

## WTF I'm Trying to Be Spiritual: A Guidebook for Loving Yourself without Fear

**Jeanette Bishop**

**Helen Varga**

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*Bishop and Varga have created a jovial and generous guidebook for self-care.*

The co-founders of Kiss and Tell Creative Productions, Jeanette Bishop and Helen Varga (*Shut the Hell Up, I'm Trying to be Spiritual Here!*, 2005), return with a new manual for generous, spiritually centered self-care. With prose lightened by quips and made accessible by revelatory personal examples, they seek to shed light on the ways self-negation impedes holistic health.

The authors are convinced that the unhappiness they detect in those around them is the result of pervasive dispossession from intimacy with the Spirit or Universal Source of Truth, which they also call God. Drawing from their own communications with said Spirit—particularly from Bishop's, who speaks in the Spirit's voice throughout—they assert that many of humanity's most persistent maladies can be addressed by purposeful inward orientations toward the good. With palpable cheer, and after a few colorful illustrations of spiritual brokenness, they offer their readership the necessary "spiritual bitch slap" to set them on that path.

The book's largest sections, which focus on loving oneself and healing via that love, offer a blueprint for this reorientation. Trading between practical advice and recalled, meditative conversations with the Spirit, the authors act as creative spiritual gurus. Sustained unhappiness, they insist, tends to be rooted in childhood disappointments; they encourage carefully following negative feelings back to their sources, where their unnatural beginnings can be confronted.

Mantras are offered, concepts like "I am beautiful/perfect" which might retrain the mind's self-critical tendencies. Corrective exercises are also proposed, some as simple as redirecting negative energy into habit-breaking physical outlets, like coloring or snack-making, most rooted in the idea of self-love.

Such pages can proffer useful advice for healthy deviations from habitual behaviors. That the authors have a background in creative workshops proves useful. In their section on practical self-love, they encourage the cultivation of needlessly ignored creative desires, one of many proposals in a list certain to add color to mundane daily situations. Other assertions prove less easy to swallow, as with some in the section on healing: both physical and mental ailments are explained in a mind-over-matter manner, though attributing cancers and mental illness to improper inward orientations might warrant the ire of medical communities.

While mental and physical health chapters should perhaps not be absorbed without the simultaneous consultation of established medical wisdom, Bishop and Varga's guide should be useful for helping to question the ways in which self-understanding shapes the day-to-day. They warn that their conceptions of God are unusual, and conservative religious adherents would be advised to take this admission to heart; irreverence adds verve to their pages but could shock those not prepared to encounter it.

*WTF I'm Trying to Be Spiritual* is a jovial and generous guidebook for self-care, certain to initiate fruitful introspection even where it doesn't prompt exact adherence.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March 6, 2014)

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