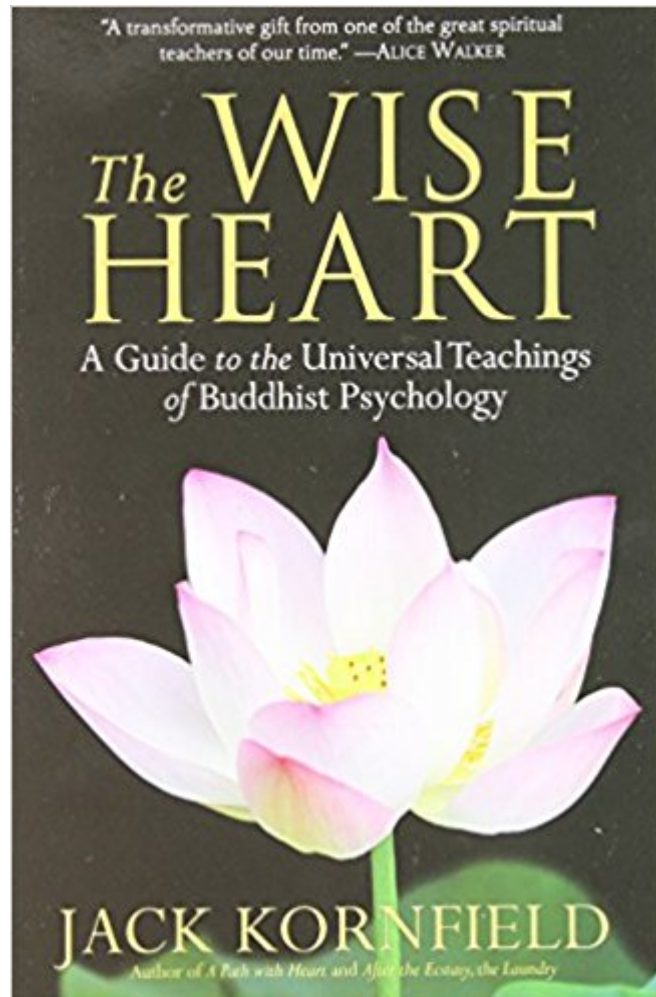


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# The Wise Heart: A Guide To The Universal Teachings Of Buddhist Psychology



## Synopsis

Experience the Transformational Power of Buddhism's Psychology of the Heart with Bestselling Author Jack Kornfield. You have within you unlimited capacities for extraordinary love, for joy, for communion with life, and for unshakable freedom—and here is how to awaken them. In *The Wise Heart*, celebrated author and psychologist Jack Kornfield offers the most accessible, comprehensive, and illuminating guide to Buddhist psychology ever published in the West. For meditators and mental health professionals, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, here is a vision of radiant human dignity, a journey to the highest expression of human possibility—and a practical path for realizing it in our own lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There's an irony that at times Buddhists can become stuck in ideology, clinging to their ideas of what they believe the Buddha intended as THE right way. Jack Kornfield avoids this. He has the soft touch, open heart and discerning wisdom that comes from his own struggles and decades of meditation, practicing therapy, and teaching. He knows there is no such thing as a formula for happiness. Kornfield generously quotes from a wide range of thinkers, mystics and disciplines, knowing Buddhists don't have a lock on insight. Still, Kornfield is steeped in and dedicated to Buddhist practices; his goal is to transmit what may at times be difficult to discern insights from Buddhist psychology to a wide audience. As he writes: "At this moment, a winter rainstorm is drenching my simple writer's cabin in the woods above Spirit Rock. On my desk are classic texts

from many of the major historic schools of Buddhism: the Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, the eight-thousand-verse "large version" of the Heart Sutra, with its teachings on form and emptiness, and a Tibetan text on consciousness by Longchenpa. Over time, I have learned to treasure these texts and know that they are filled with jewels of wisdom. Yet the Abhidhamma (or Abhidharma in Sanskrit), considered the masterwork of the early Theravada tradition and the ultimate compendium of Buddhist psychology, is also one of the most impenetrable books ever written. What are we to make of passages such as, "The inseparable material phenomena constitute the pure octad; leading to the dodecad of bodily intimation and the lightness triad; all as material groups originating from consciousness"?

I was disappointed and irked by *The Wise Heart*. My low rating comes from three sources: (1) Format (2) Content and (3) Peeves. My critical comments and poor rating come with hesitation because I have a sincere appreciation of Jack Kornfield's work. I hope this book will be re-written.

(1) Format. I have been fortunate to attend many Monday nights of Jack's dharma talks at Spirit Rock, and his powers as a presenter are unmatched. Unfortunately, the formula in this book fails to deliver the sub-title's promise "A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology." The sections start with several quotes, next a vague notion ("So does mindfulness open us to that which is unseen in our experience" p. 97) followed by an intense story with a happy ending ("With mindfulness Peter found relief" p. 98) and ending up with a sweeping generality ("Since 1980 nearly a thousand scientific papers have documented the effectiveness of mindfulness, often studying Western trainings that are based on a Buddhist approach." p. 99). The therapy stories are too numerous, I come away from this book completely befuddled.

(2) Content. The notion of inner radiance or beauty as each human's intrinsic nature isn't an idea that is accepted by many followers of Theravada or Zen Buddhism. I am finding that once you read the original texts not Western commentary, the Buddha is circumspect about settling any metaphysical debates, in Nikaya's translation of the Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha in the Aggivacchagotta Sutta on p. 590 for example, the Buddha refuses to settle a long sting of metaphysical debates in his discussion with the wanderer Vacchagotta. The 26 principles throughout the book are internally contradictory, and not universally accepted by Buddhists.

(3) Peeves.

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