

INVITATION
TO
MEDITATION

*how to find peace
wherever you are*

HOWARD COHN

Foreword by Jack Kornfield

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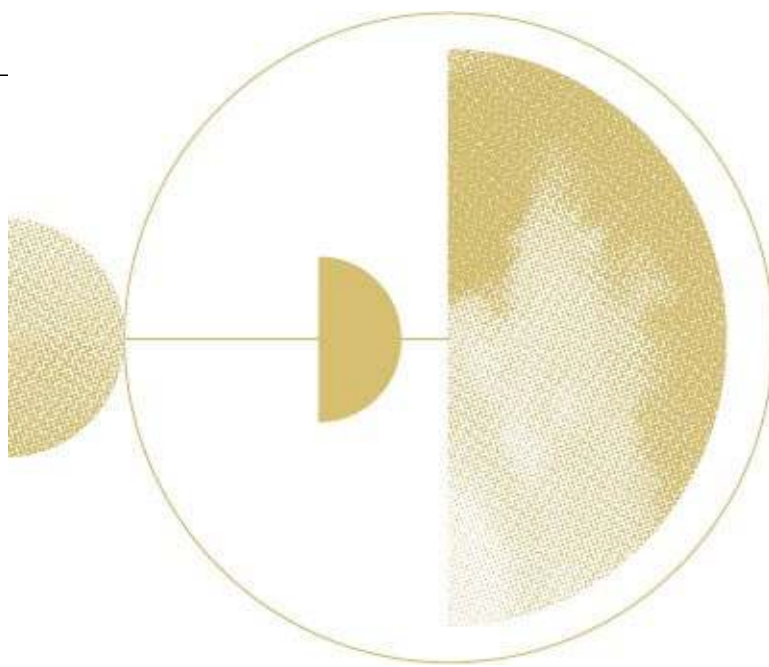
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FOREWORD

This book is a treasure you can hold in your cupped hands. The simple and elegant teachings within these pages bring you back to a quiet mind and an open heart. They remind you to be alive and awake here, in the reality of the present moment.

Howie has been a dear friend and colleague of mine for decades, and his teachings always inspire me. They offer the immediacy and freshness of what is known in the Zen tradition as “beginner’s mind”—that is, a state of openness to possibility and insights. They give a deep practical understanding of how to learn the revolutionary art of mindful presence.

Howie’s teachings are at once simple and profound. He points to the nature of the mind itself. Read this book closely, for these words can bring you to the essence of liberation of the heart, and the timeless freedom of spirit that is the birthright of us all. *Howie reminds you that what you seek is who you really are.* If this is hard to understand at first, hold it as a powerful koan, or puzzle, to solve.

Take your time with these pages. Savor them like a cup of the finest tea.

Explore, listen, and learn with Howie how to live with an open mind and tender heart.

May these teachings bring you joy and great blessings.

Jack Kornfield

Spirit Rock Center, 2015

Invitation to Meditation



Imagine feeling calm and content wherever you are. Imagine feeling that your life is so complete—right here, right now—that you do not wish to be anywhere else.



Imagine feeling this way even when your to-do list is overflowing. You are unrushed and free of anxiety. You are able to act intelligently, skillfully, and swiftly, with clarity and ease. You feel inexhaustibly alive and aware.



Imagine feeling this way in an airport or shopping mall, or even in rush-hour traffic. Your surroundings might be chaotic, but inside you feel a sense of stillness and peace.



Imagine feeling this way when you are alone. You are enjoying solitude, immersed in the life that inside and around you. Your senses are wide awake. Sights are vivid, sounds clear, tastes and smells rich and alive.



You are open to your thoughts and feelings—you are not resisting them and not bothered by them. They pass through your mind like clouds drifting through an empty sky.



Imagine feeling this way while in the company of others. You feel strong and steady, not reactive to criticism. You are praised for something, and then blamed for something, and yet you maintain your equilibrium as you experience one and then the other—a windfall and then a loss, success and then failure, exquisite pleasure and then uncomfortable pain. From one to the other, you are calm and balanced.



You are riding the waves of your life, not drowning in them.



You need not just imagine feeling so whole, so full, so intimately in touch with your life. You can feel this way *right now* by stepping out of your imagination and embracing reality, just as it is, just as you are.

But don't just believe me—see for yourself.



I invite you to a place where love, compassion, and creativity abound.

I invite you to see that inner peace is nearer—and easier to experience—than you think.



I invite you to the present moment.





“The present moment.” You’re hearing this expression a lot these days. But what exactly is the present moment? It’s the place I’ve just described—the place of calm and ease. But it’s also the place of relentless deadlines and to-do lists, of car repairs and tax returns, of regrets and disappointments, and the myriad other anxieties and sorrows that accompany human existence.

How can the two places possibly be the same?



Well, consider how many of your anxieties stem from events in the future. And then consider that the future is not part of the present moment. The future hasn't happened yet. You can only *imagine* the future. It's not real.

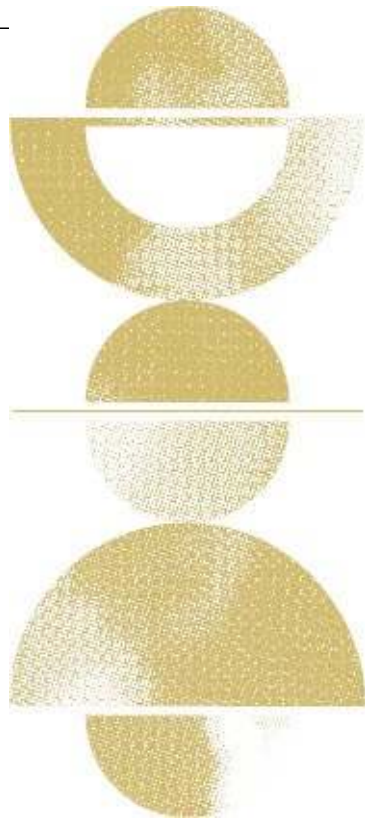


And consider that your regrets and disappointments—such as that failed relationship, that job you lost, or that comment you wish you hadn't made—stem from events that have already happened. Whether they happened last year, last month, or in the last hour, these events are in the past. And the past has passed. The past is not part of the present moment. Those events are now memories, and memories live in your imagination. You can only *imagine* the past. It's not real.



Perhaps you can see now that the past and future are actually imaginary. They are not real. They are real in the sense that you did experience the past and you will experience the future, but they're not real in the sense that they are not happening now. They are not part of the present moment. And yet we spend so much time each day lost in thoughts of our past and future—lost in imaginings of where we think we came from, where we think we're going, and who we think we are. In truth, these imaginings are just that—they are imaginary.

What a joy, to wake up to the simple reality of the present moment.





So, if the past and future are imaginary, and if so much of what we believe about ourselves is imaginary, what is real?

The present moment is real. You can experience the present moment simply by opening up your five senses to the world around you. Try it right now. See, feel, hear, smell, and taste what's real in this moment.

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