dash?” The original presentation incorporated eight words, all starting with the letter “L,” that encompassed the values that are most meaningful to me.

Early in 2010, I decided to use one word per month as a topic for my Mental Apparel newsletters and discovered that there were another four “L” words that easily aligned with my earlier thinking.

By mid-2010, the idea to turn the newsletters into a book began to germinate. *Leap Years* was originally thought to be a book for Baby Boomers, but I was amazed to find many comments about the newsletters to be coming from readers of all ages.

I offer you *Leap Years*, not intending that you follow my way, but in the hopes that it becomes a source of gentle suggestions and that it helps you to find your own way.

Maryanne

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not be possible without the literary assistance of my good friend and colleague, Barbara Jernigan. Barbara is the owner of BJWorks and can be reached at bjernigan2k1@yahoo.com.

Special thanks go to Barbara and to Jeff Gamble for their amazing photography. Please visit Barbara's website at <http://bjworks.biz> and Jeff's website at <http://photos.nush.net> to see more of their incredible work.

Thanks also to Hazel, Ruby, Eric, Lisa, and Elizabeth for dressing up the book with their adorable faces.

A very special thank you belongs to my husband Ralph for caring for our pets and keeping the home fires burning while I travel about conducting workshops, speaking to groups, and collecting material for my books.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

Have you ever thought that the life you're living isn't at all the life you envisioned?

Are you worried about what your future will be?

Have you spent too many years ministering to others and worry that you won't have enough time left to do what you really want?

Are you having trouble deciding who you want to be?

Did you give years of your life to a spouse (or to a company), only to be thrown over with little or no warning?

Are you a financial casualty of the recent economic downturn, fearing that you won't have time to recoup your lost investments?

Are you spending the golden years caring for your parents or raising your grandchildren?

Are you afraid you won't be a good person?

~~~~~

If you answered **Yes** to one or more of these questions, this book is for you!

While these and other challenges may have set you back, you can use these simple life lessons to **LEAP into the best years of your life!**

This book is written by someone who has survived setbacks of her own and now considers those events to be a gift from above.

## PEOPLE ARE TALKING...

*I wanted to send you a note of appreciation! I am so happy to have met you. Your newsletter has meant so much to me and really reminds me of your true mission in this life. I listen to your words and each month know that something inspiring is coming for me to learn. Keep up the good work helping others learn!*

**Josh Crandall**  
**Forecast Analyst**

*I cried reading the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. It is one of my favorite prayers. That prayer comes to me when I am feeling lowly. Did you ever see that '70s movie, Brother Moon, Sister Sky? When we were in Italy I wanted to go to Assisi, because that movie made such an impact on me when I was little. Thank you for all the positive inspiration and goodness you put out into the world, and more specifically that you give to me.*

**Ida Santana, MD**  
**Internal Medicine Physician**

*I get lots of these types of ezines. Yours is one of the few I always read and I usually read it within a day or two. Keep up the good work. It is excellent.*

**Chuck Connelly**  
**CEO, Excellence in Supply Chain Management**

*Your latest article is beautiful and soul-searching – Thank You!*

**Patricia Crotty**  
**Master Scheduler**

*Every month I look forward to reading Maryanne's newsletter. You will, too. She has an uncanny way of knowing just what I need to inspire me, causing me to reflect on life's joys through her personal stories and sharing tools to create a joyful life. Now, I can pick up Maryanne's book and treat myself to her gentle, practical wisdom whenever I choose.*

**Anita Sanchez, PhD**  
**Global Consultant, Trainer, Speaker**

*When I felt as though my world was coming to an end, it was your newsletters, along with the help of people close to me, that helped me see the opportunities that presented themselves to me.*

*I have learned to be kinder to myself and more generous to others I meet along my path. I have become a quieter person, more open to others and less stressed about the things I can't control.*

*Your newsletters have helped me stay focused on the truly important things in life.*

*I have come to the conclusion that sometimes the best gifts in life come in not so beautiful wrapping.*

*Maryanne gave me a chance to learn what I really want in life and helped me make plans to get it.*

## **Wealth Beyond Measure**

**I went to bed last night  
uneasy about my finances and fearful of the future**

**I awoke this morning  
realizing I'd been given a new day**

**I compared its value to those  
grieving a lost loved one  
or facing a terminal illness**

**I realized that I had my sight, and could therefore enjoy  
the beauty of my surroundings  
and the faces of my loved ones**

**I listened to the sounds around me  
and I was thankful for the gift of hearing**

**I reflected on the gifts I often take for granted**  
– the aroma of fresh-roasted coffee  
– of roses in my garden  
– the fresh scent of rain and watermelon

**I paused to really savor  
the taste of an orange  
and my morning cup of tea**

**I realized I had the gift of touch  
and the opportunity for a gamut feelings**

**I'm fortunate to be smaller than some things  
and larger than others**

**Whenever I'm feeling unloved  
I can choose to give myself away  
to reach out to another  
and offer comfort for their journey**

**I went to bed this evening  
realizing I have wealth beyond measure!**

*Maryanne Ross* 2009

## Quotes on *LEAP*

*When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So what the hell, Leap!*

**Cynthia Heimel**

*All growth is a leap in the dark,  
a spontaneous, unpremeditated act without benefit of experience.*

**Henry Miller**

*I advise you to say your dream is possible and then overcome all inconveniences, ignore all the hassles, and take a running leap through the hoop, even if it is in flames.*

**Les Brown**

*There are many talented people who haven't fulfilled their dreams because they over-thought it, or they were too cautious and were unwilling to make the leap of faith.*

**James Cameron**

*People with clear, written goals accomplish far more  
in a shorter period of time  
than people without them could ever imagine.*

**Brian Tracy**

# **LEAP!**

*Leap and the net will appear.*  
**Julia Camerson**

**January is the Month to LEAP Forward!**

*Dear Friends,  
The start of a new year is the signal for most of us to set a few resolutions. They usually last a week or two and then we slowly forget those good intentions and fall back into our old habits.*

*This typically happens because we set vague or unrealistic goals for ourselves. This year why not take the time to create a plan that will really Leap your life forward?*



## **Set SMART Goals**

Don't make any resolutions that you really don't think you will keep. So often we set resolutions because everyone else is setting them. So we repeat what we hear. We resolve to lose weight because Oprah or our coworkers are trying a new diet plan.



We go on a budget because Suzy Ormond thinks we should...you know how this works. The trouble with this is that once we fail, we reinforce a failure mentality within ourselves, and it plays back in our heads over and over like a bad song.

If you really want to **Leap** forward this year, take the time to get in touch with what you really want to accomplish, and then set SMART goals.

**SMART** stands for

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**chievable

**R**ealistic, and

**T**imed.

Here are examples of how to set SMART goals:

**Specific** – This describes the target condition exactly. If you wanted to increase sales, you would state how much of an increase you expected. For example: “Our goal is to increase sales by 15%.”

**Measurable** – In order to know when you’ve arrived at your goal, you will have to know the starting and ending conditions. Using the example above, you would state: “Sales are at 100K; my goal is to increase sales to 115K.”

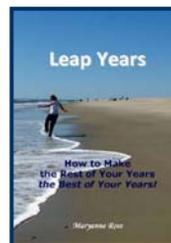
**Achievable** – The goal should stretch you, but be within reach. This provides the motivation that activates the brain chemistry necessary for accomplishment. If you were to set a goal for a 100% increase in sales, you might not believe it was possible, and give up before you got started.

**Realistic** – You must have the skills, time and resources to accomplish the stated goal. Increasing sales by 15% might be realistic if you have the product, marketing material, access to customers, and a reasonable amount of time for achievement.

**Timed** – Goals must include deadlines. Without a deadline, your goal is too vague, and will likely produce vague results. A time frame provides the finish line, which motivates and drives action. It allows you to know when you have arrived at the desired destination.

## **Leap with Small Steps**

All too often we think that in order to make a big impact on our goals, we have to take big **Leaps**. But a series of small steps can be just as effective and much easier to manage. This book is a great example of how breaking a large goal into small manageable steps can produce dramatic results.



While participating in Jack Canfield's *Train the Trainer* program, it was suggested to me that writing a book would help me establish myself as a keynote speaker. At the time, the idea of writing a book was so overwhelming and daunting that I discounted it almost immediately. But after a while, I realized that I was already writing a monthly newsletter and had an idea that could become a book. So I began to use each chapter of the book idea as a topic for the monthly newsletter. Before I knew it, it felt like the book was writing itself. And less than a year later, the book is going to print.

*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*

**Lao Tzu**

### **Take a Giant Leap**

There are times when a bigger step is needed. Sometimes the fear of failing at something is so overwhelming that we can't seem to take that first step. We've been so thoroughly warned to avoid taking risks and making mistakes that we're paralyzed into non-action. We stay in our velvet ruts while our hearts long to venture out. I found myself falling into that very trap once I realized that I had ten chapters of the book written and could easily pull the rest together. I began to procrastinate, fearing that it was a dumb idea, that it wouldn't sell, not even a single copy. Then I decided to take my own advice and **Leap!**



You can do it too. Whether it's a career move, a new skill, or a change in lifestyle that you are considering, make your plans and then put them in action. The only difference between successful individuals and others is that successful people make plans and then take action! You can do it, if you're willing to try!

### **Leap Through Your Doubts**

Whenever we hear about someone's success in a certain area, we focus only on the success itself, the result of the effort. We view the person as confident, accomplished. Sometimes the end result looks so obvious and easy that we overlook the fact that there had to be a time at the



beginning of the project when success wasn't a given, when that person struggled with the very same doubts and insecurities that you are facing right now. The difference is that they took action, that they were willing



to fail in order to succeed. If you want to really achieve your own success, you must be willing to make mistakes, to continue to push through the roadblocks and obstacles that are bound to come your way, until you find the path to your heart's desire.

*Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.*

**Helen Keller**

### **Resources for Making a Leap**

*Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* – Susan Jeffers

*See You at the Top* – Zig Ziglar

*The Success Principles* – Jack Canfield

*The Magic of Thinking Big* – David Schwartz

*The Magic of Believing* – Claude M. Bristol

*The 17 Principles of Personal Achievement* – Napoleon Hill

*Think and Grow Rich* – Napoleon Hill

*The Power of Focus* – Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Les Hewitt

### **5½ Ways to Enjoy January**

**1) Winter Sport** - Ice skating, skiing, snowboarding, or tubing – take your pick! Many ski resorts offer all of these options, and it is good clean family fun. If being outdoors at this time of year isn't your cup of tea, you can always hang out in front of the lodge's fireplace.

**2) Bowling** – More family fun, especially if you can find a smoke-free environment. Some establishments offer nighttime specials, making it fun and affordable. And it's good exercise!

**3) An indoor picnic** – Spread a blanket on the living room rug, make sandwiches or grill hotdogs and pretend it's summer. Better yet, turn up the heat so that you can wear tank tops and shorts. All the pleasures of a summer picnic without the ants!

**4) Join a Book Club** – In a good book club you can augment your own reading with thought-provoking discussion with others. Try a book in a favorite category or opt for something completely new.

**5) Puzzles** – Crossword, jigsaw, or word-search puzzles will get your mind busy and help you pass those long winter nights. Put on some soothing music and sip on something warm and fragrant.

***And the 1/2, you ask? Practice Gratitude!*** Keep a journal and list 5 things that you have to be grateful for every day. Try it for 30 days. You'll be amazed at how much better you feel!

## Quotes on *LOVE*

*The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love,  
and to let it come in.*

**Morrie Schwartz**

*Love is always bestowed as a gift – freely, willingly, and without  
expectation. We don't love to be loved; we love to love.*

**Leo Buscaglia**

*One word frees us of all the weight and pain in life. That word is love.*

**Sophocles**

*Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again.*

**Joseph Campbell**

*The ultimate lesson all of us have to learn is unconditional love,  
which includes not only others but ourselves as well.*

**Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**

## LOVE!

*It's so easy,  
To think about Love,  
To Talk about Love,  
To wish for Love,  
But it's not always easy  
To recognize Love,  
Even when we hold it....  
In our hands.*

**Jaka**

### **Make February LOVE Yourself Month!**

*Dear Friends,*



*Just in case you haven't noticed, the Love holiday is right around the corner now. The stores are filled with Valentine's Day gifts for everyone on your list. And if the retail world would have their way, your list would include everyone you know. Now don't get me wrong, I think it's a great idea to let our loved ones know how we feel, not just on Valentine's Day but every day.*

*But today I want you to consider the one person who really needs your love and appreciation and seldom gets enough, and that is YOU!*

### **Learn to Love Yourself**

If you're in the habit of keeping a daily to-do list, odds are you can look back and notice that your entries list all the things you need to do to satisfy the boss, the clients, your family, your friends. You might also be in the habit of keeping notes regarding what needs to be done to maintain your home, your car, and your other possessions. Many of us even manage to find the time to ensure that our pets are well taken care of, and that they have "play dates."

How about yourself? When was the last time you took the time to look yourself in the mirror and appreciate yourself for all the things you do on any given day? When was the last time you gave yourself approval for your efforts? I think we're big on giving ourselves negative feedback about what we think we screwed up or failed to do, but we seldom offer ourselves the **Love**, encouragement, and support we give to others.



In his *Breakthrough to Success* workshops, topic expert Jack Canfield encourages us to do what he calls the "mirror exercise" each evening. It's an exercise best done in private. At the end of each day, stand in front of a mirror and go over your day's activities, noting the efforts you took, and celebrate your successes, no matter how small. Next, examine the areas where you may have fallen short of your goals and forgive yourself for any mistakes. End the exercise by looking deeply into your own eyes and saying, "I **Love** you."

This may seem like a silly exercise to you. As a matter of fact, in Jack Canfield's *Train the Trainer* workshops, it is not unusual for him to spend a good deal of time dealing with resistance and questions about the value of this exercise, and encouraging other trainers like myself not to exclude this exercise from our own workshops or from our own lives.

And so I promise you this: It is a powerful force, well beyond your expectations. We often make the mistake of looking outward for the **Love** each of us desires. And our ability to find that **Love** by offering **Love** to others is moderated by our ability to really **Love** ourselves.



## In Your Own Back Yard

If you're like me, you've probably watched *The Wizard of Oz* many times in your lifetime and considered it for its entertainment value. But I think there was a valuable lesson in the movie that is often overlooked. At the very end, once the good witch tells Dorothy that the ruby slippers will take her and Toto home, Dorothy wakes up in her own bed and tells Auntie Em that she learned a valuable lesson during her trip to Oz. She learned that if she ever went looking for her heart's desire again, she need go farther than her own back yard. If what she's looking for isn't there, then she would realize that she never really lost it to begin with.

I think Dorothy was one smart little girl and that the "back yard" she was referring to was herself. We are each the "home" we look for. We are the **Love** we look for, it's right there within us. We never lose it — what we lose is the awareness of it. So get in touch with yourself and learn to **Love** yourself for the special and unique person you are. Learn to honor yourself by making choices that respect your mind, body, and spirit. Listen to your intuition. Follow your dreams, and indulge yourself, just a bit, each and every day.



Make a list of the things you **Love** to do. In this tighter economy, you might be worried about taking on any additional spending. But you don't have to break the budget to indulge yourself with something you crave. Sometimes, allowing yourself an hour of reading, twenty minutes of meditation or exercise, or a glass of wine at the end of a long day is enough to make you feel special and content. Aim to work in one thing from your list each day, or at least several times a week.

### **Only You, Only Now**

Another great way to celebrate yourself in February and all year through is to make a master list of things you **Love** about yourself – start with the easy stuff like “I **Love** my eyes, smile, and eyebrows.” Think hard about your attributes, your quirks, even your faults. All of this equates to your wonderful and delicious self. Don't be so critical and don't compare yourself to anyone, not even the younger you!



I remember a few years ago when I was having my passport renewed I went to have a new photograph taken and commented to the photographer that I wasn't thrilled with the new photo. She told me to cheer up, that in ten years when I needed another new passport photo, I would **Love** this one. I realized that she was right!

Make your list carefully and take an inventory of those things about yourself that you take for granted. Consider yourself as others see you, as a relative, friend, co-worker, as citizen and community member.

Think about how you interact with others, with nature, and the world around you. I believe that you were put here for a reason and that you make a difference in this world, but it's much more important that you believe it. Keep going on your **Love** list until you are bursting with **Love** and pride in your own sweet self! And reward yourself with something from the "goodie" list above!



You'll find that by filling your own reservoir you have so much more **Love** to give to others, and you won't be nearly so concerned with what you get in return. Try **Loving** and honoring yourself for the next 30 days, and you just might feel that you've landed somewhere over the rainbow!

### **Resources for *Loving Yourself and Others***

*Born for Love* – Leo Buscaglia

*Bus 9 to Paradise* – Leo Buscaglia

*Loving What Is* – Byron Katie

*Love is Letting Go of Fear* – Gerald G. Jampolsky

*Personal Healing* – Caroline Myss

*A Return to Love* – Marianne Williamson

*I Need Your Love, Is That True* – Byron Katie

*A Thousand Names for Joy* – Byron Katie

*The Untethered Soul – The Journey Beyond Yourself* – Michael  
A Singer

### **5½ Ways to Enjoy February**

- 1) Eat dark chocolate** – It's a delicious way to love yourself because dark chocolate is one of the healthiest foods you can eat! And I'm not just making that up, honest!
- 2) Get some sunshine** – Make it a priority to go outside on the sunny days. It will lift your spirits and it will replenish your vitamin D, which will also make you feel happier.
- 3) Make time for yourself** – In fact, make this "**Love Me**" month. Indulge in things you love to do, love to eat, love to wear. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks, honor yourself in at least one small way every day this month.
- 4) Let go of judging others** – Wayne Dyer said, "When you judge another, you do not define them, you define yourself."

**5) Buy a gold fish** – When the outside is its dreariest, it's good to come home to something alive. Keep your little pet's water fresh and feed him a bit each morning. That's all the care he'll need, no walking or litter boxes to worry about!

***And the 1/2, you ask? Practice Gratitude!*** Keep a journal and list 5 things that you have to be grateful for every day. Try it for 30 days. You'll be amazed at how much better you feel!

*Maryanne is inspirational! Her presentations are always thought-provoking. My two favorites are "What's in Your Dash?" and "Think Naked." While listening to Maryanne, I went from laughter to tears and back to laughter while internalizing her message during brief moments of self-introspection. She engages her audience and encourages us all to stretch our reach. She is a true master speaker and sets the bar high for her peers!*

Debra Hansford  
Consultant, Trainer, Speaker

*I finished it and loved it. Can't wait until it's actually published and out there for people to gain your insight on living one's life by using inspirational words...I think most people do, but don't actually realize they are doing so. I know I do, but never thought of it this way before. See, once again, that's why we are such kindred spirits.*

Lowe Ann Emory  
Retired, Programs Assistant

*Our memories of others and, more importantly, the things those memories inspire in us are indeed the greatest legacies. Your story about your sister was very inspirational and very honoring of her. Thank you for including it. God bless you.*

David Warren  
Business Manager

*Vera's story was very moving and encouraging. She makes me value simplicity, and inspires me to make use of the abilities God has given me, regardless of how they measure up to others. I'm running a 5k for the Special Olympics in my area. I'm told over 300 Special Olympians will be there, cheering and encouraging the runners. I expect there will be tears. Lots of tears. Thanks for allowing God to use you to touch the heart of a grumpy old man.*

Russ Thorne  
Master Scheduler

*This small book is a bright jewel, brimming with hope, high ideals, honest emotions, and practical wisdom to help you be what you dream to be.*

Joni Holeman  
Corporate and Personal Success Trainer