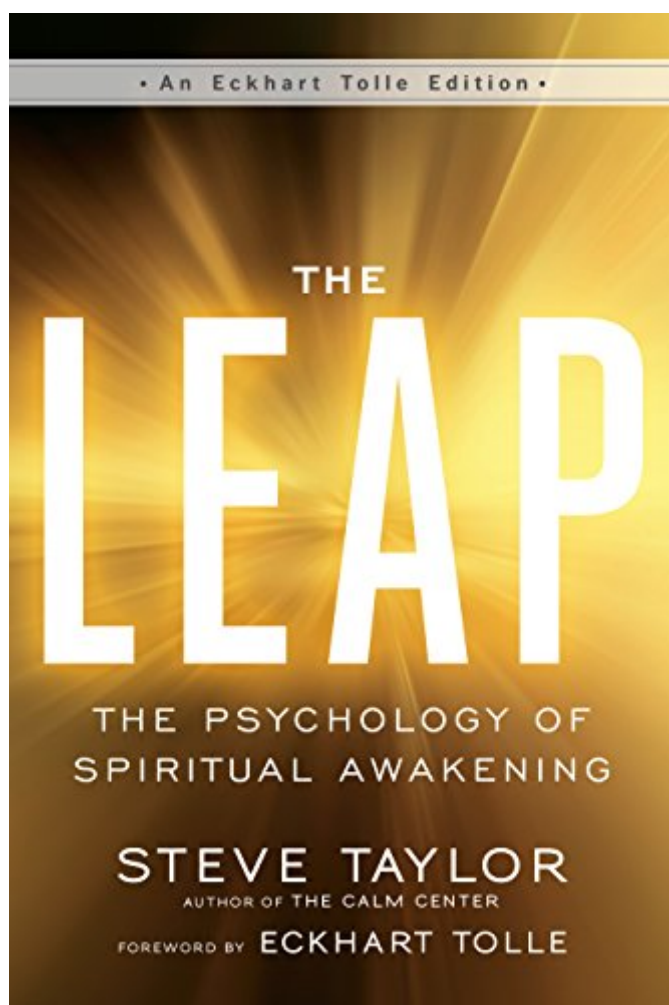


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The Leap: The Psychology Of Spiritual Awakening (An Eckhart Tolle Edition)



Synopsis

What does it mean to be enlightened or spiritually awakened? In *The Leap*, Steve Taylor shows that this state is much more common than is generally believed. He shows that ordinary people "from all walks of life" can and do regularly "wake up" to a more intense reality, even if they know nothing about spiritual practices and paths. Wakefulness is a more expansive and harmonious state of being that can be cultivated or that can arise accidentally. It may also be a process we are undergoing collectively. Drawing on his years of research as a psychologist and on his own experiences, Taylor provides what is perhaps the clearest psychological study of the state of wakefulness ever published. Above all, he reminds us that it is our most natural state "accessible to us all, anytime, anyplace."

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Customer Reviews

If you've been wondering what "spiritually awakened" or

"enlightenment" means, this book is a must read. If you've made progress on the path of awakening, this book will validate your journey. If you're having intense spiritual

experiences, confusion, and dark nights of the soul, this book could save your life. Steve Taylor explores the awakened state of consciousness from a psychological perspective in simple, crystal clear language. The book is based on his scientific study of hundreds of people who had various awakening experiences, on his vast knowledge of ancient spiritual traditions, and on his own personal journey. His approach is free from archaic terminology, dogma, and cultural baggage which sometimes obscure the spiritual brilliance of ancient teachings. His model of psychological awakening can be helpful to practitioners on any spiritual path as well as to fervent atheists who are having awakening experiences. Taylor says that ordinary adult consciousness is a state of deep sleep characterized by a sense of separateness, discontent, anxiety, and constant mental chatter. To escape this discomfort, we pursue happiness through money, success, power, etc., or sedate ourselves with compulsive entertainment or mind altering substances. It doesn't work. The author distinguishes between awakening experiences and the awakened state. Awakening experiences are temporary episodes of spiritual uplift, which can range from mild awe, reverence, and harmony to full blown mystical ecstatic union with an all pervading spiritual force. Most people have had at least the mild versions, often from nature or artistic beauty. Taylor goes more deeply into temporary awakening experiences in his book, *Waking From Sleep*. The Leap, however, focuses on the awakened state, which is permanent wakefulness. Taylor says that with permanent wakefulness, a new, higher-functioning self-system emerges, which often feels like rebirth. The author provides a list of characteristics commonly seen in people who are spiritually awake. The intensity of these traits corresponds to the intensity of the person's wakefulness. I'll mention just a few: serenity, reduced mental chatter, ability to live primarily in the present moment, emotional wellbeing, pleasure in simple activities, empathy, compassion, altruism, and an enjoyable oneness with nature, other people, and a spiritual force. He describes these characteristics and many more in fascinating detail. Of particular importance, this list of characteristics can be used to evaluate the authenticity of spiritual teachers who claim to be enlightened. Unfortunately, some "perfect masters" are self-deluded, or simply fraudulent. As a result, followers get injured. Awakened people are far more common than most people realize, says Taylor. Most live ordinary lives and are not spiritual teachers in any formal sense. Many do not comprehend what happened to them as they awakened from the normal adult sleep state. Taylor reports rare instances of people who are naturally awake, who never completely succumbed to adult drowsiness. He describes others who awakened gradually, often through spiritual practices. But the majority of people he studied had sudden, unexpected awakenings, triggered by extreme psychological turmoil and suffering. He gives brief case histories portraying a variety of awakening

experiences. One of my favorite chapters is *The Natural Wakefulness of Children*, which discusses similarities between the consciousness of young children and of spiritually awakened adults. They share such characteristics as spontaneity, curiosity, openness, present moment orientation, freedom from excessive mental chatter, joy in living, vitality, dynamic creativity, and felt connection to the external world. However, since children lack an adult self-system, their wakeful traits are often overridden by impulsive selfish desires. In a great quote, Taylor says, "Sometimes, when I discuss childhood wakefulness in talks or lectures, I joke that children are a combination of enlightened beings and narcissistic monsters." He then asks, "But isn't that a good description of some spiritual teachers?" Taylor then cracks open eleven myths about the awakened state or what some call enlightenment. His discussion as to why these commonly held beliefs are incorrect is based on his empirical research, his knowledge of ancient scriptures, and his extraordinarily powerful insight. In addressing these myths, he summarizes most of the important points in the text. This chapter is worth the price of the book! Here are the eleven beliefs he demythologizes:

- Myth 1: Wakefulness is exceptional and extraordinary.
- Myth 2: It's not possible to live in a continuous state of wakefulness. It would make it impossible to live in the world on a day-to-day basis.
- Myth 3: You are either enlightened or not. There is no middle ground.
- Myth 4: Wakefulness is the end point, the culmination, of our development.
- Myth 5: Awakened people live in a state of continuous bliss and ease, free from all suffering and difficulty.
- Myth 6: Awakened individuals are incapable of behaving improperly.
- Myth 7: Awakened Individuals are detached from the world. They become indifferent to worldly affairs and are content for the world to remain as it is, without interfering.
- Myth 8: Awakened individuals "or mystics" are passive or inactive. They just sit and meditate all day, immersed in their own blissfulness.
- Myth 9: In wakefulness, the world is revealed to be an illusion.
- Myth 10: In wakefulness, the self disappears. There's literally "no one there."
- Myth 11: Wakefulness is a state of selflessness.

You can't make an effort to wake up. In the final chapter, *The Evolutionary Leap: A Collective Awakening*, Steve Taylor suggests that the evolutionary force that has been driving life on earth toward increasing complexity for billions of years, is nothing less than the universe seeking to become more fully awake and aware of itself. By aligning ourselves with that force, humanity may be able to leap into a new world of collective wakefulness. Planetary turmoil may hasten the process. Taylor makes the case that that is exactly what is happening worldwide as increasing numbers of people are awakening. He cautions, however, that there is no guarantee that we will successfully make the leap rather than self-destruct. This book could easily become a classic on awakening with the staying power of *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901) by Richard Maurice Bucke,

Varieties of Religious Experience (1902) by William James, and Mysticism (1911) by Evelyn Underhill. That's assuming humankind awakens from the nightmare produced by the constricted consciousness currently driving us to annihilation. Again, this book gives abundant hope that we will. Eckhart Tolle supplies an excellent forward to the Leap. To my mind, no one explains "be here now" the essence of the awakened state better than Eckhart. But when it comes to providing empirical data and explaining the psychological details of spiritual awakening, no one is better than Steve Taylor. And I am making these statements as someone who is not a newcomer to the spiritual rodeo. Nearly 50 years ago, I had a powerful but fleeting awakening experience and since then have studied everyone from D.T. Suzuki to Suzuki Roshi; Ramakrishna to Krishnamurti; Gopi Krishna to Muktananda; Ramana Maharshi to Maharishi Mahesh; Allan Watts to Allen Ginsberg; Chogyam Trungpa to Rajneesh (Osho); Timothy Leary to Ram Dass; Patanjali to Yogananda; Thich Nhat Hanh to Peace Pilgrim; Ken Wilbur to Michael Washburn; Aldous Huxley to Stan Grof; Houston Smith to Jean Houston; Meister Eckhart to Eckhart Tolle; Carl Jung to Joseph Campbell; Jack Schwarz to Jack Kornfield; St. Teresa of Avila to St. John of the Cross; Walt Whitman to Gary Snyder; Annie Besant to Charlotte-Joko Beck; St. Hildegard to Thomas Merton; Evelyn Underhill to June Singer; Matsuo Basho to William Blake. And again, to my mind, no one describes the psychological details of spiritual awakening better than Steve Taylor. Take The Leap home and enjoy.

Review of "The Leap" by Steve Taylor I enjoyed this book. It is about Non-Duality but written in a rational style rather than revelatory or inspirational. It's an easy read. I like the theory that Waking Up is a part of the scheme of evolution. He offers a good definition of awakening: "an experience of clarity, revelation, and joy in which we become aware of a deeper or higher level of reality, perceive a sense of harmony and meaning, and transcend our normal sense of separateness from the world." He outlines some of the typical conditions with which awakening occurs, and differentiates between temporary glimpse and permanent awakening. He has a nice section on wakeful states in various world spiritual traditions. He aligns the permanent wakefulness with sahaja samadhi which I think is correct. He gives some beautiful examples of awakened artists, Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence. He surprised me on Lawrence. Also Peace Pilgrim and some other average folk culled from Taylor's own research and work. There are some really interesting case histories. He also covers the aftermath of awakening with examples and stories, always fun to read. This book has something of the style of the Near Death Experience literature, some case histories, some theory, something of a social topological map. He has a helpful summary of the characteristics of

wakefulness and the awakened personality in life. One of my favorite parts is listing the common misunderstandings about waking up. I liked Satyam Nadeen's list also in "From Seekers to Finders." I found it helpful when just starting out. If you are used to shocking counter-intuitive pointers to enlightenment, the world is an illusion, there is no self, "there's just what's happening to no one," "There is no teacher, no student," this book does not take that approach. It is rational, comforting and down to earth. A good read.

This is an important book for me because it's written by a psychologist and I have long wondered what a person with this educational background makes of these kinds of experiences. I regret that I will soon be done with it as it is a joy to read. It has helped me to recognize where people who are on the gradual awakening path are at in their development, as I thought awakenings were all rather sudden. This book will be very affirming to those who have experienced this shifting into expansion. The individuals' stories he offers from his research are a thrill to read. I was excited to learn that this is not as rare as I had thought. Before this book and those by Eckhart Tolle, only books written by people who had had NDEs resonated with how I experience my life now. A big thanks to Steve Taylor.

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