

The ZEN of LOVE

*Discover Your Own
Awakened Heart*



A new book by
Peter Cutler
a new life for you

The Zen of Love



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DISCOVER YOUR OWN AWAKENED HEART



Peter Cutler



N-lightenment LLC
SEDONA, AZ

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What Readers Say:

“Peter Cutler is a Buddha, a regular man who has somehow awakened. Just read his words and it is evident. His words are carried with light. He is a Mystic for our time. I am deeply grateful.”

– Lin Shanti Goodman

“*The Zen of Love* is one of the clearest books ever written on the fundamentals of spirituality and personal growth. In its pages the philosophy of Zen meets the most practical aspects of love and relationship (with self and others). Author, Peter Cutler, combines deep insights, warm anecdotes, and effective exercises to awaken the reader's heart and mind through authentic love and compassion.”

– Michael Mirdad, Spiritual Teacher *Creating Fulfilling Relationships and Healing the Heart & Soul*

“*The Zen of Love* is an absolutely wonderful book – highly compelling and beautifully written. Its openhearted message of love positively beams from every page.”

– Rosina Wilson

“*The Zen of Love* is worthy of high praise. The book immediately elicits a palpable and tangible experience of the love which it speaks. I began reading it and by page three melted into the ineffable essence of the author's writing. If you are seeking a book about spiritual awakening / enlightenment which contains more than just words, you've just found it.”

– J. Stewart Dixon *Blue Collar Enlightenment*

“A lot of Truth spoken here.”

– Edythe Currie

“More than just a book, it is a timeless path to share with all who can touch the wisdom and peace conveyed in every chapter.”

– Mary Lou Christianson

“In *The Zen of Love*, Peter speaks to the reader intimately and personally in a way that is compelling, and, through his words, conveys the love that he so eloquently speaks about. It is no surprise that Peter would write about love when he so naturally and deeply embodies it.”

– Gina Lake, *Choosing Love, The Heroic Journey and Radical Happiness*

“This writing comes from the Heart and speaks directly to the Heart. While reading these passages, I felt the gentle stirrings of recognition within.”

– Carolyn Marsden

“It is so good to read this! I can already feel this love while only reading. And now I do this practice! Thank you, Peter.”

– Stina Brunner

“Thank you. This is inspired and brilliant. Thank you!”

– Stephen Benny Benedict

“Was walking around all today thinking of LOVE, Peter. I “blame” you. Gratefully.”

– Nic Holmes

“Many thanks, Peter, for sharing so much clear, insightful and profound wisdom with us all. Your words resonate with the inner essence of all. Infinite love and gratitude.”

– Barbara Carter

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WITH GREAT LOVE AND GRATITUDE I thank my many teachers, without whom this book would not have been possible. It is a long list, so, Dear Reader, you do not have to read it through. My heart is overflowing with gratitude and so compels it. My spiritual teachers are many, as really all of life is constantly teaching me. But I will single out these names as perhaps the most important.

Thich Nhat Hanh, Mooji, Eckhart Tolle, Zen Master Seung Sahn, Douglas Harding (Headless Way), Steve Brown, Shunru Suzuki, Dogen, Sahajananda, Adyashanti, Papaji, Ramana Maharshi, Peace Pilgrim, Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu, *Heart Sutra*, *A Course in Miracles*, Byron Katie, Gina Lake, Nirmala, Alok Hsu Kwan-han, Joanne Friday, John Bell, David Hoffmeister, Bill Spain, Sarah Joy Naegle (the Silent Saint you will read about later in this book).

My family members who, whether they knew it or not, have all been my spiritual teachers: Judith Cutler, Lindsay Cutler, Rachel Cutler Costello, Grace Cutler, Noah Cutler, Jamie Chapman, my sister Starr and brother Dave, my mother Anne, my father Jack, my stepmother Marrietta, my aunts Patricia Warner, Judith Shinkle and Susan Alderich, whose love, along with the love of my maternal grandfather William Hoffman and my paternal grandmother Rosalind Cutler, went a long way towards keeping my heart alive; and my uncle Peter who I was named after, an innocent, good-natured blessing on this world if there ever was one, much like my brother Dave. Both have physically passed on, but have never for a single moment left my heart.

To my dear friends and loved ones who have such a deep place in my heart.

To Tom Bird, Rama, Gwen and Rosina Wilson for helping this book come to life in such an effortless, loving and joyful flow. To Gina Lake for being such an invaluable guide.

And my students who are too many to name, but be assured you are always as much my teacher as I am yours. This book is really dedicated to you and all the students to come. Without your questions and deep longing to awaken, I would have nothing to teach or write. This book could not have happened without you. Thank you, my beloved students. This is your book far more than it is mine.

Forward

There is a traditional Sufi saying that in all of creation there are only two: Lover and Beloved. It is possible to realize (similar to Christ's mystical knowing, "I and the Father are One") that I and the Lover/Beloved are One/Self. With this knowing comes a sense of unity with "all that is," for everyone is both Lover and Beloved, and separation is an illusion. Metaphorically speaking, Peter Cutler has been to these heights of realization; and like the freed prisoner in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, he has returned to tell of Reality beyond the shadows of illusion.

The Zen of Love: Discover Your Own Awakened Heart is a spiritual guidebook explaining the inexplicable—how the unified vision of Self-realization (Spirit) interfaces with the world of separation and duality, or how the One of Unity and the many of separation merge through the power and presence of Love. In down-to-earth, tell-it-like-it-is language, examples, and exercises, the author makes simple this seemingly impossible and complex task of using the language of duality to reveal the transcendent unifying power of Love.

The beauty of this book is that its content is understandable, meaningful, and inspiring to any reader, whether advanced or beginning on the spiritual path, or journey Home. Written from the heart of the author to the heart of the reader, the message of this book reduces enlightenment to the bare essential—the realization of Love as Oneself that includes everyone.

Chosen at random from *The Zen of Love*, the following quotes bear witness to the beauty and wisdom of the content of this

inspiring book:

“... the only real Truth there is is Love. . . . We experience difficulties because we forget this Truth and act out of imagined separation . . . and all the incredible pain and suffering that comes from this simple forgetting can also be used to point us Home again.”

“Love means the end of separation. That is all it means. And this feels very good. There is nothing that a separate human can experience that even comes close to this.”

“Ultimate Truth and unconditional Love . . . are both not separate from what you are.”

“You are an expression of the Divine Self dancing with Itself. . . Love is really simply the Self seeing and recognizing the Self. . . If you look with awakened eyes you too can see this. You are at once the Self that is looking and the Supreme Self that is being seen. Everywhere you are only seeing your Self.”

And last, but not least, the following chapter title says it all, capturing the insanity of the split mind: “You Are Already Happy—You Were Just Too Busy Arguing to Notice.”

— Rev. Lynne R. Matous, M.A., Interfaith minister and editor

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

THIS BOOK IS A JOURNEY not of the outer world, but of an inner world even more amazing and rewarding than you can now imagine. It is here, just waiting for you to open the door or turn the page. Think of this book as your loving guide to the unexplored world of you.

It is not the only book that can guide you on this very special inner journey. There have been many others: *A Course in Miracles*, Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now*, Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Advaita Master Mooji's *White Fire*, to name just a few recent ones. I highly recommend each one and the others you'll find in the Resources section of my website. But there is a very special reason you picked up this particular book at this particular time.

This is a book about love. It will improve your relationships – miraculously so if you honestly follow its suggestions. If you're not in a relationship, it will teach you the secret of irresistible magnetic attraction. And even more importantly, this book will transform your relationship with yourself. Few people actually love themselves, and this is at the center of all relationship problems. This book will show you, once and for all, how to truly love yourself.

There is enormous value in improving, repairing, and even saving relationships, finding a fulfilling relationship, and learning how to truly love yourself. But that's just the start. And this is

where this book about love is radically different from most. If you're willing and ready to take this journey to the end of the ride, if you're willing to follow the call of love to its natural and inevitable conclusion, this book will open your eyes, heart and mind to the Truth of life as it really is. This book will awaken you.

I understand that's a lot to take in. How can a book do what possibly years of spiritual practices, traditions and teachers have not? My answer is that these are new times, this is a new book, and this is a new you. Give it a try and see for yourself. Read it with an open mind and open heart and I believe you will find what your heart is seeking.

I've been a spiritual seeker for much of my life. Although my childhood was challenging, even before I was ten years old, when I was alone I often experienced being filled with a powerful light and love I did not understand. I called it the "presence of God." I began the study of yoga and meditation when I was only sixteen. At the age of twenty-two, I experienced a profound awakening, which I describe in detail in this book. After only ten days of this extraordinary bliss I fell back into the common dream state most of us consider our life. The brief taste of this profound state of consciousness, and its rapid ending, brought a new urgency to my spiritual search in the following years.

I became a student of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh and was ordained into his Order of Interbeing with the Dharma name True Sangha Virtue. I also studied with Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn, meditation teacher Jack Kornfield, Mindfulness teacher Jon Kabbot-Zinn, Advaita Master Mooji, *A Course in Miracles* teachers David Hoffmeister and Marianne Williamson, and many others. I read every spiritual book I could get my hands on and became a teacher of meditation.

And all this time I lived an ordinary life with the comings and goings of intimate relationships, two marriages, raising a family of four children, overcoming cancer, and creating and building a very demanding and successful career as a commercial artist,

photographer and film director. I met the love of my life many times, but something always got in the way. At the time I didn't realize it was me. I achieved the height of success in my career, receiving over one hundred international awards from film festivals, only to find that all of this didn't bring me the elusive happiness I sought. I didn't know who I truly was, so how could anything truly fulfill me?

As I began to awaken again, my life dramatically changed. In 2010, I moved from Boston, Massachusetts to Sedona, Arizona, founded and ran a spiritual retreat center called the Sacred Circle, and became a spiritual teacher and healer. But what was happening on the inside was far more important and amazing. No longer did I seek fulfillment outside. I realized I was already one hundred percent complete – and always had been. The happiness and peace I sought outside was already in here, and it was in here no matter what was happening around me. The love I had always sought outside had never been separate from me, nor had anything or anyone else. It became crystal clear that my self, my life and the world were nothing like I had always believed them to be. And this was such a relief. Struggle was over. Freedom was here. I just hadn't realized it before. I had been living in a dream. But I still had something very important to learn. Actually learning never ends, but this particular learning relates very much to this book, and to you.

During a seven-month silent retreat in 2014, much to my surprise, I realized that my awakening had not come only from those deep spiritual practices, but even more so from the very ordinary experiences of my day-to-day life that I had once perceived as obstacles. Even more specifically, my awakening had come from love. And that was the birth of this book. My awakening had come from each beautiful, soul-stirring moment of love, and even more from each messy, painful, and even traumatic moment. This is wonderful news for you. Each moment from the very day I was born, life had been teaching me to wake up. And this is just as true for you. For quite some time I didn't pay attention. And

then – suddenly – I did.

If I told you that to awaken you must climb to the top of a Himalayan mountain and find a certain wise man living in a cave, or leave your family and spend the next ten years in a monastery, or even do many of the more extreme spiritual practices I have done, would that really be practical? The good news is that I'm telling you that right now – in the very middle of your messy day-to-day life, with all the challenging relationships, demands and obligations – that these very things are not obstacles to happiness and spiritual awakening, but instead are the very key to it. This is what I discovered. This is how this book was born. And this is what this book will help you discover for yourself.

If you read this book with an open heart and open mind, it will bring vibrant new life to your relationships. It will connect you to your heart's true desire. It will fill your heart with a love you never believed was possible. And this book will awaken you to the miracle of life as it truly is.

May this book be the next page in your exciting new life.

Let's turn the page now and begin.

With all my love,

Peter

CHAPTER TWO

Did You Choose This Book? Or Did This Book Choose You?

IT MAY BE NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY that this book can transform your life. It will certainly transform your relationships with other people, with God (or whatever word you choose for something greater than yourself) and, most importantly, it will transform the relationship you have with yourself.

This is a special book. Perhaps you've never read another book quite like it. It is a book written specifically for you. And before you're done reading it, perhaps you will realize the part you played in its creation.

A little over a year ago I entered a seven-month silent retreat. I called this "descending into the Cave of the Heart." As a spiritual teacher and healer, I had done this many times before. But this was different.

It became clear to me that my teaching needed to go even deeper. As an awakened spiritual teacher, you experience life in a very different way from most people. You no longer identify as a separate, isolated person, so you no longer suffer. You realize the inherent perfection in all that is. People experience your peace, love and joy when they are in your presence. It triggers their own natural state of being. And this is very beautiful and helpful. But

still there was something missing.

The missing element was a bridge between the awakened consciousness of the teacher and the consciousness of the student who was still experiencing a life of separation, incompleteness and suffering. Although I didn't realize it when I began this period of deep silence and reflection, it was this bridge that was waiting for me. It was this bridge that was calling me.

For years I'd been teaching what I had been taught to help people awaken. And these were wonderful teachings, traditions and practices. I am eternally grateful for them and for my teachers.

While I was teaching, there was often this gap between what I was experiencing and what my students experienced. Try as I might, this gap remained. My students learned many things and grew a great deal, but still this gap remained. All spiritual teachers experience this gap. I needed a bridge to connect my students to what I experience, a bridge of consciousness. Spiritual teachings are of limited value if they are understood with the mind alone. They must be experienced on a very deep level that transforms everything in a person's life.

During the fifth month of the retreat, this bridge was revealed to me. I learned much from my teachers and the different traditions and practices that had become such a big part of my life. But the truth was that I had awakened through love. And not only spiritual love, but the messy love of day-to-day relationships. From the moment of my birth on Valentine's Day, I had been learning to awaken through love. I realized this was the bridge that could help others awaken too. In every experience of love, there is a powerful seed of pure, enlightened being. And this is what the book will reveal to you, just as it did for me. I also realized that this is not my book, but yours. It was written for you.

But it was not written for your mind, as so many books are. No one figures out how to be enlightened. It is a direct experience. And only this direct experience can help you.

This book is speaking to a much deeper place than your mind. It

is speaking to your heart. To get the most from the book, please don't rush through it. There are sections that need your deepest attention. You may want to stop frequently and experience what is happening inside you. Pay close attention to these feelings. The book will work on you in ways you do not yet understand. Please trust this process. It is here for you. And you will be very grateful for it.

You might say the book will work on you from the inside out. Everything in this book is already in you. You just may not be aware of it yet. But you will be.

The book will bring you to a deep and powerful experience of love you have likely never tasted before. And when you do, it will literally transform your life. Think of this book as a friend who is guiding you to a place you have longed for, but never believed you could find. It can do that for you if you truly listen, not only to the book, but to what is happening within you as you read it.

You might even say a part of you has written this book to yourself. Deep inside your heart, you already know everything you will read here. But for quite some time now, you have not listened. Your thoughts have obscured the infinite intelligence of your heart. This book will remind you. It will help you listen again. And you will be very happy.

On New Year's Eve a friend mentioned that his goal for the New Year was to communicate more through silence than through words. This is a very high-level aspiration. It filled me with joy, love and gratitude just to hear it. We have become so skilled at using words, and thinking in words, that we have forgotten our ability to communicate on a deeper level than words can touch. And, although this book contains many words, it too is communicating on a deeper level than words can touch. As you read this book, as you embark on this sacred journey of the heart, please take a moment to listen to what is being spoken in the silent spaces between the words. Take a moment to listen to the silent space deep in your own heart, which even now may be responding to this very special form of communication. The Sufis call this the

Sacred Tremor of the Heart. And, if you listen very carefully, I know you will hear it. For this is truly the Path of the Awakened Heart. And it begins with you. It has always begun with you. And right now it is beginning again.