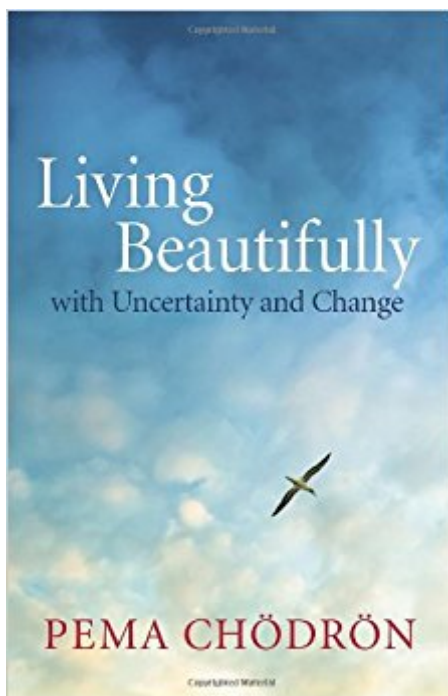


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# Living Beautifully: With Uncertainty And Change



## Synopsis

The best-selling author and spiritual teacher shares practices for living with wisdom and integrity even in confusing and uncertain situations. Is it possible to live well when the very ground we stand on is shaky? Yes, says everyone's favorite Buddhist nun, it's even possible to live beautifully, compassionately, and happily on shaky ground – and the secret is: the ground is always shaky. Pema shows how using a traditional Buddhist practice called the Three Vows or Three Commitments, offering us a way to relax into profound sanity in the midst of whatever non-sanity is happening around us. Just making these simple aspirations can change the way we look at the world and can provide us with a lifetime of material for spiritual practice. The Three Commitments are three methods for embracing the chaotic, uncertain, dynamic, challenging nature of our situation as a path to awakening. The first of the commitments, traditionally called the Pratimoksha Vow, is the foundation for personal liberation. This is a commitment to doing our best to not cause harm with our actions or words or thoughts, a commitment to being good to each other. It provides a structure within which we learn to work with our thoughts and emotions, and to refrain from speaking or acting out of confusion. The next step toward being comfortable with groundlessness is a commitment to helping others, traditionally called the Bodhisattva Vow. It is a commitment to dedicate our lives to keeping our hearts and minds open, and nurturing our compassion with the longing to ease the suffering of the world. The last of the three commitments, traditionally known as the Samaya Vow, is a resolve to embrace the world just as it is, without bias; a resolve to see everything we encounter, good and bad, pleasant and painful, as a manifestation of awakened energy. It is a commitment to see everything and anything as a means by which we can awaken further.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

PEMA CHÖDRON "DRAGNYEN" is an American Buddhist nun in the lineage of Chogyon Trungpa. She is resident teacher at Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia, the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery in North America established for Westerners. She is the author of many best-selling books, including *When Things Fall Apart*.

"The Three Commitments are three levels of working with groundlessness. Underlying them all is the basic instruction to make friends with yourself -- to be honest with yourself and kind. This begins with the willingness to stay present whenever you experience uneasiness. As these feelings arise, rather than running away, you lean into them. Instead of trying to get rid of thoughts and feelings, you become curious about them. As you become accustomed to experiencing sensation free of interpretation, you will come to understand that contacting the fundamental ambiguity of being human provides a precious opportunity -- the opportunity to be with life just as it is, the opportunity to experience the freedom of life without a story line." -- from *Living Beautifully*

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Using as the basis of this book the idea that all of our suffering comes from our fear of uncertainty, Chodron presents her path to freedom from this suffering. She presents the notion of "living by vows." Now, we're not talking head-shaved monastery living. Nor the drop-out (if enlightened) approach of *I Walked to the Moon and Almost Everybody Waved*. No, this book is for spiritual people committed to living in the modern, secular world. It's for laypeople. So these are meant more as guideposts than strict practices. The three vows are: - Pratimoksha. Commitment to personal liberation and doing no harm. - Bodhisattva. Selfless service and alleviation of the suffering of others. - Samaya. Accept reality as it is -- "awakened energy." If this sounds intriguing, provocative, or helpful to you, I recommend this book. ---Pros: Communicates a reassuring message that we can be free from fear. Also about the essential goodness of humanity, and the fact that no failure is final. Has plenty of practical teaching. Cons: You may have run across some of this material before. Like many spiritual teaches, Chodron tends to repeat herself. So while there is new material here, there's much that won't surprise you if you're a seasoned Chodron reader. ---7/19/13 Edit/Addition: I'm just about done reading *Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a*

Wandering Poet and finding it a subtly inspiring book. I highly recommend it for anyone on the Buddhist or spiritual path. It won't wow you at first, but it grew on me as I appreciated its quiet--bumps and all--interesting profiles of three historically important Zen masters.

Pema Chödrön introduces this section by describing the first of the Three Commitments, traditionally called the Pratimoksha Vow, the foundation for personal liberation. "This is a commitment to doing our best to not cause harm with our actions or words or thoughts, a commitment to being good to each other. It provides a structure within which we learn to work with our thoughts and emotions, and to refrain from speaking or acting out of confusion." She edifies the reader to understand the purpose of the precepts as a means to get at something deeper, known as outer renunciation. She elaborates by describing fixed identity or "ego clinging" as the cause of our suffering, providing practices to cultivate mindfulness, paying attention to all details of your life. "The first commitment is a vow to know your triggers, a vow that whatever it takes, you compassionately acknowledge when you're hooked by the eight worldly concerns--or indeed, hooked by anything." She completes the first section by emphasizing that awakening is not a process of building ourselves up, rather it's a process of letting go.

Part Two: The Second Commitment: Committing to Take Care of One Another

In the next section, the author lays out the second commitment traditionally known as the Bodhisattva Vow; a commitment dedicating our lives to keeping our hearts and minds open and to nurturing our compassion with the longing to ease the suffering of the world. Pema describes the second commitment as stepping further into groundlessness as a source of awakening rather than a source of dread, as a path to fearlessness rather than a threat to survival. In this section she introduces the reader to Tonglen meditation, teaching the four stages as a core practice for cultivating courage and compassion, thus accessing our interconnectedness with all beings.

Part Three: The Third Commitment: Committing to Embrace the World Just as It Is

In part three, Pema Chödrön presents what is traditionally known as the Samaya Vow, the commitment to not reject anything, surrendering to life as it is. The author states the following, "Simply put, the practice at this stage is to turn toward your experience, all of it, and never turn away." The Samaya Vow, engaging with the simplicity of life just as it comes, is taken after the cultivation of the first two commitments; much of which involves minimizing our tendency to pin labels and preconceptions, views and opinions, on everything we perceive.

Part Four: Concluding Words

At the conclusion of the book, Pema Chödrön leaves the reader

with the following question: "Are you ready to make a commitment?"

In closing, we are encouraged to maintain these commitments, thus embarking on the journey of embracing the positive groundlessness of life for the sake of our loved ones, our enemies, and ourselves.

This wonderful book explains the Tibetan buddhist monk philosophies of living beautifully even in a world of chaos. This book really has helped me to gain a lot of control over my stress and anxiety and I greatly appreciate the insights and teachings portrayed within. I highly recommend this book to my friends and family going through hard times with their current life situations!

Pema Chodron has such a gift for sharing concepts so vast with such a degree of approachability. I've read a lot of her work and thought this would be redundant but not at all. Her words run fresh and deep. Whether this is your first brush with Buddhist thought or whether you're well into it, this book lends light and insight.

I bought this book several months ago. I have read several of Pema Chodron's books; they are very uplifting and calming. I have read it several times cover to cover and then just open it up and read a page every few mornings. She has a way of writing that keeps you thinking.

Pema Chodron writes like it's a letter from your favorite Aunt...with compassion for what life dumps on our doorstep, with advice about how to be the best person we can be, and with a sense of humor that makes it all seem possible. I may not want to practice the Buddhist faith, but I can see how the Buddhist perspective offers understanding and guidance in dealing with our ever-changing experiences that create our Life. Favorite teaching that pretty much sums up the book: "We have to know ourselves fully and completely, avoiding nothing, never averting our gaze. We have to be curious about this thing called My Life, curious about this person called Me." I read a lot and she is one of my favorite authors.

Pema Chodron is a great writer. She has touched many lives with her clarity on how we can use meditation and practice to enhance our everyday lives. We have a group that meets weekly to have a short meditation and discussion. This has been a perfect book to use for discussion and reflection on our daily lives.

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