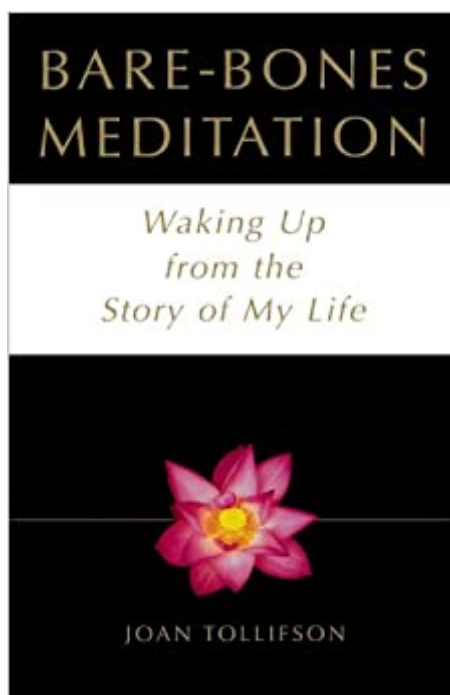


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Bare-Bones Meditation: Waking Up From The Story Of My Life



Synopsis

Born with only one hand, Joan Tollifson grows up feeling different. She comes out as a lesbian in the tumultuous 1960's, sinks into alcoholism and drug abuse, sobers up in 1973, becomes a political activist, embraces Zen Buddhism and then a very bare-bones spirituality that has no fixed form or tradition, and spends a number of years living and working at a rural meditation retreat center. Bare-Bones Meditation reveals the inner process of the mind in a new way, and Tollifson's account is beautifully written--intense and from the heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An exquisitely honest book about an unconventional woman's search for truth in an age of doubt and anxiety--raucous, painful, and serene. I recommend it highly to every skeptic looking for companionship on his own rocky path--a wry voice of hard-earned wisdom to urge him along the way." --Mark Matousek, author of Sex Death Enlightenment
"I loved Joan's book. She's there on every page. Lively, ravishingly honest, funny, deeply serious, totally disarming. Her own foibles and obsessions are as transparently and tenderly rendered as her hard-won insights. She so precisely captures the ups and downs, the taste and texture of meditation practice, and the muddles we all get ourselves into. And the love." --Lenore Friedman, author of Meetings with Remarkable Women
"Joan Tollifson gives us an unvarnished, exhilarating account of her struggle to make sense of her life. We can watch her muddy waters slowly settle into the 'right now, just as it is' understanding in which nothing is solved and nothing needs to be. Useful for all of us!"-- Charlotte

Joko Beck, author of *Everyday Zen*"A wonderful piece of writing and meditation teaching. Joan Tollifson moves decisively from self-preoccupation to self-knowing. She takes us with her, in writing that is simple, straightforward, and honest--at times excruciatingly so. The tenacity of certain stubborn forms of conditioning is treated brilliantly. All who practice awareness must sooner or later face and see through such habit-energy. This book also provides us with a rare and invaluable record of the teaching of Joan's remarkable teacher, Toni Packer. Joan shows us how she learns and tests these guidelines in the fire of her own life. It documents one person's courageous commitment to self discovery--to 'come-what-may' seeing. I was very moved. I recommend this book to Zen, Vipassana, and nontraditional practitioners of mindfulness meditation. When the book ends, Joan Tollifson is in a strong and hard-earned position to take herself and all of us even deeper into the world of mind. She has the rest of her life to do that." --Larry Rosenberg, Guiding Teacher, Cambridge Insight Meditation Center and Insight Meditation Society

What so many people (including me) enjoy about this book is that it's not by a teacher but by a student. Here's someone who experiences all the ups and downs we do and is not afraid to admit it, examine what's happening, and write her way out of it. When I read Joan's book, I find it hard to believe that it's her writing and not mine, she so precisely describes the difficulties and delights of meditation practice. She doesn't miss a beat. --Toinette Lippe, editorial director of Bell Tower

What author, Joan Tollifson's *BARE-BONES MEDITATION* is not: A primer on meditative practice. What it actually is: An insightful, autobiographical book about her inner and outer "life-adventure". Ms. Tollifson is very open and quite frank about her adventures, coming across as an honest seeker of that nagging, missing piece of the puzzle. She definitely shows that everything in life is meditation, regardless of its appearance. Her early travails and many wanderings, vividly chronicle her existential longing, and are what make this book an authentic and compelling read...

Very much enjoyed this blatantly honest account of her spiritual process. Full of heart wisdom! Joan Tollifson... you are one of my favorite nondual teachers.

What inspires me about Tollifson is her self-aware honesty. In these memoirs, whatever her thoughts and feelings, she is clear about them, and she doesn't hide them. Born with only one hand, she already feels different before she discovers her lesbianism. She goes through alcoholism and drug addiction, becomes a political and disability-rights activist, embraces Zen Buddhism and

Advaita, and finally lets those go, leaving a bare-bones spirituality which has no form. As a woman I particularly appreciate Tollifson's struggles with authority as she works through the impulse to reach for a book or a teacher or a lover when uncertain, and instead learns to be still and listen inwardly.

One of the best books I have read in a long time and the timing was perfect. The author's life story is powerful and she demonstrates in her writing the constant struggle of letting go of attachments, expectations and judgments. It was a relief to me to hear in her writing an honest depiction of how someone else thinks and contradicts themselves almost within the same moment. My meditation practice and the impact meditation has on my daily life has improved because of this book.sgw

A relevant description of a woman's journey from a highly political perspective on the world, to becoming aware of the constructs and biases in what seems to be justifiable disenfranchisement. She finds openings to a fresh, new self where she is able to witness her own thoughts and story without great attachment/identification. It doesn't happen in an instant, but in months and years of inner work and outer living experiments. A worthwhile and helpful read!

Yes, I know that line is taken, but its how I felt several times while reading this book.Joan Tollifson's birth defect seems to have spun her off a downward path from which she turned away only after a great deal of suffering and no small amount of effort. Part of what she did to herself was to become a habitual in-your-face type of person and a compulsive joiner. These are qualities that by one-third of the way through the book I found made Joan a bit hard to take.Once she manages to shake loose of her drinking problem and to move out of the orbit of groups which focused on her identity as that of one sort of victim or another I had a brief feeling that this was turning into a soft, warm, fuzzies type of book. No such luck, Joan continues to be a compulsive joiner - only this time she's a guru-chaser, one after the other, after the other and back again. There were times if she'd been in the room with me I would have given her a good shaking and probably screamed, "Stick with something, you ninny! Just stick with something for once."It was at those moments that I most realized exactly how much this woman and I were alike. And her frenetic flitting from one "enlightenment" thing to another was embarrassingly familiar.So, I end up with a one-handed, lesbian, guru-chaser as a mirror. Could be worse.I think, for me, this was lesson enough. By the end of the book I didn't have the idea that Joan Tollifson was ready to hand down any secret doctrine. In fact, that may just put this book leagues ahead of those that attempt to do so.

The relative story of "me" will preface this review by stating first, that I have read Nisargadatta, Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Wei Wu Wei, etc... All the spiritual "great" standards. Second, this is a review of a book about a subject that words cannot explain. That being said if "you" are looking for a clear and concise book on radical nonduality this is on "my" must-read list. Do "yourself" a favor, if you don't just "choose" to "wake up" on "your own". Read the following: 1) All books by Jeff Foster 2) All books by Joan Tollifson 3) Awakening to the Dream - Leo Hartong 4) The Book of Undoing - Fred Davis 5) Oneness - John Greven 6) Radically Condensed Instructions for being Just as you Are - J. Matthews 7) Love's Quiet Revolution - Scott Kiloby 8) Living Nonduality - Robert Wolfe 9) Clarity by Nathan Gill Others have been read, (Parsons, Spira, Adamson, Balsekar, Liguorman, etc..) but the above listed are "who" resonated with the story of "me". Enjoy!

one of the most moving stories about the journey towards enlightenment i have read

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