

## A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives

*Thupten Jinpa*

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**A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives** Thupten Jinpa  
The Buddhist practice of mindfulness caught on in the west when we began to understand the everyday,  
personal benefits it brought us. Now, in this extraordinary book, the highly acclaimed thought leader and  
longtime English translator of His Holiness the Dalai Lama shows us that compassion can bring us even  
more.

Based on the landmark course in compassion training Jinpa helped create at Stanford Medical School, *A  
Fearless Heart* shows us that we actually fear compassion. We worry that if we are too compassionate with  
others we will be taken advantage of, and if we are too compassionate with ourselves we will turn into  
slackers. Using science, insights from both classical Buddhist and western psychology, and stories both from  
others and from his own extraordinary life, Jinpa shows us how to train our compassion muscle to relieve  
stress, fight depression, improve our health, achieve our goals, and change our world.

Practical, spiritual, and immediately relevant, *A Fearless Heart* will speak to readers of *The Art of Happiness*  
and *Wherever You Go, There You Are*.

## A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives Details

Date : Published May 5th 2015 by Avery (first published March 1st 2015)


ISBN :

Author : Thupten Jinpa

Format : Kindle Edition 304 pages

Genre : Religion, Buddhism, Nonfiction, Spirituality, Philosophy, Psychology, Self Help

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Transform Our Lives Thupten Jinpa**

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## **From Reader Review A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives for online ebook**

### **Brittany says**

I read this book for a class, but I'm so glad I got the chance to read it! It's all about compassion and how we can develop it better. It was very interesting because it talked a lot about the science behind compassion and compassionate acts (it's getting a lot more attention in the scientific world lately). It also discussed why we may be hesitant or not feel compassion and suggested ways to help overcome that. The author was a Buddhist monk, and because of his background, there are many mindfulness exercises that include meditation. However, anyone of any religion or even no religion can utilize this information. The world needs more love and compassion, and this book gives some great ways to make that happen! It was easy to read and very useful. I definitely recommend it!

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### **Joeri Kooimans says**

This book offers an accessible introduction to compassion as an important value and practice. The value of compassion is convincingly shown by the backing that is provided from Buddhist and Western philosophy, as due to the evidence that is provided from the modern life and social sciences. It is nice to read that the best of two worlds are being brought together with the purpose to improve people's wellbeing.

The exercises in the book are as accessible as the book itself and challenges the reader to apply compassion in daily life. The proof and examples that are offered in the book regarding the positive effects of compassion help to motivate you doing these exercises.

The book is a worthwhile read for anyone who seeks to create a more compassionate world.

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### **George says**

Dr. Thupten Jinpa is a genial man with a drive to make compassion the standard for seeing, understanding and living in the world. Each one of us is born with the spark of compassion but we do not typically grow it or use it in expanded ways. Why not? This book explores that question but also gives us practical ways of growing compassion starting with self compassion and compassion for the other and community.

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### **Tyler Disney says**

This was one of the most helpful books that I have read in a very long time. If any of you are as hard on yourself as I am, you should read this book! We often overlook how important we are, as we try to help people or make others happy. Forgetting that our well being enables us to be there for others. We excuse the mistakes of others far quicker than we often excuse ourselves. Within one of the chapters, I was presented with several reasons for why I may be feeling a certain way and it was like turning on a light in a dark room. I also found some of the exercises helpful. Some of them were not for me, but overall, I did notice an improvement in my mood after just a short time of practicing them. I will definitely be keeping this book

around to reread whenever I feel like I am being too hard on myself.

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### **Pam Mooney says**

A book worth reading. While backed up by solid research the book is very readable regardless of experience level. The exercises are clear and easy to do. I loved the sections on self compassion which is a concept most people are not aware of let alone practice. This is a good read!

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### **Dominic Ng says**

A great primer on compassion and loving-kindness meditation. Jinpa interweaves anecdotes from throughout his life as well as those who have participated in his compassion-based program, which includes experiences as the translator for the Dalai Lama. Those familiar with metta practice might not gain much from reading this, as the book is geared towards the reader with little to no experience with meditation, but Jinpa does a fine job articulating psychological and intimacy issues that plague the western world and offers powerful solutions for healing.

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### **Thomas says**

I read this as part of the Stanford Compassion Cultivation Training. I found it reinforced the lessons gleaned from the course and the course meditations.

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### **Katie says**

I recently heard this book referenced by Jack Kornfield in an interview/training done by Psychotherapy Networker. Jack Kornfield was talking about how the main ingredient in psychotherapy is love/compassion. I got to pondering and reflecting on this more, thus I decided to read this book as well. Most of the things mentioned in the book I already knew due to my lifelong curiosity and love for the tenets of Buddhism as well as my interest in the increasingly popular theory on how self-compassion can positively transform one's life (specifically Kristin Neff's "Self-Compassion" I have recommended to many of my clients struggling with extreme self-judgment). This book was a refreshing and comforting reminder of why Buddhism has always been a nurturing comfort to me, especially when it comes to suffering personally and the collective suffering of humanity. I also liked how this book gave different exercises one can try to combine deep breathing with meditation.

My favorite thing about this book overall that I hope to be my new mantra (especially in this polarized society we're currently living in) is The Four Immeasurables Prayer:

*May all beings attain happiness and its causes.*

*May all beings be free from suffering and its causes.*

*May all beings never be separated from joy that is free of misery.*

*May all beings abide in equanimity, free from bias of attachment and aversion.*

### **Laura says**

In my job as a nurse, compassion is a very important trait to be able to exhibit, therefore I was interested to read what other people have to say on the matter in the form of this book. Not only that, but compassion is at the heart of us as human beings. The aim of this book is to 'redefine compassion as something we can all grasp'; a great concept, however it troubles me to think that there are people out there with the inability to be compassionate. And of course there are those who are not compassionate, but then they are certainly not going to be reaching for this book, so it's a bit of a moot point.

The book is divided into a number of very useful topics, such as self-acceptance (how can we be fully compassionate if we are not yet accepting of ourselves?), making way for compassionate behaviours in our lives, and what to do if we become 'unstuck'. This is a really resourceful and informative read, with lots of interesting anecdotes from the author which help to put the point across well. Each chapter lays a good grounding for the following chapter, and by the end of the book there won't be much that you don't know about compassion! With simple ideologies for implementing into your every day life, I hope that this would have as positive an impact on other readers as it did myself. The only reason for only awarding three stars, as that in parts it is a monotonous read and dragged.

(Thanks to NetGalley for this copy).

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### **Craig Bergland says**

A fascinating look at compassion and compassion training, the impact it has on individuals, and the impact it could have on every corner of our lives and our society. Profound insights from an author I deeply respect.

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### **Nancy says**

Filled with ways in which compassion has been proven to help us live life fully and helpfully. I found it very uplifting. I'm so glad that there are actually people teaching things like how to develop more compassion and empathy. We have the innate ability, but it gets deeply buried in an individualistic society. A book I will read again and again and try to absorb its practices so they become habit.

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### **Surabhi Yadav says**

How to keep compassion intact and not let the coldness and cynicism triumph over it? - I picked up this book to cultivate my curiosity to answer this question. It is both a requirement in the personal and the professional life. The book didn't get me close to the depth of the question but did offer a few simple ways of becoming better at the practice of compassion. A light and a good start towards understanding mindfulness and compassion.

The book might be a great start for anyone interested in starting meditation. Also, for the ones who want to direct their meditation towards cultivating compassion to handle the difficult emotions and life situations.

The content is fairly simple to read and process. The author has tried to briefly touch upon various issues that one faces while mustering the courage to be compassionate: differentiation between self-love, self-pity, complacency, and self-compassion, self-esteem vs self-compassion, and above all, the role of mindfulness in everyday life, fighting injustice compassionately, the difference between equanimity and indifference etc.

If you have done Vipassana, this is going to be repetitive.

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## **MentalHealthAtHome says**

In *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives*, Dr. Thupten Jinpa offers a practical guide to creating change through Buddhist-inspired compassion practices. Dr. Jinpa is a former Buddhist monk, who left the monastic life to pursue higher education, completing a Ph.D. in religious studies at Cambridge University. He has been the principal English language translator for His Holiness the Dalai Lama for a many years. While he weaves in his own experiences to reinforce various concepts relevant to compassion, this is not a book about his own story. Rather, the major focus is the elements Compassion Cultivation Training, a standardized secular compassion training program that he was involved in developing at Stanford University.

While the author's approach is steeped in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, he makes it very accessible for non-spiritual audiences. He provides clear explanations of relevant terminology, and incorporates a variety of concepts and research findings from the field of psychology, often pointing out the parallels to classical Buddhist thought. Some ideas will be familiar to those who have done cognitive behavioural therapy work, such as distinguishing between observations and evaluations, and recognizing that thoughts are not who we are.

Dr. Jinpa describes three elements of compassion: perceiving another's suffering or need, emotionally connecting with the suffering/need, and wishing to see that situation may be relieved. Empathy involves the first two of these elements, and is a complex phenomenon in the brain that appears to involve the limbic system, attachment system, and pain matrix. Dr. Jinpa explains that "compassion acknowledges the fundamental truth of our human condition that not all pain can be fixed... In many situations, it's not fixing that is needed; rather, it's our empathic response, our acceptance, understanding, and solidarity."

The importance of self-compassion is emphasized throughout the book. A free online self-compassion test is mentioned, which can be found at <https://centerformsc.org/learn-msc/ta...> The test breaks down scores on scales of self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. I completed the test, and scored particularly low in the areas of common humanity, isolation, and over-identification. This helps point me in the direction of the type of work that I need to focus on.

Dr. Jinpa explains that while the practice of self-compassion and the capacity to self-soothe and regulate emotions is heavily influenced by experiences and attachment early in life, the capacity for compassion is innate and therefore growth and change are possible. Self-compassion work includes cultivating both compassion (a wish to be free from suffering) and loving-kindness (a wish for happiness) towards ourselves, with a goal to cultivate the capacity to genuinely accept and care for ourselves and a profound appreciation of our natural and legitimate aspiration to kindness. The book offers specific, uncomplicated exercises to build skills in these areas.

Self-hatred is something that many of us living with mental illness have experienced at some point or another, and Dr. Jinpa offers an interesting view on this. He states that self-hatred comes from actually caring a great deal, but being unable to accept/forgive imperfect selves. As a result, people hide behind the

“layers of armor we put on when we feel like we’re under attack”. When approaching self-forgiveness, Dr. Jinpa suggests that it is important to acknowledge the legitimacy of unmet needs that prompted the behaviour in question, which I found very powerful.

The Tibetan practice of “tonglen” (literally “giving and receiving”) is offered as an active compassion meditation. It involves breathing in another’s suffering (while visualizing dark clouds or smoke) and breathing out happiness and good fortune (visualizing white clouds and light). Rather than drawing us into another’s pain, this voluntary taking on of another’s suffering is presented as an empowered state of mind that allows us to get out of ourselves and our own pain. Thus it differs from the empathetic taking on of another’s suffering, which is liable to cause what’s often referred to as “compassion fatigue”. Working in a helping profession myself, I found this to be an interesting differentiation.

Compassion training has been shown to improve psychological well-being in a number of different ways. It is correlated with decreased suppression of emotions and increased resilience. It teaches us to become less self-preoccupied and see ourselves in the context of our relationship with others rather than in isolation. It also increases self-acceptance, social connectedness, and a sense of purpose in life. The exercises in the book provide a useful roadmap, and I’m looking forward to adding a compassion practice into my holistic wellness plan.

Previously published on the blog Mental Health @ Home  
<https://mentalhealthathome.wordpress...>

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### **Amy Vey says**

The content of this book was exactly what I needed at this time. I work in a profession that serves the public, where there are great challenges on a daily basis as well as a constant negative mindset of those we are serving. This can cause it's own negative cycle of thinking and stress in those of us working with those individuals. The meditations in this book, and how to slowly grow your circle of compassion outward is a necessary and vital nutrient for the future positive growth and evolution of man kind on this Earth. It is necessary for those of us giving care to those who can't help themselves, or choose not to etc...When I read the part of how to deal with difficult people, I just kept hearing the "ding, ding, ding...we have a winner...aha moment!" It spoke volumes to me, as a matter of fact, the whole book did. If you are looking to be more compassionate just in general or in your profession, this book and the gleens of insight inside, will definitely be worth your time and the read. Thanks for gifting me this book in the goodreads giveaway. I absolutely loved it, and needed to read this; so thankful that it was placed into my hands at just the right time. With gratitude!

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### **Thor Olafsson says**

Hands down the best book I have read so far on compassion. The author manages to write the entire book in an honest, humble, and light-hearted style....while coming across as an authority on the matter.

What I find especially interesting is the mix of learning from contemplative practice and psychology. It is fascinating to see modern scientific methods confirm what the buddhist monks have known for centuries.

