



Loving What Is

Four questions that can change your life

by Byron Katie

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352 pages

The Big Ideas

Don't Argue with Reality

You'll lose. But only 100%.

Whose Business

Are you in?

Alarm Clocks

Set a compassionate one.

Your Projector's Lens

And lint.

Inquiry/The Work

4 Questions + Turnaround.

Believing Lies

How would you be if...

Every Story's Theme

Should should should.

One Prayer

Spare me, please!

Insanity

Shoulding again?

Carpenter's Level

Where's the bubble?

Stock Market

Invest in yourself.

Doing Dishes

What's the next thing?

Nothing Goes Wrong

Ever. Embrace that.

"The only time we suffer is when we believe a thought that argues with what is. When the mind is perfectly clear, what is is what we want."

~ Byron Katie from *Loving What Is*

THAT, in a nutshell, is the book.

If you want to argue with what is, you will suffer. Period. In fact, "If you want reality to be different than what it is, you might as well try to teach a cat to bark." :)

The question, of course, is "How can we get to a point where we actually 'love what is?'"

Enter: The Work.

Let's start with Rule #1:

■ Don't Argue with Reality

"I realized that it's insane to oppose it. When I argue with reality, I lose—but only 100% of the time."

Guess what?

What's happening is happening and no amount of wishing on your end is going to make it any different in that moment. So, why not take a deep breath and reflect on the following: "How do I know that the wind should blow? It's blowing!"

DO NOT argue with reality. You'll lose. But only 100% of the time. :)

■ Whose Business Are You In?

"I can find only three kinds of business in the universe: mine, yours and God's. Much of our stress comes from mentally living out of our business."

That's brilliant. Think about that. There are really only three kinds of business, eh? Mine, yours, and God's. I love that.

Katie stresses the fact (yes, it's a fact) that our stress arises when we get out of our own business and into someone else's or into God's business.

"God's" business: Why would we think we should be able to control an earthquake or a

"The pain shows you what's left to investigate."

~ Byron Katie

war? We can't.

"Your" business: Why would we think we should be able to control a partner or a boss? We can't.

And by not recognizing these facts, we spin our wheels spending all of our time thinking about how someone or something should be different than what it is. Enter suffering.

So: stay in your own business. It's the only place where you can get some good work done.

■ Compassionate Alarm Clocks

"It is easy to be swept away by some overwhelming feeling, so it's helpful to remember that any stressful feeling is like a compassionate alarm clock that says, "You're caught in the dream.""

That's a brilliant statement. Too often we let our stressful feelings get us MORE stressed.

Why not look at a stressful feeling as an alarm clock—a very compassionate alarm clock that's nudging us to wake up to a new reality? A reality grounded in truth.

I like that.

*insert favorite alarm clock sound here!! *

Wake up!

■ Lint on a Projector's Lens

"As you inquire into issues and turn judgments around, you come to see that every perceived problem appearing "out there" is really nothing more than a misperception within your own thinking."

Imagine you're watching a movie. You're in the movie theatre. (No popcorn, you brought your own healthy and yummy snacks, of course.) The lights dim. The movie starts to play and you notice that there's something funny on the screen. You walk up to the front and you try to wipe off the little thing that's on the screen. Still there! Weird. So, you try again. Still there! Huh. Now you're getting a little frustrated. You try again. This time you scratch harder. Still there! GRRRRR!! Now you're really getting upset. So you start scratching away at the screen ... knowing what you're doing SHOULD be working ... until you scratch a hole right through the screen and ruin it.

D'oh.

Of course, the issue was NEVER with the screen. There was a tiny something on the PROJECTOR that showed up on the screen. No (!!) amount of scratching on the screen would change the fact that the projector's lens had some lint on it.

How often do we go through our lives thinking we need to change our "movie screen"?!? How often do we get frustrated by the movie on our screen—by the traffic, by a loved one not doing what we think they should do, by the weather... you know, stuff we have a lot of control over?

That's a recipe for disaster. (As we all know.)

The solution Katie proposes is remarkably simple. It's a process that questions our assumptions about reality to bring us to the only thing we can change: our own mind.

We're finally ready for The Work.

"There is no thought or situation that you can't put up against inquiry. Every thought, every person, every apparent problem is here for the sake of your freedom."

~ Byron Katie

■ Inquiry/The Work

"The Work is: Judge your neighbor, write it down, ask four questions, turn it around. That's it. Simple stuff."

"The Inquiry:

1. **Is it true?**
2. **Can I absolutely know that it's true?**
3. **How do I react when I think that thought?**
4. **Who would I be without the thought?**

And then ... Turn it around."

Alright. You're going to want to get the book to read a deeper explanation of the process and, most importantly, to see the brilliant examples of Katie working with many people over a range of issues (from relationship challenges to parenting issues, work stuff, etc.).

Here's the essence of The Work:

Think of something that's annoying you. It could be something in the past that still burns you up every time you think about it or it could be a current drama in your life. Something that really gets ya.

Got it? Good.

Now, write it down. (It's mandatory that you WRITE all this stuff down otherwise you can't slow your mind down enough to do The Work.) Katie has a specific process she uses to help you get your frustrations in writing—she calls it the "Judge Your Neighbor" worksheet and you should get the book to use it to dig deep.

For now? Write down what's upsetting you. For example, it could go something like this: "Bob is a complete jerk. He should do what he said he was going to do. Because he didn't, I'm screwed."

Got it?

What's yours? (You write it down?)

OK. Now that you've got your issue, let's do "The Work" on it, shall we?

Read your statement and ask yourself, **"Is it true?"**

So, for me, we'll start with the first statement: "Bob is a complete jerk." Although my first response may be, "Yes!!," if I'm honest, the answer is, "No." He's not a complete jerk. Sometimes he can be cool.

If you get stuck on #1, then go to #2 and ask yourself, **"Can I be absolutely certain that it's true?"** You're going to be hard-pressed to find a situation where that answer is yes. :)

From there, ask yourself **"How do I react when I think that thought?"**

Well, when I think the thought that Bob is a complete jerk, I get angry. I feel myself burning up a bit inside. I'm tense. I treat him like a jerk and I'm not pleasant to be around. I'm bitter. I don't particularly like feeling like that. (Schew!)

Powerful. OK. Then ask yourself the question: **"Who would I be without the thought?"**

Well, if I didn't have the thought that Bob was a complete jerk, I'd probably be able to see more of his good qualities. I'd feel lighter and happier and less stressed. It would be a nice place to be. (Ahhhh...)

"Every story is a variation on a single theme: This shouldn't be happening. I shouldn't be having this experience. God is unjust. Life isn't fair."

~ Byron Katie

OK. "And then ... Turn it around."

Turning it around is simply taking what you said and "turning it around" to its opposite. So, for me, it would be "I am a complete jerk." (!!) Or "Bob is *not* a complete jerk."

Are those "turnarounds" equally or more true than the original statements? The answer is (always!) yes. :)

Now I would go back thru to my second statement ("He should do what he said he was going to do.") and do the four questions and turnarounds on it.

Got it? Now try yours!!

■ Believing Lies

"Who would you be if you didn't believe this lie?"

So and so should be doing such and such. There shouldn't be so much traffic right now. My boss should be nice to me...

Riiiiight.

"Who would you be if you didn't believe this lie?"

Soooo much of our stress is tied into these stories about what SHOULD be happening. Katie calls them lies.

Anytime you're feeling stressed and projecting your story about what should be onto the reality of what is (traffic, spouse, whatever), slow down. You can go through the questions and the turnaround or you can go straight to asking yourself "Who would I be if I didn't believe this lie."

Powerful stuff.

■ Every Story's Theme

Katie talks a lot about the stories we tell ourselves. In fact, The Work is really just a tool to bring truth in place of these stories about what *should* be happening.

The theme to all these stories: this *shouldn't* be happening. My car *shouldn't* be broken down. My child *shouldn't* be talking back to me. My spouse *shouldn't* be so inconsiderate.

Blah blah blah blah shouldn't be blah blah blah!

The quickest way to peace in your life? Throw "should" in the trash. Accept reality and go from there!

■ One Prayer

"If I had a prayer, it would be this: "God, spare me from the desire for love, approval, or appreciation. Amen.""

I love that. It's remarkable how much energy we put into thinking about what other people are thinking of us. Whether they'll approve of something we're going to do or laugh at something we attempted. Gah!

A couple years ago, in one of his great books, Deepak Chopra introduced me to a mantra, "I am totally independent of the good or bad opinion of others." (How cool is that!?) I said it thousands and thousands of times and it was amazing how aware I became of the

influence others have on me—and how I was able to let go of a lot of my need for their approval.

Let us bow our heads as we add our own little prayer: *May we live independent of the good or bad opinion of others and experience life as the beautifully fearless, authentic human beings we naturally are.* :)

■ Insanity

“If I think that someone else is causing my problem, I’m insane.”

Pssstttt...

* leans in to tell you a secret *

* whispers *

If you think someone else is causing your problem, you’re insane.

(At this stage, I hope and trust you realize that the lint is on the projector. So quit scratching your friends! I mean, the screen! :)

We need to get to Work on our minds--the source of all of our challenges.

■ Carpenter’s Level

Katie creates a brilliant image to help us see if we’re out of balance. You know those little carpenter’s levels with the bubble that floats to the left or to the right or sits there in the middle if it’s level?

Think of your mind like that. If you’re telling yourself that a situation “should be” one way or “shouldn’t be” another way, your little bubble is floating to the left or to the right. Get it to the center by loving what is. :)

■ Investing in the Stock Market

“The greatest stock market you can invest in is yourself. Finding this truth is better than finding a gold mine.”

I love that. Never think that the time and money and energy you are investing in yourself is imprudent. **“The greatest stock market you can invest in is yourself.”**

Are you investing enough?

■ Doing the Dishes

“We never receive more than we can handle, and there is always just one thing to do.”

One of my favorite concepts from the book is something Katie calls **“doing the dishes.”** In any given moment, we usually (always!?) have an intuition about what needs to be done. Whether that’s to do the dishes, speak our truth, make a phone call, pick up the laundry, write the next page of our novel. Whatever. There’s something for us to do.

The fact is that our peace and well-being is powerfully tied to whether we pay attention to that nudge and DO the thing we’re called to do OR whether we choose to ignore it. You ignore it and you’re in trouble. You create this unconscious “knowing” within your soul that you’re *not* showing up. Make a habit of that and you’ll feel the weight.

“We’ve been looking outside us for our own peace. We’ve been looking in the wrong direction.”

~ Byron Katie

“Self-realization is not complete until it lives in action.”

~ Byron Katie

The solution? Just do the next thing your inner voice is guiding you to do.

If it's the dishes, do the dishes. :)

■ Nothing Goes Wrong

"Nothing ever goes wrong in life."

Reminds me of Wayne Dyer's wisdom: *"In my world, nothing ever goes wrong."*

I love that. Can you see that everything is either a blissful experience or a blissful opportunity to learn?

As Katie says, **"Everything happens for me, not to me."** And, **"Until you can see everything in the world as your friend, your work is not done."**

So, the sooner we can get to the point where we realize the fact that nothing ever goes wrong, the happier we're going to be.

What are you waiting for?!?

My recommendation: Read/Re-read the book and let's get to ("The) Work,"

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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About the Author of "Loving What Is":

[Byron Katie](#)



Byron Katie, founder of The Work, has one job: to teach people how to end their own suffering. As she guides people through the powerful process of inquiry called The Work, they find that their stressful beliefs—about life, other people, or themselves—radically shift and their lives are changed forever... Katie is the author of three bestselling books *Loving What Is*, *I Need Your Love—Is That True?* and the recently published *A Thousand Names for Joy: Living in Harmony with the Way Things Are*. (From her site, where you can learn more and sign up for a live event: thework.com!) Buy the book [here](#)!

About the Author of This Note:

[Brian Johnson](#)



Brian Johnson is a Philosopher & (Professional) Student of Life. He used to build businesses. Now he reads a lot and has fun integrating universal truths into his day-to-day life. He also likes to hike, laugh, write, think, draw and teach. Learn more at philosophersnotes.com today!