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Become Awake and Aware: New Books on Conscious Living



Books encouraging conscious living are finding eager readers

By Lynn Garrett | Sep 23, 2016



Even ordinary activities—working, managing money, caring for animals, growing plants—can be plumbed for deeper meaning; the quotidian can be transformed into the spiritual by those who want to dive below the surface of life. A sprawling range of books to aid in that quest have begun to fall into a developing category called conscious living.

“Conscious living means being in the present moment, and being aware of how your actions affect yourself, the lives around you, and the world at

large,” says Joel Fotinos, publisher of Penguin Random House’s TarcherPerigee imprint. “Through conscious living we become more aware of the patterns that control us and can make positive choices, rather than be ruled by our subconscious.”

Readers are increasingly cultivating that heightened consciousness not through traditional religions or forms of spirituality, but through a philosophy that values health, happiness, and a connection to the natural world. Fotinos adds, “As a book category, conscious living is akin to the mindfulness trend—these books explain how to live an aware and awake life in practical ways.” Demand for these titles is growing, he says, “as inner growth and connection with others become more of a focus in a world that often seems chaotic and negative.”

Be Aware

Learning to live consciously means rooting out beliefs and attitudes that are obstacles to happiness and peace, and books that help with that goal are central for TarcherPerigee, such as *Carpe Diem: Reclaiming Seize the Day in a Distracted World* (Apr. 2017) by Roman Alexander Krznaric, who offers a wide range of examples of people who seize the day by living in the moment, from war photographers to nightclub dancers.

According to Tom Lund, director of sales and marketing at Llewellyn, “conscious living is about developing yourself into the person you aspire to be, taking care of yourself, friends, and family, caring for the Earth and its citizens, and leaving a legacy that matters.” He adds, “Readers crave tools they can use to de-stress, reset their mental and emotional states, feel less alone in chaotic times, and find peace of mind.”

For example, in *Dreamworking: How to Listen to the Inner Guidance of Your Dreams* (Llewellyn, Mar. 2017), Christopher Sowton teaches readers to understand their dreams and use them to develop greater self-awareness and receive guidance. The book follows *Llewellyn’s Complete*

Dictionary of Dreams, which was published in 2015 and has 10,000 copies sold, according to Lund.

Spirituality can be found almost anywhere if you know how to look. In *Holy Spokes: The Search for Urban Spirituality on Two Wheels* (Eerdmans, Apr. 2017), author Laura Everett writes about an “urban spirituality” she discovers by commuting to work on her bicycle.

Another book seeks to enhance readers’ consciousness of ecological crises through focusing on the physical world. In *Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life* by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee and Hilary Hart (Apr. 2017), the authors urge readers to pay attention to environmental issues when engaged in ordinary activities, with chapters titled “Walking,” “Breathing,” “Gardening,” “Stories of Seeds,” “Cooking with Love,” and “Cleaning,” as well as such recognizably spiritual topics as prayer, meaning, and the sacred.

Be Happy

An important part of living consciously is cultivating happiness by examining what makes us unhappy and rooting out destructive thinking. These books, on what has come to be called positive psychology, teach that happiness is a habit, a mental muscle that can be exercised and strengthened.

Books on positive psychology and happiness are a major part of TarcherPerigee’s publishing program, and the imprint has several new and forthcoming titles. In *Finding the Blue Sky: A Mindful Approach to Choosing Happiness Here and Now* (Oct.), Joseph Emet gives practical exercises to develop the habit of happiness. In *Ordinary Goodness: The Surprisingly Effortless Path to Creating a Life of Meaning and Beauty* (Jan. 2017), Edward Viljoen writes that happiness comes from practicing kindness and compassion toward others.



Being ruled by the ego is an enemy of happiness, according to two books coming in 2017. New World Library weighs in with *Live Your Happy: Get Out of Your Own Way and Find the Love Within* (Apr. 2017) by Maria Filipe, who writes that readers must recognize and reject “the cuckoo voice of the ego” to discover the happiness within. Also pointing to the danger of being ruled by ego is Cate Montana; her *The E-word* (Atria, Jan. 2017) offers ways to overcome a false view of the self to create a life of fulfillment.

Two books on the subject are structured for year-long inspiration: *Walking on Sunshine* by Rachel Kelly (Atria, Nov.) offers 52 ways to become happier with breathing techniques, poetry, prayer, philosophical quotes, and meditations. *Wake Up to the Joy of You: 52 Meditations for a Calmer, Happier Life* by Agapi Stassinopoulos (Harmony, Dec.), a motivational speaker and Huffington Post blogger (and sister of Arianna Huffington), guides readers through a program to free themselves from negative thoughts and emotions and find happiness.

Talking to Myself: Reflections on Learning to Love Myself and Living Bravely by Daniela Rivera Zacarias (Skyhorse, Sept.) tackles underlying beliefs that can destroy happiness. Also from Skyhorse is *Happy Pretty Messy: Cultivating Beauty and Bravery When Life Gets Tough* by Natalie Wise (Feb. 2017), which the publisher calls “a refresher course on how to be happy.”

Everything You Need You Have: How to Be at Home in Your Self by Gerard Kite, with a foreword by Andy Puddicombe (Harmony, Dec.), tells readers not to rely on therapy, medication, or ditching their current lives to chase happiness, arguing that what they need is already within. Kite uses relaxation techniques to help people find their natural rhythms.

In *Detox Your Heart: Meditations for Healing Emotional Trauma* (Wisdom, Feb. 2017), Valerie Mason-John writes from her own history of abuse and addiction, with meditations designed to overcome painful experiences and transform negative emotions into peace and happiness. Likewise, *The Overwhelmed Brain: Personal Growth for Critical Thinkers* by Paul Colaiani (Ulysses, Jan. 2017) uncovers the obstacles to taking action to fulfill dreams and how to overcome them.

From Parallax comes *Inside the Flame: The Joy of Treasuring What You Already Have* by Christina Waters (Nov.); she urges readers to unplug from their distracting modern devices and pay attention to the world and its wonders. *Living from the Center Within: Co-creating Who You Are Becoming* by Michele Rae (Paragon, Mar. 2017) examines the interplay of mind, body, and emotions, encouraging awareness to achieve transparency and fearlessness for a more joyful and satisfying life. *The Path of Presence* by Synthia Andrews (New Page, Oct.) offers eight practices to bring about spiritual healing and open the door to happiness.

Be Wise at Work

Conscious-living principles apply to all aspects of life, including work, a common source of stress and unhappiness. But in *Exponential Living: Stop Spending 100% of Your Time on 10% of Who You Are* (NAL, Feb. 2017), Sheri Riley argues that even the busiest people can integrate career success with personal fulfillment. Riley offers a nine-principle plan to achieve that wholeness; Usher gives his thoughts in the foreword.

Stress is often cited as the enemy of happiness, but perhaps it isn't all bad. In *The Stress Test: How Pressure Can Make You Stronger and Sharper* (Bloomsbury, Jan. 2017), clinical psychologist and cognitive neuroscientist Ian Robertson uses decades of research and analysis to demonstrate that while some people are crushed by stress, others find a way to turn pressure and stress to their advantage.

Work and money can be sources of stress, but what activities make people happy? For many, creative pursuits are a source of joy and personal growth. *Drawing Your Own Path: 33 Practices at the Crossroads of Art and Meditation* by John F. Simon Jr. (Parallax, Nov.) is a guide to art as an accompaniment to meditation. Simon's own drawings and paintings are pictured along with 33 meditation and drawing exercises that teach such techniques as concentrated looking and mindful sketching.

Writing coach Deb Norton shows writers how to overcome blocks to their creative process in *Part Wild: A Writer's Guide to Harnessing the Creative Power of Resistance* (Enliven, Sept.).

The craze for coloring continues, and in *The Psychology of Adult Coloring: How Coloring Creates Health and Healing* (Skyhorse, Oct.), author Blake LeVine offers insights into its appeal, outlining the history of coloring and its potential as a therapeutic tool to treat depression, addiction, loss, and illness.

Be Close to Animals

Animal companions bring happiness for many. At New World Library, books about humans' relationships with animals are a perennial. This fall brings *Call of the Cats: What I Learned About Life and Love from a Feral Colony* by Andrew Bloomfield (NWL, Nov.). Bloomfield had a 10-year relationship—sometimes contentious and expensive—with a colony of feral cats he encountered in the backyard of his house in California.

Kit Kat & Lucy by Lonnie Hull DuPont (Revell, Sept.) tells how a pair of felines pierced the author's isolation after she moved from San Francisco to a farmhouse in Michigan. A more esoteric approach to the human-animal connection is *Whispers from the Wild: Listening to Voices from the Animal Kingdom* by Amelia Kinkade (NWL, Oct.), who describes as herself as someone who can communicate with animals. *Animal Frequency: Identify, Attune, and Connect to the Energy of Animals* (Llewellyn, Mar. 2017) by self-described psychic Melissa Alvarez suggests ways to tap into the energetic power of animals. The reference guide covers 181 animals, offering exercises, guided meditations, and other techniques to affirm the human-animal bond.

Always by My Side by Edward Grinnan (Howard, Feb. 2017) is a memoir of Grinnan's relationship with Millie, a golden retriever who taught him lessons in compassion and helped him recover from addiction. Grinnan, the editor-in-chief of Guideposts, also writes about other beloved dogs in his life and how they changed him.

One way to live consciously is to consider the ethics of how humans treat animals.

A Plea for the Animals: The Moral, Philosophical, and Evolutionary Imperative to Treat All Beings with Compassion by Matthieu Ricard (Shambhala, Oct.) makes a case for animal rights and more compassionate treatment, with descriptions of the suffering of the animals humans exploit.

Welcome to the Farm: How-to Wisdom from the Elliot Homestead by Shaye Elliott (Lyons, Apr. 2017) describes living consciously through working with living things; the book is an illustrated guide to growing one's own food and tending to animals, including cows and bees. Finally, *This Phenomenal Life: The Amazing Ways We Are Connected with Our Universe* by Misha Maynerick Blaise (Lyons, Mar. 2017) takes a wider-angle view of humanity's place in the world, one that is part of every process in the universe and related to every other living being. Lyons Press senior editor Holly Rubino says the book describes "the intimacy we have with fungi on a daily basis, and the similar ways that humans and birds learn to communicate. It provides powerful evidence of our interconnection with nature, combined with beautiful artwork that will inspire readers to look at the world in a whole new way."

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