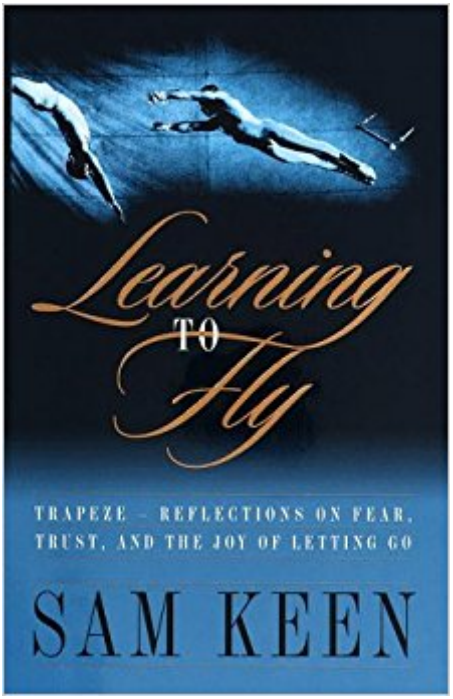
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Learning To Fly



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Synopsis

The acclaimed author of Fire in the Belly presents an exhilarating memoir of his late-blooming love affair with the flying trapeze--and a provocative look at the potential it offers for growth and transformation.Since he first experienced the joy and freedom of flight while swinging from trees as a boy in Alabama and Tennessee, Sam Keen dreamed of being able to fly. But it was only when, at age sixty-one, he happened upon a trapeze training program at the San Francisco School of Circus Arts that he took up the quest in earnest. After ascending to the platform thirty-one feet in the air and grasping the trapeze bar, Keen dove into the ocean of emptiness above the net, lost in the pleasure of swinging. Returning to the trapeze again and again, he gradually developed the poise and confidence that allowed him to release himself from the bar and soar--airborne--into the hands of a catcher. Having tasted the elation of actual flight, Keen’s childhood dream became a passion and a vehicle for exploring the challenges and dilemmas of life.In Learning to Fly, Keen traces the life journey that led him to respond to the lure of the trapeze late in his life and shares what his five years of intensive practice have taught him about living more intensely and passionately. He also recounts how his recognition of this art form’s transcendent powers led him to launch Upward Bound, a trapeze workshop for anyone facing deeply rooted fears.An unprecedented adventure of the soul and psyche, Learning to Fly teaches us to soar on the wings of possibility as we watch Keen and his students progress through breathtaking exercises. As he describes take-offs and knee hangs and thrilling mid-air catches, Keen imparts moving revelations about risk-taking, trust, bravado, true strength, falling, and letting go. Guiding us on a remarkable inner journey through the "circus of the mind," Learning to Fly reveals the grace of ascending in body and spirit--and living with levity.A film documentary of Learning to Fly is also available on video, produced by Quest Productions based in Berkeley, CA.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For as far back as he could remember, Sam Keen had dreamed of flying. And so just before his 62nd birthday, Keen enrolled in a trapeze class at the San Francisco School of Circus Arts, thus becoming "the oldest student at the circus." In this richly written memoir, Keen uses the details of trapeze training to frame his spiritual understanding of the world. Not surprisingly, the flight metaphors work--giving room for chapters titled "Leap of Faith," "A Fledgling Among the Eagles," and "On the Wings of Spirit." As a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Keen is a fine memoirist--able to step outside himself to tell a good story and willing to share his humiliations and inner fears as he became a student of flight. "My failures have taught me there is always a second chance.... Failing gives fallible human beings a chance to start over. And that is why every man, woman, and society needs a safety net." He now leads an "Upward Bound" trapeze program for abused women, drug addicts, and inner-city school children. --Gail Hudson

Of all the writers and pundits who shaped the immensely influential men’s movement of the 1980s, Keen (Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man, Bantam, 1992. reprint) is perhaps the most able. His new work, a gracefully written account of his experience at the trapeze training program of the San Francisco School of Circus Arts, should please his avid readers and perhaps earn him many more; he delivers unobtrusive lessons in the arts of fear, strength, and trust as natural corollaries of a real and vividly described experience. This charming and worthy work should make a fine addition to most collections. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

If you are more influenced by books that show rather than by books that tell, add this one to your list.Keen gently unfolds his ideas of meeting the challenge of life changes and thriving through a gently told memoir of his experience of becoming a flying trapeze artist at the age of 62. The word artist is important here: an artist is one who strives for beauty, although he may not be the most accomplished of his co-strivers. The effort, and the successes that do occur, are enough.Those who have found themselves dangling at the end of a parachute, kayaking a gorge, learning to run, or learning to surf at midlife or beyond will recognize the drive for efficiency and beauty in ones own

bodies' actions.This lovely metaphor for life has given new context to my own: I don't ask for more.

Fast shipping, well packed. This stuff smells clinical, like it's probably killing lots of germs (not too strong of a smell though). Cleaned out my clarinet case and sprayed the inside of it, let it dry and put my horn and accessories back in and it doesn't stink anymore - no odor.

I, too, read this fascinating book in just a few sittings. I have the entire book highlighted with tiny sticky notes that I want to go back and re-read and review again. After finishing this book, I realized my need to "WIDEN" my horizons and to carve myself an entirely new shape. The chapter-beginnings were very helpful and inspiring. Impossible to get what Sam Keen says out of your mind after reading this book. This book is truly a winner!

In love with the book. Has great life lessons in it. Easy to read & quite enjoyable.

Surprisingly profound even for those of us who are not athletically inclined

Good book

Towards the end of this fascinating book Keen shares a pearl of wisdom passed on to him by his friend and mentor Howard Thurman,"The hard thing when you get old is to keep your horizons open...over the years you carve yourself into a given shape. The challenge is to keep discovering the green growing edge." With literary grace and the usual "keen" insight this author has been blessed with, we go on a magical mystery tour to see and experience Sam Keen's "green growing edge" in this, his sixty eighth year. I read this book in one sitting. I have had the pleasure of taking a few baby steps on a trapeze rig, so much of what is here was re-living my short foray into the "the beyond". Even if you are only metaphorically taking leaps of faith each day, you will find a feast of insights, awarenesses, giggles, philosphical koans, and other assorted presents brought to you by one of today's liveliest minds!

Everyone who reads Keen knows he writes very well and from the heart. But in this book his very soul flies through the air with his words. When Sam reviewed my book, PRIMAL AWARENESS, he said it was an adventurous search for the lost ark. LEARNING TO FLY is about finding the lost ark.

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