



# Open Heart, Open Mind: A Guide to Inner Transformation

*Tsoknyi Rinpoche , Eric Swanson*

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## **Open Heart, Open Mind: A Guide to Inner Transformation** Tsoknyi Rinpoche , Eric Swanson

In *Open Heart, Open Mind*, Tsoknyi Rinpoche--one of the most beloved of the contemporary generation of Tibetan Buddhist meditation masters--explains that a life free of fear, pain, insecurity, and doubt is not only possible, it's our birthright. We long for peace, for the ability to love and be loved openly and freely, and for the confidence and clarity to meet the various challenges we face in our daily lives.

Within each of us resides a spark of unparalleled brilliance, an unlimited capacity for warmth, openness, and courage, which Rinpoche identifies as "essence love." Timeless and imperishable, essence love is often layered over by patterns of behavior and belief that urge us to seek happiness in conditions or situations that never quite live up to their promise.

Drawing on rarely discussed teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, Rinpoche describes how such patterns evolve and offers a series of meditation exercises to help us unravel them and, in the process, reawaken an energy and exuberance that can not only bring lasting fulfillment to our lives but ultimately serve to enliven and inspire the entire world, as well.

With great humor, intelligence, and candor, Tsoknyi Rinpoche also details his own struggles to reconnect with essence love. Identified at an early age as the incarnation of a renowned Tibetan master and subjected to a rigorous monastic training, he ultimately renounced his vows, married, and is now the father of two daughters.

As he recounts his own efforts to strike a balance between the promptings of his heart and an obligation to preserve and protect the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, Rinpoche provides a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern life, and encourages each of us to rediscover the openness, fearlessness, and love that is the essence of our own life.

## **Open Heart, Open Mind: A Guide to Inner Transformation Details**

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### Carole says

Unlike Tsoknyi Rinpoche's other books which are compilations of edited lectures that are primarily of interest to students of Dzogchen (and are brilliant on the subject), this is a much more personal book. He describes his uneasy path as a tulku (reincarnated lama) through leaving his family to be taught by some of the great masters of Tibetan Buddhism, and how he gave up his monastic vows, married and became a family man, all of which inform the lessons of this book. It is an well written book with some heart-felt advice for those on a path of transformation in language that is designed to appeal to Buddhists and non-Buddhists. As a student of his, it certainly gave me greater insight into some of the changes that I have observed over time, and how he contrasts with his younger brother, Mingyur Rinpoche.

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### Gwen says

This book could easily have been divided up into three - that's how much is packed into 237 pages - all well-explained and precious teachings. There were a couple of places where I felt the narrative wasn't quite as focused, but then he starts on a new topic, and I was riveted all over again! I get the idea Rinpoche is bringing some information to us that isn't normally presented to the general public. His own experience of having snuck into libraries as a young monk and read books that were a bit "old" for him has clearly made him think that sometimes this can be really helpful ... and it is. As with all books by Tibetan lamas, there is a wealth of stories here, from his own life and from that of others, and the illustration solidifies the concepts so you can apply them to your own experience. It reads really well, and I think addresses a modern Western audience in a fresh and accessible way. This is one of those books I have so many pages dog-eared, it won't fit back on the shelf - that's how good it is!

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### Clivemichael says

Well written insightful and accessible to this non Buddhist. It certainly had me thinking especially about attachment among other things. There are opportunities to practice, which I did not. Each chapter though struck a chord within me. I read a chapter about every other day allowing much time for reflection on the "lessons". I plan to read it again and possibly incorporate some of the meditations into my daily existence in my transition towards my intention to be in the moment, present to possibility, unattached to outcome with less expectation and diminished assumptions.

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### me says

I read many Buddhist books. Lately, I haven't felt connect to many. I find many Buddhist authors while wanting to assist others are not as learned or experienced as they should. I start many books then put them down because of this.

That being stated, I read this book from cover to cover. I found it easy to connect with the author. He has had

many years of exposure to very qualified and experienced teachers and it shows.

I also like he is a householder, it provides a interesting view.

Overall, I really recommend this non academic book. It is grounded in everyday life and the teachings are throughly rich. Some of the teachings I had never heard or read before.

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### **Eric says**

This book makes an interesting addition to my Buddhist / mindfulness-related due to the fact that the author was trained as a Buddhist monk, but then renounced his vows, got married, and had kids. That greater similarity to my own life helped me get past some potential hurdles in accepting the teaching.

There were some good anecdotes about some folks that Tsoknyi Rinpoche has worked with, including two that were chillingly familiar to some of my own struggles.

Chapter 12 "Putting it Together" is a nice practical prescription for using the ideas expressed in the several preceding chapters.

I find this book to be a good compliment to his brother's work (The Joy of Living by Mingyur Rinpoche) as well as The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh.

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### **Jennifer says**

Open Heart, Open Mind was a book a friend at work recommended as a good read to be more positive in a work environment that has turned very negative recently. This book is based on the Buddhism religion, and encourages everyone to seek happiness in a world that is increasingly uncertain and bleak. I thought it was interesting how the author described his youth and the pressures he faced to be perfect, to be the individual people expected him to be... which leaves the impression that those pressures are everywhere, even in a culture that thrives on life free of fear, pain, insecurity, and doubt.

Did this book "reawaken an energy" and help me discover an "essence love" in my life? Unfortunately, I can't say that it did... although I do feel that it gave me 'new' questions to ask myself and open myself up to experiencing new things. Or in the case of my current work environment, to fight through the challenges because it will not only empower you to understand other people's struggles, but also to see the challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. Overall, I thought the book was very well written and offered great insights through the author's own experiences in life that each of us can incorporate into our own life.

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### **Eileen says**

? 2012 Tibetan Buddhist teacher gives instruction in meditation from the beginning including some different

exercises that I hadn't seen before. Also includes more advanced practice suggestions. Clear and easy to understand overview of the whole trajectory of meditation practice. Very helpful.

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### **Alex Lennon says**

A wonderful and very approachable book which really speaks to me.

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### **Jeanne says**

This book is as helpful, generous, kind and humorous as Tibetan teacher and author Tsoknyi Rinpoche himself. With co-author Eric Swanson, Rinpoche offers advice, based on fundamental Tibetan Buddhist wisdom, to anyone who wants to do more than merely cope with our speedy, challenging modern world. I would recommend *Open Heart, Open Mind* to those who are seeking to re-find or uncover the warm-hearted spark within, and to live life with love, joy and kindness.

The warm, conversational tone of the text makes it accessible without being diluted, and Rinpoche uses stories from his childhood experience as the son of great meditation master Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche, his youth growing up in Tashi Jong monastery as a tulku himself, and his more recent experience as a husband and father of two daughters to illustrate experiences many of us can share, like uncertainty about our place in the world, the sometimes overwhelming desire to please others, and our extraordinary ability to offer love and compassion to loved ones and even complete strangers.

Reading this book was indeed a transforming experience for me. I highly recommend it.

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### **Ana Hernandez says**

Lovely, funny, warm, teachings; fast, accessible read. Great insight on essence love, the work of learning to love and be loved by tapping into the spark of brilliance we all possess. How to pay attention to that which brings out our capacity for warmth, courage, and openness, as well as how to work with the things that get in way of clarity.

This would be an excellent graduation gift for high school and older.

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### **Beverly says**

The author of this book is actually Tsoknyi Rinpoche with Swanson more as an editor/coauthor. And the subtitle is actually *Awakening the Power of Essence Love*. Shows that even rinpoches have their challenges to overcome, and he demonstrates how to do this. Worth reading.

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### **Katherine Collins says**

This book contains a helpful categorization: “REAL BUT NOT TRUE”. Many fears, notes Rinpoche, fall into this category. This is not just clever wordsmithing – it gives us a helpful way to approach our fears. Instead of trying to brush fears aside or feeling helpless because they are irrational, we can acknowledge that they are indeed real, and then move on to recognizing that they are ALSO not true, clearing the way for less fear and more joy.

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### **Melissa says**

A friend recommended this book and ever since then it means a lot to me. I didn't want to finish it because on days where I feel torn apart, I pick up this book and read, and feel much better after. I used mindfulness taught in the book, allowing me to be much more at peace with myself. Even though i don't have a religion nor am i spiritual, this book still changed the way I see myself and others. It has taught me to "let go", something which I have a lot of trouble with.

I particularly loved Tsoknyi Rinpoche's take on everyday things around him, many of which I find relatable. I also liked how he shared his struggles.

Thank you for writing this amazing book. I enjoyed every single part of it, now that i am done, it feels like I lost a friend.

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### **Vishnu says**

I thought this book was going to be more about Tsonkyi Rinpoche's personal choice to leave monastic life, and it wasn't. I also hoped this book would discuss something interesting about the idea of "Essence Love," and I didn't see much of that either. Instead, this book was kind of a plain vanilla general introduction to Buddhism and meditation. For what it was, it was pretty good! But definitely not what I was in the market for.

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### **Brad McKenna says**

I picked up this book because Pema Chodron mentioned it. I love Ms. Chodron so I trusted her recommendation and was awarded for it.

Tsoknyi Rinpoche battled inner turmoil whilst studying to be a monk. As a Tulku (reincarnation of a great teacher), he really wasn't given a choice to start studying but was allowed to leave the order. Now he's a married father of two that travels the world and teaches. There were three things in the book that I'd like to highlight.

First, he refers to something called patterns, which basically is what makes me, me. I'm afraid of heights (like Tsoknyi, actually), good at technology, hate to drive in big cities, and on and on. He says that we react to situations based on our traits. And if they stop us from doing something, we must overcome them.

Second, he teaches about The Subtle Body. This is something scoffed at by Western Civilization. I found it to be like the OS of a computer; the connection between the hardware (your body) and software (your mind). If your subtle body gets out of way, then your mind can affect your body (and vice versa). It takes a bit of a leap of belief for Westerns. But I've seen much in my day to think there's something to it.

Third, he speaks about an Internal Speed Limit. In the stead of taking each situation for what it is we tend to rush through it. Our internal speed limit says we've got to get through this and move on, no matter what the situation says about pace. Since I'm constantly trying to slow down but have different degrees of difficulty depending on the day, this really spoke to me. He said recognizing that your speed limit doesn't match what the situation calls for is the first step to slowing down.

This is a great read. It's a very approachable style. He's humble and funny yet profound. If you're looking for an intro to Buddhist thought, this is a great choice.

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