

From Role to Soul: 15 Shifts on the Awakening Journey

Annie Burnside

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From Role to Soul: 15 Shifts on the Awakening Journey by Annie Burnside presents a path to freeing the self for more authentic living. This book is for those who've looked in the mirror and wondered who on earth that person is. Across generations and cultures, people let others tell them who to be. Burnside calls on people to set their own agendas and expectations, to stop fulfilling a role, and to live from the depths of who they are.

The book offers a process that helps people who are trapped by expectation and obligation to move toward wholeness and freedom. The numbered steps make the impossible seem possible by clearly delineating past lifestyles and future lifestyles, and describing how to get from one to the other. Burnside hits common topics in the self-help landscape and in life: strength and weakness, worthiness, shame, and vulnerability. In the process, she ventures from abstract and spiritual guidance to intensely practical and physical advice.

This is an individual-centered approach, but Burnside continually highlights one of the key factors for individual change: positive community. She describes her family relationships, friendships (online and in real life), and casual interactions in ways that demonstrate wholeness and mutuality. Burnside uses her personal story and reflections to drive the book, inviting others to join her journey or to set out on their own. This communal feel is an asset to the book—it embodies the common affirmation, “you are not alone.”

Burnside's empathy and compassion permeate her tone and advice, and even the way she describes her own life: “I felt quite tired. Not hard-physical-labor-fifty-weeks-a-year tired. Not single-parent tired. Not grieving-for-the-loss-of-a-loved-one tired.” As a result, those who interact with her words and ideas will feel cared for and valued—a true life-changing gift.

The tone of the writing is calm and reflective, but Burnside occasionally lapses into sentences that are wordier and more formal than needed. These longer phrases will resonate with people who are savoring the process of change, but may frustrate those who are more focused on forward motion than on introspection for its own sake.

The design—from the cover colors to the interior type to the chapter-opener layouts—has a light, airy feel that echoes the weight and tone of the book's content. The subheadings/chapter subtitles on the table of contents don't add usability (they don't have page numbers and don't represent headings within the chapters), as a result they make the contents pages feel overcomplicated, and the repetition of the word “from” creates distracting word stacks.

From Role to Soul invites and equips people for life-giving transformation.

MELISSA WUSKE (November 13, 2014)

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