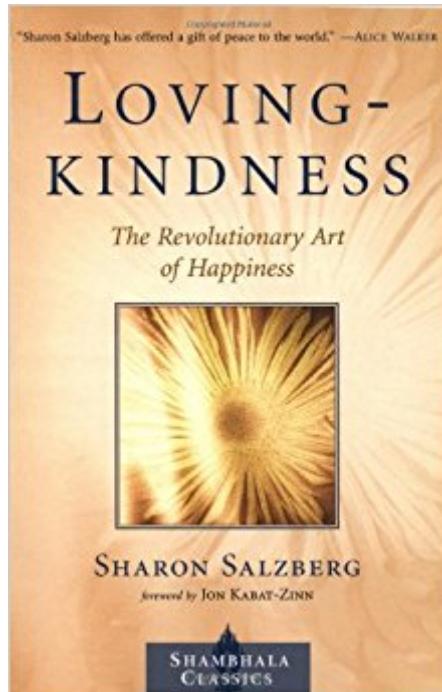


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Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art Of Happiness (Shambhala Classics)



Synopsis

Throughout our lives we long to love ourselves more deeply and find a greater sense of connection with others. Our fear of intimacy—“both with others and with ourselves”—creates feelings of pain and longing. But these feelings can also awaken in us the desire for freedom and the willingness to take up the spiritual path. In this inspiring book, Sharon Salzberg, one of America’s leading spiritual teachers, shows us how the Buddhist path of lovingkindness can help us discover the radiant, joyful heart within each of us. This practice of lovingkindness is revolutionary because it has the power to radically change our lives, helping us cultivate true happiness in ourselves and genuine compassion for others. The Buddha described the nature of such a spiritual path as “the liberation of the heart, which is love.” The author draws on simple Buddhist teachings, wisdom stories from various traditions, guided meditation practices, and her own experience from twenty-five years of practice and teaching to illustrate how each one of us can cultivate love, compassion, joy, and equanimity—the four “heavenly abodes” of traditional Buddhism.

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Customer Reviews

I am not a Buddhist, but I've practiced insight (vipassana) meditation for several years. I was curious about lovingkindness (metta) meditation, which I'd heard of when I was in Burma, although as a beginner, I chose to stick to insight meditation. Somehow I thought this book would be the best introduction to me, and I ordered it. But let me confess, at first I failed to appreciate it. I read about

20 pages, I was bored, and I put the book down for about 8 months. That's fine, insight meditation never hurt anyone. I don't remember why I was initially so bored by the book. Perhaps it was because of her conversational style, full of stories from her own or her friends' experiences. Most people like that kind of thing, it makes the author's ideas easier to understand, more familiar and more human; but I usually prefer an author to state their point and move on, without personal stories. Anyway, the stories she shares actually illuminate her points quite well. When I picked the book up again (8 months later), somehow it hit me this time. I read it in about 2 weeks, and it only took me that long because I actually did many of the meditation exercises she suggests. I intend to keep going back and doing more of them. She does a good job presenting the tradition of metta meditation, as far as I can tell, although I'm certainly no expert on it. Since she's Buddhist, naturally she believes in karma and reincarnation, but I don't. So I, as a thorough skeptic, appreciated the lack of supernaturalism throughout the book. In the penultimate chapter she gave an account of karma, but that was all. She was very considerate to skeptics in that regard. The rest of the book is sharply focused on the techniques and principles of metta meditation and their benefits in this life. That makes it a book I can strongly recommend, regardless of your religious inclinations, if you want to practice metta meditation. You don't need to believe in karma or reincarnation to benefit from it! But let me add a little caveat to that. I am not a great teacher or anything, but if you're just starting meditation, I'd recommend trying insight meditation first. One more small note: On beliefnet.com, you can enjoy some guided meditations led by the author of this book, for free.

Lovingkindness : The Revolutionary Art of Happiness by Sharon Salzberg is by far one of the best books ever written. And contrary to what others have said in their reviews, I believe that this book can be read by anyone. If meditation makes you uncomfortable, think of it as a positive affirmation. Ms. Salzberg teaches us how to appreciate life and those around us. It really is a great book: one of three that I always keep by my bedside and refer to frequently! I highly, highly recommend it!!

Sharon Salzberg is such a capable, warm, and inspiring voice for Western Buddhism. This work beautifully weaves together Buddhist philosophy and practice, reality and practicality, compassion and joy. She fleshes out concepts of meditation and mindfulness using her own experiences, often amusing, without drawing attention to herself. Rather, she is a skilled teacher who guides the student on his/her own journey. Whether Buddhist or not, beginner mind or monk, most readers will celebrate this work.

This is one of the few books I would actually read over and over. It's incredibly down-to-earth and is full of great quotes you keep in mind all day long. It invites you to think about your perception of yourself and others in a very different light. There is so much common sense in the buddhist way of relating to each other, but we don't often use our common sense.

Loving-kindness meditation is unique to our Buddhist traditions, and in this book Sharon Salzburg presents us with an informative body of work on it's practice. She uses her understanding and know-how drawn from many years of practice to point each and every one of us to the realization that the light of love is already within us all. Loving-kindness must be aimed at two sources: ourselves and all beings. Sharon talks a bit about what holds us back from this realization, ranging from our attachments to antagonism. One of the first rules to breaking down these impediments is the act of giving, not just giving in a material sense but ultimately giving the breadth of our very being; compassionate action, not just loving-kindness thoughts. This book should speak to all of us, and for this reason alone I give it 5 stars.

I am not overstating in saying that I owe much of my happiness to the principles this book so clearly, intelligently, and accessibly presents. The principle of loving-kindness is explained in short, marvelously fat-free chapters, at the end of each of which are excellent guided suggestions for practice. The book is impeccably written and edited. These meditations have helped me through profound grieving, which has transformed into joy and new insight. I especially recommend this book for readers who are experiencing divorce or other difficult interpersonal problems. Short of an expensive and demanding meditation retreat I can think of no better practice for unconditional love and happiness. This is worth a mint in therapy! No religious belief in Buddhism is necessary.

While self-help books abound, promising deliverance from all that ails us, Sharon Salzberg's "Loving Kindness" refreshes. Her writings burn themselves clean...in that, one is not tangled up with an author presenting her version of a spiritual path, rather she is the path itself, unfolding for who ever wants to journey. From the opening lines in chapter one: "We can travel a long way and do many different things, but our deepest happiness is not born from accumulating new experiences. It is born from letting go of what is unnecessary and knowing ourselves to be always at home." to the last chapter, entitled, "Living Our Love", Ms. Salzberg writes with dignity and care about that which she deeply knows.

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