

the work of byron katie

"No one can give you freedom but you. This little book will show you how."

- Byron Katie

About Katie and The Work

In 1986, Byron Kathleen Reid (known as "Katie") was at a dead-end in her life. For ten years, she had grown increasingly paranoid, angry, and depressed. She often stayed in bed for weeks at a time, afraid to leave the house, unable even to brush her teeth. Then one morning, suddenly, Katie woke up with a completely different perspective on reality, without any concepts of who or what she was:

There was no me. It was as if something else had woken up. *It* opened its eyes. *It* was looking through Katie's eyes. Everything was unrecognizable. And it was so delighted! It was intoxicated with joy. There was nothing separate, nothing unacceptable to it.

What had woken up in Katie was a wordless process of inquiry that dissolved all her suffering.

Since that day, Katie's freedom has never left her. When people ask how they can achieve the same state, Katie offers The Work, an original and radical process of self-realization. The Work has been called the most powerful method ever developed to end human suffering, and yet it is so simple that even a child can do it. It is unaffiliated with any other organization, form of therapy, or religion, and complements any practice that seeks peace. The Work is offered around the world at no charge through The Work of Byron Katie Foundation, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

Welcome to The Work of Byron Katie.

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Introduction

I realized in 1986 that the only time we suffer is when we believe a thought that argues with reality. Wanting reality to be different than it is is hopeless. You might as well try to teach a cat to bark. You can try for the rest of your life, and in the end the cat will look up at you and say, "Meow."

This may seem obvious, and yet, if you pay attention, you'll notice that you think thoughts like this dozens of times a day. "People should be kinder." "Children should be well-behaved." "My neighbors should take better care of their lawn." "My partner shouldn't have left me." "I should be thinner (or more attractive or more successful)." These thoughts are ways of expecting reality to be different than it is right now. This is how all stress, frustration, and depression are born.

People new to The Work often say to me, "But it would be disempowering to stop my argument with reality. If I simply accept it, I'll become passive." I answer them with a question: "Can you really know that that's true?" Which is more empowering—"My partner shouldn't have left me" or "He left me. What are my options?" Seeing reality clearly puts you in a

position to make intelligent choices. Arguing with it leaves you limited.

The Work reveals that what you think shouldn't have happened *should* have happened. It should have happened because it did, and no thinking in the world can change it. This doesn't mean that you condone it or approve of it. It doesn't mean that you become passive. It just means that you can see things without resistance and without the stress of your inner struggle. No one wants their children to get sick; no one wants their partner to leave them; but when this happens, how can it be helpful to mentally argue with it? We've innocently done this because we haven't known another way.

The Work offers us a way to stop our painful war with reality so that we can see clearly. Using specific, penetrating questions, we investigate our thinking and become aware of our confusion. This is self-realization. It's a chance for the mind to meet itself, to stop itself on paper and, through inquiry, realize the cause and the effect of arguing with "what is."

If this doesn't make sense, don't worry. As you continue, it will get clearer. For now, let's begin with the first step in The Work: our judgments.

Judge your neighbor,
Write it down.
Ask four questions,
Turn it around.
— bk

The Work of Byron Katie

Judge Your Neighbor

For thousands of years we've been told not to judge, but we still do it all the time—how our friends should act, whom our children should care about, what our parents should feel, do, or say. In The Work, rather than suppress these judgments, we use them as starting points for self-realization. By letting the judging mind have its life on paper, we can discover through the mirror of those around us what we haven't yet realized about ourselves.

To experience The Work, choose a situation, past or present, that feels unresolved in your life—someone you are angry at or haven't completely forgiven—and fill in the Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet on the following pages.* Do not write about yourself yet. Be uncensored and petty. Please don't be "spiritual" or kind. Use short, simple sentences, trust this process, and give your mind the opportunity to express itself on paper. No one will read it but you.

^{*}If you don't want to write in this booklet, you can download a Worksheet from our web site, www.thework.org.

| i | Who angers, irritates, or disappoints you? What is it about them that you don't like? | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| | Example: I am angry at Paul because he doesn't understand me. I | | | |
| | am angry at Paul because he shouts at me and makes me feel bad | | | |
| | | | | |
| | How do you want them to change? What do you want them to do? | | | |
| | Example: I want Paul to really love me and not just say so. | | | |
| | I want to | | | |
| | What is it that they should or shouldn't do, be, think, or feel? What advice could you offer? | | | |
| | Example: Paul should get more exercise. Paul shouldn't watch so much TV. | | | |

| | rder for you to be happy? ul to know that I love him. I need Paul to he ne. |
|------------------------|--|
| I need | to |
| . What do you thi | ink of them? Make a list. |
| · | is |
| . What is it that y | ou don't want to experience wit |
| Example: I don't eve | r want to experience an argument with Pau nt to let Paul treat me with hostility again. |
| again. I don't ever wa | 10 101 1 001 11001 1100 11111 110011111 1 00011111 |

If you had to choose between being right (and the stress that goes with that) and being free, which would you choose?

And do you really want to know the truth of what causes your stress or pain?

The Four Questions

Next, investigate each statement you've written on the Worksheet with the following four questions:

- 1. Is it true?
- 2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?
- 3. How do you react when you think that thought?
- 4. Who would you be without the thought?

An example of how to do this begins on the next page.

You may feel as you ask yourself these questions (especially the first one) that you already know the answer: "Of course it's true," or "No, I know it's not true." The key to experiencing The Work is to go beyond the quick answers of the intellect and tap into a deeper wisdom. Ask, then be still and wait for the voice of the heart to respond. Let the deeper answers emerge. With practice, you will come to trust your own experience. You will learn to rely on your answers—not the world's answers—to see what's true for you.

Example: Paul should understand me.*

Question 1: Is it true?

Is it true that Paul should understand you? What's the reality of it? Be still. Wait for the answer. If you feel it is true, ask question 2. If you feel it isn't true, move to question 3.

Question 2: Can you absolutely know that it's true?

This question is a second chance to go inside and see what you can really know to be true. Can you absolutely know that Paul should understand you? Can you know what's best for him to understand at this moment—the amount of understanding he should have right now on his path? Is it up to you to decide the range of another person's understanding on earth? And what's the reality of the situation? *Does* he understand you? The whole world may say, "He *should* understand you; husbands should understand their wives." Now look closely at your own experience to see what's true for you.

I realized in 1986 that what's true is not the myths or ideals the world speaks of. What's true is what's happening in reality. "Paul should understand me." Is it true? In my experience, no—Paul *shouldn't* understand me is truer. That's reality, sometimes.

People new to The Work often have difficulty with my use of the word "should." "Okay, Katie," they say, "I see that in reality he doesn't understand you. But he *should*, right? I mean, that's what you have to get him to work on." I tried this for years, and the result was depression and anger. The only reason I wanted him to understand me was so I could feel happy, and I noticed that when I no longer believed that he should understand me, I was happy! I stopped insanely believing that fighting the world was going to bring me peace. What *should* happen is what's happening—obviously. It's what really is happening now. Everything else is just a fantasy, a story we tell.

Don't believe this is true just because I say it. If your answer to the second question is "Yes," good. There's no wrong answer. Just continue the inquiry process. With the next question, we'll investigate the feelings that follow from our thinking.

^{*}When applying the four questions to number 1 from the Worksheet, you can simplify the original statement. For example, "I'm angry at Paul because he doesn't understand me" might be simplified to "Paul should understand me" or even "I'm angry."

Question 3: How do you react when you think that thought?

What happens when you think "Paul should understand me" and he doesn't? Make a list. How do you treat Paul? How do you treat yourself? What goes on in your body? Notice all the effects of thinking this thought. Ask yourself, "Does this thought bring stress or peace into my life?"

Question 4: Who would you be without the thought?

Close your eyes. Picture yourself now in the presence of the person you want to change. Imagine looking at that person for just a moment without your thought. What do you see? Now imagine them experiencing how you treat them as you act out the story that they are supposed to understand you. What would your life look like without that thought?

The goal is not to try to change your reactions or see life differently. This is simply inquiry, a chance for you to go in and observe first-hand your thoughts and their effects. When you see this relationship clearly, your life changes automatically as a result. It has to, because once you understand that mental suffering is caused by *your thinking* about the world and not the world itself, problems become opportunities for self-realization, and life becomes a gift.

The Turnaround

After you've investigated your statement with the four questions, you're ready to turn it around. Turnarounds are a chance for you to experience the opposite of what you believe to be true. For example, "I'm angry at Paul because he doesn't understand me" turned around is "I'm angry at *myself* because *I* don't understand me." Is that as true or truer? Could it be that I don't understand myself and why I get angry at Paul over and over for the same thing? If I don't understand myself, can I see how Paul wouldn't either? Another turnaround could be "I'm angry at myself because *I* don't understand *Paul*." Can I find that?

Be creative with the turnarounds. They are revelations, showing you the unseen pieces of yourself reflected back through others. You may discover more than two or three turnarounds, each of them as true or truer than the statement you have written. Go inside. Sit with each one. See which ones are true for you. Let yourself feel them.

As I began living the turnarounds, I noticed that anything I called *you* turned out to be *me*. You were merely my thoughts projected out as real. Now,

instead of trying to change the world around me (this didn't work, but only for forty-three years), I can put the thoughts on paper, investigate them, turn them around, and find that I am the very thing I thought you were. In the moment I see you as unkind, I am unkind. If I believe you should stop waging war, am I waging war on you in my mind? If so, I am teaching war.

As you become more familiar with The Work, you may begin to notice opportunities to practice the turnarounds. For example, you might think someone you meet is arrogant. Ask yourself, "Is it just as true about me? Am I arrogant sometimes? Could it be arrogant of me in this moment to think that I know how someone else should or shouldn't be?"

The turnarounds are *your* prescription for happiness. Give yourself the medicine you have been prescribing for others. We are waiting for just one teacher to live it. You're the one.

Examples of Turnarounds

Here are some examples to help you see how turning your statements around can bring realizations.

"He should understand me" turns around to:

- He *shouldn't* understand me. (This is reality, sometimes.)
- I should understand him.
- I should understand myself.

"I need him to be kind to me" turns around to:

- I don't need him to be kind to me.
- I need *me* to be kind to *him*. (Can I live it?)
- I need me to be kind to myself.

"He is unloving to me" turns around to:

- He is *loving* to me (to the best of his ability).
- I am unloving to him. (Can I find it?)
- *I* am unloving to *me* (when I judge and don't inquire).

"Paul shouldn't shout at me" turns around to:

- Paul should shout at me.
 (Obviously: In reality, he does. Am I listening?)
- I shouldn't shout at Paul.
- *I* shouldn't shout at *me*. (In my head, am I shouting by playing Paul's shouting over and over again?)

Number 6

After you've investigated and turned around your answers to numbers 1 through 5 on the Worksheet, turn number 6 around, using "I am willing" and "I look forward to."

For example, "I don't ever want to experience an argument with Paul" turns around to "I am willing to experience an argument with Paul," and "I look forward to experiencing an argument with Paul." Why would you look forward to it? Number 6 is about fully embracing all of mind, and therefore life, without fear, and being open to reality. If you experience an argument with Paul again, even if it's only in your mind, good. If it hurts, put your thoughts on paper and investigate them. Uncomfortable feelings are reminders that we've attached to a thought that may not be true for us. They let us know when it's time to do The Work.

Until you can see the enemy as a friend, your Work is not done. This doesn't mean that you have to invite them to dinner. Love is an internal experience. You may never see them again—you may even divorce them—but as you think about them, are you feeling stress or peace?

In my experience, it takes only one person to have a successful relationship. I like to say I have the perfect marriage, and I can't really know what kind of marriage my husband has (though he tells me he's happy too).

When you argue with reality, you lose, but only always.

--bk

The Subquestions

At The School for The Work, we learn to use several sub-questions that can be very helpful during investigation. Feel free to use these throughout your inquiry process, or stick to the four main questions—whichever works for you.

1. Is it true?

What's the reality of it? Where's your proof?

2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?

Can you know what's best for someone's path? Can you know more than God?

3. How do you react when you think that thought?

How does it feel inside of you?
How do you treat others?
How do you treat yourself?
What do you say or do specifically?
Does that thought bring stress or peace into your life?
Can you see a peaceful reason to keep that thought?

4. Who would you be without the thought? What would your life look like if you could never think that thought again?

After asking the questions and subquestions, turn the original statement around. Is that as true or truer? Can you find another turnaround?

The Three Kinds of Business

In the entire world, I can find only three kinds of business: mine, yours, and God's (however you understand God or a higher power. For me, reality is God, because *it rules*). If *you* are living your life and *I* am mentally living your life, then who is here to live *my* life? Of course I am lonely. Being mentally in another person's business keeps me from being present in my own.

To assume that I know what's best for others is pure arrogance. In the long run, can I really know more than you about what is best for your life? This arrogance brings me tension, worry, and anxiety. The next time you feel separate or lonely, ask yourself, "Whose business am Lin?"

Cause and Effect

When you experience fear (or anger, depression, stress, etc.), there is always a thought behind that feeling. Thought is the cause, feeling is the effect. Until now, we have been trying to change the effect (through relationships, sex, food, alcohol, drugs) for temporary comfort and the illusion of control. Has it worked for you?

Without inquiry, the original thought remains as the hidden cause, and more concepts spring forth from it. Mind then does its job, which is to collect evidence to prove that it's right: "Paul doesn't love me. He never listens when I speak. He shouts all the time..." I can try to distract myself from the resulting feelings, or I can investigate the cause.

When I have an uncomfortable feeling, I examine the thinking behind it by putting it on paper and asking four questions. I don't try to change the feeling. I do The Work, and notice that the feeling changes, and so does my entire life. That's the power of truth.

I invite you to look forward to an uncomfortable feeling. It's a reminder, like an alarm clock, letting you know that you've attached to a belief without investigation, and it's time to do The Work. Find clarity through inquiry, and meet your discomfort with understanding. Why wait for anything or anyone outside you to bring contentment and harmony? Peace is always inside you, only four questions away.

The Work with a Partner

The following is a powerful exercise that can be done by two (or more) people who seek resolution and forgiveness. The key when working with another person is to be clear that The Work is *for you*, not for the other. Each person is there to go inside and discover their own truth, not to win or be right. We have been other-realized forever. The Work is about self-realization.

First, both partners fill out a Worksheet (available from www.thework.org) with their honest, direct, and petty judgments of each other. Partner A then reads her Worksheet aloud, statement by statement, speaking directly to Partner B. For example, "Paul, I'm angry at you because I feel like you don't love me." After each statement, Partner A pauses and waits for eye contact from Partner B.

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Partner B's job is to listen and to see if he can find *any place* where Partner A is right. Whether he finds it or not, he replies with "Thank you." Only that. No more and no less.

When Partner A has finished reading all the statements from the Worksheet, Partner B facilitates, using the four questions on p.11, working down the sheet. At the end, Partner A reads her entire list aloud again, this time turned around. She again pauses after each statement, making eye contact with Partner B, and giving herself time to hear and recognize the truth of what she is saying for herself.

The entire exercise is then repeated with the roles reversed.

You may be tempted to use this exercise as a forum to get your partner to change. Having such a motive is manipulative, leading to frustration and further misunderstanding. The Work is not for people who want to be right. It's for people who want to be free.

Whichever role you take in inquiry, always participate for your own freedom, not your partner's. If you follow these simple directions and do this exercise for the love of truth, it can bring you self-love, and therefore a deeper love for others.

Questions and Answers

I have a hard time writing about others. Can I write about myself?

If you want to know yourself, I suggest you write about someone else. Point The Work outward in the beginning, and you may come to see that everything outside you is a direct reflection of your thinking. It is all about you. Most of us have been pointing our criticism and judgments at ourselves for years, and it hasn't solved anything yet. Judging someone else, inquiring, and turning it around is the fast path to understanding and self-realization.

Do I have to write it down? Can't I just ask the questions and turn it around in my head?

The mind's job is to be right, and it can justify itself faster than the speed of light. Stop the portion of your thinking that is the source of your fear, anger, sadness, or resentment by transferring it to paper. Once the mind is stopped on paper, it's much easier to investigate. Eventually The Work will begin to undo you automatically without writing.

What if I don't have a problem with people? Can I write about things, like my body?

Yes. Do The Work on any subject that is stressful. As you become familiar with the four questions and the turnaround, you may choose subjects such as the body, disease, career, or even God. Then experiment with using the term "my thinking" in place of the subject when you do the turnarounds.

Example: "My body should be strong and healthy" becomes "My thinking should be strong and healthy."

Isn't that what you really want—a balanced, healthy mind? Has a sick body ever been a problem, or is it your thinking about the body that causes the problem? Investigate. Let your doctor take care of your body as you take care of your thinking. I have a friend who can't move his body, and he is loving life. Freedom doesn't require a healthy body. Free your mind.

I've heard you say you're a lover of reality. What about war and rape and all the terrible things in the world? Are you condoning that?

A Quite the opposite. I notice that if I believe it shouldn't exist when it does exist, I suffer. Can I

just end the war in me? Can I stop raping myself and others with my abusive thoughts and actions? Otherwise I'm continuing through me the very thing I want to end in the world. I start with ending my own suffering, my own war. This is a life's work.

So what you're saying is that I should just accept reality as it is and not argue with it. Is that right?

The Work doesn't say what anyone should or shouldn't do. We simply ask, What is the effect of arguing with reality? How does it feel? This Work explores the cause and effect of attaching to painful thoughts, and in that investigation we find our freedom. To simply say that we shouldn't argue with reality just adds another story, another philosophy or religion. It hasn't ever worked.

I don't believe in God. Can I still benefit from The Work?

Yes. Atheist, agnostic, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, pagan—we all have one thing in common: We want happiness and peace. If you are tired of suffering, I invite you to The Work.

Is inquiry a process of thinking? If not, what is it?

Inquiry appears to be a process of thinking, but actually it's a way to *undo* thinking. Thoughts lose their power over us when we realize that they simply appear in the mind. They're not personal. With The Work, instead of escaping or suppressing our thoughts, we learn to meet them with open arms.

If someone I know is harming themself or someone else, you're saying that it's not my business. Isn't that incredibly irresponsible?

It could seem that way, but in my experience this is about *total* responsibility. I'm 100% responsible for the way I harm myself, especially with my thinking about other people. Doing The Work leaves me clear, and in a much better place to assist others. Who's going to be more helpful, someone with a judgment that the other person needs to change, or someone who *has* changed and sees clearly through eyes of love and understanding? When you truly stop harming yourself, the other person will ask you how you did it. No one wants to harm another, and no one wants to suffer.

"Katie-isms"

When you argue with reality, you lose—but only always.

Personalities don't love—they want something.

If I had a prayer, it would be this: "God spare me from the desire for love, approval, or appreciation. Amen."

Don't pretend yourself beyond your own evolution.

I am the perpetrator of my suffering—but only all of it.

The direct route is: "God is everything; God is good."

Anything you want to ask a teacher, ask yourself. If you really want to know the truth, the answer will meet your question.

It's not your job to like me—that's my job.

The worst thing that has ever happened is an uninvestigated thought.

All war belongs on paper. Do The Work, find peace inside, and the world will follow. It's a law.

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Sanity doesn't suffer, ever.

The teacher you need is the person you're living with. Are you listening?

I don't let go of my concepts—I meet them through inquiry, then *they* let go of *me*.

Reality is always kinder than the story we tell about it.

Ultimately I am all that I can know.

Confusion is the only suffering.

What is is. You don't get a vote. Haven't you noticed?

I'm very clear that the whole world loves me. I just don't expect them to realize it yet.

There are no physical problems—only mental ones.

The fear of death is the last smokescreen for the fear of love.

All pleasure is pain, until I understand. Then I am the pleasure I was seeking. I am what I always wanted.

For me, reality is God, because it rules.

Testimonials

"I always thought I had to look for answers outside myself. I never knew I could find them all inside of me. For me this was an earth-shaking experience. The Work is my self-realization."

~

"Inquiry changed my relationship with my father. It even changed it retroactively: The 'memories' I have from when I was a child all changed. Where I had previously perceived no love, no connection, and no caring, I now see pure caring."

8

"I was introduced to The Work just before my last round of chemotherapy for cancer. I have found that my entire outlook on life, including my health, has been lifted to a higher consciousness because of The Work. This is the most powerful tool anyone can have—period."

8

"My wife and I had read, studied, and meditated for 27 years, trying to find the 'peace that passeth understanding' and now are living it due to The Work. And when we don't experience that peace, we do The Work again."

"The Work has transformed what I could have called depression into a certainty and gratitude, hope, peace. It has given me tools to bring me back to me—and further."

~

"When I am scared and I do The Work with my daddy, then afterwards I am not scared anymore.

The Work is the best thing in the whole wide world!"

8

"The Work is what I'd been wishing for on a life's worth of birthday candles. Since I returned from The School, I love my partner even more. She's so fine. She's funnier than I thought she was. And I'll talk to anybody now. I answer the phone on the first ring with impunity. After 25 years of rolling my own nonfilter cigarettes, I don't smoke and I like it."

3

"I'm skeptical of the countless self-help programs (New Age and traditional) that I hear about, and which generally leave me feeling manipulated or superficially consoled. I have to say, this one is different. These four questions continue to cut through anything I could call painful. I'm amazed, and sincerely grateful. In a world filled with so much marketing noise, I hope others find what I found."

The School for The Work

The School for The Work, offered several times a year, is an intense journey deep into your own mind. I like to say it's the only school on earth where people go to *un*learn. It's sole purpose is to help you end your suffering. For more information on The School for The Work, call (310)760-9000 or send an email to theschool@thework.org. Financial assistance is available.

Loving What Is

Another way to go deeper into The Work is by reading my book, *Loving What Is*, written with Stephen Mitchell. *Loving What Is* serves as a guide to your inner journey, with detailed instructions, explanations, and transcripts of people investigating issues like money, the body, relationships, work, self-judgment, and death. A six-tape audiobook version featuring live recordings of The Work is also available. Check our web site or your local bookstore for more information.

Ultimately, only you can give you freedom. If you feel that this Work helps you do that, welcome. Here's another Judge-Your-Neighbor Worksheet to get you started. It's always a beginning.

| | The Work of Byron Katie | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1. | Who angers, irritates, or disappoints you? What is it about them that you don't like? | | | | |
| | Example: I am angry at Paul because he doesn't understand me. I | | | | |
| | am angry at Paul because he shouts at me and makes me feel bad. | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| 2. | How do you want them to change? What do you want them to do? | | | | |
| | Example: I want Paul to really love me and not just say so. | | | | |
| | I want to | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | What is it that they should or shouldn't do, be, | | | | |
| 3. | think, or feel; what advice could you offer; | | | | |
| 3. | think, or feel? What advice could you offer? Example: Paul should get more exercise. Paul shouldn't watch so much TV. | | | | |

| need to do in order for you to be happy? Example: I need Paul to know that I love him. I need Paul to he me and understand me. |
|--|
| I need to |
| What do you think of them? Make a list. Example: Paul is uncaring and insensitive. |
| is |
| What is it that you don't want to experience with |
| that person again? |
| Example: I don't ever want to experience an argument with Paul |
| again. I don't ever want to let Paul treat me with hostility again. |
| 8 |
| |

"Who would you be without your story?
There is no story that is you or that leads to
you. Every story leads away from you. Turn it
around; undo it. You are what exists before all
stories. You are what remains when the story
is understood."

- Byron Katie

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The Work moves only if you say so.

If you feel this Work has value, please make a donation. Your tax-deductible gift supports our office and enables Katie to travel to schools, prisons, and other places that could not otherwise afford to host an event. You can make a donation and help The Work continue to move by visiting www.thework.org, or by sending your contribution to the address on the back cover.

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