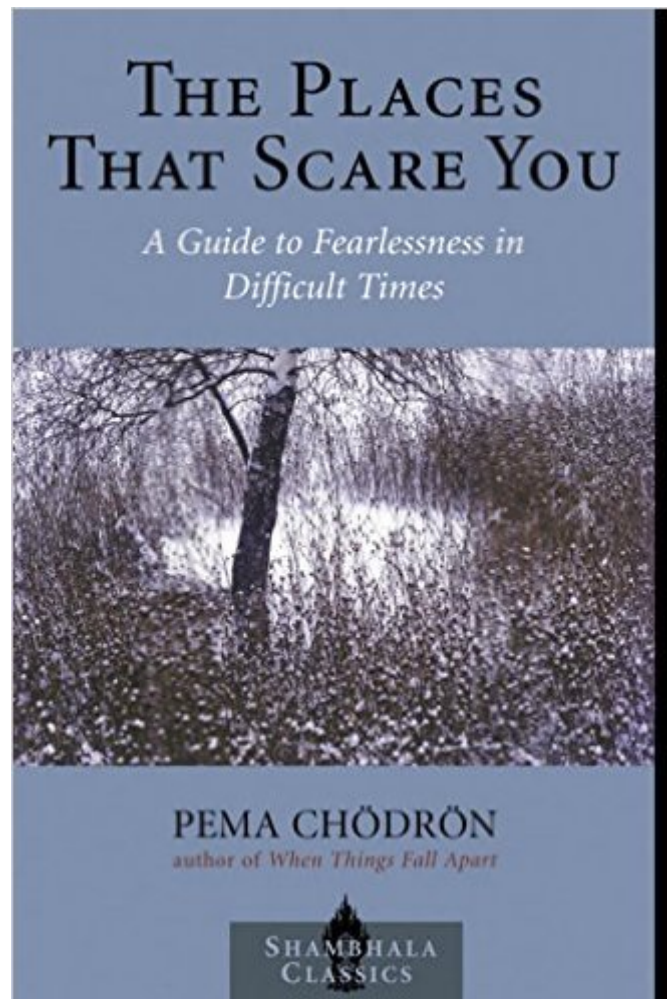


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The Places That Scare You: A Guide To Fearlessness In Difficult Times (Shambhala Classics)



Synopsis

We always have a choice, Pema Chödrön teaches: We can let the circumstances of our lives harden us and make us increasingly resentful and afraid, or we can let them soften us and make us kinder. Here Pema provides the tools to deal with the problems and difficulties that life throws our way. This wisdom is always available to us, she teaches, but we usually block it with habitual patterns rooted in fear. Beyond that fear lies a state of openheartedness and tenderness. This book teaches us how to awaken our basic goodness and connect with others, to accept ourselves and others complete with faults and imperfections, and to stay in the present moment by seeing through the strategies of ego that cause us to resist life as it is.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the current age of anxiety, Pema Chödrön is both a refreshing and challenging voice. Basically, she encourages us to see problems as spiritual opportunities. Instead of trying to run from discomfort, she advocates staying put and learning about ourselves. Instead of habitually reaching for whatever palliative gives relief -- always temporary -- she suggests feeling and observing our discomforts, becoming more fully present in our lives, learning how to be truly here now. Only through this process, she says, can we experience the deep joy of being alive. This is a great companion volume to her book "When Things Fall Apart." It elaborates on themes introduced there, describing several practices of Tibetan Buddhism, some ancient and long forgotten, which help us not only cope with anxiety but use it to overcome fearfulness. This is an important spiritual effort

because while we typically think of hate as the enemy of love, it is really fear that makes love difficult. Fear immobilizes us, makes us pull the covers over our heads, and isolates us from others. Chögyal Jungpa, a student of Chögyam Trungpa, encourages the consistent practice of meditation. And she discounts the usual results-driven expectations people associate with it, pointing out that as we confront our true selves in meditation, it often becomes more and more difficult, not easier. And for those who have found meditation fiercely frustrating, as I have, she has alternatives. The practice of "tonglen" is one simple spiritual ritual that can be done anywhere, anytime, providing a dramatic and freeing shift in emotional perspective. Learning not to let disappointment, anger, and hurt trigger our personal melodramas, which sap our energy, we can find our way to greater equanimity and become a less destructive presence in the world. I strongly recommend this book as a welcome spiritual tonic in troubled times, whether that trouble originates elsewhere or from within. As with her other books, you can read and reread it, each time discovering much to learn and reflect on -- and in her words, "this is news you can use."

I've read this book three times in two weeks. I read so many books about wisdom. The Four Agreements (not so good), meditation by Jack Kornfield books, Nietzsche, Don't Sweat the Small Stuff. I've read Pema Chodron's previous books, and those didn't speak to me as deeply as this one does. I don't read just to pass the time. I read to find wisdom. This book contains deep wisdom. The author lays out ways to analyze ourselves, our emotions and our thoughts. She discusses how we as humans react to our thoughts and pain. Her book analyzes the causes and roots of suffering. She then asks "why do most people suffer in such a similar way?". Decades of acquired wisdom are then offered. The causes and roots of suffering are our fleeing from pain, running for comfort. Fleeing without knowing why, fleeing without knowing where we are going. The descriptions of human behavior are spot on accurate. This describes so many Western philosophers, political reformers, talented artists, and many people who are looking to find 'the one true way'. After laying out the causes of suffering, she distills her understanding of human behavior, and gives us ways to approach these problems. Practical, approachable ways that you can build on over time. This isn't a set of principles of "Look at the world with happiness, and you too will be happy", or a collection of trite sayings to convince yourself "You're good enough, you're smart enough, and doggone it, people like you". Slogans don't allow us to analyze and understand the root causes of our pain and suffering. This book lays out those causes. And it lays out ways we can study suffering, and use our efforts to transform our lives from unsure, troubled beings to people who have a firm grasp of themselves. This self understanding leads to lots of confidence. And she uses a scientific method

for this analysis. There are two books I read over and over. "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind", which I've been learning from regularly for 4 years. And now this one. Suzuki Roshi said 'We are always looking for something, without knowing what we are doing'. We are looking for happiness. This book studies what is happiness, what is suffering, why is it so temporal, and what can I do about attaining it. And it helps us understand what we are doing. May you benefit from this wisdom as much as I have. "Science is best defined as a careful, disciplined, logical search for knowledge about any and all aspects of the universe, obtained by examination of the best available evidence and always subject to correction and improvement upon discovery of better evidence. What's left is magic. And it doesn't work."--James Randi

Pema Chodron, a Tibetan Buddhist nun, is the one inspirational person you would choose to have with you when your world falls apart. Being a follower of Buddhist Philosophies for many years, I have found inner peace, strength, love and fulfillment through my beliefs. Each one of us must find "enlightenment" from whatever source we alone believe in, but for me, personally, Buddhism has been the answer. As the author reminds us, "Loving kindness comes from opening ourselves to vulnerability." Meditation, mindfulness and practices such as "tonglen" (taking in the pain and suffering of others while sending out happiness) can be key tools in ridding ourselves of negativity, anxiety and fear. Each of us has within us the power to overcome that which causes us fear. Chodron explains how we can use these tools to overcome almost any obstacle or challenge. Another book by the same author which is highly recommended is "When Things Fall Apart." Both offer excellent words of wisdom and advice and both are deserving of a five-star rating. Chodron is a teacher, a sage, an inspirationalist, a mentor and a prime example of one who is good, compassionate, understanding, kind and loving.

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