

The Power of Now Summary – Eckhart Tolle

13 MINUTE READ

[The Power of Now](#) (1997)

A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment

by [Eckhart Tolle](#)

The Power of Now is an intimate Q&A on enlightenment, filled with simple, yet profound wisdom on how to find deep peace and calm by simply being in the present moment - by spiritual teacher and best-selling author, Eckhart Tolle. ([229 pages](#))

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Note: This **The Power of Now summary** is part of an ongoing project to summarise the [Best Mindfulness Books](#) and [Best Self Help Books](#) of all time.

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The Power of Now Review

The Power of Now has one goal – to remind you why you exist. According to Eckhart Tolle, you're here to enable the divine purpose of the Universe to unfold. This is your inner purpose, which will reveal itself as an outer purpose once you hone your inner energy. The publishers were "compelled" to publish the book due to Tolle's profound spiritual presence. This presence is felt as you read through the lines of this book. I came to Tolle's book after years of meditation, lots of spiritual angst, and a hunch that I was spending too much time with worries about the past and anticipation about the future. These are two no-no's I know well from over a decade in mindfulness training and teaching yoga.

There are few books that speak to you on such a deep level that you have a-ha moment after a-ha moment, but The Power of Now is one of them. As far as spiritual enlightenment goes, it's the real deal. Nobody makes the truth so simple yet so compelling. This book isn't dense or complicated but the ideas presented touch you to your core, and I found it helpful to take pause on occasion and to just let them simmer deep into my consciousness. My deepest self is revealed in Tolle's superbly simple teaching.

It helps that Tolle is so completely calm and steady as he narrates his own work. It helps that his advice is never condemning or highfalutin as many self-proclaimed spiritual gurus can be. You can tell that Tolle has been reworked from his own personal journey, at once homeless and wandering the streets of his hometown London, into a masterful mind that is strangely at peace and fully present. I'd even go as far as to say there are some direct downloads or what we call "diksha" in yoga, in this book.

The Power of Now Summary

Quick Summary: The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle offers true transformation.

True transformation and an end to suffering often happen through intense suffering. This is what caused Eckhart Tolle to experience a drastic departure from his ego-identified self that had him in a twisted knot of anxiety and suicidal depression, and brought him to a state of enduring bliss. The Power of Now is Tolle's answer to the thousand questions he fielded after experiencing a state of enlightenment and is filled with simple, yet profound wisdom on how you can also achieve deep peace and calm by staying in the present moment. Your inner energy, when peaceful and present, directs your inner purpose so that you make decisions with wisdom instead of fear.

Full Summary...

Introduction: Tolle's Interesting Past and Your True Nature

Tolle was an anxious man, with suicidal depression. When he speaks in this book, you can hardly recognize the man who he says he once was. He once loathed his own existence. After being gripped with an existential fear with his body shaking, he heard from within, "resist nothing." Becoming enlightened was never the primary focus of his life, but this is

what happened.

What transpired next is what many have described as a spiritual awakening. His fear was eliminated and he was deeply peaceful. While he went about his daily life, he understood that the intense suffering right before this reckoning caused his consciousness to withdraw from a deep identification with his fearful self. What he describes is ego-death, or the complete dissolution of the "self," that is angry, sad, fearful, dependent on external circumstances and people for validation, and a bunch of other junk that causes us to bypass our own ever-present joy.

Tolle spent almost two years without any external validation for his happiness, instead sitting on park benches feeling absolutely blissed out with no home, no relationships, no money, and no "identity" as such. Since then, he hasn't been without a grounded sense of peace and calm. His peace is so profound, that others observe it also. People want what he has, and so he wrote this book, *The Power of Now*. He unwittingly became a spiritual teacher. He has aided thousands in examining human consciousness and ways to elevate it by freeing themselves from compulsive thinking and opening to a higher level of consciousness.

Chapter One: Why We Identify with Mind

Tolle uses a story of a beggar to explain that:

- We identify with the mind and its thoughts and define ourselves as such.
- We are 90% repetitive thought patterns, most of which don't serve us. Incessant thinking is the cause of our guilt, pain, fear, anxiety, sadness, and suffering.
- We sit on our own gifts not knowing we possess them.
- We think that spiritual enlightenment is some lofty, grandiose thing that is barely attainable when this is a ruse of the ego or false self.

Enlightenment is our natural state of being.

- We can only dis-identify from the mind by realizing that we are not the mind and its thoughts. If we can observe our thoughts, how can we be our thoughts? The more we can stop identifying with repetitive thought patterns, and create a gap, which Tolle calls “no-mind,” the more there’s a possibility for allowing true, higher-level consciousness to shine. In this state, there is no anxiety, no depression, no fear because we are no longer identifying with the “self” that creates these thought patterns. As we practice this, we identify less and less with the ego, and more and more with the ground of our being.
- The wider the gap between thought and your perception of thought, the more rich and fulfilling your life becomes because you can act from wisdom instead of fear. That gap in thought and perception of thought allows us to choose new thoughts.
- Being present in the now moment will help you disengage from egoic thoughts, or fear thoughts. All thoughts based on regret of the past or anticipation of the future are outside of full, present consciousness. To be fully at peace and fully conscious, the more time you must spend in the now.
- When you begin to look at the antics of your mind like you would the antics of a child, you know you’re making headway, because you are no longer fully identifying with the mind and its constant chatter.
- The light of your consciousness is only revealed in the present.

Chapter Two: The Secret Sauce Is in the Present Moment

We are addicted to rumination in the past or future-spinning. Our minds are very rarely in the present moment. If you want to test yourself to see if this is true, the next time you have lunch with a friend, observe how often you are there with them, completely focused on the food you are eating, the things around you, the way the tablecloth feels under your fingers, or

the conversation you're having. How often do you go somewhere else in your mind? I know I'm guilty of not being fully present, especially in situations that I feel triggered or uncomfortable in. I can fantasize about being some other place and time easily.

The way out of pain is through consciousness. Tolle tells us that most human suffering is unnecessary. It is self-created while the unobserved mind runs your life. Unconscious resistance to what is in the form of judgment, or negativity, relates to how strongly identified we are with what is and how much we resist it. The more we are able to accept what is in the now, the more we can free ourselves from suffering. The ego perceives the "now" as threatening because it cannot operate without time. The mind constantly attempts to cover up the now moment with past and future musings. Our true nature becomes clouded, and thus we suffer. This is also what prolongs our joy. We think that "when I have this" or "when I do that" I'll be happy, but this is a false assumption. We can only find happiness when we are fully present. The present moment is all you ever have.

Chapter Three: How to Get Well-Acquainted with the Now

The problem of the mind cannot be solved at the level of the mind. This is the vital step most of us miss. Identification with the mind, and the feeding of the ego's endless needs, of fear and want stall us out. There's no need to explore all the ways that your ego will try to keep us outside of experiencing the present moment. There are an infinite number of ways.

We can get caught in trying to understand why the ego doesn't want to be in the now with more thinking. The ego loves this. All you have to do is to realize that the mind will do this. Just focus on being present.

The mind will do what it does, just don't mistake yourself as the mind

itself. To disidentify with the mind, you just keep practicing being present. You end the delusion of time. Memory and anticipation create an endless preoccupation with past and future, both of which offer you an identity which is illusory. Every moment that you can be in the present, you are dislodging your egoic mind. The now is the only access point into the timeless and formless realm of being.

The essence of meditation is to put us back in touch with the now moment and to cease the endless chatter of a future and past-obsessed ego.

Chapter Four: How the Mind Avoids the Now

To escape the trap of time, an obsession with the past, or the hope of salvation in the future, we must become keenly aware that our minds trend in these two places. Most people cannot free themselves of the mind's avoidance of the now without deep suffering, which jars them loose from this identification. However, you can also work at it, little by little, to become ever more present and less caught up in memories or future-yearning.

The mind avoids the now by intellectually sparring, egoic posturing, and a million other methods so that you can't be fully present. The first step is to notice that your mind does this. This is where the "gap" begins to form. When this gap becomes wider and wider, at some point the ego is completely dissolved. Then you are no longer caught up in these crazy mind games, identifying with your thoughts.

Chapter Five: Presence

You can't think about presence. You can only experience it. Ask yourself, "I wonder what my next thought will be?" then see what thought arises. When you're in a state of intense presence, thoughts are slow to come.

Thoughts only arise when we are not present. When we are “lost in thought,” we aren’t present. We can stay present by staying grounded within our bodies. Body-awareness anchors you in the now.

Myriad forms of life, aside from humans, don’t obsess about time. An oak tree doesn’t ask what time it is, it is constantly just growing toward the sun.

Chapter Six: An Inside Job

The body is an access point to higher consciousness. Being-ness arises most easily when we stay present with the physical body and its sensations. The illusion of the self, as the Buddha terms it, arises from the identification with the illusory sense of self, or ego. Words are an abstraction. Thought is an abstraction. Being is an essence, not an abstraction.

The human condition, which is run by egoic thought, has caused us to kill millions of our own kind. Unconsciousness is evidenced in the insane ways that we act. Identification with the body is a limited manifestation of the self, but when we “inhabit the body,” we feel the life force within the body that animates it. When we touch this part of ourselves, we get closer to awakened consciousness. Underneath our outer form, we’re connected to something so vast and pure that we can’t put it into words. We can only experience it from within.

The end of suffering happens when we look inside, rather than for external cues to dictate our happiness.

Chapter Seven: Portals

Meditation on our deeper animating force can help open a portal to the now consciousness. Focused breathing will do the same. When we concentrate on the energy body, we disassociate from the mind’s thinking.

Focus on the feelings that arise and don't get attached to any images that come up. Over time, we can merge the observer with the observed. Tolle calls this an awareness of the ground of being. This frees us from bondage to form.

Ironically, when we concentrate on our deeper form and energy field, we affect others with a deeper sense of calm that emanates from this newfound peace.

Chapter Eight: Applying Tolle's Wisdom to Relationships

Most of us wait for relationships – an event in time – to save us. Physical pleasure often offers us psychological gratification which comes from an underlying state of dissatisfaction. This is why many relationships are only temporarily fulfilling. As long as we depend on a relationship with another person to bring us happiness, then we are doomed to more dissatisfaction. Once we are coming from a place of inner fulfillment, we experience freedom from fear, suffering, and a perceived state of desire, or the assumption that we need another person to be happy. We share our happiness with another person, rather than seek it from them.

We mostly think that we're not yet complete, or something is wrong with us and we look to others to convince us otherwise. This is a futile endeavor. If you are lonely and don't have a relationship, you can enter the now from that exact space. You don't need a partner to enter the now.

All relationships are flawed and dysfunctional if they are not entered into from the now.

Chapter Nine: Neither Happiness nor Unhappiness But Peace

Unenlightened people require happiness to feel peaceful. Perceived negative experiences can teach us what is real and what is unreal, what

matters and what doesn't. From an enlightened perspective, things are not "good" or "bad." There is only a higher good which includes the perceived "bad."

Accidents, illness, death, and other "bad" experiences are not to be disassociated from but dived into to feel completely. In the moment, we can practice forgiveness and allow all moments to be as they are so that resentment isn't accumulated.

The key message: accept what is. This allows the ego to be quieted, and a more wise consciousness.

Chapter Ten: Surrender

True surrender isn't fatalism. You don't passively put up with your life without doing anything to change your circumstances. It means "yielding to, rather than opposing the flow of life." Resistance is most often strong when we don't like what is happening. Tolle calls this the pain gap. Instead of resisting what is, yielding to it, allows us to disassociate from egoic projections.

Once again, being in the now, we can observe where we're at, rather than how we wish things would be. Our attention then is devoid of judgment, and no emotional negativity. From there, we make better, positive choices rather than re-acting. Meaning, we re-enact the same thought patterns that likely created the experience we are already in. While some circumstances are out of our control, non-surrender emboldens the ego and keeps us stuck in a competitive, dominant state where we perceive all as our enemies.

Life energy is restricted when we don't surrender. This impedes our growth and ironically, keeps us stuck.

The Power of Now Contents

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- The Truth That Is Within You

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- Freeing Yourself from Your Mind
- Enlightenment: Rising above Thought
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CHAPTER TWO: Consciousness: The Way Out of Pain

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- The Ego's Search for Wholeness

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- Negativity and Suffering Have Their Roots in Time
- Finding the Life Underneath Your Life Situation
- All Problems Are Illusions of the Mind
- A Quantum Leap in the Evolution of Consciousness
- The Joy of Being

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CHAPTER TEN: The Meaning of Surrender

- Acceptance of the Now
- From Mind Energy to Spiritual Energy

- Surrender in Personal Relationships
- Transforming Illness into Enlightenment
- When Disaster Strikes
- Transforming Suffering into Peace
- The Way of the Cross
- The Power to Choose

The Power of Now FAQs

What Does The Power of Now Teach?

The Power of Now teaches that our mental activity, or incessant preoccupation with the past and the future keeps us from experiencing the joy of being. In the now moment is the gift of bliss. The now is our biggest treasure but we miss it due to repetitive thought patterns that govern our experience of the world around us.

The ego causes unconscious identification with outer experiences, such as our possessions or a lack thereof, social status, and other outward norms that give us permission to be happy, thus trapping us in endless misery. When we have "that" thing, or we achieve "that" goal, we can be happy, but this is the ego's way to keep us future-focused instead of gloriously in the now where dissatisfaction and misery cannot reside.

As long as we don't separate the thoughts from the thinker, we are relegated to a self-created hell. Conversely, when we surrender fully to what is, here and now, there is no more pain. Incessant thinking can be addictive, but we can learn how to slow thoughts and direct them.

What Is the Message of The Power of Now?

The main message of The Power of Now is to spend as much time identifying your endless thoughts as possible, without judging them. This then creates a gap for true, present consciousness to seep through. The

more often you practice being present, the easier it gets.

How Do You Practice The Power of Now?

To practice The Power of Now, you have to be willing to first admit that your mind is running on auto-pilot, often obsessing about the future or ruminating on the past. Once you take a few moments and observe this pattern, you start to become more present. You start to see that you are not your thoughts. From here, you can begin to rest in a stillness that is ever-present in each now moment. From here, peace arises easily.

The focus of your attention on your deeper self, that which is not tied to time (future or past) awakens higher consciousness. You're no longer a prisoner of social status, or what is or isn't happening in your life. You surrender over and over again to what is.

Best The Power of Now Quotes

These The Power of Now quotes come from **The Art of Living**'s ever-growing central library of thoughts, anecdotes, notes, and [inspirational quotes](#).

"Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make the NOW the primary focus of your life."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"Time isn't precious at all, because it is an illusion. What you perceive as precious is not time but the one point that is out of time: the Now. That is precious indeed. The more you are focused on time —past and future—the more you miss the Now, the most precious thing there is."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"I have lived with several Zen masters -- all of them cats."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"Love is not selective, just as the light of the sun is not selective. It does not make one person special. It is not exclusive. Exclusivity is not the love of God but the "love" of ego. However, the intensity with which true love is felt can vary. There may be one person who reflects your love back to you more clearly and more intensely than others, and if that person feels the same toward you, it can be said that you are in a love relationship with him or her. The bond that connects you with that person is the same bond that connects you with the person sitting next to you on a bus, or with a bird, a tree, a flower. Only the degree of intensity with which it is felt differs."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"Any action is often better than no action, especially if you have been stuck in an unhappy situation for a long time. If it is a mistake, at least you learn something, in which case it's no longer a mistake. If you remain stuck, you learn nothing."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"All negativity is caused by an accumulation of psychological time and denial of the present. Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry - all forms of fear - are caused by too much future, and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of nonforgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"It is not uncommon for people to spend their whole life waiting to start living."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place. Primary reality is within; secondary reality without."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"The past gives you an identity and the future holds the promise of salvation, of fulfillment in whatever form. Both are illusions."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

"See if you can catch yourself complaining, in either speech or thought, about a situation you find yourself in, what other people do or say, your surroundings, your life situation, even the weather. To complain is always nonacceptance of what is. It invariably carries an unconscious negative charge. When you complain, you make yourself into a victim. When you speak out, you are in your power. So change the situation by taking action or by speaking out if necessary or possible; leave the situation or accept it. All else is madness."

- [Eckhart Tolle](#), The Power of Now

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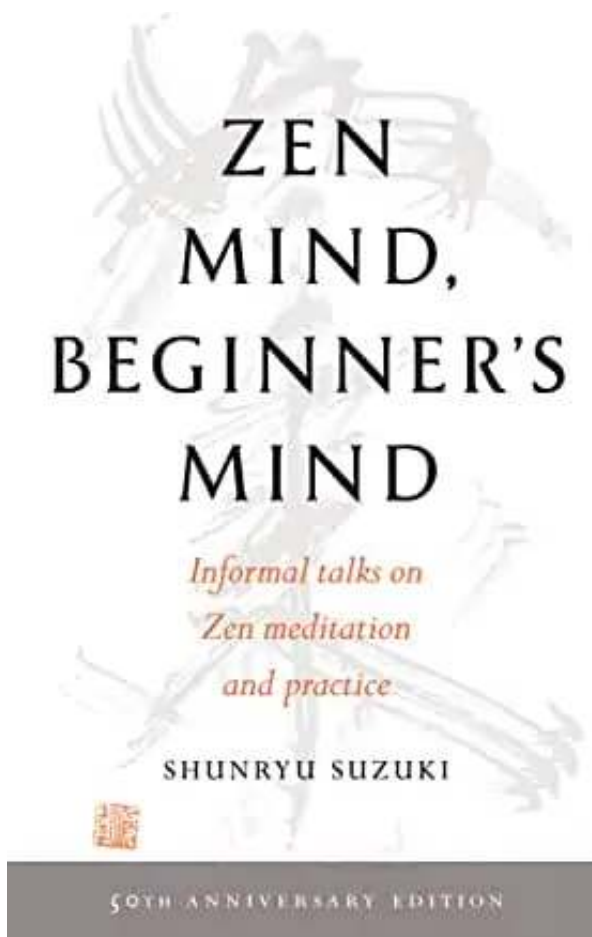
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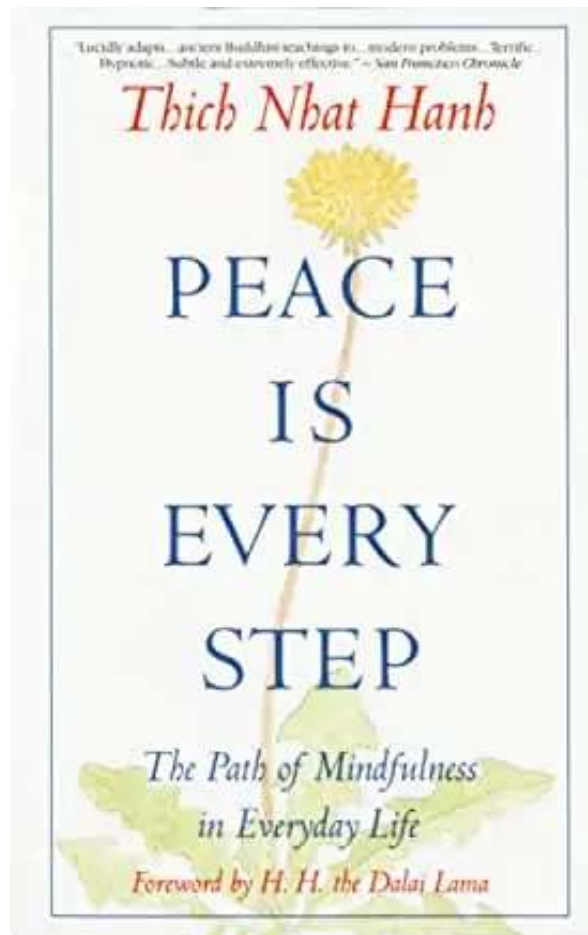
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2. [Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind](#) - [Shunryu Suzuki](#)

Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice

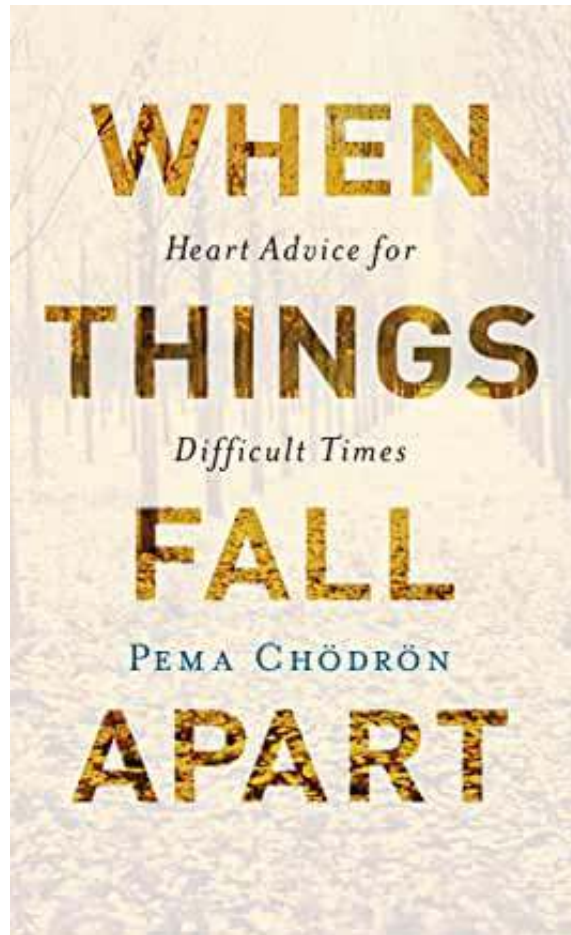
Published 1970 // 138 pages // Rated 4.2 over 41,600 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



3. [Peace Is Every Step](#) - [Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life

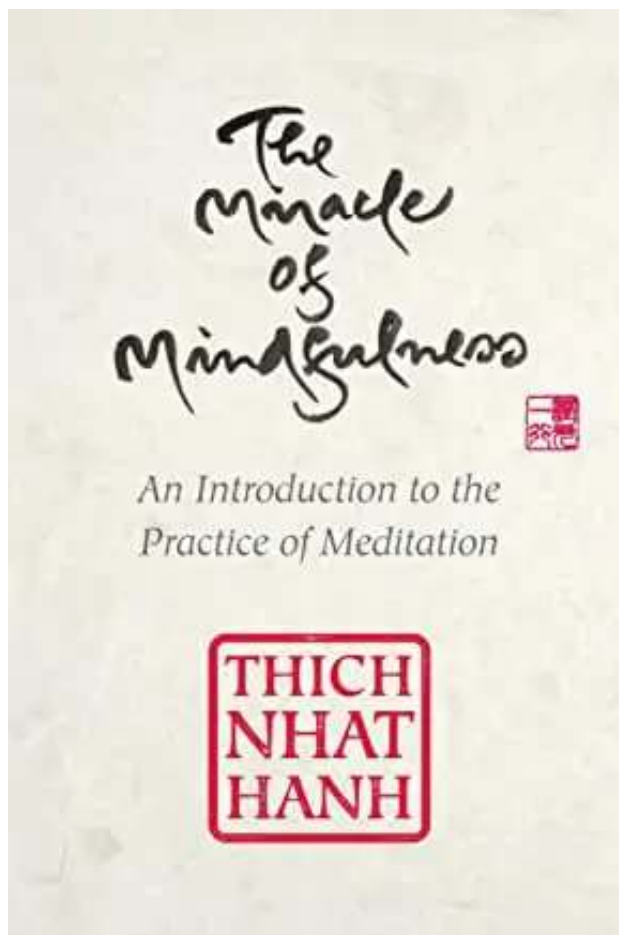
Published 1990 // 160 pages // Rated 4.3 over 33,400 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



4. [When Things Fall Apart](#) - [Pema Chödrön](#)

Heart Advice for Difficult Times

Published 1996 // 160 pages // Rated 4.3 over 43,300 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



5. [The Miracle of Mindfulness](#) - [Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation

Published 1975 // 140 pages // Rated 4.2 over 29,300 reviews [on Goodreads](#)

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[Christina Sarich](#)

Christina is a certified yoga instructor with over 15 years of teaching under her belt, trained in Nasik, India at Yoga Vidya Dham. She has been practicing meditation since the age of sixteen and has written thousands of articles on mindfulness, human development, altering consciousness, and alternative healing.