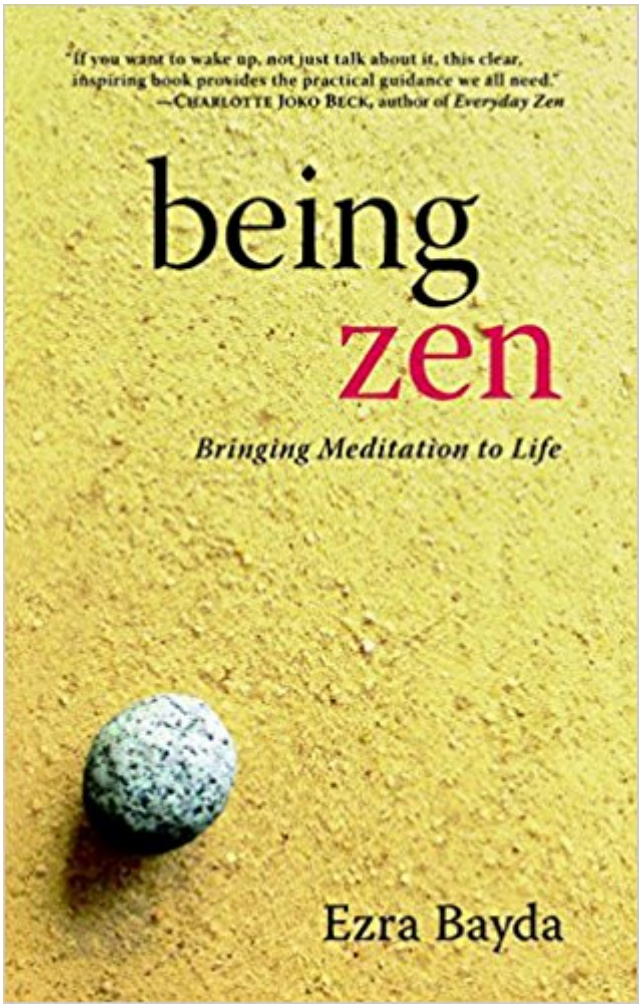
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Being Zen: Bringing Meditation To Life



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Synopsis

We can use whatever life presents, Ezra Bayda teaches, to strengthen our spiritual practiceÃ¢â ¬â •including the turmoil of daily life. What we need is the willingness to just be with our experiencesÃ¢â ¬â •whether they are painful or pleasingÃ¢â ¬â •opening ourselves to the reality of our lives without trying to fix or change anything. But doing this requires that we confront our most deeply rooted fears and assumptions in order to gradually become free of the constrictions and suffering they create. Then we can awaken to the loving-kindness that is at the heart of our being. While many books aspire to bring meditation into everyday experience, Being Zen gives us practical ways to actually do it, introducing techniques that enable the reader to foster qualities essential to continued spiritual awakening. Topics include how to cultivate: Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Perseverance: staying with anger, fear, and other distressing emotions.
Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Stillness: abiding with chaotic experiences without becoming overwhelmed. Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Clarity: seeing through the conditioned beliefs and fears that "run" us. Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Â¢Ã Â Direct experience: encountering the physical reality of the present momentÃ¢â ¬â •even when that moment is exactly where we don’t want to be. Like Pema ChÃƒÂ¶drÃƒÂ¶n, the best-selling author of When Things Fall Apart, Ezra Bayda writes with clear, heartfelt simplicity, using his own life stories to illustrate the teachings in an immediate and accessible way that will appeal to a broad spectrum of readers.

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Customer Reviews

The paradox of Zen is that learning to just live in the present requires lots of hard work. In Being Zen, seasoned Zen teacher Ezra Bayda unpacks this paradox. He demonstrates the need to just be and then instructs us how to undertake the hard work with precision and persistence. Through personal anecdotes he shows us how we keep ourselves from living a genuine life. Instead, we maintain an ideal image of ourselves by creating strategies that depend on delusive self-images, blind spots, and knee-jerk reactions. He then shows how, by "living the practice life," we can relentlessly observe this process and transform our edifices into open spaces of natural awareness and innate compassion. Bayda offers specific practices for dealing with such automatic emotions as anger and fear, teaching how they can be dampened and eventually dissolved. A "how-to" book in the best sense of the word, Being Zen is about how to just live. --Brian Bruya --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Novice author and veteran meditator Bayda writes with exceptional clarity and simplicity about the awakened life. Bayda is a recognized teacher in the Ordinary Mind Zen School founded by Charlotte Joko Beck (who provides the foreword), and he has a gift for describing that "ordinary mind," or the customary thoughts, feelings and experiences of everyday life. His style is as plainspoken as Tibetan teacher Pema Ch”dr”n's; it's not surprising that she acknowledges his work in her latest book. Bayda's grounding in life as it's lived makes his teaching and writing unpretentious and inviting, as if ready to apply. Indeed, one of the book's strengths is the techniques and exercises that the meditation teacher describes. None of them is startlingly new, but his explanations are precise, discriminating among similar practices and noting how results change over time as the meditator grows more experienced with tools for inner inquiry. Meditation, after all, takes as much time as any other habit to acquire. The book breaks no new ground a big expectation, true, after 2,500 years of Buddhist teaching and practice and it's on the small side for its price point. But Bayda offers clear instruction, as a teacher pointing the way toward Ultimate Clarity should. He deserves membership in the ranks of respected meditation teacher-authors. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If it is true, as the adage goes, that good things often come in small packages, then here we have some tangible evidence in the form of this wonderful first book from Zen teacher Ezra Bayda. A "small package" indeed, at under 150 reduced-size pages, and yet brimming with more useful

information and sage advice than many a larger book.Much of the useful information contained in Being Zen is concentrated in its opening section, "The Basics of Practice". In these chapters, Bayda first helps us to understand how we are all "skating on thin ice" by investing so much energy in attempting to control every aspect of life, and then offers practical suggestions for using meditation practice as a way of learning how to simply be with what is. One of my favorite take-aways from these "how-to-meditate" chapters involves a technique Bayda calls "three-by-three" in which you gradually expand your sensory awareness to include first your breathing, then the air around you, and finally your physical posture - and then you hold these three distinct aspects in a unified awareness for three full inhalation-exhalation cycles. This is a very effective exercise for grounding yourself in the here-and-now of the present moment.The two sections that follow - "Practicing with Emotional Distress" and "Awakening the Heart of Compassion" - contain a wealth of sage advice. Of particular value for me was the chapter on practicing with anger, a masterful explicitation of this intensely negative emotion as the natural outcome of our unwillingness to be with things as they are. It would be impossible - and perhaps harmful - to try to distill the process Bayda defines for working with anger in one or two sentences here. Instead, I will simply point out that he makes a profoundly useful distinction between "expressing anger" and "experiencing anger" that, once understood, can completely transform one’s approach to dealing effectively with the impulse to anger.The book closes with several truly moving accounts of Bayda’s experiences as a hospice volunteer, by way of demonstrating both the value and the limits of loving-kindness as a meditation practice, and a powerful free-verse poem he wrote on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday entitled, "What Is Our Life About?", which concludes with the words, "Time is fleeting. / Don’t hold back. / Appreciate this precious life."To which I would add, as the conclusion of this review - Appreciate this precious book.

One of the most difficult aspects of the path is my own tendency to complicate life with judgments and the need to control. Bayda’s book offers powerful advice on how to best deal with those issues. Just let things be. My favorite phrase from the book, "We can learn at home even in the midst of the muddy waters of our lives" is the basic wisdom of this book. Practice is where you are at any giving point of the day. Bayda’s book Being Zen is an excellent guidebook on working on letting be rather than always trying to make things happen. The wisdom of looking at our difficulties as an opportunity to practice is profound as well. Bayda’s chapter on how we construct our "substitute life" was also pertinent to me as well. As a public school administrator, it quickly became clear to me how much of what I do each day is shaped by conditioning, or decisions and choices made long ago

when I became a teacher. Being aware means I am in touch with these which allows me to be more open in all aspects of my life. This book has so much wisdom in it, I am sure I'll be returning to it again and again.

This little book has given me so much more than what I spent on it.I carry it with me. It wont solve your problems for you, butit will provide a new way of looking at things if you let it. a better way.guess what? I'm happier for having read it.

I love this book. When I was going through some difficult times, a friend recommended this book to me. It was like a breath of fresh air to my mind. It opened my eyes to the value and beauty of Zen Buddhism. It is written in a simple, yet beautiful language. The poem from the end of the book is framed on the wall of my room. "Nowhere to go, No one to be, just Being.."

Deep and accessible. A wonderful "open anywhere and read" book.

This book definitely dives a little deeper than other ZEN / Buddhism books I've read thus far. Prior to this book, I read Steve Hagen's "Buddhism Plain and Simple" (I also just purchased his other title, "Buddhism Is Not What You Think" -- soon to be read)... I have to admit, Steve Hagen is much smoother, and more comprehensible in his writing style than Ezra, but now we're getting into personal preference. Either way, I may get another book on Ezra to feel him out further...I would like to add a few notes as I do with all of my reviews; the reason for this being -- if any new readers find my points interesting, then I'm doing my small part of bringing this material to light (prior to purchase). I find this much more useful than going into the whole story about the book.*HIGHLIGHTS, that's what we need...1. To see things for what they are --Not to label `good' or `bad', but simply observe the existence of your feelings, doubts, fears, and all of the wonderful things around you as well. This is the 1st step -- to SEE. Don't hang onto certain feelings and look to eradicate others because they don't make you feel good, just notice your awareness to them. To be in touch with `good', `bad', OR indifferent; and REALIZE they are just feelings, beliefs, etc. Moreover, they are not the real YOU; they are just a small part of the "whole you". In closing, your purpose is to experience the whole, and not get attached to the smaller fragments...2. All things come /go --(Including: our moods, frame of mind, even our worst feelings and thought). All things change. We must realize this truth and then allow these feelings to move on. Do not cling to any of these emotions. Rather, discern their existence, realize where they are coming from and allow them

to pass. By practicing this exercise, you are allowing yourself not to get tied down, but to be freed instead...3. You can only learn so much in good times --Conversely, through pain, suffering, anger, and anxiety - we can learn a great deal indeed. Instead of pushing these feelings away, we should embrace them as our teachers that have a lot to offer. Pain is not suffering. Pain simply IS & we must learn to acknowledge & accept this fact of life. When you finally succumb, and realize PAIN IS - then you understand that you shouldn't push away, for you cannot turn your back on your life, your path. Also, at some point you surmise that pain allows you to feel compassion for others too. Ultimately, your heart opens to others who might be suffering.4. Hardships / Obstacles --These are simply `our path' at the present time. With that said we must look at each obstacle and impediment openly and learn what we can through this process. Lastly, we need strength to stay with this particular life and the present moment as it is, as oppose to always running from pain. You cannot run away from life and turn a blind eye. To be present, to be truly present and mindful - we must look at life in its entirety.Be aware - be awake to all that is happening inside and around us...

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