

**BETTER CHOICES**  
**INTRODUCTION**  
***A FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES***

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I had been pregnant with this book for many years. The gestation period seemed to go on and on and on...ad infinitum until a series of events occurred within a six week period. Finally! I started the birthing process.

The thing about labor pains is that you know something big is about to happen. And it's going to happen in a very painful way. I felt the full pain of birthing this book while watching an episode of Oprah.

Let me explain. One day it just *happened* that I was home at a time of day when the Oprah Show was airing. The television is usually turned off, but for some reason it was going full blast on that day. From the next room I heard Oprah announce the topic and guests for the day. Because I am the ultimate Oprah fan (I even mimicked her hairstyles for a few years), I plopped down on the sofa to watch for a few minutes.

The focus of the show was overweight teenagers. Counselors Yvonne and Rich Dutra St. John led the young people in a workshop to uncover the truth behind their struggles with weight. They took the teens through an exercise to show them that they are not alone, to put them in touch with their emotions, and to gain tools to help them get feelings out instead of trying to *numb them* out through food.

Yvonne and Rich were very successful in helping the students tap into a place they call the "inner balloon"—a place inside where people hide the feelings they can't express. To help this group of teenagers express their inner anger, Yvonne and Rich had them participate in an exercise where they completed the sentence, "*I'm angry that...*"

I watched painfully as one student after another experienced an emotional meltdown in front of Oprah, the counselors, their parents, and all of the television audience. By the time a young girl named Jillian had her turn, I had reached my limit. I was actually sobbing and beginning to feel a great deal of anger of my own.

"Why can't you see that it is not necessary to put these children through all this pain?" I started yelling at the television. "Yes, you help them get in touch with their feelings of anger. So what? They are aware that they are angry. Now what?" As I watched this depressing scene unfold, I wanted the counselors to show these kids a way to let go of the anger without all this drama. "What is the problem with you people?" I shouted.

The moment I screamed the question, I felt a sudden sense of calm. I knew the answer. The water finally broke in my birthing process. (It is too bad I couldn't have felt the same calm when I was in labor birthing two children. I required Demerol for that!)

It was then that a quiet voice in my head said to me, "They don't know how to help the children in that way because you are still carrying inside of you the book describing the process. The Decision Reframing Process can help them, but you have to do your part and show them how."

From that moment on, I felt the urgency to write this book and to show the world how the Decision Reframing Process™ (DRP™™, aka Balloon Process™) can transform so many lives. To quote the Prophet Jeremiah in the Christian Bible, this book, **Better Choices**, became "*like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.*"

## ***THE SOLDIERS ARE COMMITTING SUICIDE***

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Earlier during the week of the Oprah episode, the headline in the Augusta Chronicle, the local newspaper, read: “***Soldier suicide figures climb.***” I felt an early labor pain as I read about how the Army had announced that suicide rates among soldiers rose last year to the highest level in decades. The article called for more mental health professionals to sign up for the military because troops are “under tremendous and unprecedented stress.” According to the news article, the most common factors for suicides were relationship problems, legal or financial issues, and problems on the jobs.

I thought of Beverly, a retired Army Captain who had worked with our firm a few years ago. Beverly served in Afghanistan, Guatemala, and several other overseas assignments during her tour of duty. She once told me, “It’s just not the same when you come back home. You really need to have a way to shake that stuff.”

After Beverly went through the DRP™ that is offered in this book, she trained in the process and learned to help her friends who were also wounded warriors, by one definition or another. None of them have committed suicide! Currently, Beverly is in graduate school working on a mental health degree.

## ***REIGN OVER ME-THE FIRST SIGNS OF LABOR***

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A few days before reading the article in the paper about soldier suicide, I watched a rerun of the 2007 movie, **Reign Over Me**, starring Don Cheadle and Adam Sandler. The two actors play former college roommates, Alan and Charlie, who meet up again by chance on a Manhattan street corner five years after Charlie lost his family on 9/11. Charlie had been a successful dentist but he is unable to overcome the trauma of losing his family. Charlie has checked out on life. Full of guilt, grief and anger, he becomes so destructive that at one point in the movie Alan counsels his friend, “*Man, you just gotta let that shit go.*”

“He would, if he could,” I said aloud to the television. “It’s time for the book to be born.”

## ***THEY HAVEN’T LOCKED ME UP AGAIN***

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The birthing process actually started a few weeks before I saw the movie, read the article, or saw the overweight teenager episode of Oprah.

“Dr. Faye,” said the voice on the office answering machine. “I just called to say thank you for the Christmas card and to let you know that I made my one-year anniversary. They haven’t locked me up again. I’m doing just fine.”

In 2007 and 2008, my firm worked with men being released from prison through a federal grant for the reentry of serious and violent offenders.<sup>1</sup> The voice on the answering machine was that of Carl, one of the parolees. My work with Carl and the others involved taking them through the DRP™, helping them to set educational and job goals, and coaching them through the process of reentry.

The DRP™™ allowed them to release the stored negative emotions. Anger, hostility, fear, and insecurity often drove the decisions they made to commit criminal acts. This letting-go

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the Departments of Justice, Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services, the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) supported innovative reentry programs at the state and community level.

program also allowed them to handle anxiety associated with returning to the free world and trying to pick up the pieces.

The odds were against them. The recidivism rate for this population is extremely high. So when Carl (not his real name) called to say he was doing just fine after one year, I felt a great sense of satisfaction that our work had helped him to make the right kinds of choices. I was even more convinced that the world needed to be introduced to our model for helping these men to get back on track with their lives. I needed get this book written!

### ***LEARNING TO LET IT GO***

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We can not change the events of the past. What has happened has happened. It is what it is. The past has no power except that we can learn from it. We can make peace with the past and accept it.

The good news is that we are able to change *how* we feel about events from our past. When we let go of our attachments to the feelings associated with the memories from the past, they no longer have the power to influence the decisions we make in our daily lives.

This book is about helping you to know that:

1. Who you are today and the circumstances of your life are the result of all the accumulated decisions you have made right up to this very minute.
2. Every decision you make is filtered through the frame that makes up your model of the world. Your model of the world, “the story of you,” defines who you are today and helps you to make choices about how to be in the world.
3. You can change or *reframe* your model of the world by letting go of stored past negative emotions and limiting beliefs that no longer serve you.
4. Chapters 4-8 and the CD companion are tools to take you through the **Decision Reframing Process™ (DRP™™)** in a way that is safe and private so that you may let go of these stored emotions and limiting beliefs.
5. You can make better choices when you are confident in who you are and in your ability to make all your efforts successful.

### ***MEET GRANDMA MABEL***

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Each chapter begins with an amusing story that is a dialogue between Mabel and her granddaughter Sonia. The stories are metaphors that are used because they are short stories that help the reader get the main idea of the chapter before potentially getting bogged down in the details. Describing the writing of this book as giving birth is an example of using a metaphor to make a point.

In each story, think of Mabel as the voice of the coach and Sonia as the reader or student. As Sonia understands the main point from Mabel’s lesson, you will also get it!

### ***WHAT DO I NEED FROM YOU?***

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Not much, really. Simply give yourself permission to get out of your own way and keep reading!

*"We can't worry about what ain't happened yet. And we can't change what already was. What we got on our hands is today, right now. Times a wasting child, let's get started!"* —**Grandma Mabel**