

Everyday Awakening: Five Practices for Living Fully, Feeling Deeply, and Coming into Your Heart and Soul

Catherine Duncan

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Everyday Awakening is a practical spiritual guide that recommends steps for becoming more alive in the present moment.

Spiritual counselor and experienced chaplain Catherine Duncan's enthusiastic guidebook *Everyday Awakening* argues that spiritual awareness is available to all people at all times.

Herein, "awakening" is repackaged as being not a distant goal, but something that is continuously available to those who are fully present in their daily lives. To achieve such vivacity, the book recommends adopting five core practices: coming back to the present moment, connecting with something greater, growing trust, embodying love, and holding openness. Each step leads to the next. Further, to illustrate each, the book includes stories of life-or-death situations, near-death experiences, and general daily challenges.

More than thinking through such techniques, the book encourages its audience to feel through them—to make a conscious effort to embody them. It includes exercises and meditations at the end of each chapter to help with this work of integrating one's body, mind, and spirit. They name methods for developing deep listening, experiencing the love of oneself, and developing a sense that the purpose of life is love.

The book appeals to personal experiences to build its credibility, giving it a testimonial edge. Duncan, who was given a dire cancer prognosis when she was eleven, endured grueling treatments during which she recalls feeling afraid and alone. She asserts that prayer saw her through, resulting in a sense of being embraced with warmth and love by a greater power; she says that she knew that she would live because of those feelings. She also uses the example of a near-death experience and memories of work with hospice patients to argue that people can experience love, joy, and feelings of aliveness even while their bodies are dying.

Such stories are relayed with appealing personal conviction. So too is the book confident as it works to demystify awakening so that others can experience it long before death beckons. It includes assertive suggestions for learning self-love, and its definitions of its particular terms, including "awakening," "trust," and "acceptance," are clear. Further, its tone is consistent throughout, evoking calmness and ease even in its discussions of death and other difficult topics. And while it contains ample references and resources for further study, it rests its case with years of personal study and experience.

The joy of awakening is available to everyone; it is the birthright of all human beings, says *Everyday Awakening*, a practical spiritual guide that recommends steps for becoming more alive in the present moment.

KRISTINE MORRIS (March 27, 2023)

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