

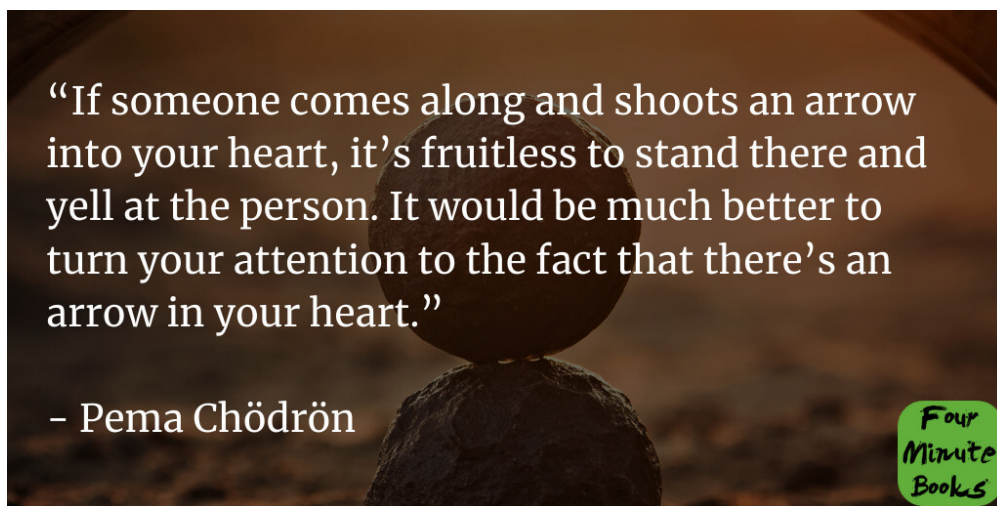
# Start Where You Are Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Start Where You Are* helps you discover the power of meditation and compassion by going beyond what incense to by and giving you real and powerful advice on how to make these tools part of your daily life so you can live with greater happiness and peace.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



A few years ago I was talking with a friend at work who began telling me about this meditation app called Headspace. I thought it sounded pretty cool, especially when he told me that it helps him stay sane amid all the busyness of life.

Although I didn't try it out myself until a few months later, I wish I'd done it sooner. That app and practicing mindfulness with its help has completely changed my life. It's transformed the way I see difficulties, helped me cope with anger and sadness, and made me a better thinker.

But there's a depth to meditation that you can only get when you read more about it. That's why I loved discovering Pema Chödrön's book *Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living*.

You'll discover how bringing your thoughts back into the present will help you develop a deeper appreciation for yourself, those around you, and the entire world.

Here are the 3 greatest lessons I've learned from this book:

1. Joy comes when you don't take life too seriously and cherish the little moments that make it meaningful.

2. Embrace emptiness for freedom, help with anger, and to cope with death.
3. For a better life, recognize that it's okay to look foolish and challenge the stories you believe about yourself.

Are you excited to find out how to have more peace and calm in your life? Let's get right to it!

## **Lesson 1: You'll be happier when you learn to cherish the little moments in life and stop being so serious.**

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Do you ever get bogged down by everything that you think you have to do? Between promises to others and ourselves, it's easy to get trapped in the stress of expectations.

You might wake up filled with fear about what you have left undone or what you've done wrong. You spend your days exhausted from living up to expectations-yours and others for you-instead of being excited.

It's not the end of the world if you don't do it all. Although this might be a tough concept to grasp, meditation will help.

At its core, this practice is about living in the moment and seeing each second as an opportunity for joy. It's a lot easier to choose to be happy when you begin to realize this. You'll begin seeing how life is really only a bunch of little moments and your experience depends on whether you decide to see them with joy or as a burden.

**It's okay to let go of what you expect of yourself.** Just let each moment be what it is, without the pressure of past regrets or future intentions.

You might try switching up your routine, for example. Some of my favorite memories with my kids are when I take a break from work to cuddle them as they get out of bed. Or when we have a dance party in the middle of our nightly routine.

## **Lesson 2: Emptiness is a good thing and can help you with many aspects of life you might not think of.**

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In Buddhism, the ultimate spiritual goal is nirvana. One translation of this word is "emptiness." To those living in the West, this might seem like a bad thing, but it can actually be really good for you.

Consider how, psychologically, reaching a state of emptiness actually sounds really calming. It's relieving to let everything go and just exist. Once you reach this state you're free from labels and judgments that cloud your vision and disrupt your peace.

Controlling your anger is another benefit of seeking emptiness. A Zen story tells of a man who was enjoying a day on his boat until he notices another boat heading toward him. The man's anger grows as it gets closer until it gets close enough for him to see that it's empty and

he's been shouting at nothing.

In the same way, every time you get angry you're just frustrated at nothing. **That's because you make up reasons to get mad, but they don't actually exist in reality.** They're only in your head.

Death is another realm of life that emptiness can help us with. Consider the author's two friends that were dying and their different outlooks on it. One resisted and feared the void, dying in despair.

The other welcomed the emptiness and left this life in peace.

### **Lesson 3: Stop getting stuck in your stories and see that it's okay to look foolish if you want to have a better life.**

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Whether you like it or not, you're telling yourself a story about who you are and what you'll do and not do. But your attachment to these tales, including where and how you grew up and your personality, is holding you back.

Consider how free you'd feel if you just let go of all of it. I just considered letting go of my personal backstory and already I feel much lighter. It's as if I can be whoever I want and do whatever I want, with no boundaries anymore.

**Another huge benefit of letting go of your beliefs like this is that it gives you confidence because you no longer have to worry about looking foolish.** Without expectations of who you are, there's no need to be embarrassed when you fall short!

The story of a young man named Juan who grew up in Los Angeles believing he was tough is a perfect example of how this can work. If you'd talked with him when he was a kid, you'd probably hear a lot of profanity.

But it all changed when he went on a meditation retreat. Juan was so moved to tears by one Buddhist master's bravery to be himself. He realized how limited he'd been with himself, and turned his life around. After getting an education he now helps kids in LA.

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**Start Where You Are Review**

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*Start Where You Are* is an excellent book that I highly recommend. I've read other stuff by Pema Chödrön and I love the ability she has to help me feel calmer just by her writing! Although I already had an understanding of meditation, this book helped me see some new ways of practicing it in everyday life that I'm excited to try out!

## **Who would I recommend the *Start Where You Are* summary to?**

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The 56-year-old manager who has anger issues and wants to change but thinks they'll be this way forever, the 38-year-old father that struggles with getting angry with his kids, and anyone that wants to have a more peaceful and fulfilling life.

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