

Book Review

Book summary of *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle, 2005. Reviewed by Charlie, Mar 29th 21

A New Earth builds on the concepts covered in Eckhart Tolle's previous book, *The Power of Now*. Living more fully in the present moment, identifying and letting go of ego and living your inner and outer purpose are some of the ways to a more conscious, more joyful life.

Tolle starts by introducing us to “ego”, and explaining how this is more than what we might commonly think of as ego. People described as egoistic are often thought of as being arrogant, self-absorbed or self-important. However, Tolle identifies the ego as identification with “my”. This acute attachment to what is “mine” and the pain caused by the loss of this is the ego. In children, the emerging ego is first seen in “my toy”, the child believes that this toy is somehow integral to their identity and as such it's very painful for it to be taken away or lost. As children grow up, this search for identity in external things increases to become “my car”, “my house”, “my social status”. “My” can also refer to “my body”, “my security”, “my feelings”. This can become a highly preoccupying concept – the constant searching for the next thing to reinforce your identity, the temporary alleviation as you believe this thing makes you happy, the need to protect it and the pain of its inevitable loss or damage. This is the current state of humanity for many people.

Ego manifests in many ways. Complaining that some small slight or difficult task is unjust and shouldn't be happening to you is an expression of ego. Being emotionally reactive, needing to be right, refusing to accept you are wrong when there is strong evidence you are, feeling superior, identification with a role and acting unconsciously, are all ways the ego expresses itself.

Even highly conscious people can express ego. In our community, this means if we unconsciously express ego, we don't need to feel judgmental of ourselves or judged by our community partners, we can simply become aware of it and determine its meaning and what we can do about it. In our journeys of spiritual growth, expression of ego can be a path to knowing ourselves better as we recognize triggers.

The pain body is another expression of ego. It is created when painful emotions are not let go of – consciously or otherwise. This particularly happens in young children who are overwhelmed by strong emotions and instead of facing them try to avoid feeling them. This means they build up. It can also be effected by the amount of negative emotions they see or receive from their parents – babies and children whose parents express more negative emotions develop heavier pain bodies. The pain body is triggered by events, however insignificant they might seem. It feeds on drama, negative emotions and repetitive thoughts. Pain bodies particularly like intimate relationships where they can feed on each other. However, the good news is people with heavy pain bodies are more likely to awaken spiritually than those with light pain bodies as it is intolerable to continue living with such a heavy pain body.

Part of our journey to greater consciousness in our community is to become aware of when our pain bodies are active and the triggers of them. In this way we can explore the meanings and recognize when our community partners have active pain bodies. Knowing this makes us more conscious of the situation, reducing the chance that our own pain bodies will be awakened.

To break free from the pain body, you must first become aware that you have one. This allows you to see that your ego is present and you can then make a conscious choice to continue the downward spiral of negative emotion or pull out of it. Removing a sense of identification with the pain body removes its

hold on you. It will still try to affect you, but you will be more resistant to it.

Finding your true self helps you to break free of your ego. This is to become aware of your being. Developing an abundance mentality – that there is enough and you are enough – means that you can create the love, affection or appreciation for yourself that you think you are lacking from others. You can believe there is enough energy for everyone. You also need to recognize the difference between knowing yourself and knowing about yourself. To know about yourself is to create labels such as electrician, alcoholic, neurotic, compassionate. To know yourself is to be yourself, your true Being.

Identifying our true selves is part of our spiritual journey, living more in our Being means to experience more joy, more peace and more love. This is easy and natural to share with each other in our community.

To be in the present is to be detached from the outcome, feeling no emotion about the consequences of an action, knowing they are only the appropriate outcome of the actions that created them. To act with no judgment and non-resistance is to be one with the moment, regardless of whether what happens is good or bad. The ego feeds on its “story” which relates to the past - “what happened to me”, “who I am”. It cannot survive in the present moment because here the past is irrelevant. To be in the present is to remove the power of the past and so the ego. Now you are able to discover the joy of Being.

Being detached from the outcome means we are aware that the consequences are only created by our actions, this makes us responsible for the outcome. Being in the present means that what is happening now is important, to move beyond our past.

The strength of the ego can also be reduced by looking at a situation such as the theft of a valued object and asking “does this diminish who I am?” At first, you might think yes it has, you feel upset, lost etc, but when you really look at who you are, you realize the loss of an object has not, and cannot, diminish who you are.

To separate ourselves from our attachments to objects is to become aware. In our community, we are able to ask each other the question “Are you suffering consciously?” if we detect negative emotions in our community partners, this allows the person to become aware of the moment and reassess the situation, without judgment or feeling judged.

Discovering your inner purpose is another way to let go of your ego. Awakening to your inner purpose is to separate consciousness from thought, to become present. Your inner purpose is to do whatever it is you are doing right now, that is why you are doing it. It doesn't mean that it is your purpose to do it for the rest of your life, just that it is your purpose to do it now. To become aware of your Being is to see the significance in every ordinary moment.

We become aware of our inner purpose by assessing our intentions for acting a certain way and determining the best way to act. We are aware that seemingly insignificant events can have great significance, even if this is something we only discover the significance of much later.

Your consciousness flows into what you do by what Tolle calls the three modalities of awakened doing. The first is acceptance. Acceptance is not a passive surrender, but a highly active state. Acceptance is a subtle peace energy, where you acknowledge that right now, this is what is.

The second is enjoyment. The peace of acceptance is transformed into an aliveness for what you are

doing now. To enjoy the present moment is to stop waiting for something “good” to happen, it is making the best of now. This is how you tap into the Universe's creative power. The purpose of life is to bring consciousness to the world, enjoying the moment is just one way you can do this.

Enthusiasm is the third modality. This is where you have a vision, an awakening and discover your outer purpose, which is related to something you already enjoy doing. Now you know what your outer purpose is, you go about it with enthusiasm, a deep enjoyment with a goal or vision to work towards. This creates a huge amount of energy behind what you are doing. To an outsider, it can look like a state of stress, but it is really a state of high enjoyment. Stress happens when you want to arrive at your goal more than you want to do what you are doing. If you are deeply enjoying what you are doing, this doesn't create stress. Enthusiasm has a high energy frequency that resonates with the creative energy of the Universe. This can be described as a flow, a zone, riding a wave and creates an enormous feeling of empowerment. In a state of enthusiasm, ego cannot exist because you are highly present and enthusiasm wants nothing.

In our community, we strive to do everything with enjoyment. Accepting the moment is to be present with ourselves and understand that what we are doing needs to be done. We work to bring the joy to our interactions, actions and work. We experience enthusiasm when we work with our outer purpose and also when we are collectively being creative. Sharing ideas and growing them as a team of community partners is a coming together of many individual energies, it creates a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts and we can feel the energy of it.

Tolle shows a path for you to move from ego and unconsciousness into awakened doing, Being and consciousness, this is a path that is available to anyone who is ready to put in the work to achieve this personal and spiritual change. This is one of the key books in our community as it provides clear ways to increase our consciousness and sense of purpose and empowerment.