

# Pink Hair & Chocolate Cookies

real life lessons from a real life coach



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## **Acknowledgements**

This book holds a big chunk of me, as I am today. For this, I thank my dad Jean Lavigne, for showing me that nothing is impossible. I thank my mom Arlette Lavigne, for teaching me that even when your heart is broken, you can learn to laugh again. I thank my grandmother Lili for reminding me daily for years that life is here to be enjoyed. I thank my children Tanissa, Marco and Costa for allowing me to stretch beyond who I knew to be and for being the best traveling companions I could ever imagine - whether traveling down a highway or down to the grocery store. I thank my friends Joan, Sharon and Erin, for helping with the never-ending punctuation needs of this book (did we miss any?). Finally, I thank Chris Shelby

from the bottom of my heart for shining the light in scary dark places and for loving me through my less lovable moments; for patiently editing this book also, when I know that many times he would have rather have been eating at a buffet. I thank Life for all of its different colors, flavors and scents; for all its yumminess and for all its challenges.

I dedicate this book to my Dad,  
who probably would not have  
read it, but might have been  
proud anyway

## **Foreword**

I remember a delicious time in our town, when a French bakery opened its ovens and its doors. The smell of bread baking mixed with Nina Simone's throaty voice came curling along the sidewalks, drawing people into this classy and comfortable venue. We came for the plump crusty loaves or the buttercream cakes; perhaps just for a tidbit of something decadent and fresh. But underneath that need to satisfy a sweet tooth, people were drawn to the beautiful French woman behind the counter, whose whole personality glistened with enthusiasm, wit and wisdom.

We wanted to just watch her, or share a story, or get her opinion on one of life's many challenges. Her chocolate eyes were home and her accent brought such music to the English language. Maybe her display case had just quit working or someone had burnt the batter, but Laura never let anything stop her. Whatever life presented was a new opportunity for creativity and ingenuity.

High school kids, mothers with their babes, men from the shipyards at the end of the street - they all knew they could open their hearts to this extraordinary person. She would remind them that life's unpredictable twists and turns could be met with a light heart and a dedication to growth, and there was laughter and delight ready to be discovered in the most unlikely places. With Laura around, life just seemed so rich and delicious.

She shared with me one day that her true passion was to be a life coach. It made perfect sense. People could have her undivided time and attention. In the next few years, her caring presence

facilitated many people to accomplish their goals. Now, with the publishing of "Pink Hair & Chocolate Cookies," her unique attitudes toward life can be shared with even more people.

Get ready to treat yourself to these morsels. I hope they fill and nourish you with renewed appreciation for life's sweet gifts.

Joan Miller

## **Preface**

My hope is that within the pages of this book, you will find a little bit of your own life: varied, occasionally messy and usually a darn good teacher.

Some of the following stories will make you smile, some might make you sigh and I am hoping that many will provide you with tools which you will be able to use to make your life simpler, richer and BIGGER.

As a life coach, I spend a lot of my time talking with people, every day. Through my work, I have the huge privilege of getting close to their lives in a way that

reminds me of how amazing, courageous and tender we all are, even when we may appear to be busy, important and aloof.

I believe that life does not have to be hard; not for very long, anyway. I believe that when it is, we can use it as an invitation to pay more attention and to ask ourselves some important questions.

Once the questions are out, the answers have been given permission to show up. And if we are ready, we will notice them when they do.

I believe that often, life is really good and that, when that happens, it is a great idea to pay close attention.

Finally, I believe that you and I have a right to be happy, truly alive and free; that while we may not feel that way every day, we sure can feel that way a lot of the days.

So here you are. A bunch of me is in this book and I am guessing, a bunch of you too.

Laura Lavigne – November 2008

## **Both**

My grandmother had lived through two world wars in France - as a Jewish woman, no less. Why this is relevant to this story, I am not sure, and yet I feel compelled to include it. What matters is that when entertaining guests in her elegant Parisian living room, she would regularly give them a choice as to what to add to their cup of post-lunch coffee.

I can still see her, holding one of those fancy silver tongs and asking, straight-faced: "Un sucre ou pas du tout?" This, interestingly enough, translates to "One sugar cube - or none at all?" Writing this today (and for the first time), makes me laugh out loud as I imagine her visitors' expressions when faced

with their unexpected - and greatly limited - options.

Fast-forward many years. I am no longer a little girl in Paris and my grandma is long gone. Instead, I am driving on an American road with my own little girl chatting away in the back seat. In her vivacious style, my daughter suddenly blurts out: "Mom, what does it mean when people say that you can't have your cake and eat it too?" Not being one to use that sentence often - and not being too fond of it either - I try my best to explain to her the literal meaning of the expression without giving it a lot of weight. She is quiet for a while and I can see that her mind is working hard. It is not long before I hear her call out to me again: "Mommy? You can have your cake and eat it too; I know how." I am now alert and ready to absorb any bit of baby wisdom that wants to come my way. "OK, sweetie, tell me." "Well..." she begins, "It's easy: just start with TWO cakes."

I wanted to jump over the front seat and give her a big squeeze.

Really, it makes sense.

Fast-forward again. The little girl now wears an iPod in the car, thus limiting any amount

of genuine interaction, wise or not. But her early words remain, and with time - and my growing dislike of limitations - their power has only increased.

In fact, one of my favorite words of late is...

"BOTH."

Such a small, simple yet BIG word. Somewhat politically incorrect too. Lovely, really, and one which is an efficient tool for a beloved hobby of mine, which I call: "agreement debunking."

Let me explain: an agreement is a "rule" (usually a limiting rule) that we have agreed upon, and which may or may no longer be true. In fact, it possibly never was true to start with. Yet these agreements are somehow time-proof and very rarely revisited. Not smoothly anyway.

I subscribed to such a limiting "either/or" agreement about 30 years ago and have only glimpsed at its debunking in the last year. As you will see, and as is often the case, "BOTH" was the perfect antidote.

At a very young age, I fell in love with the Spanish language, which I spoke choppily, due to summer-long vacations in Spain.

Years later as a teenager, a visit to Italy - and one look at Italian boys - caused me to fall equally in love with Italian.

At that point, I was solemnly told by some random person whose name and credentials I forget, that "I had to make a choice"; that because they were so similar, the two languages would somehow magically cancel each other out inside my brain and that I would end up unable to speak either one.

Terrified, I quickly chose Spanish but always held a bit of sadness at the thought of never being able to communicate with any of those 57 million Italians.

And then, last fall, a beautiful mistake was delivered to my mailbox: a video, which I had ordered thinking it was in Spanish, turned out to be in Italian.

Within seven minutes, I was once again enchanted by the beauty of the language - and yes, of the Italian men, too.

Only this time, instead of sadness, a rebellious streak hit me right on the head as years of coaching other people away from their limitations came crashing through my living room walls.

Forget it!

I did not have to choose. I wanted BOTH.

I deserved BOTH.

All of a sudden, I became aware of how much power I had given this ill-informed statement and quickly developed a plan to expose myself to as much spoken Italian as possible, including a live discussion group, Italian music and more films. Ah!

Well, it wasn't long before I could understand a movie with very little help from the subtitles, which gave me a huge amount of joy. Then came the afternoon when I effortlessly grasped the meaning of a beautiful Andrea Bocelli song, without even trying. This was so much fun and yet here is the most fun part: I am convinced that speaking Spanish is the reason why I was able to learn Italian so easily.

Imagine that.

So of course, this little jaunt opened the door to more questions: all of a sudden I wanted to know where in my life, I was subscribing to the notion that I HAD to make a choice between two desirable options. I wanted to know which agreements had

woven themselves into my head and become "rules." I was on the prowl and the hunt proved fruitful. As a result, I spent last winter living BOTH in the city and in the country (something which I had wanted to do but thought impossible - the "either/or" thing, you know...). My children and I moved into a new house, which happens to be BOTH enormously spacious and cozy. And of course, I often enjoy lovely evenings watching BOTH Italian and Spanish movies. This playful search spilled over to my clients and for a while "BOTH" had almost become a code word!

So today, I invite you to make a list of what you would have BOTH of, if you allowed yourself to - or even thought it possible. Yes, there are times when one cake is all we get and when we do have to make a choice between having it and eating it; but not always. Not even close to always.

Go ahead, search your brain, your life, for such limiting agreements. (Warning: these are sneaky and often disguise themselves as truths.)

For fun, take a peek at your life and question the places where you may have agreed that your choices were "un sucre ou pas du tout."

Chances are, you could have a handful.

And wouldn't that make life really sweet?

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and downloadable audio book  
available from**

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## **About the Author**

Laura Lavigne was born and raised in France. She moved to the United States at the age of seventeen and became a makeup artist for the fashion and movie industries. She later went on to start a small organic herb farm, which eventually led to the co-creation of two award-winning French bakeries. She has found her calling as a life coach, writer and artist. Laura lives on an island in the Pacific Northwest with her three children and a small ménagerie.



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