



JAN DESAI'S
COMPASS ROSE

A Roadmap to an Authentic Life

Get Your Bearings and Stay on Course to the Life of Your Dreams



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The Arrow of Possibility

Mother's Day is a gift that provides a powerful opportunity for reflection and gratitude. In this week's Compass Rose, learn how as mothers and children, we are all arrows of potential, graceful proof that life wants to move from darkness to light.

Brunch. Flowers. Cards. Gifts. The drumbeat of

commercialization that surrounds most holidays has had its effect on Mother's Day too, turning what *should* be honest sentiment into a more rigid and obligatory behavior.

Yet, no matter how perfunctory it may feel, and no matter your background or situation, Mother's Day is a gift that provides a *powerful opportunity* for reflection and gratitude.

For me, it is a day that whispers of the magic and miracles that can conspire to support your greatest dreams and desires. If you are willing to surrender control and allow God, a universal presence, or whatever it is that you believe in to **bring to you what you desire most**, those miracles can happen. *Hoping isn't enough*. You must believe one hundred percent in your greatest dream. You must have the courage to know that **you deserve this miracle**. And then, most importantly, you must be willing to **totally surrender**, letting go of the "how."

That's the way I approach life now, but it wasn't always that way.

For me, "*Happy Mother's Day*" used to be a painful oxymoron. In my 20's and 30's, I **loathed** this weekend. Mother's Day was a prime opportunity to focus all of my *unresolved emotion, destructive beliefs, and unmitigated sadness and anger* on the apparent **mutiny of my reproductive organs**.

For well over a decade during my prime reproductive years, I suffered deeply and grievously at the hands of infertility. **Oh, I fought the good fight**. I was fortunate enough to be able to employ the **best** in reproductive medicine. Yet, no matter where we went or who we saw, my husband and I were *unable* to conceive.

For a couple that had constructed a life around *pushing for outcomes and working nonstop to make things happen*, this loss of control was the ultimate symbol of failure. It cut a **deep ulcerated wound** that would not heal because *I was born to be a mom*.



Most of my earliest childhood memories were helping out the moms in my small midwestern neighborhood. I was happiest looking after the children who were littler than me. I loved to snuggle them close and make them laugh. I tried my hardest to create imaginative games and entertain them for

hours. I can still recall, as if it were yesterday, my shock and **total delight** when, at the innocent age of eight, our neighbor, Mrs. Bailey, asked if I could watch her two smaller children while she walked two blocks to the beauty parlor. Imagine my shock when she returned 45 minutes later and *tucked a quarter in my hand* for being so responsible. Taking care of kids was as natural as breathing to me.



Big, happy family!

And so unfolded a life surrounded by kids. Babysitting. Swim Instructor. Campfire leader. Summer girl. Camp Counselor. Tennis instructor. Tutoring. A degree in Elementary Education. A European tour as a nanny. I relished each position and **loved each mini-munchkin** as if they were my own.

I remember with great fondness the high school and college years that I was a waitress at the local historic Inn. Families would come and stay for mini-vacations. I would engage **so authentically** with the little ones in these

families during the breakfasts, lunches, and dinners that I served, that the parents instinctively trusted me. They loved my demeanor. So much so, that complete strangers would allow me to bring their little ones home (just two blocks away) for a long Saturday or Sunday of play while mom and dad rested at the pool or took in the local sites. *(Imagine today, allowing your children to go home with a complete stranger for the day. Yes, those were very different times and I miss that innocence for sure!)*

Fast forward many years. My ex-husband and I had decided to get married. I was **so thrilled** to be able to become a mother to JenWynn, his daughter from a previous marriage. Yet, at the same time, I also threw my birth control away. We were *giddy* with anticipation. We visualized a house filled with mini me's and mini he's. Yet month after month, as my period arrived like clock-work, we were devastated.

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For those who are experiencing fertility problems, it may be one of the **most difficult** challenges that they will ever face. The sense of loss, the accusations, the stress to perform, the devastation as you watch friends easily become pregnant is all overwhelming. And in

our case, it was exacerbated because the desire to have children was stronger in me than in my ex-husband. After all, he *already* had a beautiful daughter. And, even though I felt that JenWynn was also my daughter, one whom I loved, my *ego* was still selfishly insisting that the only true way to *become* a mother was by giving birth.

It didn't matter to me that our marriage was dangerously close to imploding and the stress of infertility was the match that was barely hovering over the powder keg. I was completely invested in birthing "our" kids. I wanted nothing less than the product of our combined DNA. In the *foolishness and self-absorption* (narcissism, really) of my youth, any other situation was unacceptable.

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Over the years, *a slow awakening* was being birthed through me. Like water persistently dripping on a rock, *my self-absorption was being eroded away*. Through a gradual upward spiral of awareness, I had an illuminating moment of consciousness.

It was caused by stumbling across *Kahlil Gibran's* poem on children:

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,

Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams."



That day a new possibility was born within me. I asked myself what my true reasons were for wanting children? Was it to create a better and grander reflection of my husband and me? Or was it to be *the arrow that launches limitless potential into a world, potential that is filled with wonder and curiosity?* When you truly love someone, you have to be willing to set them free. Love must soar and roam of its own accord, or else it dies. It cannot be caged. It cannot be managed or controlled. *When you loosen your grip, you open your heart.*

And so, with my newfound ability to loosen control over “how” children could arrive in my life, a new path of possibility was born.



A proud mom with Sam and JenWynn

Two years later, our son Sam was adopted at birth. I was in the delivery room as he entered this world and took his first breath. From the moment he was placed in my arms, still wet and slippery with amniotic fluid, **he was mine**. There was no confusion in my heart or

my head. This was the child I had been waiting for my entire life. I loved him instantly. And I loved him *completely*.

The question of children was never again raised between my husband and I. However, infertility was only one of **many** problems in a relationship that was already foundering. And then the definitive door was slammed on the dream in 2001 when I required a radical hysterectomy. Even though I had arrived at a place of greater peace, *I still cried for the loss of my oldest, most poignant dream*. When I was done, I slammed the door tightly shut on that dream.

Eleven years ago, I met my soul mate who became my husband. Panache is the embodiment of *limitless possibilities*. He has built a career around reminding a planet that in God’s eyes, **nothing is impossible**. If we wanted children, we would pursue our dream together, in love and respect, with an open heart.

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I will never forget the painful soliloquy I delivered to him on infertility. If we wanted to pursue adoption or surrogacy he needed to be **prepared** to have his **heart shattered** time and time again. That this journey to children would entail *limitless stress, hopelessness, fear, shame, heartbreak, and devastation, not to mention financial hardship.*

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And he was right. Because we did indeed pursue our dream with love respect and an open heart, the journey has been miraculous. Our **two sets of twins** were born with grace and ease thanks to a *selfless, loving, and generous surrogate.*

I strive each day to remain loyal to the truth that as mothers we loose an arrow into the future that is *fraught* with potential. We are the *means to an end* that is beyond our sight. We are patient as our children uncover *who they*

are. We inspire them to take the risks necessary to uncover their unique place. We foster their worth and their **utter uniqueness** so that they have the confidence to be themselves, whoever and whatever that self ultimately becomes. ***We are the guardians of a better future.*** My six children are my daily reminders to look at the world through the eyes of limitless possibilities.

Any regrets, you might wonder?

Only one. There is *no word* in the English language that encompasses the deep love and gratitude I feel for the selfless women - JenWynn's mother, Samuel's birth mother and the twins' surrogate - who allowed these children to come to me through them.



Our beloved surrogate

They are my teachers. My heroes.

So, this Mother's Day, take the time to reflect

on possibilities. *We are all arrows of potential.* We are all **proof** that life wants to move from darkness to light. We all arrived at this moment from different circumstances and different backgrounds and **here we stand**, each of us still *quivering with possibility*. Do not impede the grace of your flight by looking back into darkness and shadow. Instead, *look forward into what can be and see the miracles that are waiting if you only believe.*

I wish you a Happy Mother's Day because *I am grateful that we exist* and that we each have this endless moment of limitless potential to be our highest selves and to live the life that we have always deserved.

Until next week,



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