



A GUIDE TO

# JOYFUL

THE SURPRISING POWER OF ORDINARY THINGS  
TO CREATE EXTRAORDINARY HAPPINESS

*by Ingrid Fetell Lee*

**FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS**

# WAYS TO CONNECT

**Learn more on The Aesthetics of Joy blog:**

[www.aestheticsofjoy.com/](http://www.aestheticsofjoy.com/)



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**Learn more about living well with chronic illness on the Incurable blog:**

[www.incurableblog.com/](http://www.incurableblog.com/)



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LIVING WELL WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

# 1/ENERGY

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## VIBRANT COLOR AND LIGHT

"Energy animates matter. It is the currency of life, transforming inert material into breathing, beating organisms. Simply to be alive is to vibrate with an essential dynamism. The more energy we have, the more we are able to play, create, love, lead, explore, rejoice, and engage with the world around us."

### Discussion Questions

1. Energy is a word fraught with emotion for many people living with chronic illness. How has this chapter changed the way you think about energy?
2. What are some small changes you can make in your home to create more energy?

### Further Reading

#### Publicolor Before & After Photos

<https://www.publicolor.org/before-after>

**Chromophobia (Focus on Contemporary Issues)** by David Batchelor  
available on Amazon

#### Color Rendering Index (CRI) and Color Temperature

[https://www.myledlightingguide.com/blog-color-rendering-index-\(cri\)](https://www.myledlightingguide.com/blog-color-rendering-index-(cri))



# 2/ABUNDANCE

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## LUSHNESS, MULTIPLICITY, AND VARIETY

"The circus and the flea market are so joyful because of the collection of rich, delightful sensations they offer. The abundance aesthetic is defined by a layering of color, texture, and pattern, and you don't need a lot of stuff to achieve it."

### Discussion Questions

1. Think of a time when you were exposed to an abundance of sensations. How can you recreate that experience?
2. Think about your wardrobe, the decor in your home and the types of patterns that you find attractive. Do you gravitate toward florals, polka dots or stripes? Maybe chevron? How can you make these patterns more visible in your environment?

### Further Reading

**Decorating Is Fun!: How to be Your Own Decorator** by Dorothy Draper  
available on Amazon

**Vibrant Food: Celebrating the Ingredients, Recipes, and Colors of Each Season** by Kimberley Hasselbrink  
available on Amazon

**Move Over Hygge: It's Time to Sniff and Doze in a Snoezelen Room** by Jon Tattrie

<https://www.snoezelen.info/news/move-over-hygge-its-time-to-sniff-and-doze-in-a-snoezelen-room/>



# 3/FREEDOM

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## NATURE, WILDNESS, AND OPEN SPACE

"In a moment of joy, we say we are carefree, freewheeling, foot-loose and fancy-free. Some of the most joyful moments in life are the ones in which we gain a kind of freedom. Think of the ecstatic opening of the school doors on the last day before summer break or the buzz in the office when the clock strikes five on a Friday. Joy thrives on the alleviation of constraints."

### Discussion Questions

1. Prospect-refuge theory describes our attraction to environments with an ideal balance between safety and freedom. Have you ever found it difficult to maintain a balance between safety and freedom as you navigate life with a chronic illness?
2. What are some of your favorite "wild" places to visit? How can you make spending more time in wild environments a priority?

### Further Reading

#### 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design

<https://www.terrabinbrightgreen.com/reports/14-patterns/>

**Urban Jungle: Living and Styling with Plants** by Igor Josifovic and Judith de Graaff, available on Amazon

**'Forest Bathing' is Great for Your Health. Here's How to Do It** by Qing Li

<http://time.com/5259602/japanese-forest-bathing/>



# 4/HARMONY

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## BALANCE, SYMMETRY, AND FLOW

"Order isn't dull and staid. It is a tangible manifestation of a vibrant harmony, of disparate parts working in concert to sustain the graceful balance of life."

### Discussion Questions

1. Take a look around the main living area you spend time in. Where could you easily create more symmetry?
2. Runners often talk about experiencing "flow," as do writers and other creatives. Can you think of a time that you felt a sense of flow? What do you think contributed to that feeling?

### Further Reading

#### **Gee's Bend Quiltmakers**

<http://www.soulsgrowndeeper.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers>

#### **50 Amazing Examples of Knolling Photography**

<https://theultralinx.com/2013/09/50-amazing-examples-knolling-photography/>

#### **Feng Shui That Makes Sense: Easy Ways to Create a Home That FEELS as**

**Good as it Looks** by Cathleen McCandless

available on Amazon



# 5/PLAY

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## CIRCLES, SPHERES, AND BUBBLY FORMS

"A squiggly canopy here, a curvy mural there. A porthole window here, a pom-pom there. Circle by circle, curve by curve, we can round the edges and break out of the rigid frame of our world."

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you hold space for play in your life? How do you think making time regularly for recreational sports, board games or a fun hobby affects your health?
2. What are some simple ways you can incorporate curves and round shapes into your home or office?

### Further Reading

**Michael Graves: Design for Life** by Ian Volner  
available on Amazon

**How Googly Eyes Became an Essential Part of Crafts** by Alexxa Gotthardt  
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-googly-eyes-essential-crafts>

**The 3,500-Year-Old Rubber Ball That Changed Sports Forever** by  
Christopher Klein  
<https://www.history.com/news/the-3500-year-old-rubber-ball-that-changed-sports-forever>



# 6/SURPRISE

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## CONTRAST AND WHIMSY

"Joy has a way of showing up when we least expect it. As we move through the stream of daily life, tiny moments can capture our attention and turn our thoughts in a joyful direction. These moments can be especially powerful in times of stress or sadness."

## Discussion Questions

1. The Japanese practice **kintsugi**, or "golden joinery," in which they repair cracked pottery with gold or silver. Many people transform surgery scars with beautiful tattoos. Colorful wheel covers are now available for wheelchairs. What are some ways that you can transform your life with chronic illness to create something beautiful?
2. Surprise is about disrupting expectations. Unique prosthetics challenge the common belief that a disability is a disadvantage. What are some ways that you've surprised yourself or others and disrupted stereotypes about chronic illness?

## Further Reading

**Yarn Bombing: The Art of Crochet and Knit Graffiti** by Mandy Moore and Leanne Prain, available on Amazon

**Kintsugi: The Art of Precious Scars** by Stefano Carnazzi

<https://www.lifegate.com/people/lifestyle/kintsugi>

**'Reclaiming Their Beauty': Tattoo Artist Inks Exquisite Flowers Over Mastectomy Scars** by Richard Knox

<https://www.wbur.org/commonhealth/2017/03/03/mastectomy-scars-tattoos-david-allen>



# 7/TRANSCENDENCE

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## ELEVATION AND LIGHTNESS

"Certainly the feeling of transcendence we find in a loft or on a balcony isn't the same as the one we find at the top of a skyscraper. Most likely, these experiences lie along a continuum, with the breathtaking feeling of flying or summiting a mountain at one end and the gentle elevation of a staircase on the other. Yet while the intensity of the feeling varies, experiences all along the spectrum can help to evoke a joyous shift in perspective, raising us up above the plane and scale of our everyday existence."

## Discussion Questions

1. Metaphors for health and vibrancy have an upward quality ("the peak of health," "being in top shape"). Metaphors for sickness, on the other hand, often suggest downward movement ("falling ill," "coming down with a cold"). Think about the way you talk about your health. Do you notice any references to upward or downward movement that suggest you measure your wellness on a vertical scale?
2. Can you remember the last time you were in a treehouse? Is there a treehouse or other unique place nearby that would allow you to get above the ground?

## Further Reading

**Five Ways Mountains Can Help You Lead a Happier, Healthier and Longer Life** by Abigail Wise

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/health-benefits-of-mountains\\_n\\_5678629](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/health-benefits-of-mountains_n_5678629)

**The Cloud Collector's Handbook** by Gavin Pretor-Pinney

available on Amazon

**Head in the Clouds: 8 Spectacular Treehouses from Around the World** by Harriet Verney

<https://www.cnn.com/style/article/spectacular-treehouses-from-around-the-world/index.html>



# 8/MAGIC

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## INVISIBLE FORCES AND ILLUSIONS

"Magic can be captivating, sparkling, and sublime. But what makes it so compelling is that it ruptures the membrane between possible and impossible, igniting our curiosity about the world we live in. 'Wonder' is a marvelous word to describe our response to magic because it is both a noun and a verb. When we feel wonder (noun), it prompts us to wonder (verb) and then to go in search of an answer. It pulls us forward into learning and exploration."

### Discussion Questions

1. The ancient Egyptians are known for their "magical makeup," which may have inadvertently protected them from infection. Many people with chronic invisible illnesses perform "magic" with makeup to hide their conditions. What are some ways you've tried to hide your chronic illness in the past? How do you think this changed others' perceptions of you? What about your perception of yourself?

2. Magical thinking, especially in the form of faith in a higher being, can boost our optimism about the future as well as our resilience and longevity. How has your faith or spirituality affected the way you cope with chronic illness?

### Further Reading

**The 7 Laws of Magical Thinking: How Irrational Beliefs Keep Us Happy, Healthy, and Sane** by Matthew Hutson

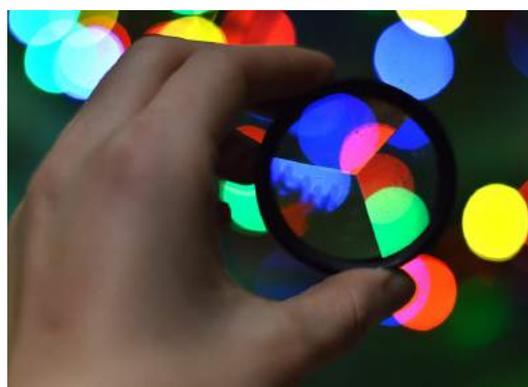
available on Amazon

**Shedding Light on Mysterious Synchronized Fireflies** by Devin Powell

<https://www.insidescience.org/news/shedding-light-mysterious-synchronized-fireflies>

**The Elusive 'Hidden People' of Iceland** by Laura Studarus

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20181217-the-elusive-hidden-people-of-iceland>



# 9/CELEBRATION

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## SYNCHRONY, SPARKLE, AND BURSTING SHAPES

"Celebrations mark the pinnacles of joy in our lives. We celebrate marriages and partnerships, victories and harvests, growth and new beginnings. At these moments, our joy seems to overflow, and we have an irresistible urge to bring others together to join in our delight."

### Discussion Questions

1. Try to remember the most joyful celebration you've experienced. What was different about this celebration that made it so joyful?
2. Is there a community you're part of or have been a part of in the past that has allowed you to celebrate and share joy with others? How did that experience affect your relationships with others in that community?

### Further Reading

**Around the World in 500 Festivals** by Steve Davey  
available on Amazon

**The Glamorous and Gruesome History of The Masquerade Ball** by All That's Interesting

<https://allthatsinteresting.com/masquerade-ball-history>

**Why India Celebrates Holi: The Legends Behind the Festival of Color**  
by Manveena Suri

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/01/asia/india-holi-explainer-intl/index.html>



# 10/RENEWAL

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## BLOSSOMING, EXPANSION, AND CURVES

"We dream of a durable kind of happiness, a state of bliss that, once found, has the constancy of granite. And while there are many things we can do to create a reservoir of joy that helps us amplify the highs and buffer the lows of everyday life, sometimes we have to accept that joy moves through our lives in an unpredictable way."

### Discussion Questions

1. The Japanese use the phrase **mono no aware**, which loosely translates to "the gentle sadness of things," to describe a feeling of pleasure accompanied by an awareness of its impermanence. When have you experienced **mono no aware**?
2. Does the realization that joy has an evolutionary purpose change the way you experience it?

### Further Reading

**How Flowers Changed The World** by Loren Eiseley

<http://2010yeagleyenglish.pbworks.com/f/How+Flowers+Changed+the+World.pdf>

**Japan's 72 Microseasons** by Laura Lytwyn

<https://thecreativeadventurer.com/blog/japans-72-microseasons>

**Eva Zeisel: Life, Design, and Beauty** by Pat Moore and Pirco Wolfframm  
available on Amazon



# MORE JOYFUL READING

If you enjoyed this book, here are a few more books you might like:

**Joy Is My Jam** by Holly Mutlu

**Inner Engineering: A Yogi's Guide to Joy** by Sadhguru

**Defiant Joy: Taking Hold of Hope, Beauty, and Life in a Hurting World** by Stasi Eldredge

**Joy: 100 Poems** by Christian Wiman

**The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World** by Dalai Lama

**Bounce: Overcoming Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy** by Cassandra Gaisford

**Chief Joy Officer: How Great Leaders Elevate Human Energy and Eliminate Fear** by Richard Sheridan



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