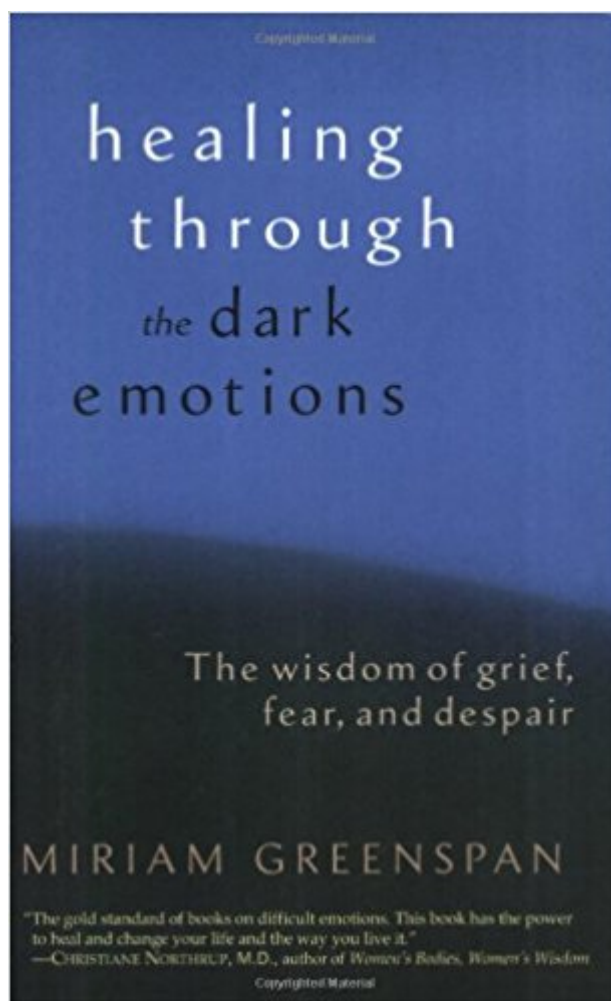


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# Healing Through The Dark Emotions: The Wisdom Of Grief, Fear, And Despair



## Synopsis

Nautilus Book Award Winner - Gold We are all touched at some point by the dark emotions of grief, fear, or despair. In an age of global threat, these emotions have become widespread and overwhelming. While conventional wisdom warns us of the harmful effects of "negative" emotions, this revolutionary book offers a more hopeful view: there is a redemptive power in our worst feelings. Seasoned psychotherapist Miriam Greenspan argues that it's the avoidance and denial of the dark emotions that results in the escalating psychological disorders of our time: depression, anxiety, addiction, psychic numbing, and irrational violence. And she shows us how to trust the wisdom of the dark emotions to guide, heal, and transform our lives and our world. Drawing on inspiring stories from her psychotherapy practice and personal life, and including a complete set of emotional exercises, Greenspan teaches the art of emotional alchemy by which grief turns to gratitude, fear opens the door to joy, and despair becomes the ground of a more resilient faith in life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this heartfelt therapeutic manifesto, psychotherapist Greenspan (*A New Approach to Women and Therapy*) argues that grief, fear and despair are not pathologies to be medicated away but emotions that help us grow psychologically and spiritually. The disavowal of these painful emotions (which she blames on Western culture's privileging of "masculine" reason over "feminine" emotion; lifelong lessons in suppressing emotional pain; and modern psychology's focus on "dispelling feelings, not learning from them") leads to depression, numbness and violence in both individuals and the world at large. But by "attending, befriending, and surrendering" to grief, fear and despair we can effect an

"alchemical transformation" through which they become "gratitude, faith and joy." Greenspan's eclectic approach to healing invokes "depth psychology, Hasidic Judaism and Buddhist meditation

"Greenspan writes intensely and compassionately. This is a committed, serious look at the emotions most of us would rather sweep under the rug." — Publishers Weekly "The gold standard of books on difficult emotions. This book has the power to heal and change your life and the way you live it." — Christiane Northrup, M.D., author of *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* "A crucial book that teaches us to alter fundamentally our fearful relationship to deep feelings." — Kim Chernin, *Los Angeles Times* "A book of remarkable depth. The author is a brilliant thinker and a natural storyteller. I've read countless books about the difficult emotions. None is as helpful and riveting as this one — or offers as much hope for our personal suffering and turbulent times." — Harriet Lerner, Ph.D., author of *The Dance of Anger* "A modern day alchemist, Greenspan teaches us to turn our pain into wisdom and our fear and sorrow into energy to improve the world. She offers us a clear and profound analysis of what we must do as individuals and as a species to survive these troubled times." — Mary Pipher, Ph.D., author of *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* "This remarkable book has taught me a whole new way of thinking." — Harold Kushner, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* "A beautiful piece of work destined to become a perennial classic." — Martha Beck, author of *Expecting Adam* and *The Joy Diet* "This is a beautifully written, deeply compassionate, and revolutionary approach to working with the most difficult human emotions. Miriam Greenspan teaches us how to trust our emotions and how to listen to hear the truth they reveal. This is a practical guide that illuminates how the wisdom of the heart can heal ourselves, each other, and our world." — Janet Surrey, Ph.D., founding scholar of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Stone Center, Wellesley College "Miriam Greenspan will help you turn the lead in your life into gold of joy and peace. Of equal importance, she helps us see that such changes are not for ourselves alone, but for the whole world." — Henry Grayson, Ph.D., author of *The New Physics of Love* "This book is essential reading for all people. It beholds that which is tragic about the human condition but embraces it in a therapeutic and consoling way. Greenspan describes enormous grief and terror — her own and the world's — and explains what it means to surrender to fear, to face straight into it, to 'let it be' as the royal road to sanity, exuberance, and freedom. She is a trustworthy guide for us in these times." — Phyllis Chesler, author of *Women and Madness* and *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman* "Written with grace, clarity, and humility, this book beautifully integrates the psychological, spiritual, and political wisdom necessary

for personal and social transformation." — Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor, Tikkun magazine and author of Spirit Matters: Global Healing and the Wisdom of the Soul "This riveting book is a powerful, urgent appeal for a transformation of our values and the way we conduct our lives. The author is a therapist but she writes not only for other therapists, who will deepen and expand their practice from their reading, but for all of us who struggle daily not to be defeated by the global darkness in which we live." — Sophie Freud, Professor Emerita, Simmons College School of Social Work "This is a profound and liberating book. Miriam Greenspan helps us to discover the life-redeeming power of the very emotion we most fear. Thus she opens ways to both our integrity and our freedom." — Joanna Macy, author of Widening Circles

As a father dealing with child loss and trying to reconcile faith with reality, this book offers a very different approach. While I do not totally agree with Dr. Greenspan's personal theology, that is a sidebar to the core story. She offers an honest look at the entire psychological / pharmaceutical complex, how patients are treated, then offers a solution. While that solution is somewhat controversial, it makes far more sense than medicating ones pain. The concept of dealing head-on with pain through faith is nothing new, but the approach offered - with the techniques explained - is very refreshing. It does not make the journey easier, there are no guarantees of complete healing, but there is the assurance that grief can be faithfully observed, understood and better accepted.

Your emotions are so incredibly important. Deep healing and spiritual transformation always have an emotional component. And there are such sublime emotions available to us. But to experience them, we can't have an agenda about them. You can't say "I'm only going to feel the sublime feelings," or "I'm only going to have feelings that are worthy of a spiritual being." You have to be willing to experience them all, on their own terms. That's what this book is about. When you befriend the dark emotions you begin a journey into the rich and nuanced world of your inner self. This book prepares you for that journey and shows you how grief leads to gratitude, fear to joy, and despair to faith.

Greenspan has written a down-to-earth, vulnerable, and therapeutic book about a topic all of us have to experience every now and then: DARK EMOTIONS. It's a topic no one likes to talk about--let alone experience--but it's a topic that is ultimately unavoidable because the emotions we would label "dark" or "negative" are themselves unavoidable. So Greenspan takes a long, hard, and honest look at these "negative" emotions through her book, using her own life experiences and

those of her previous clients, and has concluded that these dark emotions only become "bad" or "negative" when they are ignored and avoided. In fact, she goes as far as to say that dark emotions are required for a healthy life when approached and processed in a courageous and reflective manner; and having gone through my own struggles with these dark emotions, I agree with her 100%! So if you or someone you know struggles with dark emotions such as fear, grief, despair, or the like, give this book a shot and you might learn something about yourself in the process.

So helpful. My closest cat friend died of cancer, then my husband died of Alzheimer's, and then my best friend died of cancer. This book was a great help in giving me helpful outlets and outlooks on how to handle the grief.

It took me a long time to get through this book and I'm glad it did. It was worth it to chew on the thoughts and ideas slowly and methodically.

I can't recommend this book highly enough... The author writes in a very direct, honest, down-to-earth style, yet what she has to say is extremely profound. Like the little boy who says, "look, but the emperor has no clothes", she compassionately yet clearly through the cultural myths and denial that envelop and alienate us from the truth of our own direct experience. I came to this book having read plenty of other books already on "the shadow", "befriending our pain", the dangers of "spiritual bypass", etc. etc. etc. so I was initially concerned that I might find some of this material old-hat or repetitive. Instead, I was delighted to find that the author offers a fresh and original take on these valuable subjects from the perspective of both Jewish spirituality and mysticism, as well as from the wisdom of her own hard-won experience. The stories that the author shares from her own life, as well as the stories of the clients who have been fortunate enough to have her as a therapist, point to the real possibility of transformation and healing, by learning to listen to the wisdom of the "dark emotions". I found this book highly inspiring, and would recommend it to anyone who wants to find their way through and beyond the truth of suffering... While I have never met the author, I want to say a heartfelt "thank you" for having written such a powerfully moving book...

Beautiful book. The wisdom the author shares is timeless. I will return to this book again and again. Greenspan gives us the courage to embrace our pain and find the gifts. When my son died I felt the pain but found no affirmation that feeling it was okay so I repressed it. Ten years later the grief was retriggered and I surrendered to it. With the support of a therapist and a grief group I was able to

embrace my vulnerability and heal. Greenspan's book is both unique and at the same time universal. It is a crucible that can carry us through all kinds of losses not just loss through death. Everyone will find something that rings true for them in it.

One of the most impactful and best books I have ever read. Truth so deep that it has completely changed my life. I am no longer numbing constantly. I have become someone who wishes to befriend all of my emotions. My other readings in this vein were crystallized by Miriam's depth of clarity and her personal story. May we all become so integrated to the emotional ecology of each other consciously that we can heal together.

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