

THE MIRACLE QUESTION

ANSWER IT AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE

*"An inspirational self-help book! *The Miracle Question* is a refreshing guide for transformation."*

CAROL ANNE STRANGE, INSPIRING LIFE MAGAZINE

LINDA METCALF PHD

with an introduction by

BILL O'HANLON, AUTHOR OF *DO ONE THING DIFFERENT*

*The Miracle
Question
Answer It and
Change Your Life*

Linda Metcalf, PhD



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Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Foreword by Bill O'Hanlon	v
<i>Chapter One</i> Begin With a Miracle	1
<i>Chapter Two</i> Answer The Miracle Question	13
<i>Chapter Three</i> Check Out Your Exceptions	31
<i>Chapter Four</i> Write Your Action Plan for Change	57
<i>Chapter Five</i> Recognize Your Success	67
<i>Chapter Six</i> Give Your Marriage a Miracle	77
<i>Chapter Seven</i> Parenting Your Small Miracle	91
<i>Chapter Eight</i> Take Control Over Harmful Habits	109
<i>Chapter Nine</i> Rewrite Your Life After Trauma	131
<i>Chapter Ten</i> Your Miracle Journal	141
Bibliography.....	147

Chapter One

Begin With a Miracle

Miracles happen to those who believe in them.

—Bernard Berenson

How would a miracle change your life? Would you get a better job, fix your marriage, stop drinking, keep your teenager home at night, make peace with your parents, silence your boss, bring back your deceased relative, or would it help you financially?

If you have tried therapy, traditional problem solving strategies or talked to a friend at length, and still find yourself haunted by the same problem and situation, *The Miracle Question* was written for you. In other words, if you have ever found yourself saying, “If only a miracle would happen...” this book will give you hope and direction. No matter what your issue or situation, *The Miracle Question* will give you a chance to begin achieving what you want and provide new options for living your life. It will do this for you because as soon as you stop thinking about why you *can’t* have something and begin to look at how your life *could* be if a miracle were to happen, you will be on the road to solutions.

How can I make such promises? Because for over thirteen years, I have seen people change their lives when they answered *The Miracle Question*. They then realized that they had the power within themselves to make that miracle happen. Whether the issue was grief, sexual abuse, divorce, depression, anxiety, anger or addictive behavior, when my clients understood what was missing in their lives by answering the question, they were able to emotionally step out of their problems and begin finding a solution within themselves. They didn’t need me to give them advice or tell them how to change things. They didn’t even need other people or situations to change in order to try new experiences. They simply needed to answer *The Miracle Question*, learn from themselves

how the answer to it would make a difference, and then realize that they were competent enough to achieve it.

The following scenarios are examples of how The Miracle Question “gave people their lives back”. Each needed a miracle. Each was stumbling due to problems that seemed overwhelming.

The Couple

FELIX AND ELAINE: We need you to help us decide if we should get divorced or stay married. We’ve been married for nineteen years. We have three sons, aged six, eight and ten. We love each other, but the marriage just isn’t working.

Felix and Elaine were a forty-something couple who came to me because they felt their marriage was deteriorating. They told me they had dated for eight years, first through high school and then college. Felix attended medical school while Elaine pursued a nursing degree. They were used to spending time apart, but once the kids arrived, they never seemed to have any time for each other at all. Coping with their careers and keeping up with the demanding schedules of three children was all-consuming. Neither was content in the marriage and both felt resentful about how their partner never made time for them. Was it worth it to stay together?

The Mother

PAM: My three-year-old son needs a heart transplant. If he doesn’t have one, he’ll die. I need help coping with this situation. I can’t have any more children.

Pam cried throughout our session. Her son Malcolm had a rare type of tumor so enmeshed with his heart that it could not be removed. She and her husband, Alex, barely spoke these days. The fear of losing Malcolm had put a strain on both their marriage and careers. She was an engineer; her husband a salesman. Both were considering taking extended time off from their jobs to spend with

Malcolm. They were facing the last months of their child's life. How was Pam going to get through this?

The Professional Woman

SHEILA: I've had two abortions this year and now I'm pregnant again. I need to decide within the next week whether to abort this pregnancy.

Sheila was twenty-eight years old and in a casual relationship. She was successful in her career as a physical trainer. Although she was doing well financially, she was terrified to have a child on her own. She cared for Danny, the father of her child, but he cringed when she told him she was pregnant. She had a very loving and supportive family who would be there for her, but she had always envisaged having a child with someone who would provide the kind of home life that *her* family gave her. Her search for Mr. Right was leading her nowhere. Twice before she thought she had met the right person, someone who would provide her with that kind of life, but in both instances, it wasn't meant to be. Now she didn't know what to do.

The Professional Male

TERRY: I'm afraid I'm about to lose my marriage. I yell and curse at my wife all the time, even though I think she is the most wonderful woman in the world. I can't stop myself.

Terry was thirty-six years old and a successful attorney. During their six-year marriage, he and his wife Martha had accumulated money, a house and nice cars. They had one son. They also had a nightmare of a relationship; one he described as "a relationship just like my parents had". He had little guidance from his parents growing up, so he imagined that simply providing good things for those you loved was enough.

This seemed fine until Martha told him that it didn't even come *close* to being enough. He told me he'd already seen two therapists, but when both suggested anger management classes, he didn't

Chapter Six

Give Your Marriage a Miracle

At the touch of love everyone becomes a poet.

—Plato

Once upon a time, two people met. They discovered they had mutual interests and enjoyed many of the same activities. They became attracted to each other. They felt satisfied and understood, so they fell in love, decided to commit to each other, and promised to live happily ever after, no matter what.

Most of the time, inevitably, the “no matter what” happens. The marriage is challenged by trials, tribulations, old or new expectations, additions and temptations that step in its path. The couple either absorbs the interfering situations with good faith and adapts to them or dissolves the relationship because of them. When they are ready to dissolve the marriage, they sometimes spend a lot of time and money analyzing what went wrong. Sometimes insight saves the marriage but more often than not, it simply provides information.

This chapter is about saving marriages by focusing on the strengths couples sometimes forget they had when their relationship was new and their marriage working. It's about identifying and discovering methods couples used previously to absorb life's interferences and survive its storms. It's about resiliency and focuses on rewriting your love story when the world has threatened to change the characters in your fairy tale.

Before Going Forward, Go Backward

In their book, *Love is a Verb*, Pat Hudson and Bill O'Hanlon describe what happens to people when marriage goes awry:

When things go wrong in our relationships, we are all inclined to look at our mates and conclude that they have got the personality problem, and if only they would fix the problem, everything would be better. If it's not a personality problem, perhaps it's a life event. "He's never worked through his father's death and he takes it out on me." Or, "She has a conflict with her boss, but I get the flack." The difficulty with this line of thinking is that we will continue to see our mates as the cause of the pattern and nothing will change.

In Chapter One, Felix and Elaine were on the verge of divorce. Below are the answers the couple gave to The Miracle Question as we began working together:

ELAINE: In our miracle we would be best friends again. We would be doing things that we did then—dancing, hiking, talking, talking and more talking."

FELIX: The kids would be better behaved and we would share the responsibility for them.

ELAINE: We would sit down and plan together for a change, like we used to.

FELIX: In the miracle, she would look up from her book when I came home and be glad to see me.

Felix and Elaine thought they needed to reinvent their marriage. They thought they needed new ideas to do so. In the dialog above, they talked about what they used to do that worked. These are the *exceptions* that compose their miracle. Naturally, having children will change a couple's roles. There are additional responsibilities, exhausting chores, activities and challenges. Looking further back into Felix and Elaine's life pre-children, I learned that they shared responsibility equally for their pets, finances, home upkeep and more. I asked how they did that and they said they discussed what needed to be done and decided how they would do it together.

Initially, many couples handle chores in this way and when children come along or job responsibilities change, they no longer sit down and decide how to do things together. The same goes for the dancing, hiking and talking Felix and Elaine used to do. Those

activities may have looked different with the addition of three children, but the activities themselves still brought enjoyment to the couple. How they would adapt their current life to those and other fun activities would be a challenge.

As for the dilemma Felix felt regarding his attraction to Elaine, it was helpful for Elaine to tell him what she liked him doing when they were first married. Sure, sometimes lust and love just took over, but he was more thoughtful during those days and she was less tired after work. He told her he felt attractive when she met him at the door with a smile and they would save the problems of the day for later. Together, they both tried to look at what worked before.

Felix vs. Elaine: Moving Toward the Goal

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED HOW A MIRACLE WOULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

Would a miracle enable you to get a better job, fix your marriage, stop drinking, keep your teenager home at night, make peace with your parents, silence your boss, or help you financially?

In this groundbreaking volume, Dr. Linda Metcalf challenges readers to ask themselves:

"Suppose tonight while you sleep, a miracle happens. When you awake tomorrow morning, what will you see yourself doing, thinking, or believing about yourself that will confirm that a miracle has taken place in your life?"

The Miracle Question is a step-by-step approach for people who feel "stuck" and overwhelmed. It offers methods for tapping into sources and resources we already have—called "exceptions". "Exceptions" are the "good" we've learned from past experiences but have perhaps forgotten about, or situations that went well for us in the past, but over time got pushed aside. By understanding that our problems have eroded our confidence, we can discover that our abilities have simply been in limbo, ready to use as solutions.

"The Miracle Question takes one of the simplest, most effective starting points there is for change and growth and extends into a valuable and complete process. Especially useful for people who have difficulty deciding what they want, the miracle question is a great way to access a person's innate wisdom."

JAMIE SMART, NLP TRAINER, AUTHOR

"... a highly personalized and comprehensive process for change."

EVE LIPCHIK, MSW, AUTHOR OF *BEYOND TECHNIQUE*
IN SOLUTION-FOCUSED THERAPY

LINDA METCALF, PhD is a licensed marriage and family therapist and has presented workshops on solution focused therapy and *The Miracle Question*. She is the author of four books, written many articles and has appeared on *The Donahue Show*, *The Montel Williams Show* as well being a guest on numerous radio shows.

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