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THE
DARK SIDE
OF THE LIGHT
CHASERS

Reclaiming your power, creativity,
brilliance, and dreams

DEBBIE FORD



“In this profound book, Debbie Ford systematically outlines the steps to wholeness and transformation.”

—Deepak Chopra

UPDATED EDITION WITH
A NEW INTRODUCTION

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“I have now come to understand the extraordinary importance of leading an integral life. That is, of allowing myself to first notice, then to blend, all the aspects of who I am—those that I and others called ‘positive’ and those that I and others have called ‘negative’—into a grander Whole.

”Through this process I have made friends with myself at last. But, oh, how long it took to get there! And how much shorter the process would have been had I been exposed to the deep insights and the wonderful wisdom in this book.

“Read this book carefully. Read it once, and read it once again. Then read it a third time for good measure. I dare you.”

—From the foreword by Neale Donald Walsch, author of *Conversations with God*

“The path to enlightenment includes not only the search for the divine but also the total acceptance of the shadow self. In this profound book, Debbie Ford systematically outlines the steps to wholeness and transformation.”

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—John Welwood,
author of *Love and Awakening*

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THE DARK SIDE OF
THE LIGHT CHASERS

RECLAIMING YOUR
POWER, CREATIVITY,
BRILLIANCE, AND DREAMS

DEBBIE FORD

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This book is dedicated to

my beautiful mother, Sheila Fuerst.

Thank you for giving me the gift of life and for being my mom.

INTRODUCTION

More than twelve years ago, I sat down to write my first book, *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*. At the time I had no idea how it would be received or if it would even be published. But because of my personal transformation, which was both radical and heart-opening, and the urging of my sister Arielle, I felt a deep longing to put down into words the wisdom and the process that had finally changed my life. I had suffered for so many years trying to be a better person. I wanted to walk tall, believe in myself, have the courage to ask for what I wanted and needed, and live a life that mattered. I wanted to wake up in the morning with a smile on my face and know that I was loved and that I belonged. I was desperate to feel worthy and I was hungry for the opportunity to live my fullest potential.

The ache inside me was more than I could bear until the day I met my real self, my whole self, my authentic self. I was shocked at the time because I thought the self that would give me everything I wanted would be a perfect new me, a rendition of me that would come in the middle of the night replacing the me that I knew and I loathed. I fantasized about the me that I wanted to be but I never truly believed that I would turn into her. Still, my desire to love who I was on every level led me to search through every form of self-help and psychology that I could find at the time. No matter how many days passed or how many tears I cried, I never gave up my dream of being someone better than I knew myself to be, even though I truly had no idea how I would find my magnificent self.

Then one day, I saw a glimmer of the self I was looking for and had the startling realization that what I was looking for already existed inside me. The day I found my true magnificence I was confused and surprised, because it didn't actually come from getting rid of the self that I knew. It didn't come from eliminating parts of myself or burying them deep within my consciousness. In fact, it came in the most unlikely place imaginable. The self of my dreams came the day that I found out that there was gold hidden in my darkness, that there was light hiding in my bad behavior, and that there was power hidden in the traumas of my past.

It was a very holy day—a day I will never forget—when I understood that my job was not to get rid of all that I perceived to be wrong or bad about myself and that, in fact, the opposite was true. It was my job to take my most human self and transform her into my most extraordinary self. It was the

moment of falling deeply in love with my flawed self that I returned to being a whole, happy, silly, loving, passionate, and incredibly worthy woman. It was only here, holding my human self in one hand and my divine self in the other, that I experienced a life beyond my wildest dreams. It was here that I knew finally what true love really felt like, not a love that requires another human being but instead a love that can only be found by having a loving, trusting, and respectful relationship with oneself. It is a love without conditions, a love that holds no regrets or resentments. It is a nonjudgmental love that offers compassion rather than critical thought and kindness and care rather than self-loathing and internal abuse.

The path to the love that I discovered, the process that I went through, is what I offer to you in this book. In writing down the process and doing the work again myself, I experienced an alternative reality. I realized that in every moment of my unhappiness, I had been looking for what was wrong instead of what was right. I had been looking from fear and judgment rather than love and openheartedness. I had been looking through my punitive programming instead of my compassionate heart. While writing, I found the courage to reclaim my vulnerability, my unique gifts, and my deep desire to help heal humankind. Since the first publication of *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*, which laid the foundation for all the work that I've brought into the world, I've had the tremendous honor and thrill of guiding tens of thousands of people from around the world through this journey, and I can only tell you after teaching this work for more than a decade that there is no downside for those who choose this path. When you realize that what you are made of is pure love, your heart will open and you will make peace with yourself and others. When you see the value of each and every aspect of your personality, you never see yourself or others in the same way and you will be thrilled to be who you have the opportunity to be in this lifetime. It is a testimony to the power of this work that it is used in universities and other teaching institutions around the world, that it is given out by therapists, coaches, and other mental health professionals, and that it is passed on by those who read it. This book has sold hundreds of thousands of copies and has been translated into nineteen languages because the process works. This journey has worked for me and it will work for you. You can trust in this process. It is not to be feared but to be basked in, delighted in, excited about.

When you understand and embrace all of who you are, all those around you benefit. It is the gift that keeps on giving because people who are in your presence will feel better about themselves. Your children, your sisters, your brothers, your friends will open up and want to know what you know because—whether or not they acknowledge it yet—everyone is looking to return to

wholeness. Everyone is looking to feel good about who they are. Everyone wants to feel authentically valuable. This is what is available to you in this book and this is what you can expect by doing the exercises in each chapter.

It is not the easy path to love what we have hated, to love what we have feared, to love what has haunted or hurt us. It often seems easier to hold on to the pain of the past rather than the healing of this moment. But I promise you it is not easier. The future we deeply desire can only be ours if we are willing to complete the pain of our past. It is only by not just accepting but *embracing* the past that we are delivered a future unlike the past we have lived. We evolve into the self that we yearn to be by learning to embrace all that we are and all that we have experienced no matter how difficult it has been. When we understand that each and every aspect of our humanity is imperative to feel whole, we take the evolutionary leap into self-love and living our most authentic life. It is in this vulnerable place that authenticity is natural. It is on this path of divine truth that we are confident that we will have what we want and want what we have. It is in this place of truth that we emerge from any darkness as a greater, more impassioned expression of ourselves.

Triumph over our darkest feelings and our most judgmental selves gives us an internal strength that is priceless. It cannot be bought or inherited. It cannot be accessed in any other way. There is no shortcut. It is the award that we win for traveling through the darkness of our own internal prejudice into the light of unconditional self-love. It is the golden prize that is handed out to those who are courageous enough to embrace both their humanity and their divinity. It is an award that you deserve to win.

So take a deep breath and give yourself permission to transform into the greatest expression of you. You deserve it; it is your birthright to live a fully expressed life. All the love and tools you need are waiting for you when you commit to walking through the darkness into the light of your most magnificent self.

—Debbie Ford
California, 2010

FOREWORD

I did not feel good about myself as a kid. In fact, there were times when I really hated being me. I thought I was the only one in the world who was so inept, so unable to make friends, and so ridiculed by the boyhood fraternity which I desperately—and fruitlessly—sought to join.

Not much changed when I became a young adult. Oh, I thought I was going to strike out on a new course. I even moved to a new city, where nobody knew me. Where no one would know about my childhood tendency to brag a lot as a compensation for my lack of self-regard. No one would have seen what the adults of my childhood called my “flightiness.” And no one would know about my habit of “coming on too strong,” filling the room with my presence to the point where no one else felt they had any space in which to show up. My social ineptitudes would never be discovered.

Well, I found that moving didn’t help. I had taken myself with me.

Then one day I found myself in a personal growth retreat presented by the staff development department where I was employed. The retreat facilitator said something I will never forget.

“All of your so-called faults, all the things which you don’t like about yourself are your greatest assets,” she said. “They are simply overamplified. The volume has been turned up a bit too much, that’s all. Just turn down the volume a little. Soon, you—and everyone else—will see your weaknesses as your strengths, your ‘negatives’ as your ‘positives.’ They will become wonderful tools, ready to work for you rather than against you. All you have to do is learn to call on these personality traits in amounts that are appropriate to the moment. Judge how much of your wonderful qualities are needed, and don’t give any more than that.”

I felt as if I’d been struck by lightning. I’d never heard anything like this before. Still, I knew instinctively that it was truth. My bragging was nothing more than overamplified confidence. What people called “flighty” or “foolhardy” in my youth was nothing more than spontaneity and positive thinking, once again overamped. And my coming on so strong was just my leadership ability, my verbal dexterity, and my willingness to step to the line—all three notches too high.

I realized then that all of these aspects of my being were qualities for which I had also been praised at one time or another. No wonder I had been confused!

It was only then, when I looked at my “shadow side,” and I saw clearly why others sometimes called these my “negative” behaviors, that I also saw the gift in each of them. All I had to do was use those behaviors differently. Not repress them. Not disown them. Simply use them differently.

I have now come to understand the extraordinary importance of leading an integral life. That is, of allowing myself to first notice, then to blend, all the aspects of who I am—those that I and others have called “positive” and those that I and others have called “negative”—into a grander Whole.

Through this process I have made friends with myself at last. But, oh, how long it took to get there! And how much shorter the process would have been had I been exposed to the deep insights and the wonderful wisdom in this book by Debbie Ford.

Read this book carefully. Read it once, and read it once again. Then read it a third time for good measure. And do the exercises it suggests. I dare you.

Double dare you.

But neither read the book nor do the exercises if you don’t want your life to change. Put the book down right now. Stick it on the top shelf of your bookcase, where you’ll never reach again. Or give it to a friend. Because it will very likely be impossible to experience this book without also experiencing shifts in your life.

I believe in living a life of utter visibility. That means complete transparency. Nothing hidden, nothing denied. Not even the part of myself that I didn’t want to look at, much less acknowledge. If you agree with me that visibility is the key to authenticity, and that authenticity is the doorway to your True Self, you will thank Debbie Ford from the depth of your being for this book. For it will lead you right to that doorway, beyond which is found lasting joy, inner peace, and a place of self-love so vast, you will at last find the room to unconditionally love others.

And once that cycle begins, you will change not only your life, you will truly begin to change the world.

Neale Donald Walsch
Ashland, Oregon
March 1998

CHAPTER 1

WORLD WITHOUT, WORLD WITHIN

Most of us set out on the path to personal growth because at some point the burden of our pain becomes too much to bear. *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers* is about unmasking that aspect of ourselves which destroys our relationships, kills our spirit, and keeps us from fulfilling our dreams. It is what the psychologist Carl Jung called the shadow. It contains all the parts of ourselves that we have tried to hide or deny. It contains those dark aspects that we believe are not acceptable to our family, friends, and most importantly, ourselves. The dark side is stuffed deeply within our consciousness, hidden from ourselves and others. The message we get from this hidden place is simple: there is something wrong with me. I'm not okay. I'm not lovable. I'm not deserving. I'm not worthy.

Many of us believe these messages. We believe that if we look closely enough at what lies deep within us, we will find something horrible. We resist looking long and hard for fear of discovering someone we can't live with. We fear ourselves. We fear every thought and feeling we have ever repressed. Many of us are so disconnected from this fear we can only see it by reflection. We project it onto the world, onto our families and friends, and onto strangers. Our fear is so deep that the only way we can deal with it is either to hide or deny it. We become great imposters who fool ourselves and others. We become so good at this we actually forget that we are wearing masks to hide our authentic selves. We believe we are the persons we see in the mirror. We believe we are our bodies and our minds. Even after years of failed relationships, careers, diets, and dreams, we continue to suppress these disturbing internal messages. We tell ourselves we're okay and that things will get better. We put blinders over our eyes and plugs in our ears to keep the internal stories we create alive. I'm not okay. I'm not lovable. I'm not deserving. I'm not worthy.

Instead of trying to suppress our shadows, we need to unconceal, own and embrace the very things we are most afraid of facing. By "own," I mean *acknowledge* that a quality belongs to you. "It is the shadow that holds the clues," says the spiritual teacher and author Lazaris. "The shadow also holds

the secret of change, change that can affect you on a cellular level, change that can affect your very DNA.” Our shadows hold the essence of who we are. They hold our most treasured gifts. By facing these aspects of ourselves, we become free to experience our glorious totality: the good and the bad, the dark and the light. It is by embracing all of who we are that we earn the freedom to choose what we do in this world. As long as we keep hiding, masquerading, and projecting what is inside us, we have no freedom to be and no freedom to choose.

Our shadows exist to teach us, guide us, and give us the blessing of our entire selves. They are resources for us to expose and explore. The feelings that we have suppressed are desperate to be integrated into ourselves. They are only harmful when they are repressed : then they can pop up at the least opportune times. Their sneak attacks will handicap you in the areas of your life that mean the most.

Your life will be transformed when you make peace with your shadow. The caterpillar will become a breathtakingly beautiful butterfly. You will no longer have to pretend to be someone you’re not. You will no longer have to prove you’re good enough. When you embrace your shadow you will no longer have to live in fear. Find the gifts of your shadow and you will finally revel in all the glory of your true self. Then you will have the freedom to create the life you have always desired.

Every human being is born with a healthy emotional system. We love and accept ourselves when we are born. We don’t make judgments about which parts of ourselves are good and which parts are bad. We dwell in the fullness of our being, living in the moment, and expressing ourselves freely. As we grow older, we begin to learn from the people around us. They tell us how to act, when to eat, when to sleep, and we begin to make distinctions. We learn which behaviors bring us acceptance and which bring us rejection. We learn if we get a prompt response or if our cries go unanswered. We learn to trust the people around us or to fear the people around us. We learn consistency or inconsistency. We learn which qualities are acceptable in our environment and which are not. All of this distracts us from living in the moment and keeps us from expressing ourselves freely.

We need to revisit the experience of our innocence that allows us to accept all of who we are at every moment. This is where we need to be in order to have a healthy, happy, complete human existence. This is the path. In Neale Donald Walsch’s book *Conversations with God*, God says:

Perfect love is to feeling what perfect white is to color. Many think that white is the absence of color. It is not. It is the inclusion of all color. White is every other color that exists combined. So, too, is love not the

absence of emotion (hatred, anger, lust, jealousy, coyness), but the summation of all feeling ? It is the sum total. The aggregate amount. The everything.

Love is inclusive: it accepts the full range of human emotion—the emotions we hide, the emotions we fear. Jung once said, “I’d rather be whole than good.” How many of us have sold ourselves out in order to be good, to be liked, to be accepted?

Most of us were raised to believe that people have good qualities and bad qualities. And in order to be accepted we had to get rid of our bad qualities, or at least hide them. This way of thinking happens when we begin to individuate, as we distinguish our fingers from the slats of our crib, and distinguish ourselves from our parents. But as we get older we realize an even greater truth—that spiritually we are all interconnected. We are all part of each other. From this point of view we need to ask whether there really are good parts and bad parts of us. Or are all parts necessary to make a whole? Because how can we know good without knowing bad? How can we know love without knowing hate? How can we know courage without knowing fear?

This holographic model of the universe provides us with a revolutionary view of the connection between the inner and the outer world. According to this theory, every piece of the universe, no matter how we slice it, contains the intelligence of the whole. We, as individual beings, are not isolated and random. Each of us is a microcosm that reflects and contains the macrocosm. “If this is true,” says consciousness researcher Stanislav Grof, “then we each hold the potential for having direct and immediate experiential access to virtually every aspect of the universe, extending our capacities well beyond the reach of our senses.” We all contain the imprint of the entire universe within ourselves. As Deepak Chopra puts it, “We are not in the world, but the world is within us.” Each of us possess every existing human quality. There is nothing we can see or conceive that we are not, and the purpose of our journey is to restore ourselves to this wholeness.

The saintly and the cynical, the divine and the diabolical, the courageous and the cowardly: all these aspects lie dormant in us and will act out if they are not recognized and integrated into our psyches. Many of us are frightened of the light as well as the dark. Many of us are frightened to look within ourselves, and fear has us put up walls so thick we no longer remember who we really are.