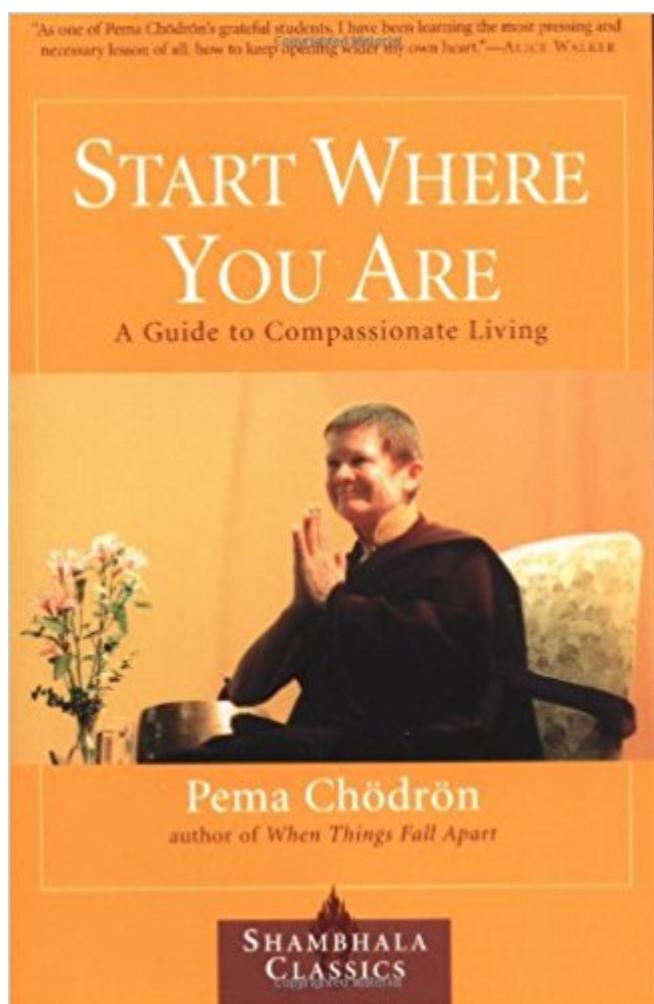


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# Start Where You Are: A Guide To Compassionate Living (Shambhala Classics)



## Synopsis

Start Where You Are is an indispensable handbook for cultivating fearlessness and awakening a compassionate heart. With insight and humor, Pema Chödrön presents down-to-earth guidance on how we can "start where we are"—embracing rather than denying the painful aspects of our lives. Pema Chödrön frames her teachings on compassion around fifty-nine traditional Tibetan Buddhist maxims, or slogans, such as: "Always apply only a joyful state of mind," "Don't seek others' pain as the limbs of your own happiness," and "Always meditate on whatever provokes resentment." Working with these slogans and through the practice of meditation, Start Where You Are shows how we can all develop the courage to work with our inner pain and discover joy, well-being, and confidence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Pema Chodron is a Buddhist nun for regular folks. Having raised a family of her own, she doesn't shy away from persistent troubles and the basic meatiness of life. In fact, in Start Where You Are, Chodron tries to get us to see that the faults and foibles in each of us now are the perfect ingredients for creating a better life. No need to wait for a quieter time or a more settled mind. The trick Chodron says is to repattern ourselves, to transform bad habits into good by first opening ourselves to the groundlessness of existence. When the cliff dissolves beneath our feet, fear has a way of actually lessening. Fearlessness opens the way to recognizing our pushy egos and that

rather than being cursed with original sin, we are blessed with an original soft spot--the squishy feeling inside that we all have, that is the seat of true compassion, and that we all do our best to armor over. Chodron is the kind of teacher who has seen it all and keeps pushing us back into ourselves until there's no one left to wrestle with but a certain recalcitrant image in the mirror. --Brian Bruya --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"This book is about awakening the heart," writes the American Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chodron. "If you have ever wondered how to awaken your genuine compassionate heart, this book will serve you as a guide." This is a broad and simple statement, and those unfamiliar with When Things Fall Apart or other titles by Chodron may rightfully fear that a volley of nonsensical fuzzballs is on the way. Good bedtime reading, perhaps, but in the decade since its original 1994 publication, there seems to be even less grounds to claim that all humans are innately capable of openness, clarity and compassion (or "bodhichitta"). What follows, however, is a savvy, down-to-earth contemporary version of an old Tibetan Buddhist technique for mind training, or "lojong," supported by instructions in basic sitting meditation practice (to cultivate tranquility and insight) and "tonglen"a meditative technique that involves taking in the dark, heavy, negative emotions and sending out an attitude of light, compassionate embrace, a warm spaciousness, in its place. Chodron supplies a pithy contemporary analysis for each of 59 "slogans" that make up the teaching behind this practice. "There is a saying that is the underlying principle of tonglen and slogan practice: 'Gain and victory to others, loss and defeat to myself,'" she writes. Far from being as masochistic as this may sound to Western ears, however, the aim is get people to unclench the heart and mind, to dare to taste defeat. Although far from easy, Chodron's humane, incisive approach can help any sincere reader learn to relate to fear and pain and pleasure and joy in a way that will open their hearts to the richness of their own lives and all life. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

A delightful, thought-provoking book that requires a second, slower and more contemplative read. My initial thoughts are that this book could be summed appropriately with the philosophy "Don't sweat the small stuff. And don't sweat the big stuff either. In fact, don't sweat at all." Equally though, it also counsels not to get overly ecstatic or confident when things go your way. The key seems to be not to let hurdles, obstacles or setbacks get you too down for too long. Equally, to not let successes think you cannot fail. Be calm and mild, either way. So, wherever you are, at any time, start from there, taking a middle path of not too much fear or sadness as well as not too much confidence and

elation. After all, all feelings and situations are temporary. I'm glad I read it and look forward to having time to read it again slowly and contemplatively.

I made a decision that I wanted to be more compassionate and the same day was the first time I had ever heard of Pema Chodron. I read Amy Poehler's book and she mentioned Pema Chodron and then a week later I saw an interview Oprah did with Pema Chodron. I knew I had to find out more. I saw this book, bought it, and read it slowly. It is so diversely simple that I had to take my time to process the slogans and meanings. I really enjoyed the stories and getting to know myself while ingesting the lessons about being compassionate and being human.

You should know that the CD Audio Book CDs have .WAV files on them rather than regular CD files or .MP3s. The reader is clear and easy to follow. If you liked the book, I think you'll like the CD version too. I picked this book after reading Eckart Tolle's New Earth. Pema Chodron speaks to many of the same issues from a little different perspective that, while perhaps more religious, seems clearer to me; more understandable. At the same time, I also think it's possible that many of us need to read both perspectives to gain a better understanding. I was attracted to this book by the title. Being able to Start Where You Are was an empowering notion. It was the idea that I don't need to wait till I (grow up, finish school, lose weight, get married, get divorced, get a job, retire) to (develop spiritually, be happy, find peace). Most particularly I don't need to stop suffering to be happy, or start my journey. Instead, I can use my suffering to facilitate my development & growth. The CD version is true to all of these ideas.

It was good, certainly not the worst I've read in the self-help or whatever category you call it. I've seen Pema's TED talks that sparked an interest in her and while I wanted to give this female monk a really good score, I found the information here just about half as useful as some of the better ones that have changed my life.

It took a long time to read. It's deep and I usually only read at night before going to sleep. That said she has a very up to date speaking style that is often humorous. I will need to read it again in order to gain more understanding.

Phenomenal book. Easy to read. Index and resources at back of book are very helpful. You will not be disappointed if you're ready. If you're not ready you will learn to visit that, also.

One of the best books I have ever read. Great refresher and reintroduction to buddhist principles.

Amazing, helpful book- must have for hard times.

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