



Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair

By Miriam Greenspan



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Nautilus Book Award Winner - Gold

We are all touched at some point by the dark emotions of grief, fear, or despair. In an age of global threat, these emotions have become widespread and overwhelming. While conventional wisdom warns us of the harmful effects of "negative" emotions, this revolutionary book offers a more hopeful view: there is a redemptive power in our worst feelings. Seasoned psychotherapist Miriam Greenspan argues that it's the avoidance and denial of the dark emotions that results in the escalating psychological disorders of our time: depression, anxiety, addiction, psychic numbing, and irrational violence. And she shows us how to trust the wisdom of the dark emotions to guide, heal, and transform our lives and our world.

Drawing on inspiring stories from her psychotherapy practice and personal life, and including a complete set of emotional exercises, Greenspan teaches the art of emotional alchemy by which grief turns to gratitude, fear opens the door to joy, and despair becomes the ground of a more resilient faith in life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this heartfelt therapeutic manifesto, psychotherapist Greenspan (A New Approach to Women and Therapy) argues that grief, fear and despair are not pathologies to be medicated away but emotions that help us grow psychologically and spiritually. The disavowal of these painful emotions (which she blames on Western culture's privileging of "masculine" reason over "feminine" emotion; lifelong lessons in suppressing emotional pain; and modern psychology's focus on "dispelling feelings, not learning from them") leads to depression, numbness and violence in both individuals and the world at large. But by "attending, befriending, and surrendering" to grief, fear and despair we can effect an "alchemical transformation" through which they become "gratitude, faith and joy." Greenspan's eclectic approach to healing invokes "depth psychology, Hasidic Judaism and Buddhist meditation"; her desire to make "meaning out of suffering" owes something to religious traditions that acknowledge the redemptive value of pain, as well as psychoanalysis's dedication to lighting up the mind's dark recesses, while her praxis includes New Age and recovery movement therapeutics such as visualization, breathing exercises, "chakra bodytalk" and prayer. Drawing on her clinical experience and her own painful recollections of the death of her infant son and her parents' travails during the Second World War, Greenspan writes intensely and compassionately. This is a committed, serious look at the emotions most of us would rather sweep under the rug.

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Review

"Greenspan writes intensely and compassionately. This is a committed, serious look at the emotions most of us would rather sweep under the rug."—*Publishers Weekly*

"The gold standard of books on difficult emotions. This book has the power to heal and change your life and the way you live it."—Christiane Northrup, M.D., author of *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*

"A crucial book that teaches us to alter fundamentally our fearful relationship to deep feelings."—Kim Chernin, *Los Angeles Times*

"A book of remarkable depth. The author is a brilliant thinker and a natural storyteller. I've read countless books about the difficult emotions. None is as helpful and riveting as this one—or offers as much hope for our personal suffering and turbulent times."—Harriet Lerner, Ph.D., author of *The Dance of Anger*

"A modern day alchemist, Greenspan teaches us to turn our pain into wisdom and our fear and sorrow into energy to improve the world. She offers us a clear and profound analysis of what we must do as individuals and as a species to survive these troubled times."—Mary Pipher, Ph.D., author of *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*

"This remarkable book has taught me a whole new way of thinking."—Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

"A beautiful piece of work destined to become a perennial classic."—Martha Beck, author of *Expecting Adam* and *The Joy Diet*

"This is a beautifully written, deeply compassionate, and revolutionary approach to working with the most difficult human emotions. Miriam Greenspan teaches us how to trust our emotions and how to listen to hear the truth they reveal. This is a practical guide that illuminates how the wisdom of the heart can heal ourselves, each other, and our world."—Janet Surrey, Ph.D., founding scholar of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Stone Center, Wellesley College

"Miriam Greenspan will help you turn the lead in your life into gold of joy and peace. Of equal importance, she helps us see that such changes are not for ourselves alone, but for the whole world."—Henry Grayson, Ph.D., author of *The New Physics of Love*

"This book is essential reading for all people. It beholds that which is tragic about the human condition but embraces it in a therapeutic and consoling way. Greenspan describes enormous grief and terror—her own and the world's—and explains what it means to surrender to fear, to face straight into it, to 'let it be' as the royal road to sanity, exuberance, and freedom. She is a trustworthy guide for us in these times."—Phyllis Chesler, author of *Women and Madness* and *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*

"Written with grace, clarity, and humility, this book beautifully integrates the psychological, spiritual, and political wisdom necessary for personal and social transformation."—Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor, *Tikkun* magazine and author of *Spirit Matters: Global Healing and the Wisdom of the Soul*

"This riveting book is a powerful, urgent appeal for a transformation of our values and the way we conduct our lives. The author is a therapist but she writes not only for other therapists, who will deepen and expand their practice from their reading, but for all of us who struggle daily not to be defeated by the global darkness in which we live."—Sophie Freud, Professor Emerita, Simmons College School of Social Work

"This is a profound and liberating book. Miriam Greenspan helps us to discover the life-redeeming power of the very emotion we most fear. Thus she opens ways to both our integrity and our freedom."—Joanna Macy, author of *Widening Circles*

From the Inside Flap

Here's a book that offers a new prescription for coping with depression and anxiety, as well as other painful emotional states: don't try to escape them. In *Healing through the Dark Emotions* Miriam Greenspan shows us that there's something good in so-called "bad" feelings, if we would only stop and listen to them. In a down-to-earth and engaging style, Greenspan explains why learning to attend, befriend, and surrender to emotional pain actually leads to lasting relief, as well as to greater wisdom, compassion, and a deep sense of fulfillment.

Most of us don't know how to listen very well to emotional pain. This is because we have never been taught that doing so is a good thing, or how to do it. Greenspan offers a step-by-step process for opening ourselves to the wisdom of painful feelings that she calls "the alchemy of dark emotions." She focuses on three of the most common forms of emotional distress: grief, despair (a.k.a. depression), and fear. Surprisingly, when we find the courage to move toward our pain and inhabit it fully, something magical happens. Grief leads us into a state of gratitude. Despair is a doorway to faith. And fear delivers us to joy. Drawing on inspiring examples from her private practice, and integrating some unforgettable stories from her personal life, Greenspan teaches us the art and magic of keeping your heart open in the presence of pain.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, in any one year more than 18 million Americans suffer from depression. More than 19 million are diagnosed with anxiety disorders. In the midst of this alarming epidemic of emotional distress, Greenspan offers a much-needed, penetrating exploration of the causes of our suffering—and practical advice on how to cure it. The culprit, she says, is our cultural intolerance for feeling bad. The biochemical view of emotions and other trends in our society have encouraged us to dismiss, deny, and pathologize the dark emotions. But to find peace and healing, she says, we need to cultivate a more open and trusting relationship to these feelings. We need to learn that the darkness has its own light.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Stewart:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important take action, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a book. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled *Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair*. Try to face the book *Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair* as your buddy. It means that it can for being your friend when you sense alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortuned to suit your needs. The book makes you considerably more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , we need to make new experience and knowledge with this book.

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James Hibner:

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Latricia Wynkoop:

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