



Mark Pelter

Further Study

Wherever you are on your journey, learning from teachers and challenging your beliefs is a part of the path. Below I share a dozen books that I would recommend to anyone interested in lovingkindness, Eastern spirituality, and facing the difficult aspects of ourselves.

Carson, Richard D. *Taming Your Gremlin: A Surprisingly Simple Method for Getting Out of Your Own Way.* Carson's "gremlin" is an internal critic, speaking the thoughts and emotions that tear us down inside. While I didn't use Carson's technique, I was inspired to make radical shifts in my self-talk after reading this book. *Taming Your Gremlin* helps to change the way we listen and relate to the most challenging aspects of our internal dynamics.

Chodron, Pema. *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice For Difficult Times.* Pema Chodron has a gift for using humor and story-telling to soften our experience of life's unpleasant events. This book is a good introduction, and companion, to the Buddhist teachings of *lojong*, or lovingkindness.

Dass, Ram. *Be Here Now.* This is the book that inspired me to begin my spiritual quest. Soon after reading it, I found my teacher and entered monastic life. Dass uses cross-cultural spirituality to show us that there are many paths to freedom, and he offers a clear example of what it means to seek the truth.

Goddard, Dwight (editor). *A Buddhist Bible.* This book includes both translations of the core teachings of the Buddha, as well as some more modern Western commentary. It's an excellent primer for those who want a broad but authentic overview of Buddhist thought.

Johnson, Robert A. *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche.* Depth psychology, the work begun by Carl Jung, is another pillar of my spiritual journey and my teaching. Johnson, in this book (as well as his excellent *Inner Work*), explores what Jung termed the "shadow," or the parts of ourselves we have repressed or denied, and offers ways to accept and integrate them.



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Levine, Stephen and Ondrea Levine. *Who Dies: An Investigation of Conscious Living and Conscious Dying*. I'm an ordained chaplain who often sits in hospice settings. Stephan and Ondrea Levine's book gently shows us not only the theory of impermanence, one of the core Buddhist teachings, but guides us into self-inquiry and the acceptance of our own impermanence.

Shantideva. *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. Padmakara Translation Group (translator). This ancient text showed me what I lost ("merit" or karmic wealth, according to Shantideva) as a consequence of my reactivity. Beautifully translated, I felt reading this book truly elevated my state of consciousness.

Patton, Laurie L. (editor, translator). *The Bhagavad Gita*. One of the primary texts of the Hindu faith, the Gita tells a story that shows us how to face and defeat the parts of ourselves that hold us back from true enlightenment.

Rahula, Walpola. *What The Buddha Taught*. This book focuses the Buddha's foundational teachings, the "middle way." The middle way is a path between the extremes of hedonistic pleasure and extreme asceticism, made up of eight interconnected aspects. Practiced together, they form the complete outline to liberation from suffering.

Rimpoche, Sogyal. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. Patrick Gaffney and Andrew Harvey (editors). A crucial text for anyone in hospice care or undergoing major life transitions, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* gave me profound support in understanding the Tibetan teachings around death and dying, the importance of compassion, the practice of *lojong* (lovingkindness) and *Dzogchen*, the unique form of Tibetan mind training.

Trungpa, Chogyam. *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness*. This is a classical translation of the ancient *lojong* (lovingkindness) teaching, and was a source book for me for many years.