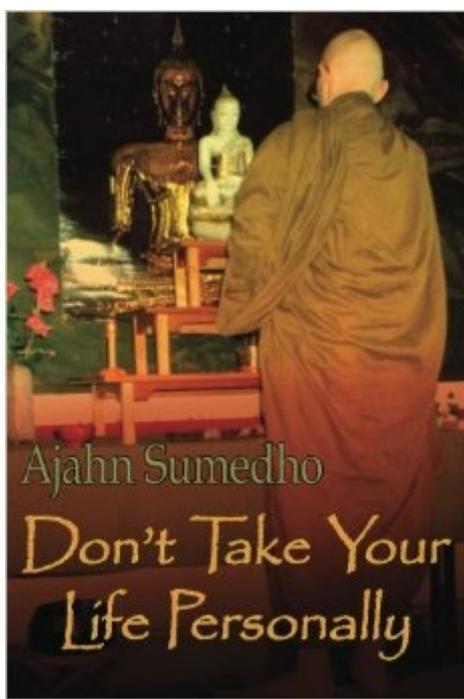


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# Don't Take Your Life Personally



## Synopsis

Ajahn Sumedho urges us to trust in awareness and find out for ourselves what it is to experience genuine liberation from mental anguish and suffering, just as the Buddha himself did two and a half thousand years ago. Ajahn Sumedho, an American Buddhist monk, practised for ten years in Thailand with the well known monk, Ajahn Chah. He has since spent over thirty years in England and is the founder of the Cittaviveka Forest Monastery in West Sussex and the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in Hertfordshire. ^Mindfulness or awareness is knowing. It is a direct knowing, immanent here and now. It is being fully present, attentive to this present moment as is. But defining mindfulness tends to make it into something ^ ” and then it is no longer mindfulness. Mindfulness is not a thing; it is a recognition, an intuitive awareness; it is awareness without grasping.â™

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ajan Sumedho's teaching is so clear and simple it makes you stop and think--can it really be so? This series of lectures at the Buddhist Summer School run by The Buddhist Publishing Group during Sumedho's last few years of teaching in the west (I believe he's retired in Thailand) may feel repetitive because of the nature of lectures--but what Sumedho repeats needs repeating for most of us. He asks us to take refuge in awareness and brings that important message home through stories of his own life and his own mistakes in his early life as a Buddhist monk. I am reminded of Zen master Bankei who tells us over and over to remain in the unborn and Ramana Maharshi who constantly brings us back to the question 'who am I.' The only difference is that Sumedho lives in

the modern world, so some of his examples are easier for modern man to relate to than those of some of the ancients. I have listened to Sumedho's lectures and purchased his other books--being satisfied with all of them, but this is his best. I am grateful to have come across this wonderful, humble teacher.

Every once in a while, you will hear a radio interview with a professional athlete that strikes a chord, even though you have only be a amateur jock yourself. When asked what he has learned over the past seasons in his particular sport, the MLB or NBA player might say something like: "I have learned to LET THE GAME COME TO ME." Is it a brand new, earth-shattering idea? No, but might really be helpful if you are trying too hard to "make something happen" during your games. With the psychological bent in America, that seems to be a easy trap for those On The Path. I get the same value from Ajahn Sumedho's books. I read for 5-10 minutes each morning before meditation just to set the tone . . . NOT to acquire new ideas . . . just to get encouragement and support. Doing 10 years of daily meditation is not like doing Billy Blanks' Tae Bo workout videos for 10 years. That change would surely be obvious!! I find the spiritual path to be less clear. Has ANYTHING changed?? Then I read a page or two, and Sumedho reminds you . . . "The goal is not to CHANGE YOURSELF . . . but become more MINDFUL of just what shows up . . . Like This . . . filtered through all your expectations and delusions . . . It is like hitting the re-set button when my computer is bogged down . . . I re-boot and feel clearer . . . I read his previous book, The Sound of Silence this way for a couple years before this title showed up in print. Same message, but it has been helpful to have some different words to allow the message to reach my . . . heart/soul/ whatever you choose to call it. I will say, as a final note that with him having been a Peace Corps Volunteer before he studied in the Thai Forests, it seems like he can understand and work with the default settings that might be in my way. Also, I like that these are TALKS spoken to retreatants not deeply, metaphysical WRITINGS that occurred while he was alone with his laptop. Something about the spoken word works for me, less academic and more relational. He and Pema Chodron have been wonderful guides for this former Midwestern altar boy who has been exploring a different spiritual path for the past decade. They both shine the light in front of you . . . so you can start to discover your own path and learn from YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES . . . as the Buddha encouraged his followers to do. Plenty of rocks to trip over in the dark and strange voices in the woods, but never boring. As Mary Oliver likes to say: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

This book is an absolute gem. It consists of the texts of about 30 talks given at a Buddhist summer school over a number of years. It is over 400 pages which makes it good value and every single chapter is outstanding. Ajahn Sumedho is extremely generous in his willingness to share his knowledge with the reader. He holds nothing back -- he wants you to benefit from his efforts as he has benefited from others' past efforts. Do yourself a favour and take this shortcut to wisdom. My deepest thanks to Ajahn Sumedho.

I think it is not easy for me to put my appreciation for Ajahn Sumedho's teaching on words. I just feel I am so blessed that I have encountered his teaching. It is just so great, just so profound!.....

Ajahn Sumedho grew up a Protestant American and served in Borneo with the Peace Corps in the 60s. While there, he traveled to Thailand and practiced meditation, which led him to becoming a monk, which led him to being ordained by Ajahn Chah in the Thai Forest tradition. Later he was sent to England to establish a monastery where he spent over 30 years. At age 80, he now dwells as a "free agent" back in Thailand. This book is a collection of talks he gave to the annual week-long Summer Schools the Buddhist Publishing Group held at the University of Leicester from 1989-2006. Included in this volume are five talks for each of the six years 2001-2006. The titles of the talks I most appreciated will give you a taste of the book: Don't Be Afraid of Trusting Yourself; Knowing Not Knowing; Intuitive Awareness; Don't Make a Problem About Yourself; Receiving Praise and Blame; Three Fetters; To Be Right is Not Liberation; Being Awareness Itself; Test It Out!. Ajahn Sumedho is a good example of taking in the deep gift of non-duality from the Hindu tradition to deepen the meditative experience of Buddhism. He notes that the culture of the West is very dualistic. I was brought up to believe that right and wrong, good and bad, heaven and hell were opposed to each other and that you had to do what was right and get rid of what was wrong. So, the dualistic thinking process was very much part of my cultural, educational, and religious conditioning. He noticed that his Thai teacher was much more tuned into time and place and what was suitable and appropriate, rather than to what was right and what was wrong. Ajahn's particular teaching gift is his humility in sharing his own struggles to clarify the journey for his students. The book is very personal even as he shares the way to giving up ego-personality.

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