

WRONG TURNS

Do we all have a purpose we have come here to fulfill? Our mission, our reason for being here, something that gives us great joy when we do it but more joy when we share it with others? Is it something that serves not just us but others as well? I believe we all do. I believe who we are, what we do, the things that give us true joy, the people we travel with, and the lives we affect are no accident.

I believe there are universal assignments for our lives— be it mother, father, sister, brother, employee, friend, writer, teacher, mechanic, lawyer, nurse, etc.—that have been mapped out for each of us since before we were born. We are born knowing, probably as children, how we should serve ourselves and the world around us. I believe each of us comes with our own unique legend. As children, our dreams of astronauts, presidents, and princesses are the echoes of our own internal guidance systems being rebooted and powered up once again. I don't believe so much in a one-way street with a predestined trail. Rather, because of the complexities of lives, our own free will, and the lessons to be learned in a lifetime, I believe instead in a global course with many roads, rivers, and runways spanning in front of us. Many of these roads—even the proverbial wrong turns—can ultimately lead us to the right destination. What happens, it seems to me, is that as adults we allow the rattling in our own heads and the strangers on the roadside to distract and derail us, sending us off course. Having traveled such a road myself, I have come to believe that if we can quiet ourselves long enough and listen to the stirrings of our souls, we will hear the whispers of our dreams once again. Then and only then, with our dreams fueling us, can we come to realize that we are our own best mechanics and to allow ourselves to be steered by our own hearts, finally following the road to our true destinations.

At first, I may have been more fortunate than most, as the unique course for my journey was whispered in my ear at an early age. I somehow knew from second grade forward that writing was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life. As I read a short story I had composed for my second grade classmates, I very clearly heard my then-eight-year-old voice say, "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life." Writing and a career in journalism became the course I steered toward. But this course was undermined when I was a senior in high school and a guidance counselor asked me how I was ever going to make money doing that. So instead of following my purpose, the need for financial security and my mother's desire to get me out of an emotionally abusive household became louder than the voice activation system whispering my dream in the background. I took a left turn at the fork in the road and headed down the business road instead.

With blinders on, I maneuvered through the thick fog of my twenties and well into my late thirties, acquiring one more raise, one more promotion, one more year of seniority accumulated toward a pension hovering on a distant road ahead. I took the same road daily for over twenty-five years as an office manager, and when the road came too familiar, I took a few other turns and made several other pit stops in the business world. But each one left me feeling like something was still missing. Ultimately, hitting forty and giving birth to my daughter, Emma, made me reassess the grueling road to money, glory, and ambition. The miles stretching ahead became too long and narrow for me, and I pulled over to the rest stop long enough to reprogram. I headed back once again to the main road, my true destination: writing, sharing my message, and helping to serve others.

But even with writing programmed in my GPS as my new destination and a resignation letter that left behind a thriving business career, I still allowed the traffic jams of practical life to take over. I let months slip by, accelerated over the speed bumps of daily life without slowing down, always promising myself that tomorrow I would wonder down the dirt road and pause

to take in the scenery and start writing again. It was sad, really, how many excuses I made up to turn up the radio of my life to silence my own inner yearning. Fear and a lifetime time of the voices of strangers and loved ones reverberated in my head, repeating the same chant: "How are you ever going to make money doing that?" Then, having once more refused to hit the brakes for myself, life in its divine wisdom decided to literally knock me off the road.

It was finally a slip and fall "accident" on the ice that left me on crutches for four months, a feather touch, that nudged me over and forced me to stop, write, and self-publish my first children's book, *Wings Up - All With A Little Help From Our Angels*.

The morning of the accident came more fiercely than most, with a thousand to-dos and even less time to do them. I distinctly remember closing the door to the house that morning and saying to myself and (unbeknownst to me) a set of universal ears, "This madness has to stop. I can't take this chaos anymore. Something has to change soon." Then, ankles turned on ice, flesh hit pavement, and bones broke—wish granted or prayer answered, whichever higher power you believe in. I was literally stopped in my tracks. No more detours allowed.

One shattered ankle, one surgery, one steel rod, and fourteen screws and bolts later I sat down (pretty much my only option now), took out the outline for *Wings Up* that I had scribbled on a random piece of paper months before, and began to "WRITE" out the true story. My story line had come to me months earlier, based on my own prayer to quiet the ramblings in my head long enough to sleep. At 4 a.m., after hours of staring at my ceiling and with nothing else seeming to work, I looked to heaven one night and asked for help turning off my engine, begging for idle followed by sleep. "Wings Up, Angels, no more thoughts. Please let me sleep," I sighed. Subsequently, or perhaps divinely, Emma began having nightmares, and I passed my new appeal on to her. "Wings Up, Emma. Ask for only good thoughts. Allow puppies, butterflies, ice cream cones, candy, and baby dolls to float in. Ask for and believe there will be no more nightmares." A wish to the Universe granted yet again. Emma began using my petition—"Wings Up"—as her atlas going forward for restful and dream-filled nights.

Now with two success stories literally under my wings, I felt even more justification that my *Wings Up* refrain was story worthy. Why not let mothers and angels unite and spread a universal message to calm and care for our young ones and ourselves. It was time to use my gift for storytelling to help other children and their moms combat their fears and calm their nerves in the dark hours of the night. And so *Wings Up*, my first children's book, took flight. Ankle casted, crutches in tow, and fears abandoned at the roadside, I signed the check and began my journey to self-publication. In the timeline of life, what literally took a year and a half to self-publish was essentially the unpacking of decades worth of "it will never be good enough, it will never make money" baggage and the rebirth of a dream to write and share lessons learned.

Months after my first print, a casually donated book floated into the hands of a woman who tracked me down at my first book event to specifically let me know that her whole family was now using my affirmation, "Wings Up," to calm themselves during the grief-stricken moments following a tragic death in their family. I was receiving even more reinforcement for my worldview that when you serve your purpose, your purpose in turn serves others. Seas part, airways clear, and the roads ahead unblock.

As I look back on the roadmap of my life that led me to writing children's books, the path looks very long and windy, but I now see with clarity that the destination, although unseen before, was always there. Every road that I traveled led to this book: a book for children and moms to know there is a higher power in those moments of fear and angst, and a book of empowerment for parents to start the spiritual engine early in their children.

So, in the end, what I ultimately believe for us all is that we just need to set our cruise controls to home, with faith and conviction in our purposes, our dreams, and ourselves. Then,

we can simply sit back, appreciate the roads we take, and enjoy the ride, as our surroundings become more familiar. It is a sweet one, especially when shared with others.



Michelle A. R. Hydeck has been called to write ever since she can remember. It was while she was reading a short story to her second grade classmates that she heard her then -eight -year- old voice say, "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life."

Michelle is the author of ABC Christmas and Wings Up-All With a Little Help From Our Angels. Her second Angel Wing Book -Wings Down- It's All About Love will be available in 2017. She lives in Milford with her daughter, Emma. Connect with Michelle at www.michellehydeck.com