

Brilliant Emotions: Great Agony, Great Promise: True Stories from a Buddhist Psychotherapist

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The spiritual wellness guide Brilliant Emotions shares advice for transforming difficult feelings into sources of courage, connectedness, and clarity.

With the belief that emotional states are fleeting and do not define one's personality traits, Buddhist psychotherapist Paul Cashman's challenging and compassionate self-help guide *Brilliant Emotions* seeks the wisdom and inherent sanity behind human emotions.

Introducing a four-step process to recognizing, exploring, befriending, and liberating one's difficult feelings rather than repressing or ignoring them, the book draws on the Tibetan Buddhist practice of the Four Karmas, which are expressed as pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and transforming. The process involves feeling one's emotions and noting the body's responses to them, enveloping one's feelings in kindness, and recognizing that emotions do go away: "We know for sure that emotion is not the sum total of our lives. We can learn that our innate wisdom runs much deeper."

The chapters are short and punchy, enabling swift explorations of the process, whether it's tried independently or with the help of a mental health professional. Each chapter addresses a different emotion, including anxiety, ignorance, jealousy, and inadequacy, showing how people used the book's recommended four-step process to liberate themselves from those feelings and illustrating how they transformed that energy into wisdom. Case studies are used to further attest to how particular patients were able to work with their emotions, overcoming difficulties without ignoring, repressing, or pushing away their feelings.

While its habit of treating each emotion in turn makes the book feel repetitive, its variety of examples give credence to the notion that the four-step process does work. There's advice for treating alcoholism, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and attachment issues too. And for those still overwhelmed by the book's recommendations, an abbreviated two-step process is introduced to notice feelings and befriend them in the moment—one tidy enough to be completed at any time throughout the day. This shorthand method is complemented by the claim that people often repress their emotions or evade thinking about how they feel through the day; the book encourages regular self-check-ins to name and transform one's emotions, reflecting enlightened personal qualities within.

An attuned self-help book for those facing tough situations including abuse, self-hatred, and bullying, *Brilliant Emotions* explores negative feelings with sensitivity and care. The ultimate goal of its process is to eliminate the power that negative emotions have over individual lives.

SARAH WHITE (March 30, 2024)

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