

THE REEL FOUNDATIONS™ PROGRAM

Instruction & Reference Manual



by Lisa Elin, Cinema Therapy Mentor



This instruction and reference manual coordinates with your companion Reel Foundations™ Program materials, including the workbook, assessment, audios, and private online tools.

This program and its related materials are only to offer information to help you on your quest for well-being. It represents the opinion of the author/publisher, and is not intended to provide counseling services of any kind, or to diagnose, prevent, cure, or treat any disease or condition.

If you need expert advice at any time, please consult a qualified mental health professional before proceeding.

The Reel Foundations™ Program, First Edition
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*Tools & programs for building a strong,
secure, successful life using movies.*

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Introduction

It's my deep belief that no matter what's happened in our history, stability and happiness are attainable. We just need awareness of certain strengths, the willingness to apply them, some courage and fortitude, and a model.

That first sentence is a bold one! I assure you I harbor no illusions as to the dark levels to which human behavior can sink. But I can also assure you that this need not hold sway over your future. We can overcome, and movies can help us do it.

I'm honored that you have chosen to include me in your quest for well-being, and it is my sincere hope and belief that this approach will serve you as well as it has me. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions, requests, or feedback. Life is an interesting journey; we're all in this together, and I'm proud to be walking the path with you!

Lisa

Triumph: It's all in the stance.

Stance is the manner in which we stand inside our own feet. It's a way of describing the level of stability and composure with which we engage Life – a way of conceptualizing our position in relation to the forces around us.



Stance is the attitudinal energy we bring to nurturing a condition, resolving a dilemma, wielding a tool, or applying a technique. It is the way we carry ourselves in this world, and what determines our level of success.

Like its cousin Experience, stance is something that can only be cultivated from within; it involves the world, but it's an inside job. Singer/songwriter Natasha Bedingfield captured this beautifully with the phrase, “Feel the rain on your skin. No one else can feel it for you, only you can let it in.”

The Reel Foundations™ Program will teach you how to improve your stance and thereby dissolve the roadblocks to your progress. It's an agile solution that works with any “growing edge,” and best of all, you implement it through watching movies.

You can use it for:

- ❖ **Accomplishing an outcome** (such as a reinvention at midlife, healing a childhood wound, or getting through the divorce without traumatizing the children)
- ❖ **Maintaining general well being** (such as remaining sharp and robust at work, or showing up as a strong partner in your love relationship)

You can take it in:

- ❖ **Baby steps** (working one Foundation at a time, and/or watching a movie a week)
- ❖ **Long strides** (working multiple Foundations at once, and/or seeing more movies)

And you can apply it:

- ❖ **On your own** (self-study and guided exercises)
- ❖ **With a coach or counselor** (in support of professional instruction and guidance)

In many ways, the Reel Foundations™ Program is the mental/emotional companion to your physical regimen. There, you pursue wellness by measuring a finite set of indicators (BMI, cholesterol, resting heart rate, bone density, etc.), and enhance them by choosing – from an essentially infinite array of options – those activities that relate to your goals and bring you enjoyment in the process (weightlifting, dancing, tennis, golf, etc.).

Your initial motivation may be immediate (losing weight) or long-term (preventing osteoporosis) ... you can adjust the week's intensity (preparing for a marathon vs. relaxing on vacation) ... you can work out with a DVD or hire a trainer ... and just as fitness can accelerate healing after a crisis, the work involved in recovering from a crisis can result in adopting a new, healthier lifestyle. Groovy.

Similarly, the Reel Foundations™ Program presents a carefully chosen, finite set of principles (the Foundations), which you enhance by choosing – from the vast array of options – those films that support your goals and bring you enjoyment as you watch. You take it at your own pace, and for whatever reason you start, you'll benefit overall.

The Reel Foundations™ Program is a means of discerning precisely how you need to show up in the world in order to achieve the best possible outcome from the challenge at hand. It's about growing into a proven stance of being alert, equipped, prepared, and congruent.

Whether it's troubled you for three months, three years, or three decades – whatever it is you are facing, I can help you to meet it. You can do this.

The Backstory

Who Am I and Why Might You Listen to Me?

You've already gathered that my DNA is a film coil; you can tootle around the site for my taste and perspective, and you've likely reviewed my About page and credentials. We can stipulate to all that, but you might also like to know who I actually *am* before diving in.

I'm a New England girl by upbringing and heritage, specifically Boston/Brooklyn and New Hampshire; we moved around a lot (a *lot*), but always summered at our cottage on Lake Winnepesaukee, so for me, school years were merely jaunts away from home (if you've seen *Good Will Hunting* and *On Golden Pond*, you can pretty well picture it).



Life permanently transplanted my family to Houston during the theatrical run of *Blade Runner*; I went to college in San Antonio, and while my heart remains in New England, Houston's been a good fit (even though after all these years, I still gotta say it feels like the surface of the sun).

I'm the only child of a Presbyterian minister and a registered nurse, both of whom graduated from renowned institutions, were active in the Civil Rights Movement (sand in their gas tank and all that), and eventually settled into careers in academia and community mental health. (When Woody cracked jokes on *Cheers* about life "back in Hanover," Harrelson was referring to his own college days, where my father happened to be on faculty at the time – I still get a kick out of it on late-night Hallmark Channel).

I stepped into my identity with ABBA, the Eagles, Barry Manilow, Elton John, and the Bee Gees, and came of age to Journey, Loverboy, The Police, INXS, and Depeche Mode (to whom I still listen almost daily – saw them live for the first time in 2009, and upon regarding the crowd thought, "Hey, I didn't know people in their 40's like Depeche Mode, who knew? Oh, wait...") The site that housed the nightclub that defined my early adulthood is now occupied by a Williams Sonoma... and I find that to be somehow – if strangely – poetic.

I'm Libra/Gemini rising, Myers-Briggs INTP, Enneagram 5, and am a girl scout about honoring just authority and the common good (like Edward Norton's Sheldon Mopes, I

have “a fetish for ethics”); I love croquet, board games and cards, and am utterly, hopelessly, everlastingly smitten with dogs.

So that’s me.

But what about this “why listen to me” part?

It never occurred to me that anyone would want to; it actually took me by surprise. But suddenly I was being asked to speak before a wide array of groups, including mental health professionals, youth center staff and the teens they served, law enforcement officers, and parents (we’ll talk more about why in the next chapter). It was all very surreal, but one thing struck me the most, and it’s something that’s continued this twenty-some years later, long after I discontinued that work.

It’s the expression of the people who would approach me afterward, who with a certain faint crinkle in the brow belying their casual demeanor, would look me straight in the eye and ask, “How did you get *through* that? How did you do it?”

I’m not sure I ever gave a tactical answer back then (an era I call “Act 1”); whatever I said, I did my best, but have no remembrance of its having been practical. Though I definitely sensed a particular deliberateness in what I’d done, it was just a natural, instinctive way of being for me, so I couldn’t truly distinguish and put language to it.

Thus my response was probably like the old joke: “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” “Practice, practice, practice!” But seriously, and sadly, it probably resembled the stock answer that we so often hear: “You have to fight.” That answer, with all due respect to myself and others, frankly sucks. We’ll talk about why in the next section, and then I’ll provide one that’s immeasurably more useful.

Because we’d met only for that moment, I never knew what became of those early folks. But I went on to apply this instinctive approach years later with my coaching clients, supporting them in reaching their career goals while strengthening their personal lives in the process. I never discussed the “how I did it” per se, but my style definitely resonated with people and led to today’s equivalent of a six-figure coaching practice.

I later transitioned into a corporate training environment, where many of my students came to class under orders to learn a skill without which their jobs were at risk. They’d obviously been avoiding the subject (otherwise they wouldn’t need the class), and arrived filled with anxiety not only of facing the intimidating tech, but of being left behind in the workforce. In short, they were scared.

It was my goal that when they left their time with me, they would (A) have basic skills that would make them more effective immediately, (B) be able to identify, in the future, what it was they needed and where to look for it, and (C) have more confidence in themselves going forward and be better equipped to face what frightens them the next time. Again, I never discussed the “how I did it” specifically, but the strength and analytical ability it gave me I conveyed to my students, and in over 230 classes taught, my record was an aggregate 4.5 out of 5 on the evaluation item, “The instructor did an excellent job.”

It was during this time that Life provided me a second opportunity to apply my process (the era I call “Act 2”), and it succeeded for me once again. This time, I was part of a large community of people in a similar situation; others began to notice the swift progress I tended to make, and again I started getting the question: “How do you do it?”

By this time, it was clear that I was instinctively doing something that helped move things along; I learned to describe it in broad strokes, and people told me that it did, in fact, help them face their own challenges.

When Life then presented a third opportunity in the form of Act 3 (I know, good grief, right?), I again reached for my trusty process, and a third time it kept me from the abyss. And once more, almost on schedule now, the question started coming.

This thing had now worked across decades, challenges, and populations. Clearly it was something I was doing on purpose and could communicate generally. So if it worked for me at a personal level, and for people with whom I shared it at a general level... and both of these worked over time... then it must be something that could be quantified and articulated.

I resolved to find a way to “codify” it. And here we are.

Why We Struggle

When faced with any substantive life upgrade, intervention, or crisis, we’re likely to hit a barrier, and find ourselves unable to progress any further under our own steam. We’ll reach the limits of our knowledge and ability, and realize that if we don’t seek some advice, then things now are as good as they’re ever going to be (which may, in fact, be pretty bad).

Thus having acknowledged this sorry state of affairs, we engage an expert in the area of our challenge. Perhaps it’s a layperson who’s lived our experience (such as a fellow veteran or 12-step sponsor). Perhaps it’s a practitioner who’s been trained in our area of need (such as a gluten-free cooking instructor or physical therapist). Or maybe it’s a

professional adviser of some kind (clergy, coach, or counselor). Whatever the case, it's someone who gets where we are, and lives where we want to be.

Filled with hope, we come before this source of wisdom and ask, "How do I do it?"

We schedule the consultation; sign up for the class; book the sessions; attend the seminar; follow the protocol; complete the exercises; buy the juicer... the equipment... the device... the supplement... the software... the turnkey 12-disc DVD program complete with bonus gifts and a private Facebook group.

In the best scenario, we're a good fit for the practitioner's solution and they provide it well, we learn and do what we need to learn and do, and we're back in business. Triumph.

...Yet so often we never seem to gain any traction, despite a talented teacher and our sincere wholehearted efforts.

So we return to the source of wisdom and ask, "Why?" Or perhaps better said, WTF? (Hey, I've been there, I get it.)

At which point, all too often, we receive one of the stock answers:



- ❖ "You have to *believe in yourself* in order to lose the weight/quit smoking/get in shape/beat the disease/start the business/get the degree/make the change/[fill in the blank]."
- ❖ "You just have to *decide to do it/keep trying/don't give up*/[fill in the blank]."
- ❖ "Just *'fake it 'til you make it, act as if* – your reality will catch up automatically."
- ❖ "It won't work if you're only doing it to please someone else; you have to *want it for yourself*."
- ❖ "*Do it for those who love you, who need you to be around for them*."
- ❖ "You have to *take care of yourself*."

- ❖ “You have to *make it a priority.*”
- ❖ “You have to *commit to the change.*”
- ❖ “You have to *fight.*”

If you’ve bumped up against them, you may be sensing the truth: that although they sound meaty and inspiring, the stock answers are ultimately useless.

So we go in search of another teacher or solution. If at first you don’t succeed, right?

Still filled with hope (mostly), we come before a new source of wisdom and ask, “I’ve been doing it and really, sincerely trying. But nothing’s changing. What do I do now?”

At this point, things can actually turn circular. This diet, that supplement; this inquiry, that training; this consultant, that practitioner. Solution after solution, dollar after dollar, month after month (year after year!), and still the issue persists. Hope begins to flag.

It starts feeling like the Snoats brothers’ bumbling bank robbery in *Raising Arizona*: “This is a stickup! Everybody freeze. Everybody down on the ground.” “Well which is it young feller. You want I should freeze, or get down on the ground? That is to say, if’n I freeze, I can’t rightly drop. And if’n I drop, I’m a ‘gonna be in motion. You see, son, - “STOP!!”



I just love that movie. I was “literally roflmao” way back when that phrase would have been written in words and taken, well, literally.

All kidding aside, it’s nice to leaven the conversation with the Coen Brothers, but when we’re talking about fighting for our well-being – indeed perhaps our very physical or emotional *survival* – the insufficiency of the stock answers becomes evident.

They sound good, and they *feel* like they’re meaningful, but when you get home, and night falls and it’s dark... they fail.

They fail because they focus on *what* we need to *do*... instead of on *who* we need to *be*.

They fail because either they’re so patently self-evident as to be meaningless, or so global that they confuse an emotional process with a mental decision, or so enormous that we can’t even walk up to them.

- ❖ “You just have to eat less and move more/communicate with your partner/come up with a plan.” (*Uhh, thanks? Meaningless.*)
- ❖ “It comes down to a decision, really.” (*You know what, it’s just time. No more messing around. But no new results, because you were already doing the work. Global.*)
- ❖ “You have to *tell* people what you want.” (*I don’t know what to say. I mean really, as in words. What if they get angry at me... what if they leave? Nope, no way. Enormous.*)
- ❖ “You have to fight!” (Trifecta.)

That last one just kills me. The stock answers fail, in the final analysis, because they leave us vulnerable to feeling even more discouraged than we already were – because if we’re told to fight (which is usually the final one offered), and we give it our all, and it *still* doesn’t work, then hope can actually die. And that goes nowhere good.

I remember seeing this play out before my eyes just recently. Sitting down to lunch, I flipped on the television and found in progress a well-known, respected talk show in which a woman literally at the edge of death from anorexia nervosa sat across from one who had prevailed.

The recovered woman urged the first – and all sufferers in general – to really *get* that they’re worth living for. To devote themselves wholeheartedly to their treatment program. To think of the people who love them, and to know that recovery is absolutely possible.

When failing to sense any hope stirring in the struggling woman, she finished with an impassioned, “You have to *want* to live! You have to *fight!*”

The survivor was sincere and heartfelt, but the struggling woman cried from deep in her soul, wailing in the tranquilized manner of one literally lacking the physical strength to speak, “I don’t know how! You got better, and [a woman in the audience] got better, and I *want* to, but I don’t know what you *did*. You say to fight it, but I don’t know how to fight it. **No one says what they *did*.** I don’t know *how* to fight, I don’t know what to *do*.”

I actually hollered at the television. “Tell her what you *did*! Come on!”

The survivor genuinely wanted to help, but she didn’t, or couldn’t, respond meaningfully to the plea. Neither could the other survivor in the audience, or for that matter, the expert on the platform. They glanced at each other with a [to me infuriating] “What can you do?” expression, and all seemed at a loss.

Shortly after filming, the suffering woman succumbed.

I suspect that the people flummoxed by this woman heard, “I can’t, it’s too hard, woe is me.” I heard a resounding, “Please, please tell me literally how to act like you, think like you, so that I can place my feet in your footsteps. So that I too can get to where you are, and leave this horrible place behind me.”

This is what drives me.

It’s just deeply not okay with me that anyone genuinely seeking wholeness be consigned to what Henry David Thoreau called “a life of quiet desperation, going to the grave with the song still in them.”

We need your song. You deserve your song. Your song is your birthright.

For whatever heretofore unknown cosmic reason, I was given a life in which I learned how never to be beaten. Beaten down, sure. Sometimes for long periods, even. But never in the long view. Never for good. To date there has never been a circumstance that took me down as far as it might have, as far as it wanted to. Not one. Not ever.

Even at the age of three, it simply wasn’t okay with me that the forces working against my well-being should prevail. I was not here as fodder for *others’* cruel amusement or selfish purposes. This was *my* life, and who the hell were they to define me and dictate my possibilities? (I may have been small, but I guess I was mighty!)



It is my goal – my intent – that when we’re done with our time together, you’ll (A) have basic skills that will make you more effective immediately, (B) be able to identify, in the future, what it is you need and where to look for it, and (C) have more confidence going forward because you’ll be better able to neutralize what unnerves you the next time. And we’re going to talk about the “how I did it” with *great* specificity.

Regardless of the nature of your challenge and how long it’s been dogging you, there’s a way to break loose of it – and there ain’t no stock answer about it. This answer’s *real*.

Let’s get to it, shall we?

lisa

*To learn more about the Reel Foundations™ Program,
please visit ReelHappiness.com. See you there!*