

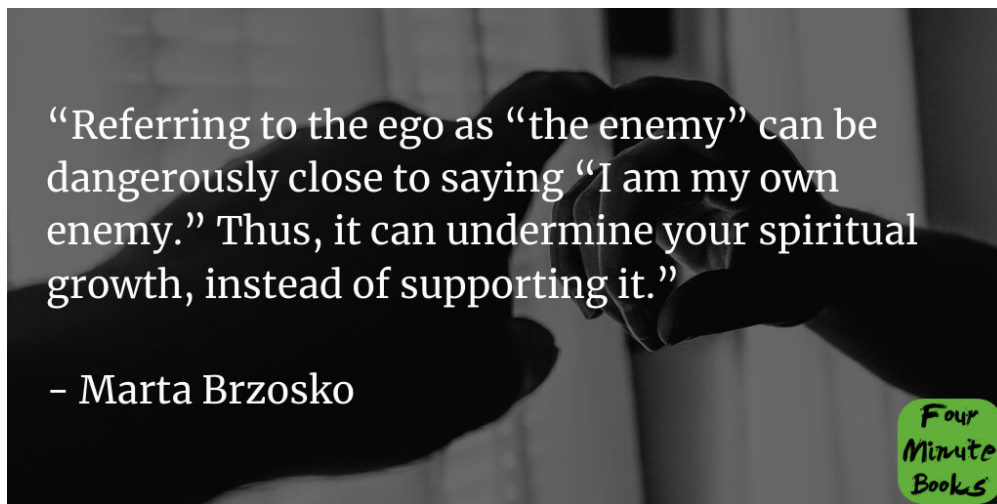
Ego Friendly Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Ego Friendly* brings a twist to the mainstream spiritual narrative by showing you how to befriend your ego and treat it as your ally, instead of “letting go of it.”

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



How often have you heard the advice to “let go of” or even “kill” your ego? In most conversations around spirituality, the ego gets a bad rap. As long as you’re driven by your ego, you remain closed-minded, selfish, controlling — in other words, “unspiritual.”

But what about all the useful things the ego does? From a psychological standpoint, the ego is simply a set of cognitive functions that select and process information about the world. Its role is to keep you safe and help you navigate reality.

Mark Epstein wrote, “*Neither Buddhism nor psychotherapy seeks to eradicate the ego. To do so would render us either helpless or psychotic. We need our egos to navigate the world, to regulate our instincts, to exercise our executive function, and to mediate the conflicting demands of self and other.*”

The real problem with the ego isn’t that it exists. Rather, it’s that most people’s egos are less than healthy, due to our cultural conditioning and upbringing. *Ego Friendly* offers a way to develop a healthier and more balanced ego, rather than try to get rid of it.

That’s what “befriending your ego” means: **Being at peace with your ego without overidentifying with it.** Here are 3 key lessons to help you with that:

1. Trying to “let go of the ego” can create more problems than solutions.
2. Having a strong sense of self is the key to making good decisions.
3. When you increase your emotional awareness, you befriend your ego.

Are you ready to stop deeming your ego the enemy and embrace it instead? Then let's go!

Lesson 1: Letting go of your ego may lead to a spiritual bypass.

Have you heard about spiritual bypassing? The term was introduced by a Buddhist teacher and psychotherapist John Welwood. He used it to describe “*a widespread tendency to*

use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks.”

In other words, spiritual bypass happens when we *think* we're working on ourselves while unconsciously avoiding our real issues. Trying to let go of the ego is often a prime example of this. It happens to people whose default attitude is self-depreciation, beating themselves up, and generally low self-esteem.

When a low view of yourself combines with the spiritual endeavor to “kill your ego,” it may lead to inflating, not curing your problems. When you see egolessness as something noble, you can easily confuse low self-esteem for a sign of spiritual growth. You sidestep the important psychological task of establishing a healthy sense of self in the first place.

Buddhist abbot Thanissaro Bhikkhu sees this as a shockingly common theme in Western culture:

“The Dalai Lama isn't the only Asian Buddhist teacher surprised at the amount of self-hatred found in the West. Unfortunately, a lot of people with toxic super-egos have embraced the teaching on egolessness as the Buddha's stamp of approval on the hatred they feel toward themselves.”

When self-depreciation is your baseline, the idea of “letting go of ego” only perpetuates it. That's why, for many people raised in the West, this often results in spiritual bypassing — instead of helping them become better.

Lesson 2: A healthy ego helps you pick relevant goals and build rewarding relationships.

One consequence of having an ego is that it creates a “sense of separate self.” This gets a bad rap in the spiritual community as it's associated with selfishness, not caring about others, and not being able to see that we're all connected.

For that reason again, the ego is portrayed as something to overcome. But this kind of forced selflessness is hardly ever helpful to anyone.

To be able to perceive yourself as a valuable part of the collective, you have to first become intimately aware of your ego. You need to understand your likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, that which motivates you and that which puts you off.

The awareness of your ego enables you to pick relevant goals for yourself rather than trying to live someone else's life.

Further, your ego also can also reveal your boundaries in your relationships. Many people assume that they should always put others before themselves. They try to please everyone around, often at their own cost. They don't realize that if helping others makes them miserable, it defies the whole point.

Your ego can show you what kind of compromises you are and aren't ready to make when it comes to relationships. By developing a healthy sense of self, you also become more aware of your needs and learn to communicate them.

This benefits not just you — but everyone you come in contact with.

Lesson 3: One way to a healthier ego is increasing your emotional awareness.

The vision of a healthy and functional ego surely is an attractive one — but how can you develop it?

In Ego Friendly, Marta Brzosko explains that most of our egos are underdeveloped because some emotions were forbidden to us as children. For example, you may have heard things like “big boys don't cry” or “a nice girl shouldn't speak like that.” As a result, you learned to suppress those emotions the world told you were “not okay.”

Those unexpressed emotions may still live within you today. They manifest as a squashed, noisy, or otherwise unhealthy ego. One way to bring your ego back to balance is to start giving more attention to those emotions.

Even though we often associate the voice of the ego with mental chatter and thoughts, focusing on feelings may be more helpful. That's because they're often the blind spot in your perception. Few people are taught how to handle them in a healthy way. More often than not, the way society suggests you manage feelings is by distracting yourself or numbing them.

When comes to self-knowledge, understanding your emotions may be the missing piece of the puzzle. By observing feelings, you can see your ego from a different perspective and get insight into why it functions the way it does.

That's typically the first step to befriending it.

Ego Friendly Review

Ego Friendly is a bit of a different self-help book. Rather than teaching you exactly what to do, it presents you with an alternative view of the ego. It frames the spiritual path as a journey directed by acceptance and compassion, rather than discipline and sacrifices. The last part of the book also contains practical guides on mindfulness meditation, mirror work, and other ways of working with the ego.

Who would I recommend the Ego Friendly summary to?

The 30-year-old about to make serious life decisions, the 47-year-old psychotherapist who wants to better understand their “spiritual but not religious” clients, and anyone who seeks answers in meditation or other spiritual practices.