

Cynthia James knows from experience how dejected, listless and dispirited a person can feel after a painful event, or a series of painful events, come at you without warning.

“I came out of a violent childhood with sexual abuse,” says James, associate minister at Mile Hi Church in Lakewood, Colo. “I lived my teens, 20s and 30s from that paradigm.”

When she was at rock bottom, “Rev. Cynthia,” as she is known to many, began studying the principles of Science of Mind and Spirit, a movement based on the writings of Ernest Holmes. She used Holmes’ ideas to take a hard look at her life – trying to weed out deep negative patterns and train herself to think differently.

“We attract what we think and believe,” says Rev. Cynthia. This concept of “Law of Attraction,” widely publicized in the documentary film [“The Secret,”](#) is also a Science of Mind and Spirit precept for successful living. “You’re responsible and you get to choose,” Rev. Cynthia explains.

“But,” she cautions, “it will take time to create the successful life you want.”

Rev. Cynthia suggests these five action steps toward freeing your spirit from painful past events and filling your life with joy and passion instead:

- 1. Take an inventory of your life and what you no longer need.** Are you holding onto self-destructive behaviors such as a compulsive need for alcohol, food or sex to avoid facing emotions about past events? If you are aware of behaviors you don’t want, you can more easily identify the ones you do want.
- 2. Stop letting your “story” and your past define you and your future.** Listen to yourself when you tell your story each day. Watch how others react. If you can focus your attention on the now rather than on the past, you can change your life today.
- 3. Pay attention to how past pain manifests in your physical body.** Your past, and even the past of your ancestors, are embedded in your mind, your spirit and your physical body – and that history will show up in your circumstances. Begin to explore your body language and practice ways to release pain on a physical level through music, meditation, and mind-body exercise such as [yoga](#), [dance](#), [t’ai chi](#) and [qigong](#).
- 4. Learn radical self-care.** Put yourself first mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually by taking time to exercise, [eat healthy](#), meditate, pray. Treat yourself in ways that enable you to be more fully present when you are giving to others.

**5. Set your intention, focus your attention on it, and act in keeping with it.** Try inspiring yourself with a “life map”: Gather pictures and words that describe the life you want and arrange them on a large sheet of paper in whatever way feels best to you. Display your map in a place where you can see it every day. It’s a kind of affirmation that can help make your desired direction your reality by keeping it top-of-mind as you choose your actions each day.

Does changing your thoughts still sound like too much work? If so, Rev. Cynthia begs to differ. “You’re working hard anyhow! So many people tell me they are struggling; what is struggle but working hard?” she says. “Every person is unique and amazing. Healing and freedom are a choice. There is nothing that has ever happened to you that can stop your greatness.”