

CLEAR

How to Simplify Your Life
& Live More Fearlessly



CHAPTER ONE

ENJOY

ANNICK MAGAC

Product of Our Environment

Chapter One

Our surroundings are a reflection of our lives. Right now, as you read this book you might be seated in a café drinking an Americano or standing in an over crowded subway car. Perhaps you're listening to CLEAR™ while you drive to work. What got you to where you are right now in this one moment and are you happy with the way your life is right now? As we go through our journey of life, we have many different experiences that play out against numerous backdrops. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to choose what that backdrop looks like and what it says about your life, while also learning how to live fearlessly?

Through CLEAR™, you will see how your environment is formed and a reflection of your life, how to take control of your habitat and move from being overwhelmed to empowered. You will also learn how to beautify your surroundings so as to lead you to be more successful in your life. At the end of each chapter, you will find exercises or lessons that will lead you on how to take the concepts from CLEAR™ and translate them into changing your mindset and helping you actively beautify your surroundings to live more fearlessly.

As we begin this journey, the first place to start is to understand how our habitats and habits are developed from our childhood to how we currently live and think. Are we a product of our environment or is our environment a product of us?



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Bruce grew up in an old industrial New England town where everyone knew each other a little too well. He spent most of his time with his grandmother and grandfather while his divorced mother worked the third shift at the local factory and waitressed on the weekends to make enough money to support Bruce, his younger brother, and aging parents. His Mother had moved back into her parents' house when Bruce was three and his brother was a baby when his Father left the family and moved to Montana with his new girlfriend. Growing up in the small town, everyone knew his family, their story, and had their own expectations for how the boys would turn out as adults. Most people were born and raised in the town without ever leaving. People typically got married right out of school, started families young, and worked in the local factories or businesses.

Because there were so many people living in the small house, Bruce and his brother shared a tiny bedroom on the third floor with one window that looked directly into a neighboring house. All the furniture in the room, which wasn't much due to the size, was a hand-me-down from townsfolk or an old piece that was repurposed from another area of the old house. As the boys grew into teenagers the tiny bedroom became stifling, as the two became too big to fit into the space together.

Although the house was warm and loving, Bruce could not wait to get into college and leave his small town behind. He loved his family, but he felt suppressed by the small town mentality and hated that people perceived him as being from the poor family. For college, he ended up in Texas where he stayed as an adult to pursue his career in the oil and gas industry. As soon as he was able to, he bought the biggest house he could afford in the outer most area of his town. Bruce wanted space and he wanted anonymity.

While the house fulfilled Bruce's criteria for what he wanted and how he envisioned he should live, he was lacking in other areas of his life. He was drastically overweight, single, and a self-proclaimed workaholic without ever feeling like he was getting ahead in his career. He rarely ate at home because he hated to eat alone. Every night he worked late, had dinner in town, and drank a few too many cocktails. He would later drive home and pass out on his brand new furniture. He was not happy with his life and he didn't know where to begin to start to change.

Bruce had made every decision in his adult life based on trying to create the opposite experience he had as a child. Because he hated to share the small room with his brother, living in a small town, and feeling poor, he tried to build a house that felt expansive, secluded, and rich. The problem was that he didn't know how to make it warm, safe, and filled with love, the very things his family had provided for him without him being aware of it. It wasn't until he started to work through his issues and getting healthy that he realized he had created a habitat that wasn't reflective of what he wanted, but instead a creation of what he feared. Once Bruce defined what he wanted out of life- a loving family, financial freedom, and great health- he was able to change his environments to support those decisions and go from feeling overwhelmed and frustrated to empowered and successful.

With the way we live our lives, as adults, we can reflect back to different parts of our lives that have influenced how we look at or do things currently. We can all recall a home that we lived in throughout our lives that may have shaped how we viewed the world or decided was how home should be, or be influenced by a role model.

Sometimes, how you set up your home has a lot to do with the physical environment in which you live. I once visited my friend, Andy who has an apartment on the lower east side of New York City. Andy is part mad scientist, engineer, and artist who is so smart that half the time you can't even follow him on what he is conceptually talking about. Andy has lived in the same 300 square foot apartment since the mid-sixties. As a designer, he has accumulated an enormous amount of parts and material from more than 40 years of working on projects. The amazing thing is that he has designed his apartment to fit him and everything he owns into his teeny tiny space. Andy has three walls covered with cabinets, drawers, and compartments that house everything he needs, a bed that fits neatly within those cabinets, and a modest arrangement of furniture. While this might sound like his place is claustrophobic, it is surprisingly open and warm. Over the years through trial and error mixed with resourcefulness, Andy has figured out how to live well and richly in his small rent controlled apartment. He has surrounded himself with art and objects that reflect his life and tastes. He is constantly curating his possessions and getting rid of what he doesn't need. Andy loves his apartment and you feel it when you enter into it. He always says that if he didn't have this apartment he would never have survived the hustle and bustle of living in NYC for so many years. It is his place of safety and home within the chaos of life.

Whether it is a city, the country, or a suburb, we all need shelter and we all need a place to call home. Some people live in the same place their whole lives while others move frequently. Whether you live in a house, apartment, on a boat, or in a teepee, it is a natural instinct as humans to cultivate a nest. It doesn't need to be much, but we all feel the need to call something our own and to feel grounded.

In some cases, our environment is provided to us in a physical way that we have not chosen. If you live in a city, chances are you live in a smaller place with limited storage and space. If you live in the country, you may have more room but have to contend with the elements and animals. If you grew up abroad, you picked up ways of living from the culture you were surrounded by. Besides our homes, the other environment we spend a lot of time in is at work. The company you work for usually dictates how your cubicle is laid out or where your workstation is. These are all examples of products or situations dictated by external forces in our environment.

Oftentimes, we take habitats for granted and accept them the way they are. The thing is-just because your living space or workspace was provided to you in one way, it doesn't mean it needs to stay that way. Like life, just because you find yourself in a particular situation, thought pattern, job, health, fitness, or relationship that isn't serving you, it doesn't mean that you can't change it at any point.

The first thing is to recognize that there can be something to change. The second part is to know you have the strength and power to make the changes necessary to create the life you want and envision. The third part is to take the steps to make those changes. Like anything new, the hardest part is getting started, but once you're on a roll it gets easier and easier. *CLEAR*[™] will help you with all these steps.

EXERCISE:

Throughout this book, you will engage in different writing exercises. Pick out a fresh journal or notebook that you love the look and physical feel of. Choose a pen that feels good in the hand and you like the color of--maybe this is the time you allow yourself to write with a sparkly purple pen. This notebook is going to be your base when working through *CLEAR*[™]. Having one place where you write down your ideas and thoughts will allow you to go back at the end and see how far you have progressed. You might even want to personalize the journal by decorating it with positive images or sayings. It is your own personal journal, and you can do whatever you want with it. There is no right way to keep one.

