



Find your dawning moment

What does it feel like when, following a period of emotional darkness, the sun rises again? We speak to five people about the moment of clarity that followed unprecedented challenges

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For some, it will happen early on in life – like a neatly-tied coming-of-age film. For others, it comes later, following false-starts, unparalleled challenges, and depleting moments of hopelessness. I'm talking about the moment everything changed, the moment we discovered our value, our confidence, and our power.

Maybe you have an image of what loving yourself unconditionally could look like, but the components to that

kind of attitude feel just out of reach. But after being shut out in the dark, something changes. The sun rises and suddenly everything is clear. It's the start of a new day, a new era in your life. The pain, struggle, and doubt from before evaporates as you are flushed with clarity. This is your dawning.

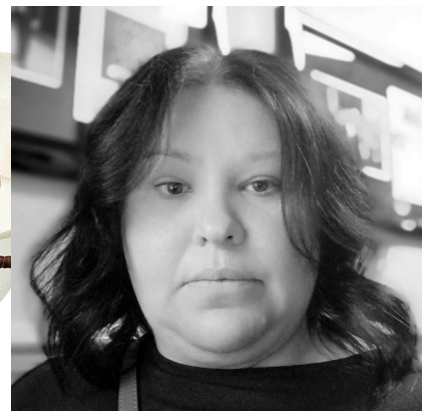
But what does this look like for real people, with real-life challenges? We speak to five individuals about the moment that changed everything.

Dawning Noun

A term to describe the moment of personal clarity and realisation we experience, following a period of uncertainty and challenge.



Sarah: The love I deserve



For as long as she can remember, Sarah Miles has struggled with self-confidence. For five years, she was in an emotionally abusive relationship with her ex-partner – who took advantage of her low self-esteem, convincing her that no one else would ever want her.

“Our relationship ended badly – he left me with everything to sort out, including selling our joint home,” Sarah explains. “Two months after our relationship ended, my dad passed away very suddenly. I had never felt so lost, lonely, or low.”

But things changed when Sarah sold the home she had shared with her ex and, literally, closed the door on the past.

“I care about myself now,” says Sarah. “I do what I want, when I want, and with who I want. I am not fully there yet, but for the first time in forever, I feel confident.”

“I’ve learned that people *will* love me, and that when I’m ready to be in another relationship, it will be with someone who loves and respects me for the person I am right now, because that is exactly what I deserve.”

Follow Sarah’s blog at
[>>>](http://beautyaddict32.co.uk)

Lauren: Embracing my power

“How’s the weather up there?” It’s a phrase that followed Lauren Marina for many years. At 6ft 3in, Lauren had been faced with constant fascination surrounding her height – everything from naivety to teasing, and intrusive questions.

“My sense of body confidence entirely circled around my height. It was what the outside world saw first about me, and so I felt rejected and completely unattractive,” Lauren shares.

But everything changed when, one night at a gig, Lauren discovered the punk band The Distillers – she remembers how the “cool-as-

f*ck” frontwoman, Brody Dalle, performed with a “billowing confidence”.

Lauren idolised Brody’s self-possession, as well as her tattooed aesthetic. Over the next decade, Lauren began collecting her own inkings. “From blooms of big pink peonies on my chest, to a dagger cutting through a blood orange on my arm – along this process of being tattooed, I’ve found each new piece enables a new level of self-confidence. Tattooing counteracts the years of discontent I felt for my body – I’m recarving and embellishing myself the way I want to be.”

Her height and her tattoos make Lauren feel powerful. She senses and embraces her presence in a room, and no longer wants to shrink into the shadows.

“I created my own patterned vessel to sail this life in. Of course, our outwards-facing image isn’t everything. I have values and morals that I hold with integrity, an abundant flow of creativity, and emotional gentleness that makes me happy to be me. But I am grateful to now stand at ease with the mirror too.”

Follow Lauren’s Instagram
[@laurenmarina](https://www.instagram.com/laurenmarina)



Lee: Turning inwards

For Lee Chambers, it began when he had a breakdown at university.

"I struggled to define myself as an adult, as a man, and understand my thoughts and feelings," recalls Lee. "I spent the next nine years trying to find that inner-trust and understanding of myself."

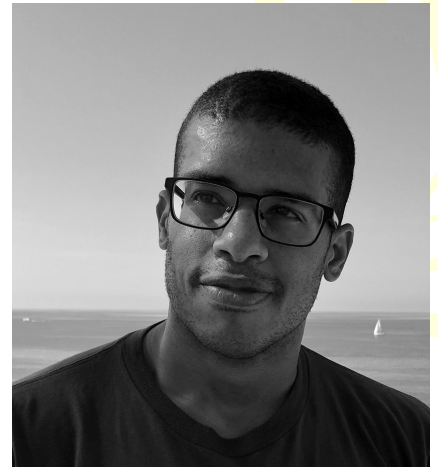
In 2012, Lee's son was born. The same year, he and his partner married and bought their first home, soon finding out that they were expecting their second child. Despite this, Lee's confidence was still almost non-existent. And things very quickly took a turn for the worse.

On an ordinary Thursday, Lee's wrist swelled up and locked in place. By the following Wednesday, he had been admitted to hospital,

unable to walk or look after himself as the symptoms spread across his body to other joints.

Never fully diagnosed, but categorised as having a type of autoimmune arthritis, for Lee, recovery was a marathon over many months, as he had to learn to walk again. But during that time, he looked at the patterns that had followed him throughout his life, picking apart where things went wrong, when it dawned on him: he had, and could continue to, overcome the challenges that came his way.

"The day I walked a mile unaided, that was my moment," Lee says. "I was my authentic self, I had confidence in my ability to overcome challenges."



An environmental psychologist and wellbeing consultant, Lee now dedicates his time to helping others. "I've learned that when you live authentically, you don't need to be confident, it resonates inside you – even when you show vulnerability. Happiness comes from within."

Ashley: A look in the mirror

In early 2017, Ashley Groom had lost her job and just been dumped.

"But by chance, I caught myself crying in the mirror and felt like I didn't recognise the reflection," Ashley explains. "That was my dawning moment – when the thought flashed into my mind that I just needed to stop."

Ashley started to take her needs seriously. She read books, took herself to museums and talks, and invested in working with a career coach. In 2019 she met her partner, and started working on her fashion brand, Monuriki. But in July,

Ashley's mum unexpectedly passed away when she took her own life.

"It was a complete shock and sent me into a tailspin. I put everything in my life on hold and went back to Vancouver to be with my family.

"Eventually, I came back to London and have slowly, over the past months, tried to adjust to continuing on without my mum. I've been feeling my way out of the dark with the help of family, my amazing partner, and therapy."

In the middle of this, Ashley and her partner got the joyous news that they had a baby on the way. She now reflects on how her initial dawning moment



equipped her for the challenges that were yet to come.

"While it has been a real challenge to hold both grief and joy at the same time, and to start to emerge from a very dark place," Ashley says, "I truly believe that I would not have been able to survive the past year without the insights and changes that I've made in the past."



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Stacey: Radically me

Since her early teens, Stacey Kelly-Maher has lived with depression and anxiety. When she thinks back to those times, she sees herself growing up in a world that isn't always kind to girls, leading so many to develop unhealthy relationships with their bodies and themselves.

When she was 17, Stacey dropped out of sixth form following a depressive episode. In the six months she spent at home, she discovered online communities,

where she learned about feminism and activism, which she says helped her to find her own purpose and a fresh perspective.

“Accepting being a lesbian is probably the best thing to ever happen for my happiness, because nothing compares to being able to be radically honest about who you are,” Stacey explains. “The more community I’ve found, the more I’ve worked to support my communities, the more at peace I’ve become.”

At the core of her confidence is Stacey’s understanding that she has to have her own back.

“I need to continue to be gentle with myself – that’s part of the package with chronic mental illness and any kind of sustainable change,” she says. “Self-love is never finished, there is no peak



confidence level (although I am aware that I’m sensational), and I’ll always need to keep finding a balance between doing the work and taking care of myself.”

The right state of mind

Transformation coach Ilse Passet says that cultivating a dawning moment is all about tuning in.

“Mindset is at the top – practise seeing challenges as moments of growth. Re-wire your brain to see the lesson in adversity. Honouring your needs doesn’t only grow your self-confidence and self-love, but also helps you grow as a person.”

Though they all take different forms, our journeys through adversity unite us.

There may be days where we want to throw in the towel, and when the dark and the unknown will feel

unimaginably heavy. But whether it’s through tuning in, or reaching out, the sun will rise again. And when we find our dawning, and we come out the other side, it will be clear, bright, and beautiful. [H](#)