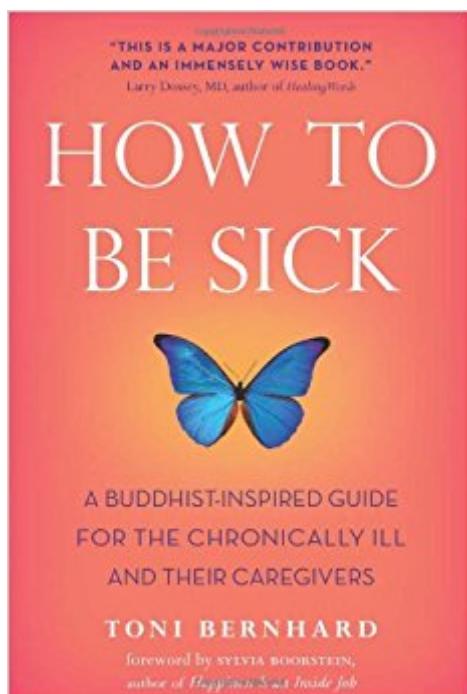


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# How To Be Sick: A Buddhist-Inspired Guide For The Chronically Ill And Their Caregivers



## Synopsis

This life-affirming, instructive, and thoroughly inspiring book is a must-read for anyone who is - or who might one day be - sick. It can also be the perfect gift of guidance, encouragement, and uplifting inspiration to family, friends, and loved ones struggling with the many terrifying or disheartening life changes that come so close on the heels of a diagnosis of a chronic condition or life-threatening illness. Authentic and graceful, *How to be Sick* reminds us of our endless inner freedom, even under high degrees of suffering and pain. The author - who became ill while a university law professor in the prime of her career - tells the reader how she got sick and, to her and her partner's bewilderment, stayed that way. Toni had been a longtime meditator, going on long meditation retreats and spending many hours rigorously practicing, but soon discovered that she simply could no longer engage in those difficult and taxing forms. She had to learn ways to make "being sick" the heart of her spiritual practice - and through truly learning how to be sick, she learned how, even with many physical and energetic limitations, to live a life of equanimity, compassion, and joy. And whether we ourselves are ill or not, we can learn these vital arts from Bernhard's generous wisdom in *How to Be Sick*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Full of hopefulness and promiseâ ¡this book is a perfect blend of inspiration and encouragement. Toni's engaging teaching style shares traditional Buddhist wisdom in a format that is accessible to all readers." (The Huffington Post)"Toni Bernhard's book, *How To Be Sick*--A Buddhist's Guide for

the Chronically Ill and Their Caregivers, is an invitation to gently set aside the fear and the fight in order to truly live. It is based on principles of Buddhism, which she carefully applies to her own chronic and at times debilitating illness. She offers a different perspective on illness and wellness, suggesting the two need not be mutually exclusive." (Psychology Today)"A immensely wise book. Health psychology has been poisoned by the view that the best way to approach illness is through a muscular, militant resistance. This books shows otherwise. Bernhard reveals how letting go, surrendering, and putting the ego aside yield insights and fulfillment even in the presence of illness. This is a major contribution." (Larry Dossey, MD, author of Healing Words)"How does one face a chronic illness? In 2001 law professor Bernhard became sick from a virus that no doctor has been able to treat. Faced with ongoing disabling symptoms, forced to give up her profession, and unable to take part in most of the activities she loves, Bernhard has dug into the roots of the Buddhism she once studied intensively, looking for resources to cope with such devastating loss. She clearly explains how such Buddhist principles as the four noble truths, impermanence, no-self, and dependent origination help her cope with limited energy and frequent enforced solitude. No longer able to meditate formally, Bernhard describes a set of easy mental practices, drawn from her own daily experiences as well as vipassana (insight meditation), Zen koans, Tibetan Buddhist compassion exercises, and the "inquiry" technique of author Byron Katie, a practice for working with thoughts. Bernhard's applications of Buddhism are sound and her insights gentle and honest; others may take heart from her determination to use the Buddha's timeless wisdom to ease the mental suffering brought about by unrelieved physical illness."-- (Publishers Weekly)"You don't have to be sick to benefit from the advice in this book. This is a book on how to live fully." (Joy Selak, author of You Don't LOOK Sick!)"An inspiring work" (Joseph Goldstein, author of A Heart Full of Peace)"Beautiful, heartfelt, and immensely courageous. Truly worth reading." (Sharon Salzberg, author of Lovingkindness)"An inspiring and instructive guide for coping with a chronic condition or life-threatening illness but it is much more than that. Each chapter is about unpacking the highest truth in the lowest places of our lives. The book is entitled How To Be Sick but I found that it's really about how to live." (Jim Palmer, Author of Divine Nobodies, and Wide Open Spaces)"This book could easily be called "How to Be Well." Toni Bernhard's hard-won wisdom dealing with chronic illness teaches us how to be kind to ourselves, to counter negative thoughts about our life and our health, and to live fully in the present--neither regretting the past nor fearing the future. Who among us couldn't use these life-affirming skills? Bravo!" (Susan Milstrey Wells, author of A Delicate Balance: Living Successfully with Chronic Illness)"If you want to better understand how to deal with a chronic illness, or you are the caregiver for someone who is chronically ill, read How to be Sick."

### (The Caregiver's Voice)

Toni Bernhard is the author of the award-winning *How to Be Sick: A Buddhist-Inspired Guide for the Chronically Ill and their Caregivers* and *How to Wake Up: A Buddhist-Inspired Guide to Navigating Joy and Sorrow*. Until forced to retire due to illness, Toni was a law professor at the University of California-Davis, serving six years as the dean of students. She has been a practicing Buddhist for over 20 years. Her blog, "Turning Straw Into Gold" is hosted on the website of Psychology Today. She can be found online at [www.tonibernhard.com](http://www.tonibernhard.com). Sylvia Boorstein is the author of many well-known books, including *It's Easier Than You Think*, *Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist*, and *Don't Just Do Something, Sit There*. She lives in Geyerville, California.

I personally understand that no book can completely encompass one's own experience with chronic illness. I read this book subjectively, knowing my situation was very different, but that I could take away something from her message. If you want to look for more concrete sickness advise...ex: how to pay bills, what to do XYZ, navigating the healthcare system, there are books for that to **FURTHER GATHER INFORMATION** on chronic illness itself. This book helped the anxiety I had associated with being chronically ill. It helped me accept my outcome with more grace. Accepting for me did not mean not continuing to look for better options; it just meant learning to live each day with more peace for what I was currently facing. It was a very helpful read. It's the book always next to my nightstand.

I love this book! I can completely relate to this book. This book helped me to find balance, self compassion, and contentment in solitude. And ,it especially helped me to let go of negative patterns of thinking. I now constantly challenge my negative thoughts and have felt more at peace. Thank you Toni Bernhard for having the courage to write this book. May you be blessed for your loving kindness that you have sent out into the world!

I've been living with chronic illness my entire life: I was born with a genetic immune deficiency which has worsened with age. Along with the immune deficiency, I have several other auto-immune conditions as well as a chronic pain syndrome. To look at me, you'd never know how sick I am: I look perfectly fine on the outside. People like me are said to have "invisible illnesses." We are often misunderstood by family members, friends, even health professionals (for those of us with rare conditions, like me). Trying to live a full and happy life despite my health challenges is my greatest

struggle. It's even more profound now that I'm a mother: I don't want my daughter to see me as a sick person. I want to be the best that I can be for her, and have the most positive outlook possible. So it was with excitement that I read Toni Bernhard's *How to Be Sick*. I read an article written by Toni online and loved her writing style and message. I immediately bought her book and I simply devoured it. This book spoke to me and affected me deeply. I am a Christian and was a little leery of the fact that this book is Buddhist-inspired. I didn't know what that meant, really. All I knew about Buddhism is that practitioners meditate. That was it! Toni gently educates the reader by applying Buddhism's principles to how to live peacefully with chronic illness. The main concept of this book is how to alleviate the mental suffering that accompanies chronic illness. Common examples of mental suffering are: asking why is this happening to me, being envious of healthy people, and being uncertain about the future (when will I relapse, will this treatment work, fear of testing and doctor visits, and fear of being unable to attend family events, etc). These issues are all things I struggle with in my every day life. So, to read a book that teaches me specific ways to address these fears was a true gift. I loved that Toni gives so many practical examples throughout the book. The examples really drove the points home and made me feel like I could start applying what I learned right away. There is a great section at the end of the book with bullet points of what to do in certain situations. I loved that! As soon as I finished *How to Be Sick*, I turned back to page one and got my highlighter ready. Now I'm reading the book a second time and really making a study of this insightful, life-changing guide. I can't say enough good things about this book. If you have anyone in your life who is chronically ill, or a caregiver, I would highly recommend *How to Be Sick*!

I thought the book would be a little more organized. The author kind of skip around to a lot of different topics without proper segway. However, I do like the messages in the book. I would probably not buy it again, unless you are looking for 6-7 Buddhist teachings that might help with your chronic pain. Only one of them was profound enough to stick in my head... but one is better than none! All of the Buddhist teachings are in the back of the book so you can look at them without going back into the story. That is nice.

I read this book as a caregiver. It taught me quite a bit about the perspective of the ill person. The buddhist philosophy has helped me be more patient and see the illness as a separate entity. I have recommended this book to many people, both the sick and the caregivers.

Seven years ago I had throat cancer (even though I never smoked or used any tobacco products, which was monstrously unfair) and I have been trying to cope with the effects of successful treatment ever since, including recurrent pneumonias requiring hospitalization and surgeries, loss of all of my bottom teeth, loss of the ability to swallow anything, and being restricted to tube feedings. I have been angry and depressed for a long time. It is not an overstatement for me to say that this book has helped me tremendously. I keep this book permanently on my Kindle so that I can refer to it at will, which I frequently do. I would enthusiastically recommend this book for anyone who has a chronic illness or cares for a chronically ill person.

Toni Bernhard's book, "How to be Sick..." has been the one faithful support and guide during this time of serious injury and slow recovery. I believe it would be of benefit to anyone, whether acutely or chronically sick or caregiving, in that we are all in those experiences in some way at some time in our lives. Her generous sharing and candor about her own sudden and ongoing illness, and the varied emotional, physical and spiritual reactions provided me with comfort. I am also a human who is suffering, surprised and dismayed in various ways because of the body's infirmity. The practices offered in such clear detail powerfully remind me there are resources within me and ones I may cultivate to bear and live this life i've been given. As a serious student of the Dharma and mindfulness practitioner, I find the guidance and wisdom of the Dharma to be a true reliable friend. I had gotten lost for a while, feeling overwhelmed by the gravity of my injury and the body's reactions to it. I send much gratitude to Toni Bernhard for writing her story and dharma-filled perspective; for me it's been a major saving grace. Nancy Riemer

Great book!! I'm disabled and this helped me through so tough times. Highly recommend.

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