

A Mindful Life

Tom Dickerson

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Tom Dickerson's ranging self-help book *A Mindful Life* covers topics including mindfulness, self-awareness, serious thinking, clarity, flexibility, and freedom.

Dickerson admits to having once lived in crisis-management mode himself. He recalls transitioning from homelessness to military life; later, he found a career in nursing and psychology. As a result of these experiences, he is a strong believer in the possibility of dramatic transformation. He covers such memories in brief, digestible subsections that are complemented by thoughts on subjects including integrity, the art of thinking, and the path to success.

The book begins its self-help work by raising important questions about people's loss of "childhood wonderment" and tendency toward "herd" thinking. To counter such trends, its major sections (with titles like "Unconditional Positive Regard" and "Four Dark-Side Demons of Mythology") model "Saying NO" to conflicts. Their advice is ranging; it draws on ancient traditions, secular philosophies, and guidance from an Okinawan monk. All proved useful to Dickerson in his own pursuit of self-awareness; here, he distills the same lessons into actionable steps for others.

To urge its audience on in building better lives for themselves, the book includes questions that function as prompts. They work to move the book's personal observations further toward the realm of universal application. Their encouragements are comforting and familiar: people are asked to reflect on their desired lives, to find ways to take control, and to claim complete responsibility for every aspect of their lives. There are also awareness exercises to sharpen such transformative mindsets, with piquing suggestions such as to focus on the texture of one's food while eating, to appreciate the beauty of one's environment while walking, and to listen to others' points of view during conversations. While not always fresh, these reminders are in line with the book's reigning philosophy.

The sections related to negativity are weighted; they involve examining self-defeating issues. They include tips for getting "unstuck" and pointed lists for altering negative thinking styles, as well as content on achieving success (accompanied by the surprising suggestion to "be quiet"). Indeed, a positive approach reigns, and the recognizable image of one's inner lighthouse sticks out as a guiding one, suggesting already available internal strength. The book's closing diagram is also instructive: it lists examples of distorted thoughts and realistic responses to various scenarios.

Encouraging transformation in the search for inner peace, *A Mindful Life* is a thoughtful self-help book with personalized advice for releasing negativity and achieving success.

ANDREA HAMMER (June 15, 2023)

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