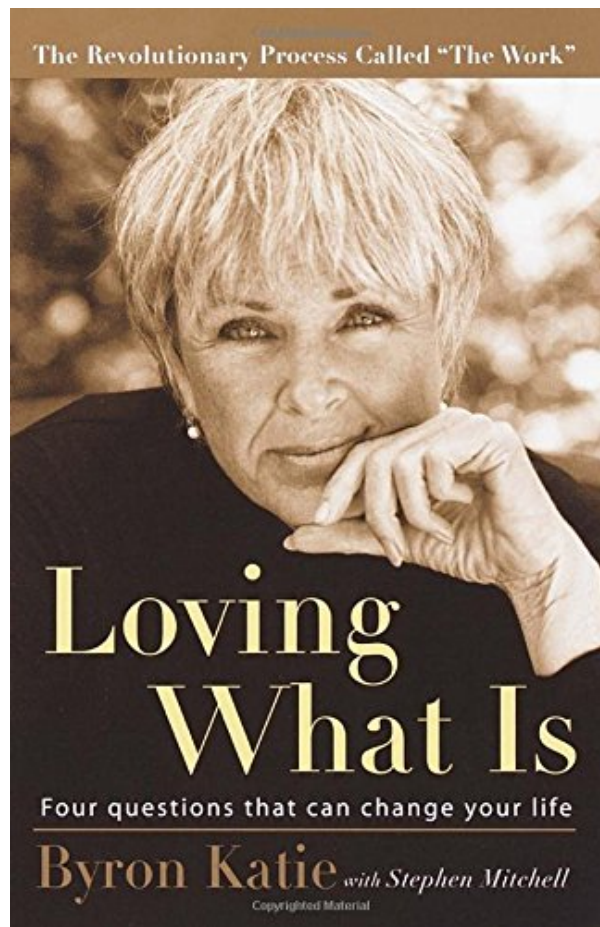


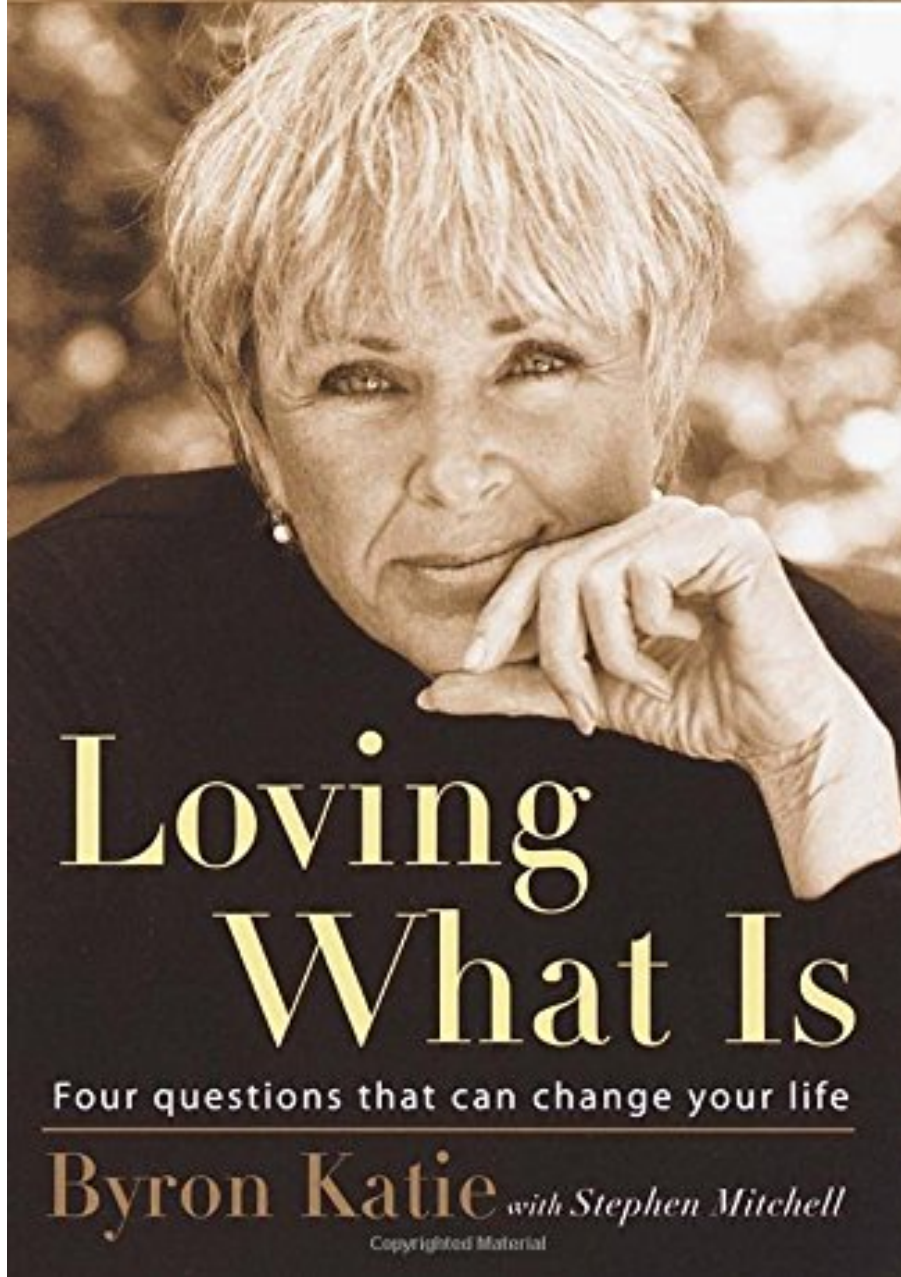
LOVING WHAT IS: FOUR QUESTIONS THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE BY BYRON KATIE, STEPHEN MITCHELL



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The Revolutionary Process Called "The Work"



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Amazon.com Review

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The book is filled with examples of folks applying *The Work* to a variety of life situations, and reading other's examples gets the idea across pretty clearly; chances are you'll find your own frustrations echoed on the pages a few times. Many chapters are divided into specific topics, such as couples, money, addictions, and self-judgments, with one chapter devoted to exploring the method with children.

Questioning your own authority is never an easy process, but it seems well worth the potential rewards--stress-free choices, peace, and affection for those closest to you. --Jill Lightner

From Library Journal

A thrice-married housewife and mother of three who once suffered from depression, Katie presents what she calls "the Work," a series of questions to help alter bad thinking patterns and reveal painful truths. So that readers might see the method in action, she has reproduced edited dialogs among herself and participants at her workshop. Direct and easy to follow, her book could indeed produce results for readers battling run-of-the-mill work and relationship problems. However, Katie and coauthor/husband Mitchell, a translator of the *Bhagavad Gita*, would like their audience to believe that this is heads above a standard self-help book: in Mitchell's compelling introduction, he compares Katie's process to the Socratic method and the Zen Koan

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Out of nowhere, like a breeze in a marketplace crowded with advice, comes Byron Katie and “The Work.” In the midst of a normal life, Katie became increasingly depressed, and over a ten-year period sank further into rage, despair, and thoughts of suicide. Then one morning, she woke up in a state of absolute joy, filled with the realization of how her own suffering had ended. The freedom of that realization has never left her, and now in Loving What Is you can discover the same freedom through The Work.

The Work is simply four questions that, when applied to a specific problem, enable you to see what is troubling you in an entirely different light. As Katie says, “It’s not the problem that causes our suffering; it’s our thinking about the problem.” Contrary to popular belief, trying to let go of a painful thought never works; instead, once we have done The Work, the thought lets go of us. At that point, we can truly love what is, just as it is.

Loving What Is will show you step-by-step, through clear and vivid examples, exactly how to use this revolutionary process for yourself. You’ll see people do The Work with Katie on a broad range of human problems, from a wife ready to leave her husband because he wants more sex, to a Manhattan worker paralyzed by fear of terrorism, to a woman suffering over a death in her family. Many people have discovered The Work’s power to solve problems; in addition, they say that through The Work they experience a sense of lasting peace and find the clarity and energy to act, even in situations that had previously seemed impossible.

If you continue to do The Work, you may discover, as many people have, that the questioning flows into every aspect of your life, effortlessly undoing the stressful thoughts that keep you from experiencing peace. Loving What Is offers everything you need to learn and live this remarkable process, and to find happiness as what Katie calls “a lover of reality.”

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Loving and Ending Suffering

By Kyle

Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes, but one of the key components of suffering is often fear. I have often experienced fear and anxiety in a variety of situations, even though I knew my worries were unfounded and irrational. I often ruminated on my problems to the point where I felt like I was constantly having an anxiety attack. I turned to things like alcohol and other drugs to keep my mind off the problem at hand, but that only delayed the inevitable. When I would sober up, the problem was still there and I would have not made any progress on solving it. This book details a simple, step-by-step guide on how to go through "The Work" toward healing and ending suffering. It has literally been a lifesaver for me. It is practical and actionable, and I use these methods in my everyday life.

I also found 21 Things You Should Give Up To Be Happy. It is a book that is just as practical and actionable as Loving What Is, but it takes a slightly different approach. It posits that giving up concepts and ideas is the best way to achieve happiness. Using advice in this book along with "The Work," I have been able to clear my head and focus on my goals. I no longer worry about what other people think, and I've started planning my life more around concrete goals and less around the aimless wander. 21 Thing You Should Give Up To Be Happy talks about the "aimless wander" as one thing you should give up. My anxiety was always on high alert, but it didn't need to be!

I'm glad I found these two books, because I've been to produce much more positive effects throughout my life. I am working toward my goals and my mind is more stress-free than it's ever been. Neither of these books offer new age mumbo jumbo. They are written by real people with real life experience who have been able to construct effective action plans that work for a wide variety of individuals. I am just one success story in a sea of others.

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

The serious flaws in Byron Katie's Work

By Arne Wagenaar

I am highly concerned about this work and it's consequences on people in need of emotional relief.

Katie tells people that their upset and frustration about other people's behaviour is a lie and that basically their own upset and frustration and consequent behaviour are the cause for their own upset and frustration (negating it away). The other people are always right as in you can learn from them, there is always truth in what they present as they represent the spiritual master.

It is statistically impossible for one person to be always wrong and for the other persons around to be always right. This can only happen from a very subjective, narcissistic standpoint in which my entire world revolves around me, but where I am, in contrast to standard narcissism, always wrong instead of always right. The effect is the same however. Everyone and everything serves as a validation of my ego, in this case an ego that thinks it is deconstructing itself (into perpetuity I'd say). Say probably hello to Katie's personality here.

I was hoping throughout the book for an interview between Katie and both parties involved to see how this would play out. Unfortunately there was no interview like that.

Then there are several issues with the reversal, or 'turning around' the statements.

First of all when something isn't true doesn't automatically mean that the opposite is true. That is a logical fallacy. I will explain this by using the (shocking) example from the book of the 7 year old girl being raped by her stepfather where the now adult woman has to change her statement "my stepfather abused me" into "i abused my stepfather". I guess anyone not attached to a desired outcome would see this as totally flawed reasoning, the woman actually even confirms it by looking for evidence as in that she could afterwards get

anything from her stepfather, thus implying that she did abuse him. My assumption is that she only does this because she wants to believe Katie because she is looking for an answer to pain and issues she is having to deal with every day because of what happened to her during childhood. I guess even for the woman involved it only holds because the statement is still fairly abstract. If her stepfather for example had broken her jaw the statement would have been: My stepfather broke my jaw and she would have change that into I broke my stepfather's jaw, I guess even she would have seen how bizarre such a reversal really is.

And in the reversal examples in the book there are problems with consistency. In the example from the book of the mother with the drug addicted daughter who has a baby, Katie claims that the mother should turn around "my daughter should take care of her baby" into "I should take care of her baby" but shouldn't turn around "my daughter should take care of her drug addiction" because all of a sudden the drug addiction is the daughter's responsibility. And the baby isn't...

Continuing with the example from the book of the mother with the drug addicted daughter, Katie claims that the daughter's drug addiction actually isn't the problem for the mother, the problem is the mental approach of the mother towards the addiction. The mother states that she sees her daughter going through a personality change caused by the drugs. She should reverse this into that the mother is going through a personality change because she is so upset about what is happening. In my opinion this is nothing else then basically denying a problem (for as far as we know the daughter might be addicted to crystal meth and is methodically destroying both her physical and mental health) and only focusing on taking away the resonance that a problem creates. It is like trying not to cough to pretend lung cancer doesn't exist or like blinding your eyes to not see the abuse and pretend everything is all right.

I believe works like these are very dangerous for people in emotional distress desperately looking for relief and answers and should be seen as unprofessional and harmful psychology and therefore be disclaimed. According to Katie's theory, however, I should therefore be disclaimed.

90 of 99 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting Method That is Taken Way Too Far

By M. Richardson

It has been said that the difference between dangerous bull and merely obnoxious bull is that dangerous bull contains enough truth in it to be deceptive. While I certainly wouldn't label Byron Katie's ("BK" from now on) ideas as "bull," the same idea applies here: BK's book deftly mixes important truths and what seems to be a helpful method with amateurish and potentially dangerous ideas, which makes the book more worrisome than any deranged rantings about reptilians and time cubes.

The book elaborates extensively on one idea which certainly will be no secret to anyone acquainted with Eastern Philosophy or Shakespeare (recall Hamlet's line that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so") - that pain is caused, not by our relationship with the world around us, but by the way we think about it - and then introduces a method which BK calls "the work" for re-evaluating our thoughts and providing ourselves with inner peace.

OK. Fine.

The idea which provides the foundation for the method presented in this book is true enough, validated by personal examples and scientific evidence for centuries. The power of the human mind over our bodies is truly impressive, and potentially terrifying when something goes wrong up there, as anyone who knows a schizophrenic or a victim of phantom leg syndrome can attest.

The major problem with BK's view of life boils down to the fact that this isn't the only true proposition about human beings. Her flighty idealism evinces a poor understanding of human biology. It is true that hormonally stable, neurotypical individuals can indeed solve most of their petty day-to-day irritations by controlling their minds, but most of what determines our behavior and thinking (as she notes in the book, if we're not making a concentrated effort at it, we are nothing thinking so much as being thought) happens on a hidden biological level. BK treats conscious re-thinking (my own term for what she'd call "the work") as the great Key to Happiness -- fine to tell to a fairly normal individual, but not so much to an individual whose problems lie on a deeper level and who requires medical intervention in order to lead a tolerable existence.

She also seems fairly ignorant of basic human psychology, which we have found to be fairly uniform in its workings throughout different cultures and the great well of time -- one reason why we can read the writings of a Japanese noblewoman in 11th century Japan and still relate to the content on some basic, primal level. I don't think she'd debate this point (she probably tell me that people have been making the same mistakes since the beginning of time, and that this in no way invalidated her point, and she'd be correct). I bring this up because, in the same way that human thought is largely homogeneous throughout history, so too are the ways in which we deal with life. Pain and suffering are normal and healthy reactions to trauma and heartbreak. There is no quick fix for really deep scars. Only time and living can heal the most debilitating emotional wounds and allow us to return to a state of relative equilibrium. Just as the body has a method for dealing with wounds, so does the mind.

This is the point where BK loses me: she holds that ALL pain can be eradicated by "the work." She lives in a Mcworld of instant gratification where pain instantly dissolves in the solvent of inquiry and a healthy individual can live his or her own life without ever having to be exposed to suffering. To her, pain is an illusion, and all one needs to do is install this filter of four questions in one's head in order to to be left with nothing but the chewy bits at the end.

What a bloodless world she inhabits! Pain and pleasure are degrees of differentiation that are comprehensible only in relation to the other. Not only is pain necessary in healthy psychological healing, it is also what allows for sympathy and compassion. It is not only methodologically wrong, but also teleologically undesirable. I have no doubt that BK is honest in her feelings and observations: she seems, in fact, brutally honest about what it would be like to talk to her. It is the same in all her books. There is an observation in another one - "A Thousand Names for Joy" - that would serve well as an illustration. When she bumped into friends of her mother (they hadn't seen her mother in years), they asked BK how she was doing. BK's response? "She's wonderful. She's dead." Who wants to live in a world with people like this, who have no regard for the feelings of others?

I'm sure if one escapes into BK's Neverland of complete emotional disengagement that one might be able to avoid, temporarily, the hard pangs that come with serious emotional trauma. One can likely become a robot who pays loads of money for her seminars and training camp and fend off the ravages of emotion for a certain length of time. Perhaps so long as one is being exploited by her cultish public offerings. But, eventually, these BK-bots will want to open themselves up to life again, and they're going to have to sort through the inevitable emotional wreckage which BK's influence will have resulted in.

This ethical objection to her philosophy is what animates most of the outrage directed at a couple of interviews in her book, where she 'counsels' war and molestation victims. Others have elaborated on this portion of the book so thoroughly that it would be pointless to do so myself. I believe I have made my own reasoning on these clear.

She frequently (always briefly) speculates on philosophical matters throughout the book. These portions are

always boorish and amateur, and the idealism here is only a Western watering-down of the obtuse metaphysics of Eastern traditions.

The method itself uses four questions to help practitioners re-evaluate their own thoughts. The idea is that our pains and grievances are warped and unreal projections of perceived deficiencies in ourselves. She has a person first fill out a "Judge-Your-Neighbor worksheet," which makes the person elaborate in petty and often excruciating detail the problems they have with someone else (BK advises beginning practitioners to always focus on the Other in order to allow for reflective honesty, since it reflects the person doing the judging anyhow). After they do this, she has them run each complaint through a series of four questions:

- 1) Is it true?
- 2) Can you absolutely know that it's true?
- 3) How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?
- 4) Who would you be without the thought?

As they proceed through these questions, people (always weaker-willed than the VERY strong-willed BK) are inexorably led to the conclusion that their complaint's truth-value is unknowable and that it is only wreaking havoc on their emotional lives. They are then instructed to 'turn it around,' which means to reverse the focus of the question in some manner. This can be achieved in multiple ways. As a simple example, the complaint "[x] doesn't love me" could be turned around to become "I don't love myself." This is following BK's notion that all of our judgments ultimately reflect something about ourselves.

A common complaint by critics is that even when BK tells people that she is not directing the flow of the inquiry, she very obviously is. This is a legitimate complaint. BK all but leads some of these people around by the nose while telling them that she isn't leading them anywhere.

I make this sound manipulative. Well, it is manipulative. So is ANY form of rhetoric or directed questioning. The problem lies in her dishonesty about this matter with her (I use this term loosely) 'patients.'

If Byron Katie is a bad ethicist and metaphysician, she is, at least, a skilled epistemologist. She says that her method works for eliminating normal stress from one's life, and from what I've seen (and personally experimented with), this seems to be true enough. BK must be credited for this.

There are various other complaints. For instance, she sounds flagrantly condescending with her liberal use of endearments ("honey," "dear," "sweetheart," etc.). But these things can mostly (like my example) be boiled down to simple personal eccentricity which admits of no moral evaluation.

I'm afraid I've rather made the woman sound bad. But there is a reason I've given this book three stars. Her method is fine for day-to-day aggravations, and many could perhaps benefit from gaining an extra element to their personal perspective by reading this book. But don't swear by it to the point where you become a creepy self-involved sociopath who is unable to relate to other humans on any important level.

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