

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Loving What Is

Byron Katie & Stephen Mitchell

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## **PRAISE FOR *LOVING WHAT IS***

‘Suppose you could find a simple way to embrace your life with joy, stop arguing with reality, and achieve serenity in the midst of chaos? This is what *Loving What Is* offers. It is no less than a revolutionary way to live your life. The question is: are we brave enough to accept it?’

*Erica Jong*

‘Katie’s unique approach, with elements that recall Zen meditation, Socratic inquiry and Alcoholics Anonymous’ 12-step programme, offers a pragmatic and simple way of getting people to take responsibility for their own problems.’

*Time Magazine*

‘I love Katie and her Work. She seems to have spontaneously discovered the essence of Buddhism and self-inquiry and manifests them through her teachings as well as her personal presence. I often recommend my own students and friends to experience for themselves her transformative practice, for both love and wisdom are there.’

*Lama Surya Das,*  
author of *Awakening the Buddha Within*

‘Byron Katie’s work is a completely accessible user-friendly form of the ancient way of spiritual inquiry. It has some of the spirit of Zen koans, and lightens the anguish that the world can bring. Katie’s work is a simple method that anyone can use to untangle difficulties in work, love and

family, and at the same time it opens the deepest spiritual directions.'

*John Tarrant,*  
Zen teacher and author of *The Light Inside the Dark*

*Also available from Rider by Stephen Mitchell:*

The Bhagavad Gita

# LOVING WHAT IS

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*Four Questions That  
Can Change Your Life*

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BYRON KATIE

With Stephen Mitchell



RIDER

LONDON · SYDNEY · AUCKLAND · JOHANNESBURG

*To Adam Joseph Lewis  
and to Michael*



# Introduction



*The more clearly you understand yourself and your emotions, the more you become a lover of what is.*<sup>1</sup> Baruch Spinoza

The first time I watched *The Work*, I realized that I was witnessing something truly remarkable. What I saw was a succession of people, young and old, educated and uneducated, who were learning to question their own thoughts, the thoughts that were most painful to them. With the lovingly incisive help of Byron Katie (everyone calls her Katie), these people were finding their way not only toward the resolution of their immediate problems, but also toward a state of mind in which the deepest questions are resolved. I have spent a good part of my life studying and translating the classic texts of the great spiritual traditions, and I recognized something very similar in process here. At the core of these traditions—in works such as the Book of Job, the Tao Te Ching, and the Bhagavad Gita—there is an intense questioning about life and death, and a profound, joyful wisdom that emerges as an answer. That wisdom, it seemed to me, was the place Katie was standing in, and the direction where these people were headed.

As I watched from my seat in a crowded community center, five men and women, one after another, were learning freedom through the very thoughts that had caused their suffering, thoughts such as “My husband

betrayed me” or “My mother doesn’t love me enough.” Simply by asking four questions and listening to the answers they found inside themselves, these people were opening their minds to profound, spacious, and life-transforming insights. I saw a man who had been suffering for decades from anger and resentment toward his alcoholic father light up before my eyes within forty-five minutes. I saw a woman who had been almost too frightened to speak, because she had just found out that her cancer was spreading, end the session in a glow of understanding and acceptance. Three out of the five people had never done The Work before, yet the process didn’t seem to be more difficult for them than it was for the other two, nor were their realizations any less profound. They all began by realizing a truth so basic that it is usually invisible: the fact that (in the words of the Greek philosopher Epictetus) “we are disturbed not by what happens to us, but by our thoughts about what happens.”<sup>2</sup> As soon as they grasped that truth, their whole understanding changed.

Before people have experienced The Work of Byron Katie for themselves, they often think that it is too simple to be effective. But its simplicity is precisely what makes it so effective. Over the past two years, since first encountering it and meeting Katie, I have done The Work many times, on thoughts I hadn’t even been aware of. And I’ve watched more than a thousand people do it in public events across the United States and Europe, on the whole gamut of human problems: from major illnesses, the deaths of parents and children, sexual and psychological abuse, addictions, financial insecurity, professional problems, and social issues to the usual frustrations of daily life. (Having a reserved seat at all Katie’s events is one of the privileges of being married to her.) Again and again, I have seen The Work quickly and radically transform the way people think

about their problems. And as the thinking changes, the problems disappear.

“Suffering is optional,” Katie says. Whenever we experience a stressful feeling—anything from mild discomfort to intense sorrow, rage, or despair—we can be certain that there is a specific thought causing our reaction, whether or not we are conscious of it. The way to end our stress is to investigate the thinking that lies behind it, and anyone can do this by himself with a piece of paper and a pen. The Work’s four questions, which you will see in context later in this introduction, reveal where our thinking isn’t true for us. Through this process—Katie also calls it “inquiry”—we discover that all the concepts and judgments that we believe or take for granted are distortions of things as they really are. When we believe our thoughts instead of what is really true for us, we experience the kinds of emotional distress that we call suffering. Suffering is a natural alarm, warning us that we’re attaching to a thought; when we don’t listen, we come to accept this suffering as an inevitable part of life. It’s not.

The Work has striking similarities with the Zen koan and the Socratic dialogue. But it doesn’t stem from any tradition, Eastern or Western. It is American, homegrown, and mainstream, having originated in the mind of an ordinary woman who had no intention of originating anything.



*To realize your true nature, you must wait for the right moment and the right conditions.<sup>3</sup> When the time comes, you are awakened as if from a dream. You understand that what you have found is your own and doesn’t come from anywhere outside. Buddhist Sutra*

The Work was born on a February morning in 1986 when Byron Kathleen Reid, a forty-three-year-old woman from a

small town in the high desert of southern California, woke up on the floor of a halfway house.

In the midst of an ordinary life—two marriages, three children, a successful career—Katie had entered a ten-year-long downward spiral into rage, paranoia, and despair. For two years she was so depressed that she could seldom manage to leave her house; she stayed in bed for weeks at a time, doing business by telephone from her bedroom, unable even to bathe or brush her teeth. Her children would tiptoe past her door to avoid her outbursts of rage. Finally, she checked in to a halfway house for women with eating disorders, the only facility that her insurance company would pay for. The other residents were so frightened of her that she was placed alone in an attic room.

One morning, a week or so later, as she lay on the floor (she had been feeling too unworthy to sleep in a bed), Katie woke up without any concepts of who or what she was. “There was no me,” she says.

All my rage, all the thoughts that had been troubling me, my whole world, *the* whole world, was gone. At the same time, laughter welled up from the depths and just poured out. Everything was unrecognizable. It was as if something else had woken up. *It* opened its eyes. *It* was looking through Katie’s eyes. And it was so delighted! It was intoxicated with joy. There was nothing separate, nothing unacceptable to it; everything was its very own self.

When Katie returned home, her family and friends felt that she was a different person. Her daughter, Roxann, who was sixteen at the time, says,

We knew that the constant storm was over. She had always yelled at me and my brothers and criticized us; I used to be scared to be in the same room with her. Now she seemed completely peaceful. She would sit still for hours on the window seat or out in the desert. She was joyful and innocent, like a child, and she seemed to be filled with love. People in trouble started knocking on our door, asking her for help. She’d sit with them and ask them questions—mainly, “Is that true?” When I’d come home miserable, with a problem like “My boyfriend doesn’t love me

anymore," Mom would look at me as if she knew that wasn't possible, and she'd ask me, "Honey, how could that be true?" as if I had just told her that we were living in China.

Once people understood that the old Katie wasn't coming back, they began to speculate about what had happened to her. Had some miracle occurred? She wasn't much help to them: It was a long time before she could describe her experience intelligibly. She would talk about a freedom that had woken up inside her. She also said that, through an inner questioning, she had realized that all her old thoughts were untrue.

Shortly after Katie got back from the halfway house, her home began to fill with people who had heard about her and had come to learn. She was able to communicate her inner inquiry in the form of specific questions that anyone who wanted freedom could apply on his own, without her. Soon she began to be invited to meet with small gatherings in people's living rooms. Her hosts often asked her if she was "enlightened." She would answer, "I'm just someone who knows the difference between what hurts and what doesn't."

In 1992 she was invited to northern California, and The Work spread very fast from there. Katie accepted every invitation. She has been on the road almost constantly since 1993, demonstrating The Work in church basements, community centers, and hotel meeting rooms, in front of small and large audiences.<sup>4</sup> And The Work has found its way into all kinds of organizations, from corporations, law firms, and therapists' offices to hospitals, prisons, churches, and schools. It is now popular in other parts of the world where Katie has traveled. All across America and Europe, there are groups of people who meet regularly to do The Work.

Katie often says that the only way to understand The Work is to experience it.<sup>5</sup> But it's worth noting that inquiry

fits precisely with current research into the biology of mind. Contemporary neuroscience identifies a particular part of the brain, sometimes called “the interpreter,” as the source of the familiar internal narrative that gives us our sense of self. Two prominent neuroscientists have recently characterized the quirky, undependable quality of the tale told by the interpreter. Antonio Damasio describes it this way: “Perhaps the most important revelation<sup>6</sup> is precisely this: that the left cerebral hemisphere of humans is prone to fabricating verbal narratives that do not necessarily accord with the truth.” And Michael Gazzaniga writes: “The left brain weaves its story<sup>7</sup> in order to convince itself and you that it is in full control.... What is so adaptive about having what amounts to a spin doctor in the left brain? The interpreter is really trying to keep our personal story together. To do that, we have to learn to lie to ourselves.” These insights, based on solid experimental work, show that we tend to believe our own press releases. Often when we think we’re being rational, we’re being spun by our own thinking. That trait explains how we get ourselves into the painful positions that Katie recognized in her own suffering. The self-questioning she discovered uses a different, less-known capacity of the mind to find a way out of its self-made trap.

After doing The Work, many people report an immediate sense of release and freedom from thoughts that were making them miserable. But if The Work depended on a momentary experience, it would be far less useful than it is. The Work is an ongoing and deepening process of self-realization, not a quick fix. “It’s more than a technique,” Katie says. “It brings to life, from deep within us, an innate aspect of our being.”

The deeper you go into The Work, the more powerful you realize it is. People who have been practicing inquiry for a while often say, “The Work is no longer something I

do. *It is doing me.*” They describe how, without any conscious intention, the mind notices each stressful thought and undoes it before it can cause any suffering. Their internal argument with reality has disappeared, and they find that what remains is love—love for themselves, for other people, and for whatever life brings. The title of this book describes their experience: Loving what is becomes as easy and natural as breathing.



*Considering that, all hatred driven hence,<sup>8</sup>  
The [mind] recovers radical innocence  
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,  
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,  
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will.*

William Butler Yeats

I have waited until now to introduce the four questions to you, because they don't make much sense out of context. The best way to meet them is to see how they function in an actual example of The Work. You'll also meet what Katie calls the "turnaround," which is a way of looking at reversed versions of a statement that you believe.

The following dialogue with Katie took place before an audience of about two hundred people. Mary, the woman who is sitting opposite Katie on the stage, has filled out a one-page Worksheet that asked her to write down her thoughts about someone who upsets her. The instructions are: "Allow yourself to be as judgmental and petty as you really feel. Don't try to be 'spiritual' or kind." The pettier we can be when writing, the more likely it is that we'll benefit from The Work. You'll see that Mary hasn't held back at all. She is a forceful woman, perhaps forty years old, slim, attractive, and dressed in expensive-looking exercise clothes. At the beginning of the dialogue, her anger and impatience are palpable.

A first experience of *The Work*, as a reader or onlooker, can be uncomfortable. It helps to remember that all the participants—Mary, Katie, and the audience—are on the same side here; all of them are looking for the truth. If Katie ever seems to be mocking or derisive, you'll notice that she's making fun of the thought that is causing Mary's suffering, never of Mary herself.

Toward the middle of the dialogue, when Katie asks, "Do you really want to know the truth?" she doesn't mean her truth, or any abstract, predetermined truth, but Mary's truth, the truth that is hidden behind her troubling thoughts. Mary has entered the dialogue in the first place because she trusts that Katie can help her discover where she is lying to herself. She welcomes Katie's persistence.

You'll also notice right away that Katie is very free in her use of terms of endearment. One CEO, before a workshop that Katie gave to his top executives, felt that he had to issue a warning: "If she holds your hand and calls you 'sweetheart' or 'honey,' please don't get excited. She does this with everyone."

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*Mary* [reading the statements from her Worksheet]: I hate my husband because he drives me crazy—everything about him, including the way he breathes. What disappoints me is that I don't love him anymore, and our relationship is a charade. I want him to be more successful, to not want to have sex with me, to get in shape, to get a life outside of me and the children, to not touch me anymore, and to be powerful. My husband shouldn't fool himself that he's good at our business. He should create more success. My husband is a wimp. He's needy and lazy. He's fooling himself. I refuse to keep living a lie. I refuse to keep living my relationship as an imposter.



*Katie:* Does that pretty well sum it up? [The audience bursts into laughter, and Mary laughs along with them.] By the sound of the laughter, it seems as though you speak for a lot of people in this room. So, let's start at the top and see if we can begin to understand what's going on.

*Mary:* I hate my husband because he drives me crazy—everything about him, including the way he breathes.

*Katie:* “Your husband drives you crazy”—is it true? [This is the first of the four questions: **Is it true?**]

*Mary:* Yes.

*Katie:* Okay. What's an example of that, sweetheart? He breathes?

*Mary:* He breathes. When we're doing conference calls for our business, I can hear his breath on the other end of the telephone, and I want to scream.

*Katie:* So, “His breath drives you crazy”—is that true?

*Mary:* Yes.

*Katie:* Can you absolutely know that that's true? [The second question: **Can you absolutely know that it's true?**]

*Mary:* Yes!

*Katie:* We can all relate to that. I hear that it really is true for you. In my experience, it can't be your husband's breath that's driving you crazy; it has to be your *thoughts* about his breath that are driving you crazy. So let's take a closer look and see if that's true. What are your thoughts about his breath on the phone?

*Mary:* That he should be more aware that he's breathing loudly during a conference call.

*Katie:* How do you react when you think that thought? [The third question: **How do you react when you think that thought?**]

*Mary:* I feel like I want to kill him.

*Katie:* So what's more painful—the thought you attach to about his breathing or his breathing?

*Mary:* The breathing is more painful. I'm comfortable with the thought that I want to kill him. [Mary laughs, and so does the audience.]

*Katie:* You can keep that thought. That's the beautiful thing about The Work. You can keep all your thoughts.

*Mary:* I've never done The Work before, so I don't know any of the "right" answers.

*Katie:* Your answers are perfect, sweetheart. Don't rehearse. So he's breathing on the phone and you have the thought that he should be more aware, and he's not. What's the next thought?

*Mary:* It brings up every terrible thought I have about him.

*Katie:* Okay, and he's still breathing. "He should stop breathing into the phone on the conference call"—what's the reality of it? Does he?

*Mary:* No. I've told him to stop.

*Katie:* And he still does it. That's reality. What's true is always what's happening, not the story about what *should*

be happening. “He should stop breathing on the phone”—is it true?

*Mary* [after a pause]: No. It’s not true. He’s doing it. That’s what’s true. That’s reality.

*Katie*: So how do you react when you think the thought that he should stop breathing on the phone, and he doesn’t?

*Mary*: How do I react? I want out. It feels uncomfortable because I know I want out and I know I’m not going anywhere.

*Katie*: Let’s move back to inquiry, honey, rather than moving further into your story, your interpretation of what’s happening. Do you really want to know the truth?

*Mary*: Yes.

*Katie*: Okay. It helps if we stick to one written statement at a time. Can you see a reason to drop the thought that he should stop breathing on the phone? [This is an additional question that Katie sometimes asks.] For those of you new to The Work, if you hear that I’m asking Mary to drop her story, let me make it very clear: I’m not. This is not about getting rid of thoughts or about overcoming, improving, or surrendering them. None of that. This is about realizing for yourself internal cause and effect. The question is simply “Can you *see a reason* to drop this thought?”

*Mary*: Yes, I can. It would be a lot more enjoyable to do conference calls without this thought.

*Katie*: That’s a good reason. Can you find a stress-free reason to keep this thought, this lie, that he should stop breathing on the phone? [A second additional question]

*Mary:* No.

*Katie:* Who would you be without that thought? [The fourth question: **Who would you be without the thought?**] Who would you be, while you're on a conference call with your husband, if you didn't have the ability to think that thought?

*Mary:* I'd be much happier. I'd be more powerful. I wouldn't be distracted.

*Katie:* Yes, sweetheart. That's it. It's not his breathing that is causing your problem. It's your *thoughts* about his breathing, because you haven't investigated them to see that they oppose reality in the moment. Let's look at your next statement.

*Mary:* I don't love him anymore.

*Katie:* Is that true?

*Mary:* Yes.

*Katie:* Okay. Good. I hear that, and do you really want to know the truth?

*Mary:* Yes.

*Katie:* Okay. Be still. There's no right or wrong answer. "You don't love him"—is that true? [Mary is silent.] If you had to answer honestly either yes or no, right now, and you had to live forever with your answer—your truth or your lie—what would your answer be? "You don't love him"—is that true? [There is a long pause. Then Mary begins to cry.]

*Mary:* No. It's not true.

*Katie:* That's a very courageous answer. If we answer it that way, with what's really true for ourselves, we think that there may be no way out. "Is it true?" is just a question! We're terrified to answer the simplest question honestly, because we project what that may mean in the imagined future. We think we have to do something about it. How do you react when you believe the thought that you don't love him?

*Mary:* It makes my whole life a stupid charade.

*Katie:* Can you see a reason to drop this thought that you don't love him? And I'm not asking you to drop the thought.

*Mary:* Yes, I can see a reason to drop it.

*Katie:* Can you think of one stress-free reason to keep the thought?

*Mary* [after a long pause]: I think if I keep my story, then I can keep him from wanting to have sex all the time.

*Katie:* Is that a stress-free reason? It seems stressful to me.

*Mary:* I guess it is.

*Katie:* Can you find one stress-free reason to keep that thought?

*Mary:* Oh, I see. No. There aren't any stress-free reasons to keep the story.

*Katie:* Fascinating. Who would you be, standing with your husband, without the thought that you don't love him?

*Mary:* It would be great. It would be fabulous. That's what I want.

*Katie:* I'm hearing that *with* the thought, it's stressful. And *without* the thought, it's fabulous. So what does your husband have to do with your unhappiness? We're just noticing here. So, "I don't love my husband"—turn it around. [After the four questions comes the **turnaround**.]

*Mary:* I do love my husband.

*Katie:* Feel it. It has nothing to do with him, does it?

*Mary:* No. It really doesn't. I do love my husband, and you're right, it doesn't have anything to do with him.

*Katie:* And sometimes you think you hate him, and *that* doesn't have anything to do with him, either. The man's just breathing. You tell the story that you love him, or you tell the story that you hate him. It doesn't take two people to have a happy marriage. It only takes one: you! There's another turnaround.

*Mary:* I don't love myself. I can relate to that one.

*Katie:* And you may think that if you divorce him, then you'll feel good. But if you haven't investigated your thinking, you'll attach these same concepts onto whoever comes into your life next. We don't attach to people or to things; we attach to uninvestigated concepts that we believe to be true in the moment. Let's look at the next statement on your Worksheet.

*Mary:* I want my husband not to be needy, not to be dependent on me, to be more successful, to not want to have sex with me, to get in shape, to get a life outside of me and the children, and to be more powerful. Those are just a few.

*Katie:* Let's turn that whole statement around.

*Mary:* I want me not to be needy. I want me not to be dependent on him. I want me to be more successful. I want me to want to have sex with him. I want me to get in shape. I want me to get a life outside of him and the children. I want me to be more powerful.

*Katie:* So, “He shouldn’t be needy”—is it true? What’s the reality of it? Is he?

*Mary:* He’s needy.

*Katie:* “He shouldn’t be needy” is a lie, because the guy is needy, according to you. So, how do you react when you think the thought “He shouldn’t be needy,” and in your reality he is needy?

*Mary:* I just want to run away all the time.

*Katie:* Who would you be in his presence without the thought “He shouldn’t be needy”?

*Mary:* What I just understood is that I could be with him in a space of love, instead of just having my defenses up. It’s like if I notice any bit of neediness, I’m out of there. I’ve got to run. That’s what I do with my life.

*Katie:* When he’s acting needy, in your opinion, you don’t say no honestly. You run away or want to run away instead of being honest with yourself and him.

*Mary:* That’s true.

*Katie:* Well, it would have to be. You have to call him needy until you can get some clarity and honest communication going with yourself. So let’s be clear. You be him and be very needy. I’ll take the role of clarity.

*Mary:* Mr. Needy comes in and says, "I just had the best phone call. You've got to hear about it. It was this guy, and he's going to be fabulous in the business. And I had another call..." You know, he just goes on and on. Meanwhile, I'm busy. I've got a deadline.

*Katie:* "Sweetheart, I hear that you had a wonderful phone call. I love that, and I would also like you to leave the room now. I have a deadline to meet."

*Mary:* "We have to talk about our plans. When are we going to Hawaii? We have to figure out what airlines ..."

*Katie:* "I hear that you want to talk about our plans for Hawaii, so let's discuss this at dinner tonight. I really want you to leave the room now. I have a deadline to meet."

*Mary:* "If one of your girlfriends called, you would talk to her for an hour. Now you can't listen to me for two minutes?"

*Katie:* "You could be right, and I want you to leave the room now. It may sound cold, but it's not. I just have a deadline to meet."

*Mary:* I don't do it like that. Usually I'm mean to him. I just seethe.

*Katie:* You *have* to be mean, because you're afraid to tell the truth and say no. You don't say, "Sweetheart, I would like you to leave. I have a deadline," because you want something from him. What scam are you running on yourself and on him? What do you want from him?

*Mary:* I am never straightforward with anybody.

*Katie:* Because you want something from us. What is it?



*Mary:* I can't stand when somebody doesn't like me. I don't want disharmony.

*Katie:* So you want our approval.

*Mary:* Yes, and I want to maintain harmony.

*Katie:* Sweetheart, "If your husband approves of what you say and what you do, then there is harmony in your home"—is that true? Does it work? Is there harmony in your home?

*Mary:* No.

*Katie:* You trade your integrity for harmony in the home. It doesn't work. Spare yourself from seeking love, approval, or appreciation—from anyone. And watch what happens in reality, just for fun. Read your statement again.

*Mary:* I want my husband not to be needy.

*Katie:* All right. Turn it around.

*Mary:* I want me not to be needy.

*Katie:* Yes, you need all this harmony. You need his approval. You need his breathing to change. You need his sexuality to change for you. Who's the needy one? Who is dependent on whom? So let's turn the whole list around.

*Mary:* I want myself not to be needy, not to be dependent ...

*Katie:* On your husband, perhaps?

*Mary:* I want myself to be more successful. I want myself to not want to have sex with me.

*Katie:* That one could be really legitimate if you sit with it. How many times do you tell the story of how he has sex with you and you hate it?

*Mary:* Constantly.

*Katie:* Yes. You're having sex with him in your mind and thinking how terrible that is. You tell the story, over and over, of what it's like having sex with your husband. That story is what's repelling you, not your husband. Sex without a story has never repelled anyone. It just is what it is. You're having sex or you're not. It's our thoughts about sex that repel us. Write that one out too, honey. You could write a whole Worksheet on your husband and sexuality.

*Mary:* I get it.

*Katie:* Okay, turn the next statement around.

*Mary:* I want me to get in shape. But I *am* in shape.

*Katie:* Oh, really? How about mentally?

*Mary:* Oh. I could work on that.

*Katie:* Are you doing the best you can?

*Mary:* Yes.

*Katie:* Well, maybe he is, too. "He's supposed to be in shape"—is that true?

*Mary:* No. He's not in shape.

*Katie:* How do you react when you believe the thought that he should be in shape, and he's not? How do you treat him? What do you say? What do you do?

*Mary:* Everything is subtle. I show him my muscles. I don't ever look at him with approval. I don't ever admire him. I don't ever do anything kind in that direction.

*Katie:* Okay, close your eyes. Look at yourself looking at him that way. Now look at his face. [There is a pause. Mary sighs.] Keep your eyes closed. Look at him again. Who would you be, standing there with him, without the thought that he should be in shape?

*Mary:* I would look at him and see how handsome he is.

*Katie:* Yes, angel. And you'd see how much you love him. Isn't that fascinating? This is very exciting. So let's just be there a moment. Look at how you treat him, and he still wants to go to Hawaii with you. That's amazing!

*Mary:* What's amazing about this guy is that I am so horrible and mean, and he loves me without conditions. It drives me nuts.

*Katie:* "He drives you nuts"—is that true?

*Mary:* No. So far, it's been my thinking that drives me nuts.

*Katie:* So let's go back. "He should get in shape"—turn it around.

*Mary:* I should get in shape. I should get my thinking in shape.

*Katie:* Yes. Every time you look at him and are repulsed, get your thinking in shape. Judge your husband, write it down, ask four questions, and turn it around. But only if you are tired of the pain. Okay, honey, I think you've got it. Just continue through the rest of the statements on your

Worksheet in the same manner. I love sitting with you. And welcome to inquiry. Welcome to The Work.



*Step aside from all thinking,<sup>9</sup> and there is nowhere you can't go.*  
Seng-ts'an (the Third Founding Teacher of Zen)

In *Loving What Is*, Katie has given you everything you need in order to do The Work by yourself or with others. The book will guide you, step by step, through the whole process, and along the way it will show you many people doing The Work directly with Katie. These one-on-one dialogues, in which Katie brings her clarity to the most complicated human problems, are examples—dramatic examples, some of them—of how ordinary people can find their own freedom through inquiry.

*Stephen Mitchell*

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The Work is merely four questions; it's not even a thing. It has no motive, no strings. It's nothing without your answers. These four questions will join any program you've got and enhance it. Any religion you have — they'll enhance it. If you have no religion, they will bring you joy. And they'll burn up anything that isn't true for you. They'll burn through to the reality that has always been waiting.

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# How to Read This Book

The purpose of this book is your happiness. The Work has worked for thousands of people, and *Loving What Is* will show you exactly how to use it in your own life.

You begin with the problems that irritate or depress you. The book will show you how to write them down in a form that is easy to investigate. Then it will introduce the four questions and show you how to apply them to your problems. At this point, you'll be able to see how The Work can reveal solutions that are simple, radical, and life-changing.

There are exercises that will teach you how to use The Work with increasing depth and precision and show you how it can function in every situation. After doing The Work on the people in your life, you'll learn how to do it on the issues that cause you the most pain—money, for example, illness, injustice, self-hatred, or the fear of death. You'll also learn how to recognize the underlying beliefs that hide reality from your eyes and how to work with the self-judgments that upset you.

Throughout the book, there will be many examples of people just like you doing The Work—people who believe that their problems are unsolvable, who are sure that they have to suffer for the rest of their lives because a beloved child died or because they live with someone they no longer love. You will meet a mother distraught over a crying baby, a woman living in fear about the stock market, people terrorized by their thoughts about childhood trauma or just