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Radical Presence: Teaching As Contemplative Practice



Synopsis

Radical Presence is a book about our lives as well as our work, suggesting that the "secrets" of good teaching are the same as the secrets of good living: seeing one's self without blinking, offering hospitality to the alien other, having compassion for suffering, speaking truth to power, being present and being real. These are secrets hidden in plain sight. But in an age that puts more faith in the powers of technique than in the powers of the human heart, it takes the clear sight and courage of someone like Mary Rose O'Reilley to call "secrets" of this sort to our attention. Radical Presence asks, "What might happen if we frame the central questions of our profession as spiritual issues and deal with them in light of our spiritual traditions?" The basis of O'Reilley's remarks is not religious; it is pedagogical. She does not preach; she shares. Writing of the human condition, O'Reilley places herself first in line, not as an ego or leader but as a friend and guide. Over the course of her journey, she seeks to discover what spaces we can create in the classroom that will allow students the freedom to nourish an inner life. This is an important book that will have a significant impact on the way educators view teaching and learning. O'Reilley writes, "Some pedagogical practices crush the soul; most of us have suffered their bruising force. Others allow the spirit to come home: to self, to community, and to the revelations of reality. [This book] is my own try at articulating a space in which teacher and student can practice this radical presence."

Book Information

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Age Range: 5 and up

Grade Level: Kindergarten and up

Customer Reviews

This is an absolute gem! A very quick read yet will not leave you when you put it down. O'Reilley's views on contemplative teaching have not come easy. She has questioned her practices as we all do, but somehow she has excepted herself and others shortcomings and has proceeded in giving us not necessarily a guidebook, but a "give it a try" book that should help us all through this journey of life.

Perhaps contradicting the Taoist dictum to the effect that the spoken Tao is not the real Tao, O'Reilley manages to capture in her often poetic words the magical presence that she advocates for the ideal, meditative mind of the truly present teacher. A very pleasant, absorbing read, this book is touching, spiritually affirmative, and realistic - realistic in the sense that it is not about some subtle spiritual distinctions that only matter within a certain tradition, but rather about concrete features of everyday life of the teacher who cares about how she's doing as both a person and a teacher. Very well written, very much worth reading.

This small book conveys a simple, yet profound message that deep non-judgemental listening is the foundation of good teaching and of human interaction in general. I think it should be a "must read" for every teacher, professor, social woker, nurse, parent, politician, judge....I highly recommend this little treasure.

This book came highly recommended, but I just struggled through it. The highlight or rather only thing that stuck with me was the description of smiling like a cow. If you want to read something that is written to demonstrate use of intelligence or confusion through wordiness then you might like it.

This is a little book on an immense subject. It covers the subject in a way that is not wordy or repetitive and not superficial as so often is the case with the subject of Contemplative Practice and Contemplative Teaching.

Mary Rose O'Reilley's book, Radical Presence is a wonderful and insightful resource for teaching mindfulness meditation. She writes about "presence" from many perspectives.

You should probably read The Garden at Night first. This book will enhance the later.

teachers who look for spiritual elements in teaching may find nourishment here

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