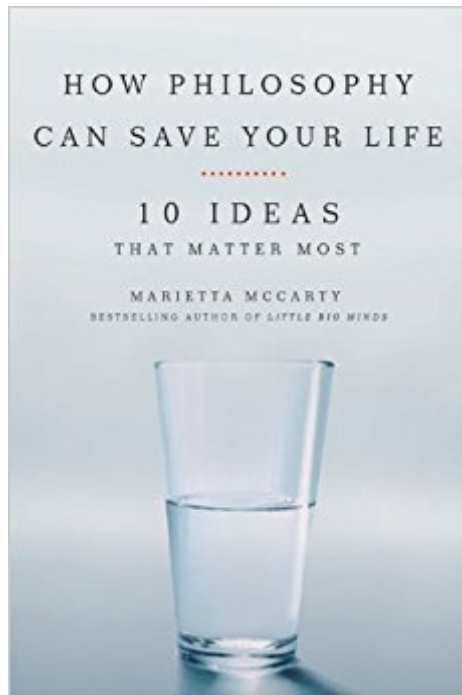


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# How Philosophy Can Save Your Life: 10 Ideas That Matter Most



## Synopsis

Discover how great philosophers can help you live a more purposeful and peaceful life. This inspiring new book from the bestselling author of *Little Big Minds* reveals how the heartbeats of philosophy- clear thinking, quiet reflection, and good conversation- are essential ingredients in a well-lived life. Full of great discussion ideas and activities you can do with a group, *How Philosophy Can Save Your Life* is framed around ten "big ideas"-themes that, according to McCarty, are necessary to grasp if one wants to live a truly fulfilling life. They are: 1. Simplicity (philosophers include Epicurus and Charlotte Joko Beck) 2. Communication (philosophers include bell hooks and Karl Jaspers) 3. Perspective (philosophers include Bertrand Russell and Mary Wollstonecraft) 4. Flexibility (philosophers include Socrates, Plato and Alan Watts) 5. Empathy (philosophers include the Dalai Lama and Martin Luther King, Jr.) 6. Individuality (philosophers include Jean-Paul Sartre and Elizabeth Spelman) 7. Belonging (philosophers include Albert Camus and Rita Manning) 8. Serenity (philosophers include Epictetus and Lao Tzu) 9. Possibility (philosophers include John Stuart Mill and Simone de Beauvoir) 10. Joy (philosophers include Shunryu Suzuki and Jane Addams) So join the greatest thinkers of all time to discover the ideas that will help you live a happier, healthier life!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A warmhearted introduction to philosophy that blends Eastern and Western intellectual traditions with specific exercises to enhance the reader's ability to think philosophically for herself. Over the course of 10 topics ranging from Simplicity to Joy, and with a decided emphasis on

self-improvement, McCarty (Little Big Minds) discusses a wide variety of philosophers, ranging from such canonical figures as Plato and Sartre to those "like Charlotte Joko-Beck" who sit closer to the New Age end of the spectrum. Throughout, the author emphasizes the ability of active reflection to improve lives, by promoting open-mindedness, the awareness of cultural diversity, social understanding and the ability to recognize priorities. Though the book contains little that is not already common currency among self-help manuals, its focus on philosophizing as a group activity and on the everyday practice of thinking, supplemented by each chapter's collection of exercises centered around music, poetry and the arts, taken together provide a pleasantly tangible approach to understanding how notions like tolerance, flexibility and perspective can enrich our busy lives. (Dec.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Self-help always becomes even more fascinating when it's backed by a little scholarship. In 'How Philosophy Can Save Your Life: 10 Ideas That Matter Most,' Marietta McCarty assistant professor of philosophy at Piedmont Virginia Community College and best-selling author of 'Little Big Minds: Sharing Philosophy with Kids' reveals how studying the greatest thinkers of our time can change your life for the better. McCarty divides her book into 10 chapters, each dealing with one of the big ideas she feels are necessary for a good life: simplicity, communication, perspective, flexibility, empathy, individuality, belonging, serenity, possibility, and joy. Full of personal anecdotes, each chapter explores the topic at hand with the help of two or more philosophers. For instance, when it comes to perspective, you can broaden yours by taking a tip from Mary Wollstonecraft, who saw past the mores of her society and refused to limit herself to conventional women's roles. Instead of being wary of change, you can learn to be flexible, embracing the new and living in the now as Alan Watts advised. McCarty is spirited and funny, and she gives you help in implementing all you're learning by providing thoughtful discussion questions, and even a little homework under amusing topic headlines like Listen and Hum, Recite and Write, Read and Talk, Watch and Reflect, and Get Up and Do. Want to find serenity in your life? Get out and garden. Need a new appreciation of joy? Go to a place that makes your heart sing; or listen to Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons' to reflect on how each season is musically exhilarating. McCarty's devotion to philosophy is obvious, and her tone is so conversational that it's nearly impossible not to get enthusiastic too. 'Entertaining new ideas can transform lifestyles,' she says, and this book - push-ups for your mind - most definitely makes you see and understand your world and yourself differently." - Carolyn Leavitt, Boston Sunday Globe

"If your book club likes to talk about ideas more than plotlines, this optimistic

and pragmatic how-to should be next on your list. In each of 10 chapters, McCarty explains a 'big idea,' such as Flexibility or Possibility, then offers discussion questions and meditative exercises (spend time with water to understand Serenity). The 4 philosophers she quotes and the artists whose works she urges you to sample are surprisingly diverse. Cat Power has as much to offer as Camus. McCarty's enthusiasm for human achievement and potential is contagious. She encourages fun and sociable self-improvement-enlightenment for the yoga-averse." - Sonya Sobieski, Psychology Today

I know, I know, previous reviews rate the book as one of the best books on "practical Philosophy" ever written, however I believe it is not, here is why: let's consider the structure of the book: for each chapter or idea there comes a light introduction about how miserable and lacking our life is in that respect, then comes what this or that philosopher(s) said about it, finally there comes some truly superficial activities for working in groups. The problem with the first section (introduction plus exposition of the philosopher's thinking) is that it is very short and superficial, no real discussion of the idea, but just one point of view and that's it, even worse, sometimes this single point of view is explained in a poor, not even coherent way, as for example when the author talks about Jaspers' ideas on communication. Now, the section that disappointed me most is the homework: full of trivial, sometimes even silly suggestions that I honestly doubt even people who gave the book 5 stars would take seriously. On the other hand, the section called "Discussion Questions" does indeed contain some interesting and important questions, but wait a minute, should not the author - a philosopher herself - at least have tried to answer some of them? No, not in this life!, all that hard work is left to the reader. In general my view is this: the author is well intended, she really tries to put philosophy to the level of basically everybody but she did it in a wrong way, the way she did it makes philosophy look more like the cheap, good for nothing self-help books that can be found by thousands. The extremes are bad, hard, academic Philosophy is not easy to understand, with no practical application in sight, on the other hand philosophy as presented here is too superficial, trying to make Philosophy accessible is "accomplished" by paying a high price: a complete lack of depth, a lack of real arguments therefore, the result is not surprisingly disappointing. I honestly believe Philosophy does matter, actually whether we like it or not it is always with us because we live our lives according to a particular form of it (understood as a set of principles, values and shared views that guide our thinking, decisions and behavior and therefore our social project). In our case, we live under the unwritten philosophy of modern capitalism. Not being truly aware of this, not thinking about it in a reflexive, highly critical way so we can take action can lead us to our own

destruction because many of its core values put the survival and the continuing functioning of the system right above basically everything else. Well, too harsh a review maybe, but in the author's favor I have to say that at least she made the word philosophy visible again, and perhaps made many people think, which is good of course. In general, her commentaries and advice are OK, the problem starts when she mixes it with light, too superficial philosophical arguments, in this respect the title and especially the editorial review are misleading, creating expectations the book does not fulfill.

This is an interesting structured approach to 10 philosophical concepts with suggested supplementary material. It is not just a "head trip", but helps the reader integrate these ideas into his or her everyday life. It was intended as a discussion group guide, and I only wish I had a group that would join me in exploring it!

I purchased this one for a friend, who started to read my copy and needed her own copy. I originally purchased and read this book, and worked through some of the exercises for a graduate course I took in Philosophy as it relates to education. However, this book is not just for teachers/educators bringing philosophy to the classroom. It's for everyday people. The book has 10 chapters (1. Simplicity, 2. Communications, 3. Perspective, 4. Flexibility, 5. Empathy, 6. Individuality, 7. Belonging, 8. Serenity, 9. Possibility, 10. Joy). Each chapter discusses different philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, Jr., Sartre, Jane Adams, Mary Wollstonecraft, and many more). Each chapter starts with the chapter topic, followed by the philosophers for that chapter, and then homework/exercises for the reader to practice. At the end of the chapter the resources are listed, such as music, poems, documentaries, etc. This gives the reader the opportunity to explore beyond the book. Can't say enough good things about this book. If you are interested in finding meaning in your life this book is worth reading. Other suggested reading: Socrates Cafe by Christopher R. Phillips

I purchased this for a class and for no other purpose. Class is over and I have shared it for new students

Ordered for a class. Nice book

The book was for a class and so far so good. Discussions questions are insightful.

Haven't read it yet, but it did come in the mail really quick.. As soon as I do get to this book I'll update my review.

really..just yuck.

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