

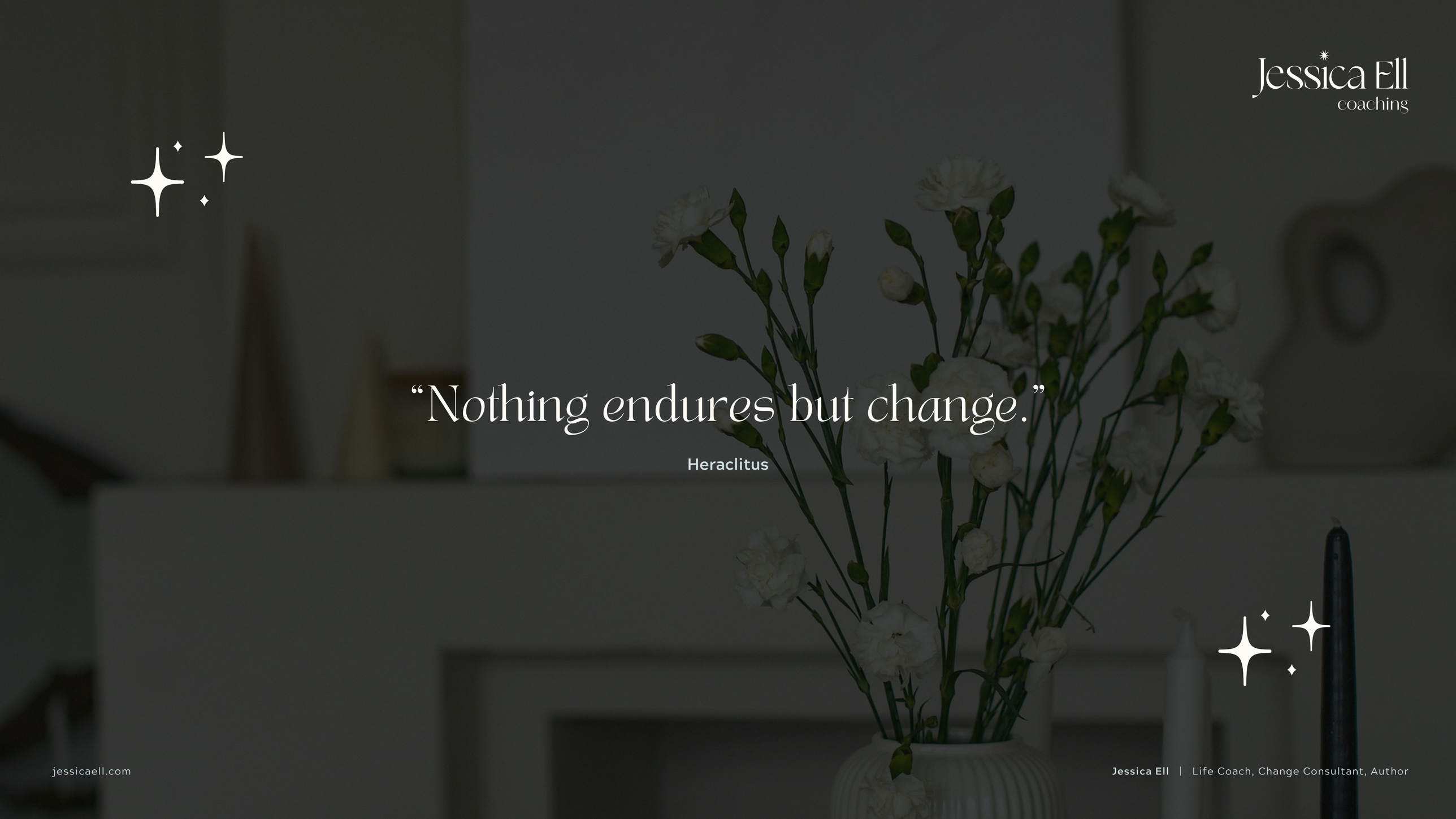
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Strategic Abandonment

The Art of Letting Go Pt. 1 | April 2025

Jessica Ell | Life Coach, Change Consultant, Author

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“Nothing endures but change.”

Heraclitus



Purpose of This Workshop:

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Key Ideas:

- A new way of thinking about quitting
- When it’s time to let go
- How to conduct a Strategic Abandonment Assessment of your goals and life

“I can’t fix this.”

The moment I realized I couldn’t salvage my marriage.

“Thank you, Universe, for taking from me what I am now willing to give away.”

- Gabby Berstein

“You will find that it is necessary to let things go; simply for the reason that they are heavy. So let them go, let go of them. I tie no weights to my ankles.”

- C. JoyBell C.



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Strategic Abandonment

The Case for Quitting in Business and Life

- Strategic Abandonment = a business and organizational practice to stop doing things-projects, initiatives, products-that are no longer profitable, strategic, or making an impact. Quitting the things that are no longer serving the organization’s goals.
- The iPod Mini, the Model T... and Kodak film
- The pace of change and how to flow with it



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Why is it so hard to let go of things?

- Doubt that it’s the right decision
- The sunk cost fallacy
- FOPO
- Fear of feeling stupid
- Cultural message that quitting is practically evil
- Unsure what you’ll do instead
- “The grass is greener where you water it.”
- Fear of letting people down, at the price of your own happiness



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All models are wrong, but some are useful.

George E.P. Box

Benefits of Strategic Abandonment

- Freeing up resources
  - Time and money
  - But also your mental space!
- Forced creativity and pushes boundaries. Gets you out of your comfort zone. Forces you to play around with other ideas, think of other ways to achieve your objective
- Forces intentionality and reflection. Avoid “Why did I come so far down this road?”
- Clinging to things burns a lot of energy-ideas, initiatives, people, plans. And it makes you miserable.



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When to change the method instead of the goal

Is it working?

- Distinguish between the goal and your methods
- Know when to abandon or iterate a method instead of throwing out the goal
- “I just need to work harder” fallacy
- Tweak and iterate



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When it's time to evaluate the goal, vision, or direction

Knowing when it's time to strategically abandon a goal or vision for yourself is deeply personal.

No KPIs, metrics, or advice will answer this for you.

Some things you CAN identify:

- General mood state about the project (or components)
- Unable or very difficult to imagine your future with this goal
- Constant frustration



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Do Your Own Strategic Abandonment Assessment

Take Inventory of Your...

Desires

Highly Unlikely Goals

Initiatives / Projects

Relationships

Routines / Habits / Processes

Stories / Narratives / Ideas

Questions to Evaluate...

Why did you decide to do it initially?

Results: What impact is this thing creating on you and in your life? Is it having a positive impact in your life? On YOU?

What do your magnets say?

Are you just tired of it? Bored? Angry? Ready for something different?

How does it fit into your personal growth pattern?

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Now What?

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How to *actually* let go

- Some will be easy to quit... just stop doing them.
- The hard ones are hard because you have a lot of stories about why you can't or shouldn't quit.
- Working with those stories--and letting THEM go--is what we'll focus on in May.



If Letting Go is Hard...

Things fall away when you stop clinging to them. You don't have to TRY to drop something. When you relax your muscles, the thing just drops.

If this is hard, try the opposite.

Instead of, "I want to let go of this old story," make, "I will stop grasping onto this story," your goal.



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The art of letting go is the art of change.
The most meaningful change is what we let go of, not what we add.

It's an UNdoing, not a doing.

Letting go is admitting you didn't have control anyway.



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Recommendations

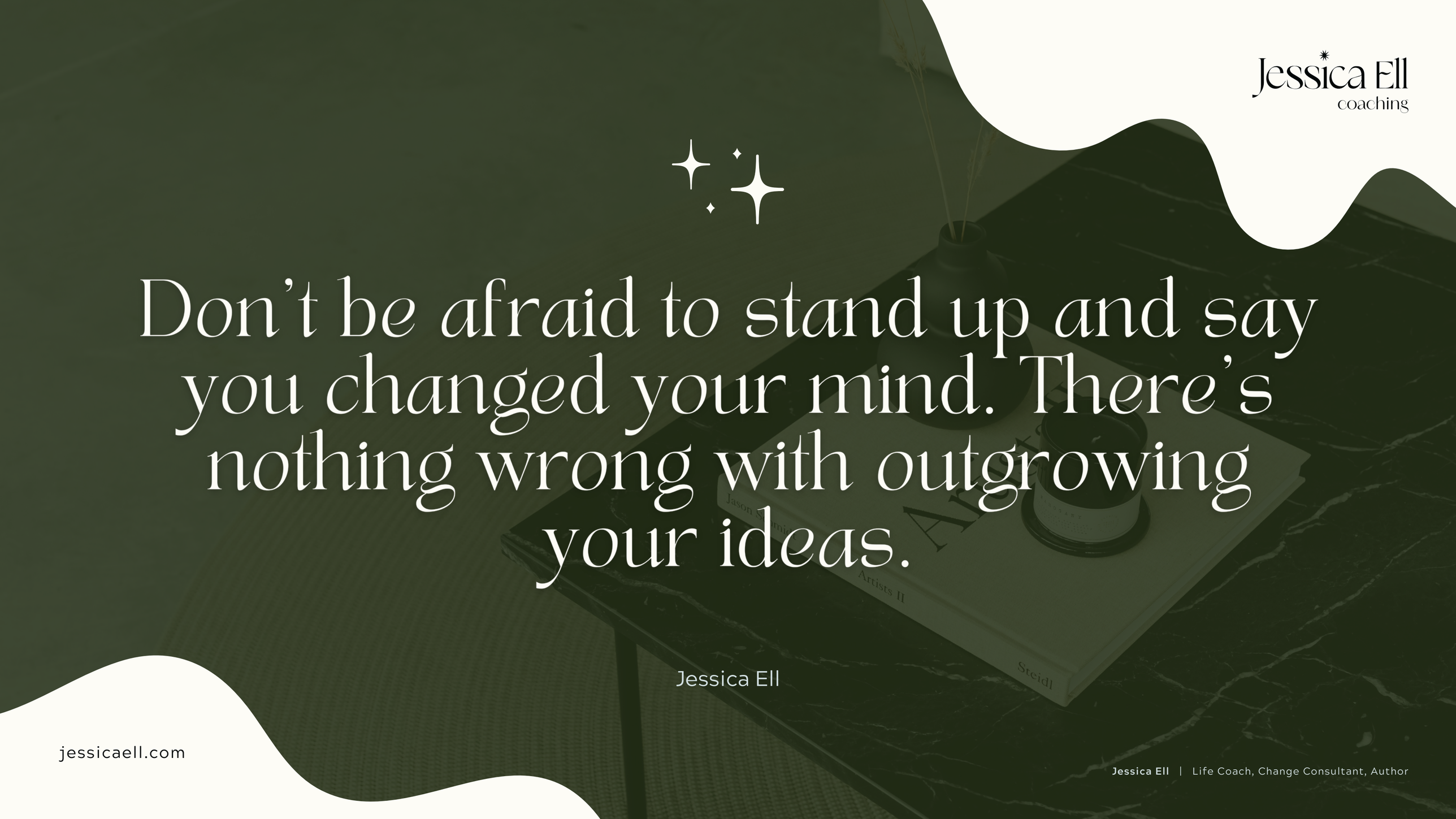
Review your life at least once a quarter--your desires, your goals. Is it still TRUE?

What weights have you tied to your ankles?

What are you afraid to know?



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Don't be afraid to stand up and say you changed your mind. There's nothing wrong with outgrowing your ideas.

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jessicaell.com