

**NOW
WHAT**



COMPILED BY MISTILEI WRISTON

NOW WHAT?

A COMPILATION BY MISTILEI WRISTON

Now What? Protecting that sacred space after a change, decision, or life-changing event.

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Life Is in Session

by Deborah Driggs

When I began researching this chapter, I Googled "now what?" to see if anyone had written an article or a book with this title. Guess what? I found hundreds of titles: "I Am a Principal—Now What?" "I Am Widowed—Now What?" "I Bought a Computer—Now What?" I had no idea this was such a popular subject or common question.

I sat with the question for a while, and it occurred to me that it actually has a deeper meaning than I initially thought: "I am at a *crossroads*—now what?" My biggest question today is, "I am sober—now what?"

After four decades of self-medicating and abusing alcohol and then, toward the end, prescription pills, I am happy to say I am completely sober. I had made many attempts at putting the bottle down and getting sober once and for all, only to pick it up again. And each time, the problem just got worse.

In 2008 you'd better believe I asked, "Now what?" when I was in lockdown after a failed suicide attempt and complete mental breakdown. Looking back on that very scary time, I remember thinking "Now what?" or even better, "What now? Where do I go from here?" I ended up in lockdown because of a suicide attempt with pills and alcohol—only to be heavily medicated there. I thought I was in the Twilight Zone, and for the most part, I was. I had no idea what life would look like after I got out or what would become of me.

I was horribly depressed and financially struggling. Every rehab or 12-step program warns us that we could end up in jail, lockdown, or an institution—and there I was. I had strong suicidal thoughts when I was blackout drinking. The thoughts were also there when I was sober but were not as

militant. In my sober mind, I have crazy thoughts, but I do not act out like I do when drunk or blacked out.

Alcoholism is a disease of the mind and thinking. It has no filter and likes to attack me when I am alone. That is exactly what happened on November 3, 2008. I was at rock bottom (or so I thought) and did the unthinkable. I am not proud of this moment, nor do I think I am unique or have some special situation. I felt the despair of a progressive disease; it was moving forward like a runaway freight train, and I was hanging on for dear life.

What is interesting about my story is that I grew up in a dysfunctional environment with alcoholics, and I *swore* that I would never be like them. Alcoholism is a family disease that definitely got its hook in me too; I just did not know it then. The scariest fact about addiction is only 2 percent of people struggling with it will ever stay sober, and that fact is staggering, so now what?

I tell my story in the hopes of helping anyone who thinks they might be drinking too much or cannot figure out why sometimes they seem to have a good drinking night followed by a reckless three nights of blacking out and feeling sick—or finding unexplained bruises on their body. For me, drinking brought on the absolute worst anxiety-driven hangovers that eventually became unbearable (which is something I try to remember when I think I can drink normally).

So another question for me was, "I am an alcoholic—now what?"

After a lot of hard work, I have learned to practice the principles of self-care. What is self-care? It includes the following:

- Improving my gut health
- Maintaining a healthy mind
- Learning to say no

- Walking in nature
- Choosing to associate with people who feed my mental diet
- Having healthy relationships
- Having a voice
- Being of service
- Reading
- Growing
- Keeping a journal
- Writing a gratitude list
- Grounding myself
- Sitting in silence
- Being okay with where I am in life

I went to rehab again in October 2020—this time by choice—to do more work on myself. When I left with so much beautiful information after seven days, I said, "Now what?" I knew I was in a healing state, and I wanted to keep that feeling. So before I left Tennessee, where I attended the Living Centered Program, I asked my counselor what he recommended I did when I left. He had a few great suggestions, but the student in me wanted more.

After the rehab program, our group tried to meet once a week on Zoom, and we had a few successful check-ins. But those meetings faded into the abyss. So again, I asked, "Now what?"

I went to my favorite self-care spa in the desert. At the time, a few friends were doing 75 HARD, a fitness program that was all the craze in late 2020. So my 2021 New Year resolution was to start 75 HARD on January 1. I got to about day forty-two and woke up at two o'clock in the morning, riddled with anxiety and frustration. I could not sleep. I tossed and turned, then said aloud, "Stop doing other people's programs and do your own!" I got up, switched on the lights, wrote my own ninety-day program, and then I did it!

Now What?

After ninety days, I felt better, so I kept going. Today, I use these self-care principles when coaching clients or speaking. We have all the answers, but sometimes we need a guide or mentor to help us figure stuff out.

Let me share this: my ninety-day program is not for everyone. A lot of emotions came up for me. I cried more than I ever have, my sleep was rocky at first, and it was difficult to surrender and let go of everything that was not serving me after fifty-plus years.

It was uncomfortable, and that's when I knew it was working. The good news is I am okay with uncomfortable feelings today; I know they will pass. I do not have to use, change, or do anything to fix them.

I did my ninety-day program, so you might ask, "Now what?"

Today I am a sober empowerment coach. I created Deb's Den—Where Healing Begins. It's a safe, private place to recover from anything not serving you. During my program, I guide clients on self-care and *only* self-care for ninety days through a journey of removing and replacing.

Now I practice, practice, practice what I have learned, and when I forget, I have the program to remind myself. It starts with me, as a coach, walking the walk. I survived the uncomfortable feelings and got comfortable with them. When I began my self-care journey, I removed anything and everyone for six months that was not allowing me to heal. Life got crystal clear when I removed all of the following from my life:

- Dating
- Sexting
- Sex
- Social media
- Travel

- Shopping
- Drinking
- Smoking
- Junk food
- Major decisions
- Netflix (I just lost some of you, didn't I?)
- Anything that changed my thinking
- Sleeping aids or prescriptions
- Porn

It is the ultimate self-care if you can remove all those distractions from your life for at least ninety days! For those who are struggling and cannot understand why, imagine the clarity you will have when you remove and replace! As I always say, "Wellness has no destination; it is a practice."

The next time you are in the throes of a full-blown struggle and asking Now what? or What now? give yourself ninety days of self-care and then reask, "Now what?" I guarantee you will have the clearest perspective, and you may not even want what you thought you must have before.

I encourage you to remember the four-letter word HELP: healing, empowerment, love, and possibilities!

Now What?



Deborah Driggs is on a healing path (after a wildly varied and highly successful career path). She is an author, actress, and former VJ. She has been a cover girl and centerfold for *Playboy* magazine, as well as a professional dancer, US Football League cheerleader, member of the Screen Actors Guild, and top-rated insurance industry professional.

Deborah has overcome several challenges by being willing to take risks and maintaining a positive attitude. Dedicated to helping women break through negative self-talk and take on any challenge, Deborah knows the difference it can make to have a helping hand when one needs it the most.

Her response to internal struggles is, “If there is a struggle, then there is a problem, and in that problem, there is a beautiful, simple solution for complicated souls!”

Her book *Son of a Basque* is out now!

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Have you met a major goal to find yourself sliding back unexpectedly? Have you lost weight only to gain it back and are not sure what happened? Taken back a toxic ex? Just one drink turned into a trip off the wagon. Self-sabotage in other creative ways?

Or, have you learned to protect the space of self-improvement? Have you had to say goodbye to people to stay in alignment? What lessons have you learned about the importance of the people around you? When it came to it, how did you decide who and what had to go? How about when you figure out a new truth about yourself, and you are free to absolutely succeed, and get everything you want? Now What?

I found people who made progress, met goals, and maintained them have taken steps to protect this sacred space. They made the decision and said, Ok, Now What?

You have done it! You met the goal! Now what?

I set a boundary, and it's up to me to protect it, Now What?

Life happened differently than expected, NOW WHAT?

Protecting the Sacred Space After a Change, Decision, or Life-Changing Event

"It's been an honor to work alongside Mistilei. She is heart-centered and giving, bringing people together to provide a platform to have their voices heard to create change. She is a true joy to work with." JJ Villar, Author and Transformational Coach

"It is such a joy to be a part of this collaboration where all Authors bring their stories and shape all different points of view and can truly represent something for everyone! "Now What" reveals personal heartaches to gladness, stumbling to regaining your step, and to all points, beginning to end, and in between. Truth from experience". Tracy Smith, Author and Musician

"You really are the master of writing your own story." Raschell Harlingten, Author, Transformational Coach and Podcast Host

"One of my mantras is to set your soul on fire. Being part of this collaboration with Mistilei and these amazing authors sets MY soul on fire! I am forever grateful." Author and Musician, Ginine Emily

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