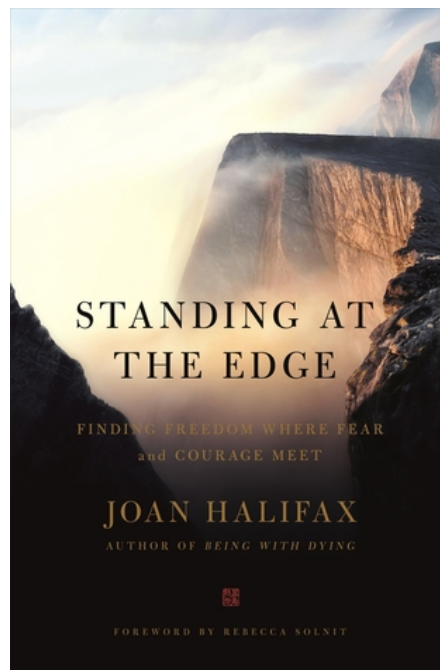




Standing at the Edge: Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet

Joan Halifax

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Standing at the Edge: Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet Joan Halifax

Standing at the Edge is an evocative examination of how we can respond to suffering, live our fullest lives, and remain open to the full spectrum of our human experience.

Joan Halifax has enriched thousands of lives around the world through her work as a humanitarian, a social activist, an anthropologist, and as a Buddhist teacher. Over many decades, she has also collaborated with neuroscientists, clinicians, and psychologists to understand how contemplative practice can be a vehicle for social transformation. Through her unusual background, she developed an understanding of how our greatest challenges can become the most valuable source of our wisdom—and how we can transform our experience of suffering into the power of compassion for the benefit of others.

Halifax has identified five psychological territories she calls Edge States—altruism, empathy, integrity, respect, and engagement—that epitomize strength of character. Yet each of these states can also be the cause of personal and social suffering. In this way, these five psychological experiences form edges, and it is only when we stand at these edges that we become open to the full range of our human experience and discover who we really are.

Recounting the experiences of caregivers, activists, humanitarians, politicians, parents, and teachers, incorporating the wisdom of Zen traditions and mindfulness practices, and rooted in Halifax's groundbreaking research on compassion, *Standing at the Edge* is destined to become a contemporary classic. A powerful guide on how to find the freedom we seek for others and ourselves, it is a book that will serve us all.

"Joan Halifax is a clearheaded and fearless traveler and in this book...she offers us a map of how to travel courageously and fruitfully, for our own benefit and the benefit of all beings." —From the foreword by Rebecca Solnit

Standing at the Edge: Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet Details

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Meet Joan Halifax**

From Reader Review Standing at the Edge: Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet for online ebook

Tena says

I won this in a GOODREADS giveaway! #GoodreadsGiveaway

julia says

read it, didn't listen to it. outstanding work filled with guidance about how to do the interior work of being present for others without tipping into ego or self destruction. Profound.

Mary B. says

It's unfortunate that this book's rather vague, unremarkable title doesn't hint at the riches inside. Joan Halifax, an amazingly accomplished Buddhist teacher (she first met the now-popular Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh back in the 1960's) and social activist, takes readers on a fascinating spiritual journey into what she calls the five psychological "Edge States" that form the basis of character: altruism, empathy, integrity, respect, and engagement.

The book is roughly divided into five parts that each explore an edge state and culminates in a chapter that brings all the author's ideas together in a sort of call to action on how to practice, or rather, live the truths Halifax lays out so well.

The author begins with the metaphor of an edge state being part of our psychological terrain, a ridge on a mountain with pitfalls on one side and potential on the other. Altruism, for instance, can be helpful or toxic to both ourselves and others. It's helpful when we serve others in a useful, non-egoistic way and toxic when it leads to pitfalls such as burnout or self-aggrandizement. Halifax illustrates these challenges through captivating stories drawn from her own and others' experiences (unhealthy example: a psychologist who had so much compassion and empathy for clients that he eventually shut down and came to resent those same clients, leading to his leaving the field; healthy example: social activists who travel afar to help populations in distress but are able to disengage enough to teach those inhabitants how to implement and take ownership of those ideas and skills in order to help their own people).

Explains the author, "Edges are places where opposites meet. Where fear meets courage and suffering meets freedom. Where solid ground ends in a cliff face. Where we can gain a view that takes in so much more of our world. And where we need to maintain great awareness, lest we trip and fall."

Standing at the Edge is not so much a heavy read, drawing as it does from Zen Buddhist philosophy, as it is a deep dive into an ocean swirling with new ideas. It makes its points in an eddying fashion, rather than linearly, which can be frustrating at times as it leads to abstractness and repetition. But what stands out is how seamlessly and paradoxically Halifax integrates Zen Buddhism with practical strategies for serving others without losing ourselves. And for neophytes to Buddhism, this book instructs so naturally that its precepts come to seem second nature.

Given the extremely divisive and frightening times we live in, Standing at the Edge is essential reading for those who, as the author notes, seek to “serve and survive” by strengthening the “internal and interpersonal qualities that are keys to a compassionate and courageous life.”

This review is based on an Advance Reading Copy provided by the publisher.

Kent White says

Such a gem! A book to listen to again when I find myself feeling overwhelmed.

Mary Nee says

Very interesting book. Gives you a lot to think about. Worth reading!

Roger Whitson says

I read this book at a particularly difficult moment in my life, when realities like empathic distress and burnout seemed all too real for me. Halifax talks about empathy, altruism, and engagement as "edge-states," spaces where we have to be very skillful in order to not fall into the abyss of distress and suffering.

I realized while reading the book that I had conceptualized empathy as standing in the place of someone else and feeling/doing for them. Not only did that heighten my own empathic distress, it was also completely narcissistic and condescending. All-too-often Westerners condescend to those who need help, seeing it as the duty of people who are better off. But that striving keeps us from truly connecting with others through compassion. A vital book for these difficult times.

M. says

I thought it was an interesting book - lots to think about. Definitely a good read.

Frieda says

Ms. Halifax highlights in depth about five psychological practices that she calls Edge States - altruism, empathy, respect, integrity and engagement - that are mainstays in society. She also shows how burnout occurs when an individual "overdoses" on these practices. We find freedom in awareness and having a sense of balance in what is seemingly a more troubled world.

Karl Nehring says

Sorry -- the book was well-intentioned and contained some good advice, but after reading closely for about 80 pages or so it just wore me out and I just quickly skimmed the rest. Her "Being with Dying" was much more impressive.

Kaitlyn says

I so appreciate the richness of experience and thought that Roshi Halifax brings to her teachings. I am particularly grateful for her thorough presentation of compassion and the clear differentiation she makes between compassion and empathy.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

"Halifax has identified five psychological territories she calls Edge States—altruism, empathy, integrity, respect, and engagement—that epitomize strength of character, but can also be the cause of personal and social suffering."

Her previous book, *Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death*, was a huge help to me during my father's illness. This book is a bit more philosophical than practical, and more Buddhist than generalist, but I think any reader could take bits out whether or not they were practicing Buddhists themselves. She navigates sometimes obscure (to me) teachings to help provide practical suggestions for using but not tipping over the edge in situations like caregiving, dealing with difficult people, etc. I had actually encountered some of what she includes in this book (the ABIDE acronym, for example) in "A Mindful Campus" workshop on trauma informed pedagogy a year or two ago, and I think it originates with her.

At times, I feel the text gets a bit bogged down in Buddhist teachings, especially when things start coming in sets like the 8 of this and the 5 of that, or when using ancient koans as examples. I understand that this is the perspective she's coming from but sometimes I would lose track of the topic while it meandered off to these parts. Someone with greater familiarity in Buddhism would probably move more quickly through these parts.

Some bits I marked, which I can't quote directly since I had an uncorrected galley, but will summarize:

-I appreciated the commentary on "compassion fatigue" and her suggestion that it is actually empathy fatigue, and that compassion applied correctly should not lead to fatigue.

-Women and the societal pressure for self-sacrifice and Halifax talks about the pros and cons of altruism bias

-That we build "walls of expertise" because of what we are afraid of, and this is in the larger context of being blind to our own biases and the versions of stories we tell

-I marked this tanka from Izumi Shikibu:

*"Although the wind
blows terribly here
the moonlight also leaks*

*between the roof planks
of this ruined house>."*

-In the section about integrity, discussion of the "golden repair" idea, where we incorporate suffering and don't try to hide it in our daily ways of being with others

-The Perfections (I hadn't heard of these before)

I received an eARC from publisher through Edelweiss. The books came out May 1.
