Clarion Review

Self-Help

The Path to Real and Lasting Inner Peace
Jane V. Milardo
Create Space
978-0-615-60579-1
Five Stars (out of Five)

Chances are you have snippets of twelve-step recovery programs in your head, even if you've never set foot in an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. Concepts like surrendering to a higher power and making amends for wrongdoings have become commonplace since Bill W. introduced his program in the 1930s. In *The Path to Real and Lasting Inner Peace*, marriage and family therapist Jane V. Milardo updates the steps for the twenty-first century and shows how the program can be used for both recovery and spiritual growth.

An experienced psychotherapist, Milardo has worked with patients in hospitals, treatment centers, and private practice for over twenty years. Impressed by the personal transformations experienced by addicts in recovery programs, Milardo realized that these patients often came through the process with an enhanced sense of peace and fulfillment. She wondered if the spiritual enlightenment achieved through twelve-step programs could also be attained by non-addicts. This book is her answer to that question.

Milardo retains the traditional AA language in her chapter headings, but her approach is thoroughly modern. Speaking directly to the reader, she jumps right in with this admonition: "Repeat after me: I am not the center of the universe." She continues to dispense advice in a tone that is part cheerleader and part drill sergeant. She is not a life coach claiming everything will be wonderful, but a veteran therapist calling on her readers to do the hard work that makes transformation possible.

Clear and concise, the volume can be read front to back in a single sitting. To really experience Milardo's process, however, readers will need to concentrate on one chapter at a time. The organization of the book supports this by addressing a single step in each chapter, allowing space for reflection.

Spiritual growth is central to Milardo's program, and she does not limit this spirituality

to a particular belief system. She explains that her Christian faith is important to her, but she defines God, or a “higher power,” in a variety of ways. One intriguing example is the power of a group of people, such as those who supported Rosa Parks in serving a greater good. Milardo believes in the importance of becoming a part of something larger than oneself. These insights don’t exactly make it easier to grow spiritually, but that isn’t the author’s point. Milardo wants those who are seeking spiritual growth to get out into the world, to take part, and to make a difference.

A pep talk with punch,*The Path to Real and Lasting Inner Peace* encourages readers to think deeply and act honorably. The journey Milardo outlines may not be simple or easy, but she promises it will be transformative.

Sheila M. Trask