



MAGIC WAND

Not Required

TO LIVE & LOVE ON YOUR OWN TERMS

By [Karen M. Rider](#)

MORTALITY. It's been on my mind lately. But not the way you're thinking. Images of the afterlife are not flickering through my head. I'm not even thinking about how I'll die or when—though, maybe I should be because my older daughter has been asking those very questions (story for another time). No, I've been thinking about what mortality means for the life I'm living and how I'm living it, right now. Maybe it has something to do with the Harry Potter series coming to full-screen conclusion. There's no denying the books, better than some adult fiction, deal with love and loss; hope and fear; life and death. And, perhaps most importantly, beneath all the coming-of-age angst for Harry, Ron and Hermione, J.K. Rowling's fantastical septology compels us

to think about how we *choose to live* and *make meaning of* the life we have been given—even if we're not the Chosen One.

And that's just it, isn't it. Most of us are not aware that we've been chosen for anything. Most of us, myself included, plod through life like Hagar meanders through the woods at Hogwarts. Circumstances, however trite or serious, freeze us in a moment of angst and, quite a lot of us get stuck there. We can't go back and change things, though the "what ifs" that haunt us in these moments would have us think otherwise. Even Harry wondered what if he hadn't survived that fateful night Voldemort came for his Mum and Dad. Trapped between fear and hope for what might (or might not) come next we are unable to step forward into the uncertain future. But, what if (ah, there she is again), we could summon the courage that is born of that strange combination of fear and hope, and thrust ourselves into the unknown?

Wait—you say. Harry had wizarding skills! Ah, yes, but magic never made Harry's pain—the loss of his parents—disappear. It never made being a teenager easier for him. It never made finding his true place in the world simple. If anything, his prowess with magic often made life more challenging, not less, for the young wizard.



True, who among us wouldn't want to yield a magic wand to call forth a spectacular Patronus Charm—especially in these times when people are losing their homes, their jobs and for some, their faith? I have a surprise for you: Wands are not necessary. Harry's galloping Patronus Charm did not just come from his wand or even the wizard's skill. The *expecto patronus* charm derives its meaning from the classical Latin for "I desire a protector." The true source for manifesting one's protector lies not with the wand, but with the bearer's ability to conjure *in his mind* a happy memory. A positive emotional state is the true source of the patronus—and, I would argue, of most magic. (Unless, of course, you're into the Dark Arts).

When you find yourself looking for a magic wand to take down the Voldemorts that seem to rule your world, remember what sustained Harry through all his trials, whether he held a wand or not: The power of the love in his heart.