



## INTRODUCTION

**B**efore you start reading this book, there's something you should know about its author: I, Kevin Gilliland, believe the world is flat.

Now, I know there's been some controversy. I know others think differently. But I'm convinced the world is flat, and I don't care what Stephen Hawking has to say about it.

How can I be so sure? After nearly thirty years of working with perfectly rational, intelligent folks who have bank accounts and can spell their names correctly, not a day goes by I don't shake my head at the number of stories I hear about these people sailing right over the edge. Just like the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*—clean off the face of the earth!

If you watch people long enough to see what kind of poor decisions we can make, I think you'll come around to my way of seeing things. I think you'll also agree that most people who sail off the edge don't seem to be trying that hard to do it. It just kind of happens.

But here's something else. In all my years as a professional therapist, I couldn't begin to count how many people I know who have avoided the edge and gone on to sail in clear, blue waters. I can also tell you that many of them were able to do so without even trying that hard.

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Marital problems, alcohol addiction, sex addiction, anxiety and worry, relationship issues, trauma, grief, body image, depression, dependencies of all kinds—I have seen many people deal head-on with these and other problems and conquer them. I've even seen boats rise up from the edge and get back on course.

Sometimes they needed counseling. Sometimes they needed medication. I'm an advocate of both, but I've also learned that sometimes neither is useful. The truth is that for all the things counseling and medication can do for us, there are countless things they can't do.

The solutions to our problems are often right in front of our bewildered faces. We don't see them because we're too busy listening to friends and family with good intentions give us less than stellar advice. "I don't think they appreciate how hard you work," they say. "You should just quit the job."

**This book is about giving you the tools to take back your life in a smart, effective, and proven way.** You'll find real answers to real human problems both large and small. And while I believe many of those answers are already rattling around somewhere in our brains, I know that for the majority of us, all it takes is a different perspective or a little nudge to get us back on course. Every once in a while it takes a wise old man walking past to pick the answer up off the ground, dust it off, and say, "Here you go."

And I am not saying that I'm particularly wise, but in counseling men and women with a variety of struggles for three decades, I've learned a thing or two about human nature.

If you're looking for self-help, this is not the book for you. You're going to find that willing yourself to be better, act better, talk better, and look better are not going to work in the long run, which is why you won't find advice like that here. You're also going to find that if you keep buying books to solve

problems, you're never going to solve the real problem, which is a self-help book-buying problem. And I'm about solving problems, not encouraging them.

The wisdom in this book is not mumbo-jumbo or metaphysical nonsense that I told Siri® to record on the way to work. This is knowledge I've accumulated from nearly thirty years of working in healthcare. This is knowledge you can put into practice. And I hope that you will give it a try because that's where growth lies.

If you think your problem is more urgent or more serious than the scope of this book, I encourage you to see a professional. Better safe than sorry. But if any of the topics covered in this book have any relation to what it is you're going through, I guarantee you'll find something of great value that you can put into practice immediately.

It might just keep you from sailing over the edge.