

VEGETARIAN VAMPIRES

and What We Can Learn From Them

New 2020 edition



One woman's epiphanies
on Deepak Chopra's
*The Seven Spiritual Laws
of Success*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE – 2020 EDITION

Being both an author and a publisher can sometimes be vexing. While I feel very privileged to be able to bring the work of many wonderful authors into the world, I often do so at the expense of my own writing – my 'sweet compulsion'.

No surprise then, that an updated edition of *Vegetarian Vampires*, my series of essays on Deepak Chopra's seminal *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, has been sitting on the blocks for almost two years. Every time I turned my attention to the task, some other project with more urgent deadlines would invariably scuttle it.

However, the Universe works in mysterious ways and, I've found, it frequently has other, better plans for me and my hill of beans.

In May 2020, when a break in the regular publishing traffic arrived, my trusty collaborator, Barbie Robinson, and I plunged back into *Vegetarian Vampires* second edition with gusto.

While I was still lamenting the length of time it had taken to get to this point, Barbie looked up from her re-read of the original text to announce that now was

the perfect time to be bringing out this refreshed edition.

And Barbie was right, as she so often is. Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic (and before that in Australia, the bushfires and interminable drought) fear, uncertainty and human suffering are at unprecedented levels all over the planet. If ever there was a time for some Universal wisdom and spiritual succour, it would be now.

However, I'm no guru and my skillset is light years away from the many spiritual leaders who have stepped up to offer guidance at this terrifying time. Furthermore, the life crises that led me to write a collection of essays on Deepak Chopra's *Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* in the first place don't amount to much in the face of a global pandemic.

But here's the thing – my writing has always provided shelter in times of turmoil, helping me to make sense of the inexplicable and most of all, to self-soothe. I've also been blessed that my musings resonate with a wide variety of people. To know that one has been helpful to one's fellow travellers on the footpath of life is the greatest salve of all, bar none.

With the benefit of hindsight, I see

now that the many delays and obstacles thrown in the path of this *Vegetarian Vampires* reboot brought us to this 'perfect storm' – a place where the most good can come from this endeavour. Yet again, a patient Universe has reminded me to relinquish the struggle, whispering quietly, 'It'll happen when the time is right.'

And so, dear reader, in the spirit of exquisite timing I offer you this 2020 edition of *Vegetarian Vampires and What We Can Learn From Them*. My sincerest hope is that my pre-pandemic explorations of *The Seven Spiritual Laws* will provide everyone who comes into contact with this little book renewed comfort and solace at this most testing of times.

With you all the way.

Jen McDonald
May 2020



INTRODUCTION

Working The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success

I used to only read self-help material during my holidays which, as a small business owner and mother of two very active children, were few and far between. When the kids came along, leisurely afternoons reading a book on my bed became a thing of the past. It's a small miracle I actually opened and started reading Deepak Chopra's *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* on an action-packed family holiday to Hawaii in early 2008. I wish I could say it was a defining moment, a turning point in how I approached my life and work. But, at that time, I was in another headspace

that made it nigh on impossible for me to really get what Dr Chopra was saying.

This headspace can best be defined in two parts, the first being an unacknowledged belief in the dichotomy of my life — either business or personal, with little in between — and the person I was when I inhabited those two realms. The second part is a new-age sentiment I'm sure many of you have heard before: 'Too busy doing to just be.'

I knew as soon as we arrived home from Hawaii my life would be swallowed up again by the roles of mother, wife, sister, daughter, friend, mentor, and a host of other things I do. In my holiday reading haste, I skipped the introduction to *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* that harbours more than a few gems, such as (but not exclusive to):

"Success is the ability to fulfil our desires with effortless ease. And yet success, including the creation of wealth, has always been considered a process that requires hard work, and it is often considered to be at the expense of others. We need a more spiritual approach to success and to affluence, which is the abundant flow of all good things to us."

Hear, hear! If only I'd been listening. If I had read that introduction, the first *Law of Pure Potentiality* may not have been such hard going. I made it to the end of this first law not really comprehending what I'd read. In order to experience Pure Potentiality, the first thing I needed to do was be silent and connect with my inner spirit, to simply be.

He's joking, right? How could I just be when there is always so much to do?

It wasn't until a couple of years later when I was in a particularly emotionally charged work situation that I found Chopra's little book again while cleaning out a bookshelf at home. How's that for manifesting what you need when you need it? I started reading, this time not skipping the Introduction and even reading the Afterword to get the full context. Then, I started reading each law on the day it was intended to be read, endeavouring to practice the three tips Chopra provides to experience each law to its full potential.

Subtle yet profound changes in my approach to my home and work life have unfolded in the time since I started practising these daily laws. I am calmer and more present. I make clearer decisions and

am more conscious of the consequences. I am more grateful and less judgemental, slower to anger and quicker to forgive. I realised something else as well. We don't have two lives, a work one and a personal one. It's all the same life. What a relief — for a while there I was quite literally beside myself!

I'm now on a bit of a crusade to do my small part to inject more spirituality into the workplace, starting with my own. The Blackie McDonald Epiphany Mentoring group studied *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* and have begun practising various types of meditation and mindfulness techniques in a bid to cope more effectively with the stresses and vagaries of consultancy life. It was and remains a small start to be sure, but, as the great songwriter/philosopher Paul Kelly once sang, "From little things big things grow".

That said, I'm hardly a voice in the wilderness on the concept of spirituality in the workplace. Other much more erudite types are way ahead of me, espousing things spiritual as a pathway to a more fulfilling and productive 'whole life'. Two texts that are standouts in my mind are:

- Alain de Botton's *Religion for Atheists* in which he entreats us to borrow rituals from religion to enrich our secular lives.
- *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* by Daniel Pink, which lists purpose and meaning as one of the three underlying quests of human beings at work.

Oh, and one final tip – do try not to skip the intro this time, OK?

All the best.



TUESDAY, LAW 3

Vegetarian vampires and what we can
learn from them

Here's a confession for you: I just read the *The Twilight Saga* collection again for about the fifth time. I know, I know. I'm a sucker (pardon the pun) for a tale where love triumphs over seemingly insurmountable odds, with a heavy overlay of supernatural otherworldliness. This time I thought I might stop at one book — *Twilight* — the first and, in my opinion, the best of the four books in the series. But no. Once I was into it, I had to re-read the whole dang lot, wondering once again what attracts me to the story of Bella Swan and Edward Cullen.

There may be some of you who slept

through Twilight-mania in recent years so here's a quick rundown. Bella Swan is an ordinary, somewhat clumsy small-town girl who doesn't see herself as anything special in the looks or any other department. Edward Cullen is a pale-faced, mysterious fellow high school student who is (almost) fatally attracted to Bella and presents in every way like the boyfriend from heaven. There's just one teeny, tiny problem — he's a vampire with a twist. Not wanting to be monsters, Edward and his adopted family eschew human blood as their main source of sustenance in favour of animal blood. The Cullen family jokes that this makes them vegetarian vampires.

On the fifth reading of *Twilight*, I think I finally cracked why Bella and Edward's story is so compelling for me. It's about conscious choice. While I doubt Deepak Chopra had vampires in mind when he wrote about Karma or Cause and Effect, number three in the *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, Edward Cullen could be a poster boy for this law. The term Karma is pretty well known as the 'reap what you sow' concept. If you do something bad it eventually comes back to you, usually amplified. Chopra exhorts us to sow the

seeds of our own and others' happiness in the present to reap the benefits in the future. Sounds simple enough, but how does one do that, exactly?

It all comes down to conscious choice-making. Slowing down enough to become conscious of your decisions and exercising self-discipline, every day, to stay conscious and make choices that work to the highest good of ourselves and those around us. That's what I love about Edward Cullen apart from the fact that he's gorgeous, rich and a true gentleman, despite that pesky vampire thing. He could fall back on the Lady Gaga *Born This Way* excuse, but he doesn't. He makes a conscious choice not to be a monster. He doesn't give in to his base urges and he talks himself out of the instant gratification and 'fulfillment of my wants *right now*' drive that's all too pervasive in today's world.

With practice, Edward discovers he's expending less energy on the self-discipline it takes not to bite Bella. He also realises the practice of willpower makes him, Bella and those around them, much happier in the long run.

A Harvard Business Review blog by Tony Schwartz (author of *Be Excellent at*

Anything) explores why we continually engage in self-destructive behaviours when our rational minds know this does us no good. Schwartz provides a monster tip on how to “co-opt the more primitive habit-forming regions of our brains, so that rather than reinforcing our negative impulses, they become the soil in which we build positive rituals that serve our long-term interests”.

That tip just happens to be slowing down long enough to notice our primal instincts and default reactions to our circumstances and the myriad of choices we are presented with each waking hour. Funny that. Conscious choice-making is just what Chopra recommends in order to experience the third law — The Law of Karma or Cause and Effect.

Now, before I make an ordinary, everyday choice like deciding whether to have another scoop of that ultra-chocolate ice cream or go for a brisk walk instead, I’m asking myself, “What would Edward Cullen do?”

Happy Tuesday.

