

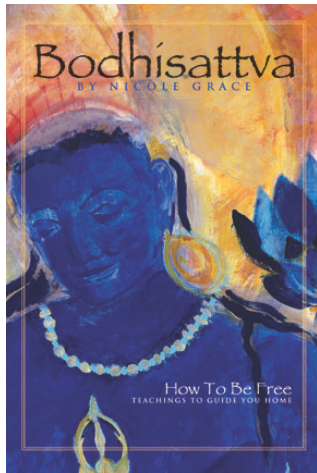


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A Conversation With Nicole Grace, author of *Bodhisattva: How To Be Free – Teachings To Guide You Home*

By Norm Goldman Published August 11, 2010 Self Help & How To's



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Today, Norm Goldman Publisher & Editor of Bookpleasures.com is honored to have as our guest Nicole Grace, author of *Bodhisattva: How To Be Free - Teachings To Guide You Home*.

Good day Ms. Grace and thanks for participating in our interview

Norm:

Please tell our readers a little bit about your personal and professional background.

Grace:

First, Norm, allow me to thank you for inviting me to discuss my new book *Bodhisattva* with your readers. I am grateful for the opportunity.

While I always envisioned being a writer, it wasn't really a feasible way to support myself financially. After college I was extremely fortunate to be ordained as a Buddhist monk by a very progressive, wise Teacher, whom I adored, and whose guidance is responsible for every achievement and pursuit in my life that I value. I was meditating diligently and believed that in order to progress in my spiritual disciplines, it would be necessary to strengthen my mind. I also believed that in order to be able to teach in the West someday, I would have to be successful professionally, as well as spiritually.

The *Bodhisattva* path requires us to be able to deal with life – as a spiritual seeker, you can't hide out forever in a monastery, as entrancing as that idea can seem in the midst of stressful circumstances...Meditation requires a mind that is sharp and quick. I was determined to meditate well and to be successful in my career, but equally determined not to lose track of my priorities or be seduced by success. I was on a mission to conquer myself and then to help relieve the suffering of others, whatever it would take.

Thus, I began my professional life as a computer programmer and quickly moved into project management, then global management consulting, which was very exciting. I became a methodologist, which is essentially structuring project tasks in a coherent way that can be tracked and measured. I published some papers in technical journals on these subjects. I was hired by CIO's to create methodologies for their global corporations, and



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was invited to speak about methodology and project management at places like the Pentagon, the White House offices and high-level military bases – pretty thrilling!

On 9/11 I was working as the Director of Project Management for a trading firm on Wall Street when it suddenly became clear I needed to shift gears and begin the next phase of my life. I noticed that despite the screaming and crying and horror around me that day, I remained very still inwardly. I discovered then that I was not afraid of dying. It seemed that after my years of training on the spiritual path I had truly learned some life skills that could hopefully help others to find success without stress and anxiety. I started a personal and professional development company with a colleague and wrote *Mastery At Work: 18 Keys For Achieving Success, Fulfillment And Joy In Any Profession*. The book was a way of sharing with others how to live and be successful in any circumstances and yet maintain a quiet, peaceful mind and heart.

After many years of directing every moment towards the goal of awakening and enlightenment I was graced with several months of extraordinary, miraculous realizations and indescribable experiences. They have fortunately never stopped...Well, at that point, my Teacher basically pushed me out the door and off into a life as a teacher myself.

I have now been teaching meditation, Buddhism and mysticism around the world for over a decade. I also know that each day I learn much more than I teach. My students are extraordinary.

Norm:

How and why did you become interested in writing *Bodhisattva*?

Grace:

I have noticed that sometimes the less you say, as a teacher, the more is communicated. Words can get in the way of Truth and clarity, and can restrict the imagination. With *Bodhisattva* I wanted to distill key teachings of this path of selfless giving, investigation, meditation and revelation into their essence. I wanted to provide people from any background, any faith, with a starting point for contemplation and self-discovery. These brief teachings are intended to light a fuse in your mind, to lead readers to “aha” moments, little epiphanies that can lead to bigger ones, and eventually, to peace.

Norm:

Do you worry about the human race?

Grace:

Worry might not be the word I’d choose. I feel a lot of compassion for the struggles that we endure as a community of beings on this earth. I take a very long view of life – and also an instantaneous one. What I mean is that I see the bigger picture of life – how it rises and passes away, generation after generation, aeon after aeon. We live in cycles, the earth moves through cyclical periods as well. Creation, preservation, destruction, it goes on forever. So, no, I’m not “worried” about a cataclysm or some horrific future event, – it may happen, it may not. I am more concerned about the painful and ignorant states of mind that draw us towards the decisions and circumstances that lead to cataclysmic events, and in healing those mind states, enlightening them, one individual at a time if necessary, so that as a community, we are more inclined to care about one another rather than about the rise and fall of political fortunes.

It only takes one person, one moment in time, to change a life. For example, we pass homeless people all the time, holding up signs, hungry. How hard is it really to stop and give them a dollar, five dollars? That five dollars, which you can probably afford to give away without too much hardship, could prevent that one person from starving that one day. Maybe they will starve tomorrow, but today, you can ease their suffering. And in doing so, you will ease your own. Who doesn’t feel like a better human being after offering support to



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someone less fortunate? If anything causes me concern, it is the number of people that comfortably walk by a hungry person and keep talking on their cell phone, listening to their iPods, without noticing or without acting. If we can all just give our five dollars, one way or another, at least once a day, we will all suffer less.

But in any case, Norm, I prefer not to waste time worrying. That's trying to predict the future isn't it? Worrying is projecting your mind into some unknown future and then assuming it could be awful. Well, I would suggest we would be much better off focusing our minds 100% on making "now" perfect, instead of wasting even one brain cell thinking about some future event that might never happen. Then, each perfect "now" moment will add up to the best future we could ever have. Every time we worry, we just end up diluting the potential of "five minutes from now."

Norm:

What draws you to express yourself through this form of writing?

Grace:

As I mentioned earlier I would say that Bodhisattva is a series of distillations of core teachings of the spiritual path, in a form that I believe is most likely to inspire reflection and contemplation.

Norm:

Whom do you believe will benefit from your book and why?

Grace:

Who will benefit from Bodhisattva? I do believe anyone with an interest in personal evolution, self-discovery or spirituality would enjoy this book. I also believe that any person looking for answers – looking for that ephemeral deep understanding about themselves and life – could find the peace of knowing by reflecting on the teachings in this book.

Norm:

It is sometimes said that people in times of need turn to poetry. Is this true and if so, why?

Grace:

That is a beautiful thought. Poetry by its nature creates a state of reflection. Good poetry isn't just words arranged in a pretty way, but words layered with meaning and color. Poetry takes three pages of information, from 20 different books and references, and condenses that into a few lines, each one like a folded up fan. You read one carefully chosen word, and as understanding dawns in your mind, the fan spreads open revealing the painted designs in the folds. Ahhhhh. So wonderful. Sometimes we want to discover the hidden truth ourselves, rather than have it explained to us. There's a process that we can participate in that transforms us. So poetry can be ultimately more comforting than 20 pages of text just telling us how it is and who we are and what we should understand.

However, I would like to mention again that Bodhisattva is intended as a book of teachings, and not technically as a book of poetry. Poetry is a specific art form – the verses in my book are really more meditations on spiritual truths, more Lao Tzu than John Keats.

Norm:

Would you say you get clarity about a subject from writing about it? If so, please elaborate.

Grace:

Yes. Writing is the unfolding of a transformation in one's world. As Dante said, a writer can not only write about transformation, but if done right, can actually cause transformation to occur in the reader's mind as well.



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Norm:

Do you feel that there are some subjects that are more important than others to write about?

Grace:

Shakespeare wrote, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Let me paraphrase then, and say that there are no subjects either more or less important, but writing makes them seem so...

Norm:

What challenges or obstacles did you encounter while writing your book? How did you overcome these challenges?

Grace:

I'd have to say that the challenges occurred first, and they led to writing these teachings...Writing the book was the reflection of a process of realization. I was motivated to share with my students – and anyone else who might benefit – the understanding I gained from observing nature, from experiencing the highs and lows of Life.

Norm:

How can our readers find out more about you and Bodhisattva?

Grace:

We have a website: www.bodhisattvabook.com. We will also have a Facebook page that readers can visit. I will be visiting a number of different cities throughout the Fall, giving readings, teachings, signing books. The schedule will be available on both of these sites. I would welcome anyone to attend these events so we can meet and, hopefully, enjoy some moments of Truth and joy, together.

Norm:

Is there anything else you wish to add that we have not covered?

Grace:

There is one message that I always want to shout from the rooftops: Enlightenment and peace are real. The Bodhisattva path is arguably the fastest – though most challenging – way to become free, but it is accessible, available and it works. If we can all just find something to love and respect more than ourselves, if we can give more than we take from life, we can all find enduring bliss.

Norm:

Thanks once again and good luck with all of your future endeavors

Grace:

Thank you so much for this conversation. I wish you and your readers joy and success in your lives and work.

Norm Goldman

Norm Goldman, B.A. LL.L, is the Publisher & Editor of Bookpleasures, which he created in 2002.' Practicing law for over 35 years enabled Norm to transfer and apply to book reviewing his many skills that he had perfected during his career in the legal profession and as a result he became a prolific free lance book reviewer & author interviewer.