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A Thousand Names For Joy: Living In Harmony With The Way Things Are



Synopsis

In her first two books, Byron Katie showed how suffering can be ended by questioning the stressful thoughts that create it, through a process of self-inquiry she calls The Work. Now, in *A Thousand Names for Joy*, she encourages us to discover the freedom that lives on the other side of inquiry. Stephen Mitchell "the renowned translator of the Tao Te Ching" selected provocative excerpts from that ancient text as a stimulus for Katie to talk about the most essential issues that face us all: life and death, good and evil, love, work, and fulfillment. The result is a book that allows the timeless insights of the Tao Te Ching to resonate anew for us today, while offering a vivid and illuminating glimpse into the life of someone who for twenty years "ever since she awoke up to reality" • one morning in 1986 "has been living what Lao-tzu wrote more than 2,500 years ago. Katie's profound, lighthearted wisdom is not theoretical; it is absolutely authentic. That is what makes this book so compelling. It's a portrait of a woman who is imperturbably joyous, whether she is dancing with her infant granddaughter or finds that her house has been emptied out by burglars, whether she stands before a man about to kill her or embarks on the adventure of walking to the kitchen, whether she learns that she is going blind, flunks a "How Good a Lover Are You?" test, or is diagnosed with cancer. With her stories of total ease in all circumstances, Katie does more than describe the awakened mind; she lets you see it, feel it, in action. And she shows you how that mind is yours as well. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Katie's work is absolutely different from anyone else's. Most self-help books aren't really about anyone's "self" except the author's. They provide you with their ideas about how you can be happy, and these ideas are supposed to work for everyone. But instead of offering a one-size-fits-all strategy, Katie has shown me how to craft my own solutions, under any and all circumstances. The value of this really can't be overstated. In addition to helping me with problems after they've arisen, Katie's work showed me how to stop the problems from arising in the first place. I've learned that the way to counterbalance difficult emotions is not necessarily to explore or analyze them, but to catch them as they present themselves, question their validity, and then simply let them go. Once I examine any thought whatsoever, I'm struck by what it really, truly is in the first place: a thought. A thought has no bearing on reality. If you're suffering from a broken heart, for example, when you look, you see that your heart is not really broken. No matter how hard you try, you literally cannot find a broken heart. There is only the thought that a broken heart exists. The funny thing is that if you stop thinking that thought, the heartbreak also stops--not because you've healed it, but because it was never there anyway. It can be difficult to believe that it's this simple, but it is. Most self-help strategies are detailed commentaries on complex psychological or spiritual theories. But Katie's suggestions are almost pre-psychology and even pre-spirituality. They're about how the mind naturally works, no matter how you were raised or what you believe.

I wrote a glowing review for "Loving What Is," so it only seems right that I give my impression of this book. I didn't enjoy it as much, and it left me with a very confused impression of who Byron Katie is, and what she actually believes. I'm not discounting Katie's experiences, but in reading it I occasionally got a sense of contrived ingenuousness. Sometimes it's innocent enough ("I trip and fall down. It must be time for a rest!") other times it's almost heartless, such as when she runs into friends of the family she hasn't seen in several years, and when they ask "how is your dear mother" she replies, "She's wonderful. She's dead." She goes on to write: "Silence. The smiles were gone. I saw that they were having a problem, but I didn't know what it was. When [my daughter] and I were outside the store, she turned to me and said "Mom, when you talk to people like that, they can't handle it." That hadn't occurred to me. I was just telling the truth." This is a sixty year old woman writing. No matter what happened to her to change her worldview so substantially, surely she still has an idea of social mores and compassion. When my mother dies someday, and if I run into some old friends of hers, I would expect to tell them the news in a kinder way. Later in the book she talks about the fact that loving what is can seem heartless, and says that no matter what happens -- no matter how terrible -- she rejoices in it. "When I woke up from the dream of Byron Katie, there was

nothing left, and the nothing was benevolent. It's so benevolent that it wouldn't reappear, it wouldn't re-create itself. The worst thing could happen, the worst imagination of horror...and it would see that as grace, it would even celebrate, it would open its arms and sing "Hallelujah! ...

Eureka! Once and for all, Byron Katie has proven that enlightenment is not waiting on an oxygen-deprived mountaintop in Tibet, nor hiding in some mysterious, inaccessible cave of the heart known only to Yogis and Kabbalists. It's available right here while we're doing the dishes. I'd describe *A Thousand Names for Joy* as "The Tao for Dummies," a truly useful manual for "the rest of us" who want to live a peaceful, happy life. The conversations in this book are Katie's responses to verses from the *Tao Te Ching*, an ancient text on the art of living by the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu. (Katie's co-author and husband, Stephen Mitchell, wrote one of the most highly esteemed translations of this text in 1986, coincidentally the same year of Katie's now famous "moment of clarity.") This volume is much more than that. Like so many spiritual classics, the Tao wisely tells us what we should be striving for, but not how to get it. Katie, through the alchemy of self-inquiry, always tells us how. At the same time, this truly is a portrait of an awakened mind. We get to see life through Katie's eyes as a seemingly ordinary person who, like us, endures many of the kinds of experiences we may wish we didn't have to. We witness her as a woman whose purse is stolen, whose husband ate the snack she'd bought for herself and was so looking forward to having when she got home, who watches as the birth of a granddaughter becomes a medical emergency, who gets a diagnosis of cancer, who takes care of her dying mother, who is threatened at gunpoint, who looks into the eyes of a dead friend, having arrived "too late"...who endures a painful, degenerative disease of the cornea which leaves her largely blind and vulnerable to falling (though she's since had successful corneal transplants).

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