



# Be Brave. Make Space.



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Hi! I'm Coach Margie  
I'm glad you're reading the Brave Space newsletter. My newsletter is written to share information and support.



## Upcoming Events

**January 1-31:** Follow me on Facebook, IG, and/or LinkedIn for daily video tips and benefits for navigating your Dry January. Links below for my social accounts.

**February 1-29:** Sober Curious Small Group. A separate email coming this week!

**Q1 2024:** Setting Values-Based Boundaries. Details are coming soon!

## How to choose who you want to be and the life you want to live.

Let's begin with a basic reality of life: We are all products of our upbringing and the culture in which we grow up. We didn't get to choose our parents, siblings, extended families, where we lived, where we went to school, the activities we participated in, or the conditions of our early lives. Our upbringing became the universe that enveloped us from birth. Every value, attitude, belief, emotion, behavior, and way of interacting that was a part of our upbringings was absorbed into our subconscious.

- Acknowledging the aspects of your upbringing and culture that had an unhealthy impact on who you have become (this may be a difficult step because some of these unhealthy influences may be people or institutions toward whom you feel a deep connection and affection).
- Sitting with the emotions that have dominated your life, the general direction of those emotions (negative or positive), and the specific emotions that shape your daily existence.
- Identifying the people who were most influential in your early life, whether to your benefit or detriment.

You can think of culture as the attitudes and norms of a particular social group. Usually, we think our culture is defined by popular media and large institutions that shape our lives. For example, religion, politics, and education all surrounded us in our early lives. These bigger forces certainly have a significant impact on who we become, because we are social beings with a strong need to feel part of a group. We naturally accept the cultural messages that we hear most often.

**At the same time, more “micro” cultures also influence the way we view ourselves and our world, including our family culture, as well as sports, arts, hobbies, internet-related activities (e.g., texting, social media, online games), as well as friendships, peers, and adult groups with whom we are regularly in contact.** All of these smaller cultural forces shape us in subtle, yet indelible, ways.

Healthy influences from our upbringing and culture contribute to healthy personal development. Unfortunately, neither our upbringing nor the culture within which we were raised are entirely free of toxins. The Internet in particular provides unhealthy messages about wealth, success, celebrity, power, status, consumption, and beauty.

Repetitive exposure to these unhealthy messages may lead us to adopt values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and ways of interacting with others that are unhealthy and interfere with our happiness, relationships, and the pursuit of our goals.

These obstacles can lead to a wide range of personal challenges. These difficulties can include low self-esteem, perfectionism, fear of failure, and self-criticism. Or they can include serious issues, such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, that can significantly impair our well-being, functioning, and relationships.

This is enough to make one think that how we turn out is like a roll of the dice. However, **being a victim of our circumstances early in our lives doesn't mean that we have to be a victim all our**

### Step #3: Challenge Your Past

As noted earlier, when young, you accepted many values, attitudes, beliefs, and ways of behaving and interacting blindly. Because you were a child, you accepted whatever you saw and heard without considering whether they were right for you. In Step #3, you challenge what had been your conventional wisdom in your life about who you are and how the world works.

In doing so, you examine how your upbringing and culture growing up influenced you. **Were the messages that you absorbed from them and became instilled in you as values, attitudes, emotions, etc. healthy or otherwise?** The third step is important because it brings to your conscious awareness, perhaps for the first time in your life, many aspects of who you have become that had previously existed only in the shadowy corners of your subconscious. **Allowing beliefs, thoughts, and emotions to rise, allows those unfamiliar, yet impactful, parts of you to become tangible, understandable, and less scary.**

### Step #4: Identify Your Present and Future

The first three steps in this journey into the subconscious give you the knowledge and understanding of who you are and how you became who you are. This alone can have a profound effect on how you perceive yourself and your ability to give yourself compassion, grace, and forgiveness. These are ways that prepare you to let go of your past and embrace the present and future you know you want.

**At the same time, you can't put the past behind you until you have some clarity on what future you want in front of you.** As a result, you must now consider who you want to be and the life you want to lead. Ask yourself:

1. What kind of person do I want to be?
2. What values, attitudes, and beliefs do I want to consciously embrace?
3. How do I want to behave and interact with others moving forward?
4. What emotions do I want to dominate my life? What's my emotional goal?
5. What educational and career paths do

lives. At some point, as early as in our teens, but more likely in our 20s (though it's never too late), we have the opportunity to reject our perceived 'lot in life' and decide for ourselves who we want to be and how we want to think, feel, behave, and interact with others.

My micro-culture gave me unhealthy messages about my body image, and my worth as a female, as well as which groups I fit into and which groups I didn't. By the time I got to my teens, I had low self-esteem and low self-worth. I also learned that drinking alcohol would conveniently numb these hurtful feelings.

I've since realized that alcohol holds no benefits for me whatsoever, and now I'm on my personal journey to determine who I am and who I want to be.

This week I want to give you five steps that I'm using to let go of "victim thinking" and decide how I want to live out the rest of my life.

### Step #1: Make a Commitment to Deliberate Choices

The way we think, feel, behave, and interact has been deeply ingrained from years of our upbringing and culture, our natural reaction to current life situations will be driven by those early forces. **To resist these involuntary influences, use the "3 Cs" (consistent conscious commitment) which involves making a deliberate choice about the direction you take your life when presented with "forks in the road."** One fork would be the road you've been on driven by who you were from your early life dictated by your upbringing and culture. Another fork would be the road you want to be on driven by who you are now, who you want to be in the future, and then choosing the "good" road over the "bad" road.

### Step #2: Understand the Forces in Your Upbringing and Culture

The next step in leaving behind our victimhood involves **closely examining our upbringing and culture.** This process involves:

- Explore all of the forces that shaped

you want to follow?

6. What sorts of people do I want to have in my life?

### Step #5: Pursue the New You

This final step is where "the rubber meets the road." In other words, as with any journey, you must move forward to get where you want to go.

The challenge is that all the forces of your upbringing and culture growing up take hold in a powerful way. The values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, behaviors, and ways of interacting that led you to this point will be reluctant to relinquish control over you.

Thankfully, you now have a toolbox of tactics for releasing them. First, **you have the knowledge, insights, and understanding about who you are and, most importantly, why you are who you are.** This deep awareness of "what makes you tick" helps you reduce the power of the old and unconscious forces to a resistible level. Second, you possess a pre-frontal cortex, which gives you the ability to consider risks and rewards, short and long-term consequences, and, to make deliberate choices about how you want to think, the emotions you want to experience, the way you choose to behave, and how you want to interact with others.

From this point, you can go back to Step #1 and make new, deliberate choices on a moment-to-moment basis about who you want to be, and how you want to act and react to the world around you. OK, Step #5 is the most difficult because the "old you" will want to cling to the familiarity of who you were. But every time you take the "good road," it gets easier because positive change is self-reinforcing; you feel good, and good things usually happen.

With each step forward, you break your old patterns, create positive momentum, and steadily redirect yourself and your life in a healthier direction of your choosing. And then one day, you notice that you didn't have to choose to take the good road—you just did. At that point, you will know that you have shed the old and unhealthy

your life.

- Identifying the strongest forces in your early years.
- Recognizing and appreciating the aspects of your upbringing and culture that had a healthy impact on who you have become.

aspects of who you were from your upbringing and culture and embraced the new and healthy aspects of who you have chosen to be.



*Margie*



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Brave Space Coaching | 6150 DANA CHERYL LN, BARTLETT, TN 38135

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