

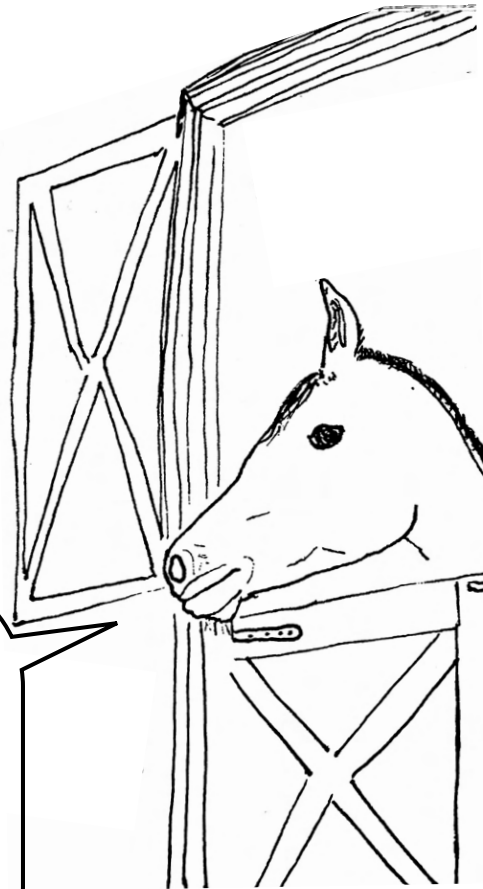
Hot Tips, Hacks, Lessons Learned:  
**A Practical Guide**  
For An Upside Down World



✿ IN CELEBRATION OF DANA KAPLAN-ANGLE, 1988-2021 ✿



*DKA wisdom as collectively recorded in her memory on August 7, 2021*



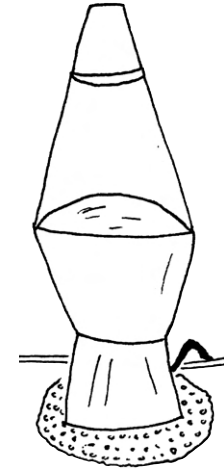
*This book is comprised of text in response to the prompt "Dana taught me..." The responses were handwritten, over the course of just a few minutes (from the top of the brain, from the depth of the heart). Of course, it is just a start. Every legible response was used, and the drawings are all from the submitted pages or made by Dana.*

*The text has been scrambled, and the tense has often been changed to fit the guidebook format, shifting past memory to future possibility. For example, the memory "Dana taught me how to sew" would now become an imperative: "Sew!"*

ADDITIONAL SPACE:

### THINGS TO PRACTICE:

- grieving
- resilience
- non-extractive love and kindness
- teamwork
- humor with wisdom
- awe, open and immense
- radical generosity through art and giving
- the beauty of ritual
- community swapping
- friendship, resilience and chosen family
- play
- deep honesty
- goofiness
- tempered seriousness
- compassion
- ensemble
- subtlety
- kindness
- listening
- the power of listening
- care
- empathy
- community
- creation
- family
- games
- so many good games
- love
- love
- love
- love, just by being yourself
- yes
- patience
- joy
- empathy
- integrity
- quiet humility
- awareness
- curiosity in space with others
- space
- what it truly means to feel connected to another person in the world
- generosity, the opposite of living with a scarcity mentality
- generosity



### WHAT TO DO:

- visit with ancestors while you dream
- hang a philodendron over your bed
- sit by a fire with friends (there is joy to be found everywhere, but especially here)
- rub lemons on your hair while sitting in the sun for the most perfect natural highlights (Okay, so maybe not perfect but you know, it does kind of work and bonus: it's fun. Ask someone to rub lemons on your head. You'll see.)
- be kind to strangers, and sensitive and warm
- talk about money
- love each other's (and your own) deep weirdness. It can create the very best art.
- trust the seeds of your wildness
- do a podcast on "the eviction"
- platonically flirt
- also, just flirt
- be more mindful of toothpaste in the bathroom sink
- dress up!
- wear a wig.
- put on a costume, an accent (preferably British) (a theatrical performance is always a good idea)
- just be real
- surrender fully and wholeheartedly to grieving

## HOW TO BE:

- be humble and open in activist roles as a person coming from many kinds of privilege
  - be original
  - be silly
  - be silly in all of the creative ways
  - live and be creative. Be inspired and amazed
  - be brave, take chances, and see what happens, and be kind while you're doing it
  - use the tragedy creatively when you're ready
  - grow, but stay young
  - be another person, wildly different than who you present to be
  - be a serious sand sculptor on the beach (she was 8 and I was 52)
  - be an excellent listener, a skilled improviser
  - be light and delightful
  - be a friend
  - be unafraid to use the men's room
  - seize moments where you can be helpful, especially if it feels small or easy to you (it can make a big difference)
  - be an inspiration
  - be seen, show your love, show yourself
  - be excited in the face of uncertainty, doing the thing because you should or want to or must and figure it out as you go
  - have fun, be creative, be yourself, enjoy life
  - have fun in unexpected ways
  - be willing to share questions about life and meaning and loss, and keep asking questions of life
  - don't be scared
  - say yes
  - it's not too late
- 
- approach things softly
  - lead with kindness
  - be a wise fool



## PEOPLE CAN BE:

- the embodiment of lightness and joy
- casually Jewish in the most fun way
- powerful in authenticity, joyful in lightness, and so so funny
- tremendously generous in an incredibly hard circumstance
- incredibly kind, considerate, thoughtful.

I loved every conversation

When kids say "let's hang out," they play pretend, make stuff up, create make-believe games, but at some point when we're teenagers, "hanging out" becomes "just sitting around talking." "Want to hang out?" ends up meaning "Want to sit around talking?"

Dana said she wanted to keep playing and creating, rather than just sit around talking all the time.

## REMEMBER:

- art matters (Dana wore a t-shirt that said so in high school)
- wisdom and grace are inherent to some people regardless of age or diversity of experience
- love reaches out long after our life flies out to find other worlds. The sparks of love are the light that fills us
- deepest insecurities can become intimacies and even humor when we share them
- you can have lived a life with lots of pain and live a life with lots of joy
- you don't have to know someone very long to know how special they are
- there is great power and beauty in mixing and matching bold patterns of all kinds
- my sister Hannah doesn't know everything. There are people that she learns from, too
- a tiefling monk assassin named Silence and a rock gnome named Barbrika infected with toxoplasmosis by eldritch cat gods can come together and create a family with a Dragonborn band and an elderly elf druid on the road. Even if their time was brief... it was epic.

As a very little kid she seemed to deeply love Peter Jennings. She insisted on being able to stay up to watch him on the nightly news and called him Jen-Jen.

Dana could see without effort what was good, joyful, fun about a person (or a place or thing for that matter). She was beautiful in her ability to share with me and brought me comfort through her bravery. She taught me how to rise above pain and loss and lead a life of joy and connection. She taught me how to navigate unexpected orphanhood with grace and self-possession. She taught me how to prank someone properly.

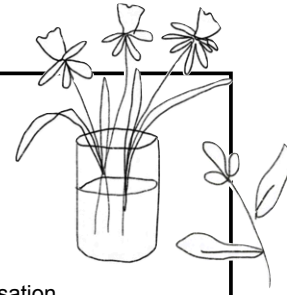
Even if there was just ten minutes before we needed to part ways, ten minutes was worth it... at a bowling bar, at a park, at a cookie making class.

We ran into each other on the train.

I ran into her on the ferry once.

I remember catching the ferry with her -

her sunglasses, the wind in her hair.



## IT WAS US

We stood together at protests, created make believe worlds together. She taught me to speak. She taught me to speak earnestly, and truthfully, how to roll cigarettes, and how to sit with the moon. How to make a new friend while standing up against the police. FTP. She taught me what it might feel like to have a sibling. We were Beezus and Ramona. She taught me how to be a big sister, rather than the little sister I am. How to be present in the moment and have meaningful, vulnerable and real friendships. She showed me places to go in Greenpoint, certain thrift stores, different social justice NGOs, taught me about her block when I first moved to Bed Stuy (she had a witty and wordy description of various local characters and architectural features, buildings, or in one case, a large hole in the ground). We were in Story Pirates. She could get a room of kids to look at her and follow her by just being herself. She could anchor a story or song by being light, vulnerable, and kind (as opposed to the loud, obnoxious blow horns the rest of us are). We lost our parents in our 20s, and I admired the family that Dana built around her. This lesson is everlasting through my beautiful friends.

I love you. Hi.

Almost every memory I have, she's smack dab in the middle of an overly occupied couch. Where I saw discomfort, she saw joy and excitement. She really was always having fun while smooshed among friends. What an opportunity to sit hip-to-hip with those who you love! We encouraged each other. Her presence in my life helped me to see beauty inside myself at a time when I could not see it. Deepness can exist in a person's life. Living genuinely is the only thing worthwhile in the short time we have in the blip of one time on the planet, in this version of our soul. No matter how far we are apart, there is always space to listen and share. Love can be shared if one is willing and open and if love is allowed to be given. Some strangers, some dear friends, some acquaintances always felt close togetherness when Dana was there at annual gatherings.

Dana had a really good singing voice! Dana laughed when I asked a friend if he grew his mustache "intentionally!" Dana taught me to grieve my dad with my creative heart! We connected over the lows of family loss —

Dana taught me forgiveness!

Dana showed me exactly where to stand, when to cross, and where to leave my props. She had really good taste in music.

The perfect sense of style.

She was very loved.

I love you. I miss you.

Inspired by Dana's persistence and vulnerability in social justice work, I will carry her legacy forward and ask boldly knowing she would be cheering me on and encouraging boldness in all senses of the word. Her journey to supporting reparations completely changed my perspective on possibilities for true justice in this world. We learned what it looks like to keep living after the worst that can happen; what a house with the right amount of plants and light is; what it looks like to really hold on to your friends when they're far away; what it feels like to have someone to advocate for you; what it's like when a person's presence is like magic, and everyone feels loved and accepted and appreciated by her unconditionally.

DRIVE YOURSELF  
CRAZY IT'S LITERALLY NOT  
SNOWING THAT  
-GIVE YOUR FUNNIEST  
CHARACTERS REALLY AVERAGE NAMES.

## A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Sigur Ros
- The Books!
- Helen DeWitt
- Ramsey Clark playing the Beatles
- the singer, Lizzo
- a John Wizards record (gave the room a mood, a bounce. I would often listen to that music on a dull day at work and get uplifted by the spirit of the music shared and imbued with Dana)
- [swimmingholes.org](http://swimmingholes.org) (for finding places to swim on a road trip)
- Read *Spirit of Intimacy*
- banana bread pudding at Magnolia Bakery
- Call Your Girlfriend* music video
- Japanese workout with piano music (google Japanese Radio Calisthenics)
- white jeans
- white clogs
- buy the white sneaks
- thrift kitchen utensils
- find the best bric-a-brac
- tea balls (I never had one before. I didn't know how people drank loose tea)
- tarot (bring friends together for tarot)
- the *Mother Peace* tarot deck
- you can put as much chocolate in banana bread as you want
- collage
- specific podcasts
- Poog*
- Jellycat has good stuffed animals
- try things and see how they go
- take the g train
- make a breakfast frittata
- listen fully
- enjoy time alone



"When I Was a Boy"  
by Darr Williams

### WHAT TO DO part 2:

- make things
  - decorate everything (there's nothing that can't be embellished)
  - play subway charades
  - sing along to Dar Williams songs, particularly *Iowa*
  - make NYE meaningful
  - have proper English tea complete with white gloves, pinky finger held high and, of course, funny hats
  - impersonate and demonstrate JRJP
  - notice the weird and beautiful mannerisms and details around us
  - love yourself
  - you're cooler, stronger, smarter, more talented, deserving of love/incredible friendships
  - reframe the way you view what you value
  - learn the truth about certain hairstyles
  - experience awe and joy in the simple life of a plant
  - whip up a bibimbap, pie or other just incredible food.
  - if you have a bicycle, use it more - "why did you take the train? You have a bike"
  - try things you're not good at yet
  - delve into creative work even when it's hard and you feel stuck
  - keep going with your art
  - continuously say yes to exploring the full depth of a genuine connection even when it's unexpected or leads to unfamiliar terrain
  - say what you want
  - deliver the truth with clarity, warmth, grace, kindness
  - never underestimate anyone. A six-year-old might know all the parts of a butterfly.
  - one can never say the word "proboscis" too many times
  - invite people into whatever mischief you've got going on (you don't have to keep people at arm's length).
- try to identify trees (even though it can get difficult, it is worth it to stay the course)

The world fits together in  
a curious way, to pay attention  
to the seams.  
You can't always see  
the beautiful thing  
right away.



Untitled  
by Franz Wright

I basked in you;  
I loved you, helplessly, with  
a boundless tongue-tied love.

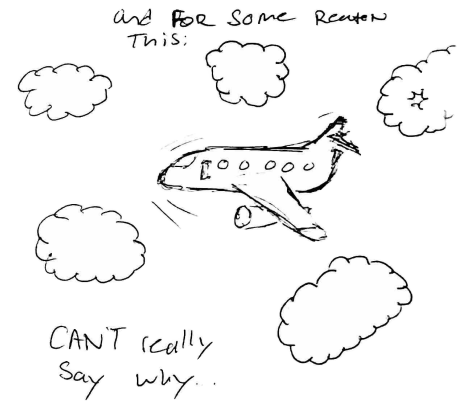
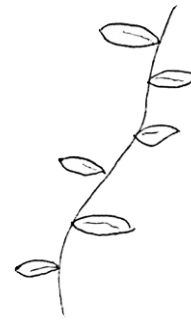
And deathn doesn't prevent  
me from loving you.

Besides,  
in my opinion you aren't dead.  
(I know dead people, and  
you are not dead.)



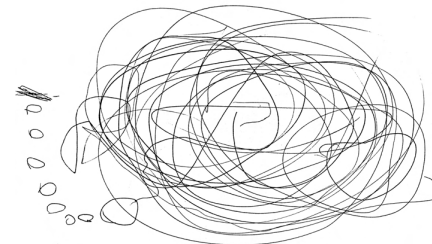
## REMEMBER:

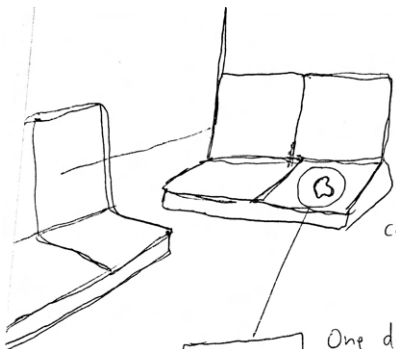
- a heart never reaches its capacity, it just continues to grow and grow
- the beauty of life is held deeply by those that loved them
- it's a true gift to be true to your creative silly self
- if you are truly yourself, your tribe can find you
- the world is filled with wonder and delight
- vigorous justice can go a long way with warmth and humor and fun
- we must grow and change
- it's always okay to look silly when playing sports
- there is no trip to the grocery store that can't be enhanced by playing with a grocery cart, plastic bags, and tiny children's candies
- impressions made in middle school may hold to be true
- I have to do better
- it's easy to do little things to make the world a better place
- the simplicity of beauty and how to build a life of love and light
- the beauty of lefties
- even the smallest most seemingly trivial shared interest can be a doorway into a deeper presence and intimacy
- always trust the whisper of the soul
- grace never died
- if you love fully, people show up for you
- no matter how small you are you can make a great big impact on the world
- extended family is important and those relationships should be nurtured and cherished
- we cannot let our communities go back to business as usual. We are urgently called to build a society where BIPOC communities can exist safely and thrive.
- strength is built from sadness and resilience is created by encompassing life's lows so that the highs can also be felt as fully
- making sourdough is a tad more complicated than I'm ready for
- being uncomfortable is okay
- all feelings are okay to have
- approach life with warmth, kindness and authenticity
- we can and should dance on
- there's always a reason to smile
- sparkly comes in human form, sweet isn't just a taste, friendship can be as big or small as you want it to be.
- wisdom and beauty can exist together
- infinite humor and infinite grace can coexist simultaneously in one person
- the world is full of kindred everywhere, even in the most unexpected places
  
- there can still be laughter
- there can still be love. Dana taught me how deep the love in a friendship can be.



## FUN FACTS:

- rabbits can smile
- diehard lava lamp fans refer to each other as "goo heads"
- clogs can look casual
- pillow cases are also dresses
- you can wear anything
- the Adidas Samba is a great shoe for all ages
- all skunks are handsome
- you never have to be the loudest in a room
- it's never that serious, so don't take it all so seriously
- monstera plants have a tremendous capacity to bounce back, so they're just like humans that way
- some plants are poisonous to cats
- Cam's song *Diane* is *Jolene* from another woman's perspective
- escaping with a friend is better than disappearing into yourself
- it's important to tell people you respect their work because they will remember it and it will always make them feel good
- fairies exist
- robots could be funny
- angels are real
  
- joy is easy (find joy in the tiniest miracle)
- an innocuous, once-a-year object like my sports menorah could resonate and inspire and take on a life of its own
- it's okay to watch Bravo and still be who we are





On the subway, there are often hard patches of plastic on the seats, wind blows that always confounded Dana and me.



One day, Dana and I were sitting next to one of these strange blobs. We talked about how it was just one of those "New York" things.

"Touch it!" I said. "No you touch it." I touched it and it wasn't one of the hard blobs. It was WET.



finding magic in the moment

On that day I learned to never touch anything on the subway ♡



\*not pooping... looking for rocks

**PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR SLEEPING WHEN YOU'RE LONELY:**

- tuck your sheet and blankets around you!
- get some warm light!
- give yourself a cozy bedtime routine

**MORE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a list of organizations fighting for justice on the ground in Minneapolis to follow or support: Minnesota Freedom Fund, Reclaim the Block, Black Visions Collective, Unicorn Riot, Northstar Health Collective, MPD 150, Black MN Covid-19 Response, George Floyd Memorial Fund
- The North Star Fund, Black Land Projects
- play Coup
- the guacamole song
- Tip Top is the best
- Betwix and Betwain
- make envelopes out of magazine pages
- my Spiderman dance is actually very cool and fun
- it would be pretty funny to start a labiaplasty GoFundMe for all our ex-boyfriends
- a contour drawing is the best way to do a portrait of someone
- love acting (the best way to be good onstage is to have fun)
- appreciate the fine details
- the gross smell in the back of QSIC should not deter a performer from putting on a good show
- you can be ruthlessly competitive at Settlers of Catan without coming across as a jerk
- take care of everyone that matters. Bake and deliver loaves of bread in a pandemic.
- spend the holidays with chosen family
- even a little child in a crib needs lots of books to look at/read (when Dana's grandmother Iris and I visited the Philadelphia loft, we noticed that Dana had many books tucked in around the liner in her crib!)
- release is required for movement and transformation
- when we are grounded in our values, ritual, interdependence, and connection, and we are committed to living into action and transformation, there is so much space for spontaneity and playfulness and joy
- never stop showing other people that you're interested in their lives

When I think of Dana, I still feel an impulsive joy in my heart. ♡

(here I am trying to give a speech, and Dana, as Ramona, is impulsively interrupting)

PARADE

thinking she is making everything better

not yet realized she is wrong. Right.





**WHAT TO DO part 3:**

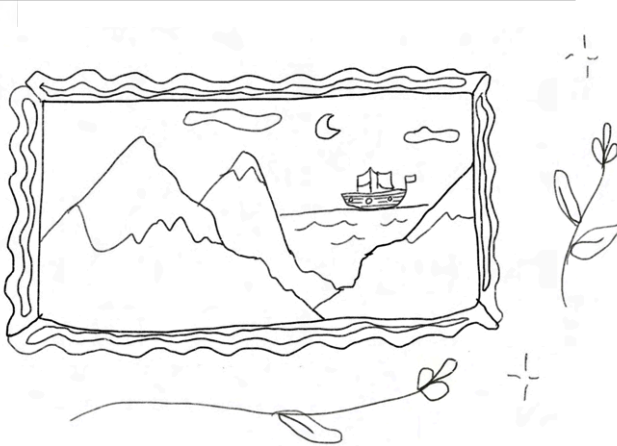
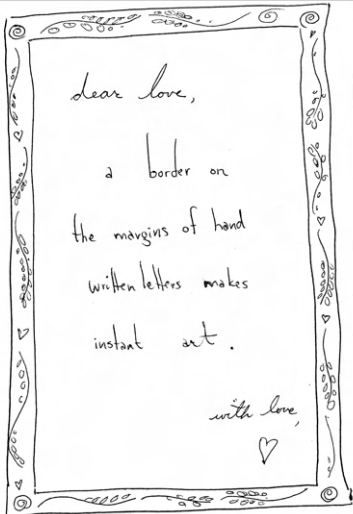


- think radically about wealth redistribution
- accept
- enjoy a pudding cup as an adult
- stay curious
- live with curiosity and loosen your pride
- continue to love and enjoy the company of others, fully immerse
- give people a chance
- feel comfortable in a crowd by connecting with people you love
- make moments special
- own and feel all of your feelings
- fuck the haters
- see the positivity in any situation
- live with meaning
- eat bacon in a car trunk
- find the fun, even when you might not see it right away (whether in the crevice of a couch next to an old friend or otherwise)
- spread love
- create something out of what you have
- play the sentence-drawing interpretation telephone game
- find magic in the moment
- dream beyond your own vision of the world into a bold reality of collective abundance moving backwards and forwards in time, into possibilities of falling all the way into embodied liberation
- celebrate life and people joyfully (face what's difficult with joy)
- ride the Griffon's Tale
- don't be such a scrooge
- smile at people you don't know
- lead with joy and curiosity
- don't take the notes that don't work for you
- see the humor in EVERYTHING! Surround yourself with love. Be a crucial friend.
- bike from Brooklyn to the West Village
- ask boldly but also with compassion, kindness and openness. Lean into the vulnerability of asking something of another person knowing it's scary and that's even more reason to do it
- through pain, reflection and resilience, we can find thoughtful meaning and purpose



## WAYS TO GRIEVE:

- expand time, energy and focus on grief
  - experience grief while surrounding yourself with friends and as much joy as possible
  - hold grief and practice love
  - grief holds clarity and honesty
  - grief can be a guide not just a burden
  - even with major tragedies, we can still present warmth, joy, spark and love for our people
  - joke about darkness
  - spin the darkest moments in a way that no one else can
  - make gifts and notes by hand
  - give the best hugs
  - ask questions when a person is suffering
  - stay open, loving and creative
  - be mighty and tender and small all at the same time - while singing
  - believe in yourself, whatever doubts you have
  - relish in secrets
  - let go
  - send letters across the classroom and across the country
  - have the courage to give more of yourself to people you don't know
  - keep your inner child alive
  - check yourself when you really need it
  - think about things more deeply
- 
- decorate your apartment
  - make a full cozy wonderful event of sitting on a fire escape
  - find small beautiful things in unexpected places
  - approach difficult tasks with wonder, positivity and a little mischief
  - stop and enjoy the moment



## LIFE HACKS:

- do rubbings of gravestones
  - do silly moves while running
  - skip through Brooklyn and do moves while singing Rent
  - use the second stall
  - make magnets out of little bottle caps
  - bring your friend tea and a ceramic mug to drink from outside in the rain
  - Watch *Godzilla vs. Kong* through the lens of bisexual lighting (think about this in all movies!)
  - make a mean lemon curd to pour with Dutch Babies (the pancake not actual babies). I wonder if anyone has the recipe
  - playing charades/celebrity with a bed sheet draped over you is the best way to play
  - how nice it is to have a lava lamp in your home
  - make majadra (rice and lentil dish made for every day celebratory meal)
  - set an example of how to be a faithful, always-available true friend
  - visit Indiana (I always enjoyed that!)
  - make a really good bagel pizza in the toaster oven (I don't think there was any wisdom beyond using good mozzarella. And I also had just never used a toaster oven, but Dana showed me they are the best)
  - you can take up to 3 - maybe more - Lactaid at a time
- 
- bike helmets are dorky, but in a good way
  - build a bed with cinder blocks, foam, and a plywood sheet from Home Depot (I slept on plywood for five years)
  - keep the shells after you've eaten the oysters - they are things of beauty
- 
- ### I DIDN'T KNOW
- what geocaching is
  - what shingles is
  - how to use the texting app "Signal"
  - imaginative play is for grown ups too
  - you can love across the miles and be soulmates with someone forever no matter what! (And not be separated in death.)