



The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have

Mark Nepo

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Philosopher-poet and cancer survivor, Mark Nepo opens a new season of freedom and joy--an escape from deadening, asleep-at-the wheel sameness--that is both profound and clarifying. His spiritual daybook is a summons to reclaim aliveness, liberate the self, take each day one at a time, and to savor the beauty offered by life's unfolding. Reading his poetic prose is like being given second sight, exposing the reader to life's multiple dimensions, each one drawn with awe and affection. The Book of Awakening is the result of his journey of the soul and will inspire others to embark on their own. Nepo speaks of spirit and friendship, urging readers to stay vital and in love with this life, no matter the hardships. Encompassing many traditions and voices, Nepo's words offer insight on pain, wonder, and love. Each entry is accompanied by an exercise that will surprise and delight the reader in its mind-waking ability.

The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have Details

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Author : Mark Nepo

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From Reader Review The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have for online ebook

Doubledf99.99 says

This book was giving to me upon my release from the hospital, was bedridden for months, the book really came in handy going through that and the chemo phases, definitely helped me through some trying times and just coping with what was going on.
And still read it from time to time.

Roman Stadler says

Nepo is a wonderful poet and storyteller, so don't let the "self-help" title turn you off. These short vignettes of his experiences of loss, of his own cancer, and lighter moments, contain all sorts of wisdom and surprising little moments of self recognition. I've given this book as a gift many times, and keep returning to it myself. One of those books I'd want on the proverbial deserted isle.

Merged review:

Nepo is a wonderful poet and storyteller, so don't let the "self-help" title turn you off. These short vignettes of his experiences of loss, of his own cancer, and lighter moments, contain all sorts of wisdom and surprising little moments of self recognition. I've given this book as a gift many times, and keep returning to it myself. One of those books I'd want on the proverbial deserted isle. Recommended for: anyone, but especially if you're dealing with a traumatic event.

Kim Stalling says

Some days, the message is exactly what I need. Earlier this week, I was feeling very insecure about some career issues and wishing I were a bit like others. There was a story about a man (Akiba - I believe) who was sorry he wasn't living his life like Moses. The message reminded us, God wants us to live our lives as ourselves, not as someone else. It was exactly what I needed to remember at that moment.

Kenneth Ferber says

This is a kind of daily reflection 'Bible' for me and almost always 'primes the pump' when it comes to personal reflection as well as an incentive for my own writing. Mark Nepo is a cancer survivor which was his 'hitting bottom' so to speak and part of his transformational experience. Nepo is also able to effectively combine the spirituality of the world, embracing so many branches, from Christianity to Buddhism, Hinduism and much more in his personal and thoughtful year of daily reflections. The author concludes each reflection with a way to 'practice' it and work it into ones daily walk. I own and have used MANY varieties of daily reflection books that encourage me, but none that goes as deeply and practically as this one.

Nia Ferrell says

I am doing a project for my sophomore English class in which we were to find a topic that we were passionate about, and do research as well as impact the community. There were not very many guidelines for this project, what we call the passion project, however one of the things required was we were to find a book related to our topic. My topic is appreciation, and I actually had a very difficult time coming across a book that showed appreciation the way I want to display it-- in a positive light. However, when I stumbled upon "The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have," I knew it was a perfect fit. I was not disappointed at all in this book, and all in all it really opened my eyes a lot to my topic. It allowed me to relate to my topic more as I followed Nepo's tips and tricks in order to live a positive life. I truly enjoyed this book, and if anyone is ever in a tough spot in their life, I truly recommend reading this. Not only will it open your eyes, but it will also allow you to see all the good things in life as humans tend to miss out on.

Susan says

I found each daily entry thought provoking and inspiring. Mark Nepo's book is balanced and creatively written with great reflective questions. He gently nudges you to become more aware, awake and present. His book touched me deeply by his simple storytelling "awakening" a sense of longing for better living and connection within me.

Daily reads take 2-3 minutes, are filled with great quotes, subtle humor and a touch of mysticism. Wholesome soul food at its best.

Amy says

Note added on 2/22/13: I want to add a word of caution to my previous remarks. The entry for February 20 in this book, titled, "Nicodemus and the Truth" is not what I would consider anti-Semitic writing, but as a Jew it really bothers me to read it in a book that seemed to be more openminded about different cultures and religious faiths. In the story Nicodemus is a Pharisee who secretly visits and believes in Jesus, but doesn't acknowledge it in public. So it says Nicodemus was "traumatically thwarted and plagued for the rest of his days." The author of this daybook goes on to use the story of Nicodemus to illustrate how we create pain for ourselves when we don't honor what we know to be true. I agree with the general point that we need to honor what we know to be true, but it's offensive to make that point in a context that singles out a Jew publicly denying Jesus. These are the kinds of stories that have been used historically to try to convert Jews to Christianity and/or to promote anti-Semitism and fuel the persecution and murder of many Jews, whether they were religious or not. There are other days in this book where the author uses fine quotes from Jewish sources, as well as other sources, to illustrate a focus for that day, so I don't think the author intended to exclude Jews from those he considers to be people who honor truth. At the same time I am disappointed and very put off by the apparent lack of historical awareness about the suffering caused by this kind of storytelling. This is in serious conflict with the purpose of the book, to promote awakening and being present to life.

I did find many of the other entries helpful to read, day by day, over the course of an entire year. Sometimes I tired of the writing style, when it began to sound like too many self-help books, but that was outweighed by the spiritual insights the author shared from his own personal struggles and growth.

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[original review follows]

Ha ha or ah ha! I like the entry for Jan. 2 near the beginning of the Google preview for this book. It tells about a friend who stubbornly tried to carry so much house painting gear through a door that he fell down covered in paint.

I have put 1217 books onto various shelves of my imaginary GoodReads library, and counting. I need to put down many things, so I can get through the threshold of the here and now.

Perhaps reviewing a lifetime of reading is a way of setting books down, to be able to walk through a door. Only a few things need to be carried through the door of the present moment. I was thinking of it as more like a road that passed certain books on the way, as if those books were places on a map. And maybe it's useful to leave a map that shows ditches and dead ends as well as good routes. Why read if we don't communicate about it with others?

I love libraries, but I wouldn't like them if I was not free to go in and out of the doors there. And I wouldn't want my own library to crowd out all the living space in my home. I was drawn to this virtual library because I prefer to get most of my books at the public library - and not keep too many at home. On the other hand, I love to check out tons of books and I love remembering and shelving them on this virtual list where I can see them and the patterns between them. Is it hoarding? It can be a form of hoarding. On the other hand, the urge to make libraries and share reading with other people is a wonderful door.

Kate Powell says

The book is formatted into a daily meditation guide whose purpose is to awaken you, using quotes, and many spiritual precepts as the jumping off points. Day-books have been the rage in the last decade, and frankly, most are a bit like FaceBook, allowing you to feel like you are having a brief respite when in fact, like the thousand friends you've collected, real friends need to be cultivated and spent time with, listening and understanding and celebrating. I postulate that while they may be nice as part of a calendar, if you want to have any kind of spiritual awakening, you need to pick a spiritual path and stay with it like you would a good friend, and get to know its depths.

While I was so-so on some of the quotes and his commentary about them, I had a great deal of trouble with several of the religious precepts I perused. If you are going to use religious quotes and precepts, then know them. OR, tell your readers you are a dabbler and going loosey-goosey on everyone, throwing your shallow interpretation on the wall to see if it sticks. OR, say you like this quote, saw it as graffiti on a bathroom wall, what it means to you, and that you've not spent much time on it. OR, don't interpret a quote at all and just write what you want to say. A quote doesn't validate you, but to a reader, it might make them think you know what you are talking about.

I was gifted with the book. It is poorly written. While it is true, everyone has the right to take a word and reinterpret it anyway one likes, language and culture are based on the dialogue between the differences and similarities of thought. And it may be true that I know more than your average bear about a lot of religious ideas, going deeply into four of them. Still, Nepo has taken many precepts, religious quotes, and has not bothered to really understand them. He has given a platitude version of a quote for the ages. While this may have helped someone, somewhere, I have a problem with what the man robs a reader of the opportunity for, and that he holds himself out as a meditation instructor who is guiding you to a deeper and more awakened life, when it is really a Hallmark day-book. I postulate he wastes your time for 15 minutes over 365 days (roughly 90 hours) when in that same time you might get to some sort of awakening by picking up a Buddhist, Jewish, Shamanic, Catholic -- insert your faith here -- book and going deeply into the pages, thinking about what they mean with a really good highlighter! (Oooh, there's a good quote for my own daily book!)

Granted I didn't read the whole book -- I read from the back (this is a weird thing I do unless it is a book of fiction) and was unimpressed. Then this morning, I went to page one, Jan 1, and decided to give this a chance. I read, "Precious Human Birth. Of all things that exist, we breath and wake and turn it into song." He began to incorrectly describe what that precept is all about (and in any scholarly -- not spiritual -- Buddhist 101 book they'd give it to you accurately) then took off on his own digression. He even threw in a chop-wood-carry-water reference -- just to let you know he knew a bit about Zen/Taoism/Eastern thought!

Okay, it is a good thing to contemplate what he said -- to marvel at how great it is to be human and give thanks to be able to reflect and be conscious (and he implies other forms of life do not do this) -- BUT BUT BUT, this is not the precept. There is so much more to it. The precept of "Precious Human Birth" is not just about being grateful for the gift of a human body, it is also to contemplate that you have a gift in that you have heard good teachings, truths that you can use toward consciousness, compassion, openheartedness. It is a contemplation you do at the beginning of every Buddhist prayer -- in any branch of Buddhism -- so understand that it is core to a mind-set toward all the practices and meditation, from the most difficult or elaborate to the simple act of zazen. You contemplate four thoughts:

- 1) having this precious moment free of tyranny or fear, perhaps;
- 2) of the fact that you can die at any time;
- 3) of karma, (what you do -- thinking too, if we are honest -- whether virtuous or nat, traps you into cause and effect;
- 4) and of the suffering of others.

The last one eventually leads many on to the Bodhisattva vow, to not rest until all are released from suffering (Reader's Digest explanation.) These are four preliminaries are words, and in the beginning of my path I thought them a bit mundane and boring. Then I wondered, "Why do they all yak on and on about these obvious things?" Wondering why teachers I respected yakked on about them, and trusting them a bit to guide me, led to contemplation. I committed to my practice and went deeply with them, discovering in the gratitude beyond the wonder of blue sky, into the synchronicity of my precious life and its more painful moments as well. And to look for the consciousness in all things.

When Nepo reduces this to more than the statement of "contemplate your Precious Human Birth," and begins to reduce it to you meditating on how you are different than the rock and the bench, he takes your practice away from you. He leads you into a sense of false security that you are pretty hot stuff, and your life is pretty damn good. Then during the day you may wonder why that feeling doesn't last.

Real practice, any real practice (although I think there are better practices and worst practices if you want to

awaken), will not just make you feel good for a few minutes, or make you think you have 4,678 friends. It will make you feel the discomfort you have, and offer a way to seriously cope and grow through the discomfort, just as an awake person may enjoy their FaceBook friends but also know that most are not "real" friends but acquaintances or less, and in that number there are a few good friends who must be tended, spoken to, cried for, cared about, shared with, and celebrated.

Linda says

When was the last time that you were totally awed by a particular book? Well, I'd like to hand off a copy of Mark Nepo's The Book of Awakening because "awakened" you will be. Your search for daily meditations is over. This is truly the one! I own stacks of books that I page through to speak to me of matters that touch my spirit. I no longer need the stack. Each day Mark provides you with something to ponder indepth. He has a profound gift for leaving loveprints upon your soul with language that touches your very being. I've highlighted, circled, underlined, and have left my copy well-worn and totally embraced. Mark knows the uncertainties of life and he shares and shares with a dialog found nowhere else in time. Highly, highly recommend.

Effie says

Reading this daily. Each reading gives such a window to a deeper, richer, examined life. Nepo is a gifted writer who has really taken this journey. Grateful for his insight which helps Improve mine.

Yelania Nightwalker says

A mí me gusta, de vez en cuando, leer algún libro de meditación o temas parecidos. Cuando vi que la editorial anunciaba éste, decidí darle una oportunidad, aunque no había leído a Mark Nepo antes. Un libro para renacer cada día es una especie de diario, hay una entrada para cada día de año, donde el autor nos da una reflexión o un pensamiento sobre ese día y entonces nos pide que hagamos algún ejercicio, algo sencillo, que tenga que ver con lo que estamos leyendo en ese pensamiento.

No es un libro que tengas que seguir al pie de la letra, no es que te veas obligado a hacer tal o cual cosa ni a estar de acuerdo con el autor. Seguramente habrá días que te parezca que hacer eso es algo absurdo, puede que, al contrario, consideres que llevar a cabo tal ejercicio, te ayudará.

En lo personal, no me dediqué a leer las entradas de los días desde enero hasta hoy, lo que hice fue ir leyendo entradas al azar, de días anteriores a esta fecha, no quise buscar ningún día después, para darme la oportunidad de hacerlas en el momento que les correspondiera. Hice uno de los ejercicios, me "llamó la atención", vamos a decir y decidí intentarlo. Lo más curioso es que no lo hice al momento de leer ese pasaje, fue ya en la noche, cuando estaba en la cama y no podía conciliar el sueño que de pronto recordé ese ejercicio en particular y pensé: ¿por qué no? Así que terminé haciéndolo. Me sentí bien, más que bien en realidad, después de haberlo llevado a cabo. Fue... liberador.

Un libro para renacer cada día no se ha vuelto mi libro de cabecera, sé que no leeré todos los días la entrada

correspondiente, pero sé que cuando quiera encontrar algo especial para mí, abriré el libro en un día al azar, y me toparé con algo así: especial, tanto si lo llevo a cabo como si no, sé que en algún momento me servirá. Cuando menos lo espere.

*Libro enviado por la editorial a cambio de una reseña honesta.

Mary Schumann says

I really like this book. I am reviewing a copy from the library, but will make a purchase. It's a daily meditation, the author gives a short quote or thought, then a deeper exploration of the meaning of that quote, and follows it with an exercise to do on your own, if you wish. My perception of it so far is that it simply changes the angle at which you see things and opens your eyes to a new way of approaching your life or your thoughts. It doesn't INSTRUCT you to think in any particular way, but rather poses a question or gives an example that you can apply to your particular situation. It helps guide mindfulness. I hesitated to put that in as a description because it may turn some people off, but it's a practical tool to being aware of your life. Sometimes we just need a different perspective on things. I can see that this book would not lose it's usefulness after 1 year because as your life changes the exercises and meditations naturally will follow.

Elizabeth says

This harks back to 1999 but the call to slow down, pay attention, and get past ego I feel is more important than ever. I listened to the author read this and I am ordering a copy for myself to have at hand for always. It contains a parable and a meditation presented for each day of the year. There is so much meaty wisdom here, I cannot wait to delve into it over and over again.

Debbie "DJ" says

This is by far the best daily reader I have ever read. I no longer have a stack of meditation books, as this surpasses them all. So far each daily read has left me with a sense of "WOW!" His writing is deeply profound and the messages go straight to my heart. He also includes a short meditation after each read which carry the message even further. You will be amazed...I love this book!

John Girard says

An exquisite book of daily meditations. One of my very favorites.
